



## Colossians: Christ is All

**Memory Verse:** Colossians 3:2 "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

### Background

Colossians is the 51st book in the Bible and the 12th book in the New Testament. Colossians is one of four "Prison Epistles" that Paul wrote c. 60-61 AD, during his first Roman imprisonment. Colossae was a busy trading center famous for its wool trade and was located about 100 miles to the east of Ephesus but near the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Paul had never been to the city of Colossae when he wrote this letter (2:1). However, it is possible that the church in Colossae may have been a result of Paul's work in Ephesus (Acts 19:10), with Epaphras being its founder (1:7 & 4:12-13). Epaphras, one of the Colossians, had come to Paul in Rome with a report that a false teaching attacking Christ's deity had infiltrated the Colossian church. In response, Paul writes the Letter of Colossians and sends it to the church with Tychicus and Onesimus (4:7-9), who also took with them the letters to the Ephesians and Philemon. Tychicus was one of Paul's coworkers and would have been able to help believers understand and apply the teachings in Paul's letters. Once read by the Colossians, Paul's letter was to be passed on and read to the other churches nearby (4:16).

### The Short Story

Jesus Christ is our supreme and all-sufficient Lord and Savior.

### What's the Big Idea?

While Ephesians focuses on the Church as the Body of Christ, Paul's letter to Colossians focuses on the Head of the Church which is Jesus Christ Himself. The Colossian church had been permeated with a mixture of heresies that were claiming Jesus was not actually God, calling for the people to worship angels as intermediaries between God and man, and insistence on very strict observances of certain Jewish requirements (2:16-23). Paul describes for the Colossians the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God," "the firstborn over all creation," "in Him all things were created," "He is before all things," "in Him all things hold together," He is the head of the church," "He is the beginning," "the firstborn from among the dead," "In Him all fullness dwells," "through Him all things are reconciled," "Christ in you is the hope of glory," "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form," "in Christ you have been brought to fullness," "He is the head over every power and authority" (1:15-2:10). Paul's goal in writing to the Colossians was that "they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ," (2:2) and not be deceived by false teachings. Having described Jesus Christ, Paul exhorts the Colossians to live accordingly as those who have been made alive in Christ. They were to set their hearts and minds "on things above," clothing themselves "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience," bearing with one another and forgiving others "as the Lord forgave you," and "over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (3:1-2, 12-14).

### So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

The deity and supremacy of Christ was non-negotiable for Paul. Paul knew that having the proper view of Christ impacts every area of one's life. Just as it was critical for Paul that the Colossians know who Christ was in all His greatness and glory so as not to be swayed by false teachings, it is also essential for our lives today. When we know and believe that Christ is our supreme and all-sufficient Lord and Savior, we will be able to live in Him. "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness...And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (2:6-7 & 3:17). Our faith in Jesus Christ will not only transform our lives, but it will also transform the relationships we have in our home, our church, and our world.

*\*Material taken from various sources.*

## Teaching Text

**Colossians 1:15-17** “**The Son** is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

## Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- What are some prevailing views about Christ? Why is it important for us to get our **Christology** from scripture? What was Paul trying to instill into the Christians at Colossae? What was he trying to address?
- What is the significance of recognizing Jesus as agent in creation of all things? Why must we understand His supremacy? Why do so many have misperceptions about Christ and Christianity? Who is to blame?
- Why were all things created? What purpose do they serve? What purpose do we serve for the Creator?
- How does Christ hold all things together? How do you respond to “there is no match for His power”?

## Practical Application

- Who is Jesus to you? How would you explain Him to someone who does not know Him? Give it a try!
- Do you struggle with the concept of Christ having all authority according to this passage? How do you process it?
- Where do you need the creative power of Christ to come into your life? What would you like Him to do? Is He capable?
- Do you ever feel like things are coming apart in your life and world? How do you hold it together?
- Practice Lectio Divina at least three times this week. As you do write down any thoughts you might have.

## Hitting the Highpoints

- 1:9 “We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will ....”
- 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy...”
- 3:15 “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”
- 4:2-6 “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful....<sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity....”

## Bonus Features– Divine Reading

In Christianity, **Lectio Divina** (Latin for *divine reading*) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word. It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word. Traditionally LD has four separate steps: **read, meditate, pray and contemplate**. First a passage of Scripture is read, then its meaning is reflected upon. This is followed by prayer and contemplation on the Word of God. The focus of LD is not a theological analysis of biblical passages but viewing them with Christ as the key to their meaning. For example, given Jesus' statement in John 14:27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you" an analytical approach would focus on the reason for the statement during the Last Supper, the biblical context, etc. But in LD rather than "dissecting peace", the practitioner "enters peace" and shares in the peace of Christ. In Christian teachings, this form of meditative prayer leads **to an increased knowledge of Christ**.

## Personal Takeaways and Notes