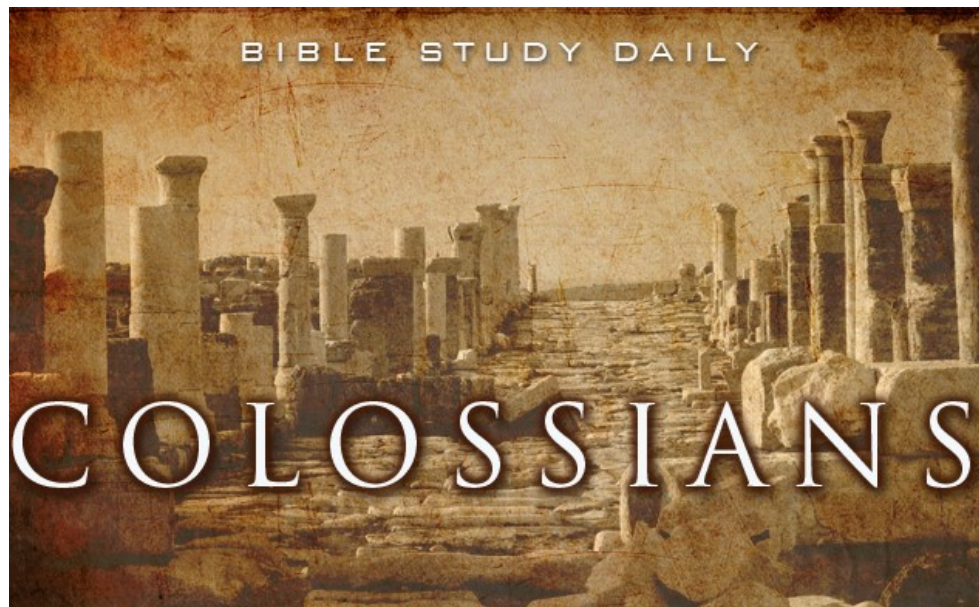




BIBLE STUDY DAILY



This document contains the introduction to the book of Colossians as well as my study notes for the book.

## Name

The title “Colossians” comes from the intended audience designated in 1:1, “To the saints in Christ at Collossae.” The body of the epistle makes it clear that Paul’s intended audience in Colossae is both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

## Author

Paul claims authorship of Colossians in 1:1, 1:23 and 4:18. Also attesting to Pauline authorship is the mention of so many of his brothers in ministry (4:7-17).

Externally, many of the early church fathers attribute the book of Philippians to Paul including Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.

## Genre

Epistle

## Literary Form

The epistle to the Colossians is a personal letter that includes a section written as poetry (1:15-20) that may have been an early hymn.

## Time Frame

Paul was in prison in Rome in A.D. 60-62 when he wrote the letter to the Colossians.

## Emphasis

The emphasis of Colossians is on 1) the supremacy and deity of Christ, 2) a polemic against the "Colossian heresy", 3) to lead believers to spiritual maturity, and 4) to update them on his plans and to ask for their prayers in support of the ministry.

## Outline

- Introduction, greeting and thanksgiving (1:1-8)
- Prayer for spiritual growth (1:9-14)
- The centrality of Christ (1:15-23)
- The mystery of Christ (1:24-29)
- Paul's suffering for the Lord (2:1-3)
- False teaching exposed (2:4-23)
- The Christian life (3:1-4:6)
- Conclusion (4:7-18)

# What I Noticed Today

## (Colossians 1-4)

### Colossians 1

In verses 1-2 Paul uses the typical opening for a letter: he identifies himself as the author (an apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will), he identifies the audience (the saints in Colossae), and a greeting (grace and peace to you from God the Father).

**Note:** Timothy was with Paul and was a partner in the ministry but was not the co-author of the letter to the Colossians.

In verses 3-8 Paul gives thanks for the saints in Colossae because of their faith and love for all the Christian brothers. The gospel is bearing fruit around the world just as it is with you. The truth you learned came from Epaphras a fellow slave a faithful servant of Christ.

**Note:** Paul had not started the church in Colossae and he had not visited there yet. Epaphras had apparently started the church in Colossae and informed Paul of their condition.

