A STUDY
OF
COLOSSIANS
Introduction to Colossians

* Colosse - city in Asia Minor (modern Turkey); one of churches of Asia (not mentioned Revelation 1-3); near Laodicea (4:16)

* See maps

* Church not begun by Paul (2:1); probably Epaphras (1:7)...maybe during the time of Acts 19:10

* May have been where Philemon lived. Compare: Col. 4:9 w/ Philemon 10-12...4:17 w/ Philemon 2...4:10-12 w/ Philemon 23-24

* Paul is in prison - 4:18

* Written in early 60’s A.D.

* Colossians and Ephesians are twin books - eg. Eph. 5:19 & Col. 3:16; Eph. 6:1ff & Col. 3:20ff

* Ephesians emphasizes the church of the Christ -- Colossians emphasizes the Christ of the church
Thanksgivings And Prayers For
The Colossian Christians (1:1-12)

Look at v.1,2.
What relationships do we have mentioned?

What does “apostle” mean?

By whose authority was Paul an apostle? Why would Paul emphasize that point?

Do you read anywhere in the New testament of false apostles? If so, where?

What does the word “saint” mean? Are you a saint? How do you know?

Describe how YOU treat different kinds of mail. How does the identity of the sender affect this?

What kind of brethren are addressed? Can there be any other kind?

What makes one a “faithful” brother in Christ?

What is so desirous about having grace and peace from God and Jesus Christ?
Look at v. 3-5a.

Did Paul believe in the power of prayer? (vs. 3 & 9)

For what did Paul give thanks?

Why is “love for all the saints” a companion of “having faith in Christ Jesus”?

How do we express our “love for all the saints”?

What is our “hope which is laid up” in heaven? Is it more than heaven itself? Explain.

Look at v. 5a - 8

If our hope is heard in the gospel, then our hope hinges on who or what?

What else can we learn about the gospel in these verses?

What is the difference between hearing and knowing the grace of God?

By the time Paul wrote this letter, how far had the gospel gone outside the city of its origin, Jerusalem, where it began? What is so incredible about this fact?

How had the Colossians learned the truth?
What kind of person was Epaphras to Paul? What was he to the Colossians?

What had he declared to Paul and Timothy about the Colossian brethren? What does this mean?

**Look at v.9-10**

Why did Paul continually pray for the Christians in Colosse?

For what was he praying for them? List at least nine mentioned through verse 12.

What is the impact of the word “filled” in verse 9?

What do you make of the continued emphasis in verse 10 to “fully”, “being fruitful”, and “increasing”?

What does it mean to “walk worthy of the Lord”?

**Look at v. 11-12**

How were the Colossians to be strengthened?

Explain the phrase, “longsuffering with joy”.

Did they have just cause for “giving thanks”?
How has God “qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”?

Can you hear yourself praying this way...about these kind of things for yourself?

Do you think these kinds of sentiments ought to be predominant in our prayers in the assembly? When praying for the whole church?

The Preeminence Of Christ  (1:13-23)

Look at v. 13,14

Who is the “us” of verse 13?

What has God done for us?

Who did the delivering? What is the significance of this?

What is the “power of darkness”?

In this context what is the “kingdom of the son of His love”?

Was the kingdom of Christ in existence at the time of this writing in the first century? What does this say about the doctrine of men that teaches that Jesus was unsuccessful
in establishing His kingdom when He first came and that He is returning to set it up in the future?

What is “redemption”? Check a Greek definition if you are able. Why is this word so fitting to describe our salvation from past sins?

What was the redemption or ransom price? Provide a verse for your answer.

**Look at v. 15-20**

What tense did Paul use when he spoke of Jesus being the image of the invisible God? What is the significance of that?

Is this “image” physical likeness? If not, how is Jesus the image of the invisible God?

Give some thought to the phrase, “the firstborn over all creation.” What do you think it means?

“Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” is a question occasionally asked. According to verse 17, who or what came before either of them?

How does this harmonize with the Genesis account of creation?

What did Jesus create?
Compare verse 17b with Hebrews 1:3. After creation, what does Jesus continue to do?

How many times are “all things” mentioned? What is the point?

What are some things the creation reveals about God?

What are some things the creation does not reveal about God that Jesus does reveal?

In verse 18, the church is defined as what?

What relation or position does Jesus hold?

What does “firstborn from the dead” mean?

In what does Jesus have pre-eminence?

