



A Study of Colossians

June 13, 2007

Outline from Evening #1 & Question

Intro to Colossians

Written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (approx AD 60-61). Colossians is considered another of Paul's "prison epistles."

Occasion

A resort culture having its effect on those who live in the valley (Lycus Valley)—potential ideas that might lead others into improper conclusions about their faith. More than likely these ideas were coming from a synagogue or a group of Jewish Christians in Colossae.

Potential Problem | Gnosticism/Syncretism mixed with traditional Judaism.

Gnostic influence: Through wisdom, insight and knowledge and other elements of the universe, one can gain entry into and participate in "the divine fullness." You can only get here IF you PROVE yourself worthy through certain rites, rituals, etc.

Jewish influence: The following of strict dietary, devotional, etc. rules & routines, elevated one to spiritual superiority.

Author | Paul, with a faithful steward/scribe/servant/disciple at his side

Colossians 1:1-14

Colossians 1:1-2 Introductions & Greeting

INTRODUCTIONS

Paul an apostle—direct connection to Jesus, signifies authority, power, honor. "Will of God"—emphasizes the profound nature of Paul's calling (in his mind and expectation of the kingdom).

Jesus Christ—the single most distinctive and characteristic identifying/bonding factor for these new groups.

Timothy our brother—the traveling scribe/servant role—a note on Authorship. The apprentice is not a new idea. Brother—signifies a close communal group, a bond between believers which was a distinguishing quality of Christianity.

GREETINGS

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae—Believing group of Christ's followers: Grace & peace may infer that there were some issues (but aren't there always). The need for grace, the need for peace (not just from war but ALSO necessary in the absence of it).

Colossians 1:3-5 – Gratitude for the lives of faithfulness

Blessed actions: a quality of Christianity.

- the prayer between believers for believers vs. 3
- the blessing of praising another: spread the cheer of faithfulness vs. 4a
- the encouragement of righteousness toward others vs. 4b
- the REASON for the action of love: HOPE in other words, the word of truth—the gospel vs. 5

Colossians 1:6 – Dynamic nature of the Gospel: Worldwide, not specific to a location or group of people (power comes from an outside source).

HOPE: word of truth—the gospel vs. 5

- Remember Hope's location is an ultimate destination: "Laid up for you in heaven." vs. 5a
- Remember "Hope has come to you" not you to hope! vs. 5
- Remember Hope is not ego nor ethno-centric "as in all the world" vs. 6a
- Remember Hope never shrinks or ceases to exist: "constantly bearing fruit and increasing (local appearance vs. global reality—i.e., we may experience times when it appears there's no hope) vs. 6b
- Remember Hope is always making a difference—especially when we understand it in light of the "grace of God in truth." vs. 6c

Colossians 1:7-8 – Affirmation and identification for and with the leader: Epaphras (picture of faith in action) Outside source REALIZED in his actions toward the world.

NOTE: God has designed the spreading of the "The Gospel" or "the hope laid up for us in heaven" to occur through PEOPLE: in this case, Epaphras.

REMEMBER CONTEXT: As we read these encouraging words—there's a problem in the background—HOWEVER, Paul focuses on Positive Leadership, positive reinforcement of who they are and what they are to do, emphasizing the significance of the actions of their leader. . .

- Epaphras taught them vs. 7a
- Epaphras served/led them vs. 7b
- Epaphras encouraged/ loved them (enough to speak of their love for others) vs. 8

Colossians 1:9-14 – A Prayer for the People —"we have not ceased giving thanks for you"

REMEMBER: Paul's statement in vs. 3 "we pray for you" is here validated in his prayer—another picture of faith in action: Real vs. Ideal

Prayer intro: Vs. 9

Key Summary of prayer: That, because it's InU, you would be able to please God because you are wise and understanding (as a result of the Spirit's presence "InU") vs. 9

THE PRAYER

So that . . .

Prayer purpose: The hope for the people : Vs. 10-11

Vs. 10 “so that . . .”

PURPOSE: “You will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects.”

“All respects”: look like . . .

1. vs. 10b “bearing fruit in every good work”
2. vs. 10c “increasing in the knowledge of God
3. vs. 11a “strengthened with all power. . .”
4. vs. 11b for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience
5. vs. 12a joyously giving thanks to the father

Intro- Laying a foundation for “Hope”

The GREAT TRANSACTION vss. 12-14

1. Vs 12 | “Qualified us”

This phrase emphasizes a concept that was all too clear to a “non-Jewish” audience. It had been assumed for some time that the “Jews” and their future were untouchable. This phrase reveals the depth and breadth of the gentile experience. I.e., to share in an inheritance they had previously been unqualified, something that was once thought of as Israel’s alone.

ALSO NOTE: (Comments on “in light” —light from heaven that provides illumination, clarity of vision AND clarity of self perception (John 1:-4-5; 3:19-21; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:13-14; 1 Jn 1:5, 7, ; 2:8)

2. Vs 13 | “Rescued/Delivered us”

NOTE: key idea here is the emphasis on “already been transferred” (aorist tense) to the kingdom, like a whole people transported from their traditional territory to settle in a new region. Image: spiritual deliverance i.e., Israel from slavery in Egypt Ex. 6:6; 14:30

3. Vs 13 | “Transferred us”

EMPHASIS: like a transfer of title—no longer are you the legitimate owner over me—i.e., “domain of darkness. . .” see below

NOTE: on “Domain of Darkness” — the idea is a “domination of darkness” and the idea is that “darkness” can be legitimately/authoritatively resisted i.e., as having its license revoked (Ro. 13:11-14; Eph. 5:8-11; 1 Thes 5:4-8; 1 Pet. 2:9). Within a unitary kingdom (1Cor. 15:24) subjects of the king can reject all other claims to final authority over them (also note 1:16, 2:10, 15)

4. Vs. 14 | “Redeemed us”

NOTES: In many of Paul’s letters the idea of “redemption” is very futuristic but here we have “Christ in us” 1:27. There is a tension between what is now and ultimate, what is experienced and hoped for, what has already not yet occurred.

Some comments on “Redeemed/Redemption” — the idea of a captive or prisoner of war being freed or released from slavery. Lots of OT connections with captivity in Babylon or Egypt, etc. the idea of “Freed” or “released” to enjoy life in the new promised land which is now, “the kingdom of God’s beloved Son.”

5. Vs. 14 | “Forgave us”

NOTE: “forgiveness of sins” — this further describes the BENEFITS of REDEMPTION:

PARDON FOR FAILURE, the idea is purging an offense from memory and conscience.

The most important aspect of forgiveness is that it is only found “IN CHRIST”

CONCLUSION:

Something to consider. . . InU

THE GREAT MYSTERY/ THE AWESOME REALITY

COLOSSIANS 1:27-29

God wanted to make known to them the glorious riches of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

QUESTIONS one for each day of the week . . .

1. **THURSDAY’S Q** | What would be the reason you would come back to our study on Colossians next week? (Thursday’s question)
2. **FRIDAY’S Q** | Do you experience GRACE & PEACE on a regular basis? How would you finish these sentences:
“I experience grace when . . .”
“I enjoy peace when . . .”
3. **SATURDAY’S Q** | How would you define “HOPE”?
4. **SUNDAY’S Q** | Why do you go to church?
Finish the statement: “I go to church because . . .”
5. **MONDAY’S Q** | How do you measure your spirituality? In other words, if you were asked, “Are you spiritual?” how would you answer the question?
6. **TUESDAY’S Q** | Can you identify with these words: “qualified” and “rescued”? If not explain, if so, how?