
COLOSSIANS: CHRIST PREEMINENT

Session 1 | Colossians 1:1-8 | Dr. Randy White

Colossians is one of three epistles dealing with the church as the Body of Christ. Ephesians considers the body under the headship of Christ, Colossians considers the head (Christ) and its relationship to the body, and Philippians considers the members of the body in relation to one another.

THE AUTHOR AND THE RECIPIENTS | COLOSSIANS 1:1-2

VERSE 1 | THE AUTHOR

- Paul is very specific about his apostleship:
 - It is of Jesus Christ by the will of God.
 - Not of man - Galatians 1:11-12
 - It is not of the same category as the 12
 - THE MINISTRY OF THE 12
 - The 12 were sent to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom, a message of repentance - Acts 2:38-40
 - The 12 were under the leadership of Peter - Matthew 16
 - The 12 would have 12 thrones, judging Israel - Matt 19:28
 - The 12 were to preach Christ as the Messiah, coming to judge Israel and rule over the nations - Acts 3:19-21
 - The 12 were sent to teach obedience to the Law for Israel - Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 21:19-20
 - THE MINISTRY OF PAUL
 - Paul was the recipient of a mystery revelation, not a prophetic revelation - Ephesians 3:2-3
 - Paul magnified his ministry over that of the 12 - Romans 11:13
- Paul is an apostle of **Jesus Christ**
 - The emphasis of Colossians is the preeminence of Christ. Christ is seen in His heavenly realm, not in His earthly walk (as in the Gospels) or in His future reign (as in the Prophets and Revelation).
- **Timotheus** - The KJV was not consistent in translating Τιμόθεος [timotheus]. Often KJV transliterated the name (as here), but other times when the exact same form of the word was used, it translated to Timothy (as in 2 Cor. 1:1). Timotheus and Timothy are the same person.

VERSE 2 | THE RECIPIENTS

- The **saints** is ἅγιος [hagios], and is used three times in Colossians.
 - Here, note that there is the conjunction and, which separates the saints from the faithful brethren. In Phil 1:1 Paul speaks of saints and bishops and deacons.
 - Why does he make a distinction? Because saints are Jewish believers in the time of the Messiah and the Kingdom Offer.
- **Colosse** was a town to which Paul had never been, but had a thrill to hear of converts and a desire to see them grow in Christ.
- **Grace and peace:** Paul began each letter with this familiar pattern.
 - Grace and peace is the message of this mystery age.

- Judgment and War was the only real message that could be given from the Old Testament for the time in which Israel would reject the Messiah. Compare Revelation 19:11.
- Grace comes from the Father. Peace comes when the Son will reign as the Prince of Peace. The Spirit is the "earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:14).

The Thanks from Paul's Heart | vv. 3-5a

- There are three things that cause Paul to give thanks and to be praying always for the Colossians:
 - Their **faith**. Paul was not rejoicing in their health, wealth, or prosperity, or even their happiness or peace, but in their faith. They were saved by grace (v. 2) through faith (v. 4).
 - Their **Love...to all the saints**. This was evidence of the fact that they (both Jews and Gentiles) had placed their faith in the Jewish Messiah, therefore they loved the Jewish people.
 - The **hope which is laid up...in heaven**. While all the Jewish Apostles spoke of a coming *earthly blessing*, Paul speaks exclusively of *heavenly blessings*, because Paul is speaking to the church, not to Israel.
- Compare to 1 Corinthians 13:3, which teaches that faith, hope, and charity (love) are all that remain after the end of the era of the Kingdom offer when prophecies "become useless" (Young's Literal) and tongues cease.

The Truth flourishing | vv. 5b-6

The Spread of the Gospel | v. 5

- Which Gospel made it to "all the world?"
 - Concerning the Gospel of the Kingdom, which the Apostles were to take "to the remotest parts of the earth," such Gospel clearly never made it or the end of the age would have come (Matt 24:14).
- Was Paul exaggerating when he said the saving Gospel had come to all the world?
 - Romans 1:5
 - Romans 16:25-26
 - Colossians 1:23
 - Ephesians 3:9
- How did Paul accomplish this? Read the book of Acts and his epistles closely to see the boldness, strength, and unfettered determination which he displayed.
- What happened? A darkness came even before Paul's death - 2 Timothy 1:15.

THE BEARING OF FRUIT | v. 6

- Even though we are saved "by grace and not of works," there is always the goal of fruit, which only comes from maturity. The charge of "cheap grace" is a straw-man argument.

Epaphras the Fellow Servant | vv. 7-8

- From this verse and 4:12 it appears that Epaphras may have been the pastor of the church or a deacon (the word *διάκονος* [*diakonos*] is translated **minister**).
- He is also mentioned in Philemon 1:23, and Philemon's companion (possibly son) Archippus is mentioned in Colossians 4:17.
- In the light of the references to Philemon's family, it is possible that the church of Colossae met in Philemon's home (Philemon 1:2). It is also possible that Philemon or Archippus could have been the Pastor. All is speculative.