**Note:** Epaphras is short for Epaphroditus that Paul referred to in Philippians 2:25, 4:18, and Philemon 23.

In verses 9-14 for this reason (Epaphras' report to Paul) Paul has been praying for the believers in Colossae that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will, wisdom, and spiritual knowledge. So that:

- You will walk in a way worthy of the Lord,
- Pleasing to Him,
- Bearing fruit in every good work, and
- Growing in the knowledge of God.

**Note:** In Greek the word for "fill" implies a complete filling, and the word used for "knowledge" implies complete knowledge. This kind of filling and knowledge comes only from the Holy Spirit.

Paul prays they will be strengthened with all power by God resulting in endurance, patience, joy, and thankfulness for God allowing you to share in the light. God has rescued us from darkness, redeemed us, forgiven our sins, and transferred us to the kingdom of His Son.

In verses 15-20 Paul discusses the supremacy of Christ as Creator and Redeemer:

- Christ is in the image of the invisible God.

**Note:** "Firstborn" in verse 15 does not mean that Christ was born in a

traditional way as some modern cults suggest. It is an indication of his superiority over all creation (v. 16).

- Everything in heaven and on earth, everything seen and unseen, was created by Christ.

**Note:** Paul's inclusion of things unseen may be to correct those who worshiped angels because angels were themselves created by Christ.

- Christ is before all things and by Him all things are held together.
- Christ is the head of the church. The firstborn of the dead (resurrection).
- God is pleased to have His fullness dwell in Him.

**Note:** This fullness dwelling in God shows Christ was fully man and fully God.

- Through Christ and his shed blood on the cross, mankind is reconciled to God

**Note:** Verses 15-20 are written as poetry and may have originally been a hymn. Paul's use of this is to counteract specific issues of false teaching that had infiltrated the church in Colossae.

In verses 21-23 Paul expands the theme of reconciliation from verse 20:

- Once you were alienated from God and hostile to Him.
- But now you are reconciled to Him by Christ's physical body, His death as a sinless sacrifice in order to present you blameless before God.
- If you remain grounded and steadfast in the hope of the Gospel through faith.

In verses 24-29 Paul says he rejoices in his sufferings because they have been endured for the cause of spreading the Gospel. He has become a servant of the Gospel given to him by God. As God's servant, he has been ordained to reveal the great mystery that has now been revealed to the saints, which is Christ in you and the hope of glory. His goal is to present the Gospel, warning and teaching everyone so that they might present everyone mature in Christ.

**Note:** The mystery Paul refers to was not that Gentiles *would* be saved, but *how* they would be saved. Paul's desire is not only to have people accept Christ but to also become spiritually mature believers.

## Colossians 2

In verses 1-3 Paul says he has struggled (labored) for you (Colossae) and for Laodicea, and for those whom he had not met.

Paul wants their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love so that they will have full knowledge of the mystery of God in Christ.

**Note:** Paul's inclusion of Laodicea suggests the false teaching had spread



there, though it had been centered in Colossae. Laodicea and Colossae are cities about 11 miles apart in the Lycus River Valley.

In verses 4-23 Paul explains he wants them to have a full knowledge of God so that no one will be able to deceive them with persuasive arguments. Even though he was not with them Paul rejoices at how orderly they are and their strength in Christ.

Paul exhorts the Colossians:

- Now that you have received Christ, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith just as you were taught.
- Be careful that no one takes you captive through a deceitful philosophy based on human tradition, and not based on Christ.
- The entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ and you have been filled by Him.

**Note:** Verses 8-10 are a defense against Gnosticism. Gnostics believed the world was created and ruled by a lesser being who reported to a remote supreme divinity.

- You were also circumcised in Him, not of the body, but of the Messiah.
- You were buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through faith in God who first raised Christ.
- You were dead in your trespasses (sins), but He made you alive and forgave your sins.
- Christ paid your debt (the penalty for sin) and nailed it to the cross.
- Christ disarmed rulers, disgraced them publicly, and triumphed over them.
- Therefore, don't let anyone judge you regarding what you eat or drink, what festivals you celebrate, or the celebration of the Sabbath.
- These celebrations and traditions were only a foreshadowing of the coming of the Messiah.

**Note:** This reference is to spiritual circumcision of the heart and the sinful nature put off by Christ's death and resurrection.