What two things was it the Father’s will to do?
How does “all the fullness” dwell in Christ? What does this mean?

Verse 20 points out that redemption not only involves forgiveness but also what?

What is the peace mentioned in verse 20?

How is peace made through the blood of the cross of Christ?

Look at v. 21-23

What is the past, present, and future of this section of the text?

What causes man to be alienated from God?

What word describes the change? (vs 20, 21)

Who does the reconciling? Who gets the credit for the change in us?

Explain how the reconciliation is in the “body of His flesh through death”.

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Because of what Jesus has done, HOW can man be presented?

According to verse 22, WHY were we reconciled to God?

Is there a condition attached to the assurance of verse 22?

List the four things upon which the presentation is conditional?

How can Christians “continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast”?

How might one be moved away from His hope?

To whom had the gospel been preached at that time?

What is so amazing about this fact?
Christ’s Preeminence Shown In The Ministry Of Paul (1:24 - 2:5)

Look at v. 24-25

How could Paul rejoice in his sufferings?

On who’s behalf was he suffering?

What does Paul mean by “fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ?”

Does this mean that the sufferings of Christ were incomplete? Not adequate? Fell short in some way?

How did Paul receive His ministry?

For whose benefit did he work?

Look at v. 26-27
How or why does Paul refer to the word of God he preaches as “the mystery”? What does this imply? To whom was it a mystery?

Was it still mysterious?

What is the glory of this revealed mystery among the Gentiles?

How is Christ in us?

What is our hope?

On whom is the emphasis placed in all this?

Look at v. 28-29

What aim did Paul have for “every man”?

How was this accomplished?
Paul says he labors and strives, but it is according to who or what?

Once again, this stresses what about Christ?

Look at 2:1

Why would Paul want the Colossians and Laodiceans to know what a great conflict he has for them? Clue: verse 2.

Paul writes this epistle from prison. What kind of conflict was he likely having?

What else in the verse indicates something that might have contributed to his agonizing over these brethren?

Look at v. 2-3

What four things did he so anxiously long that they might attain?

Why do Christian hearts need comforting or encouraging?

How can two or more Christian hearts be “knit together”?
Why might the Holy Spirit use the word “knit” to describe this?

What is the benefit of a close-knit band of saints?

When it comes to understanding (wisdom) and knowledge of God and Christ, which is more important?

What is the ideal goal in learning and understanding?

Is there any spiritual wisdom or knowledge outside of Christ?
Once again, the preeminence is seen where?

Why is this treasure house of wisdom and knowledge still referred to as hidden in Christ?

**Look at V. 4-5**

This section begins “...I say this in order that”. What is “I say this,” referring to?

Why has Paul described his work, and the greatness of Christ and the gospel?

How are some people deceived with persuasive words?

Based on these verses, write a explaining how one can avoid being misled by false teachers.

How was Paul “with” them, and “seeing” them?

How did Paul describe the Colossians’ faith in verse 5?
Christ's Preeminence Over Man-made Religion and Judaism (2:6-23)

Look at v. 6-7

1. Name the seven things Christians are to do, since they have received the Lord Jesus.

2. What does it mean to walk in Christ?
3. How can we be “rooted and built up in Him”?

4. Why the emphasis on “as you have been taught”?

5. What is the importance of abounding in the faith?

6. Continual thanksgiving is stressed here and in many other passages of Scripture. Why is that so important? Where or how do we sometimes fail in this?
Look at v. 8-10

1. What is the power of “Beware”? 

2. Some translations say “cheat” you; others say “take you captive”. Elaborate on what the Spirit is saying here, either translation.