**Note:** Verses 11-17 are teaching against legalism of the Judaizers who said in addition to believing in Christ one must also follow the Jewish tradition of circumcision.

- Do not let anyone convince you to engage in ascetic practices (self-humiliation) or the worship of angels claiming to have a visionary mind.
- The mystic has lost connection with the head (Christ) who provides nourishment for the body to grow.

**Note:** Verses 18-19 are teaching against mysticism. Mysticism believed an

understanding of God was possible through ascetic practices, contemplation, and self-surrender.

- If you died with Messiah why do you still live as though you belong to the world?
- Why do you submit to regulations: Don't touch, don't handle, and don't eat? These are regulations of men. They have the appearance of wisdom, but they are not of any value in reducing self-indulgence.

**Note:** Verses 20-23 are teaching against the practice of asceticism, which is the practice of self-denial, and self-humiliation.

## Colossians 3

Paul shifts from matters of doctrine to practical application in chapter 3. Verse 1, "So if" related back to Colossians 2:20: "So if you died with Messiah...."


In verses 1-11 Paul describes how you should live:

- Seek the things of above where Messiah is seated at the right hand of God.
- Set your minds on things above, not on this earth.
- Your life is hidden with Messiah. When Messiah is revealed you will also be revealed with Him in glory.
- Put to death what belongs to your worldly nature (sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed which are idolatry).
- God's wrath comes on the disobedient.
- You once walked this way but now you must put away your anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language.
- Do not lie since you have put off the old self and put on the new self.
- You are being renewed according to the image of your creator.
- In Christ there is no division. Christ is all and in all.

**Note:** Distinctions between Christians are removed (national origin, past religious affiliation, slave or free, none of this matters). We are all new creations and we are all one in Christ.

In verses 12-18 Paul describes the virtues of putting on the new life:

- Put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, gentleness, humility, and patience.
- Accept one another and forgive one another.
- Put on love, the bond of unity.
- Let the peace of Messiah control your hearts.

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- Be thankful.
  - Let the Gospel dwell among you teaching and admonishing in all wisdom with singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.
  - Whatever you do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father.

In verses 3:18-4:1 Paul exhorts each member of the family to perfect their own lives:

- Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
- Husbands, love your wives and don't be bitter.
- Children, obey your parents for this pleases the Lord.
- Fathers, do not exasperate your children so they become discouraged.
- Slaves, obey your human masters. Work wholeheartedly fearing the Lord.
- Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically as if for the Lord and not for men. Know that your reward is your inheritance from the Lord.
- Wrongdoers will be paid back for whatever wrong they have done, there is no favoritism.
- Masters, supply your slaves with whatever is right since you know you also have a master in heaven.

## Colossians 4

In verses 2-4 Paul discusses their prayer life.

- Devote yourself to prayer. Be watchful (stay alert). Be thankful.
- Please pray that we will have an open door to present the Gospel and present it clearly.


In verses 5-6 Paul discusses their public life.

- Act wisely toward outsiders (unbelievers).
- Your speech should be gracious, seasoned with salt (pure and penetrating) so you will know how to respond to them.

In verses 7-17 Paul closes the letter expressing concern for his friends:

- Tychicus a dear brother and faithful minister.
- Onesimus a faithful and dear brother, and a Colossian.
- Aristarchus a fellow prisoner with Paul.
- Mark, Barnabas' cousin.
- Jesus who is called Justis.



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- Epaphras a servant of Christ and a Colossian.
  - Luke the physician and Demas.

Give my greetings to the brothers in Laodicea and when you receive this letter have it read there as well.

Tell Archippus (probably the son of Philemon, Philemon 2) to pay attention to the ministry given him by the Lord and complete it.

In verse 18 Paul's salutation is a greeting he signed himself. He asked for the Colossians to remember him in prison and prayed for God's grace to be with them.

*Some thoughts for further consideration:*

- *As much as Paul expressed his love for the Colossians he was more concerned they not be tempted by heretical beliefs, and that they become spiritually mature. How many of us as Christians today do not clearly understand the Gospel and as a result accept heretical beliefs. Also, how many do not deepen their spiritual lives and become spiritually mature?*
- *Paul's very practical exhortations in chapter 3 provide an excellent guide by which we can measure our spiritual maturity. How are we doing at putting off the old self and putting on the new?*