3. What kind of things does Paul say could jeopardize our relationship with Christ?

4. All of these originate where?

5. Does it seem that our relationship with God through Jesus Christ is doctrinally based?

6. What reason is given in verses 9-10 for not allowing themselves to be cheated or captured?

7. Is verse nine past tense or present tense? Explain the significance of this.

8. How does all the fullness of the Godhead dwell in Christ “bodily”?

9. Do we need Christ plus something else?
10. If something does not originate with Christ, what is it's value?

11. How do we determine what is of Christ?

12. According to the latter part of verse 10, why do we only take orders from Jesus Christ?
Look at v. 11-12

1. There is a “circumcision” for all who are in Christ. Who performs it?

2. When does one receive the “circumcision made without hands”?

3. What is cut off by this circumcision?

4. Thought Question: Why does the Holy Spirit equate baptism and circumcision?

5. Why is it so fitting to speak of baptism as a “burial”?

6. What is the significance of being buried with Christ?

7. When we are baptized, where is the working taking place?

8. Once more, preeminence is placed where?
Look at v. 13-15

1. Describe the before and after states that are contrasted in vs 13.

2. What is the "handwriting of requirements" that is said to have been against us?

3. Why and/or how was it contrary to us?

4. In what act was it taken away?
5. Explain the phrase, “nailed it to the cross”.

6. Who was defeated in all this? How did Christ make a “public spectacle” of principalities and powers?

7. Christ is depicted as triumphing over them in it. How is that?
Look at v. 16-17

1. In what matters did Paul say men were no longer to judge (condemn) another?

2. After looking at v. 16, what is v. 14 referring to?

3. Does this include the “Ten Commandments”? Explain.

4. How could one judge another regarding food, drink, festival, new moon, or sabbath?

5. Is there a sabbath requirement of God still binding on men today?

6. If these things were shadows, what cast the shadows? (v 17)

7. Think of two or three characteristics of a shadow.
Look at v. 18-19

1. In what other way might the prize (reward) be taken from the Colossians (v 18)?

2. This is the fourth thing in this chapter about which Paul warns the Colossian Christians. List all four found in vs. 4, 8, 16, 18.

3. Elaborate on what you think was involved in “taking delight in false humility”.

4. Elaborate on what you think was involved in “worship of angels”.

5. How can one intrude into things which he has not seen? Why is this so wrong?

6. One who follows these errors (vs 18) is doing what (vs 18)?

7. One who follows these errors is NOT doing what (vs 19)?

8. Verse 19 describes how GOD wishes Christians to grow and how is that?

9. If Christ is shown to be the origin, predecessor, reality, ruler, etc. of all earthly (human) products, such as philosophy, religion, and science, does that mean that His instruction (to follow) would change as civilization evolves?
Look at v. 20-22

1. “If you died with Christ” refers back to what event mentioned in verse 12?

2. Being in Christ sets us free from what?

3. What generally is Paul’s argument or reasoning in these verses?


5. What are the two fallacies of this error mentioned in verse 22?
**Look at v. 23**

1. What things had “an appearance of wisdom”?

2. What makes such appear to be wise?

3. Explain what is meant by “self-imposed religion”.

4. How can humility be false?

5. What might neglect of the body include?

6. Can being religious, humble and restrictive appear to be beneficial and appropriate?

7. Does being religious, humble and restrictive automatically benefit one in their efforts to stop sinning?

8. Therefore, is it possible for a person, to appear wise, humble, religious and austere, yet be given over to the indulgences of sin?

9. So, where do so many go wrong along these lines?
Christ’s Preeminence Is To Be Demonstrated
(3:1-17)

Look at v. 1-2.

1. “Raised with Christ” refers back to what event in 2:12?

2. Does the word “if” imply the possibility of this being otherwise? Explain.

3. What are we commanded to do in these two verse since we have joined ourselves to Christ?

4. Where is Christ now?

5. What is the significance of Him sitting at the right hand of God?

5. How does one seek and set his mind on things above?

6. Does it seem God thinks man has power to determine his attitude, mindset, mental focus, etc.? Elaborate.

7. Describe a person who sets his mind on things that are on the earth.
8. Describe a person who sets his mind on things above?

Look at v. 3-4

1. What reasons are given that we should set our minds on things above?

2. How is the Christian's present and future state depicted in these verses?

3. What is meant by “for you died”?  

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4. How is a Christian’s life “hidden with Christ”?

5. What do you think the phrase “Christ who is our life” means?

6. When are Christians to appear?

7. Therefore, how long is a Christian’s life to remain “hidden” in the background?


Look at v. 5

1. If we hide our lives in Christ and seek things above, what will it be necessary that we do according to this verse?

2. How does one “put to death” his members?

3. What are “members” and why and how is the word used in this connection?

4. Discuss the list of verse 5. Check alternate translations for meanings of some. Here is the NKJV...
fornication -
uncleanness -
passion -
ever desire -
covetousness -

5. Why and how is covetousness idolatry?

6. How can one put covetousness to death?
Look at v. 6-7

1. What is indicated about the wrath of God?

2. Upon whom does the wrath of God come?

3. Is it correct to say that some people live in a certain sin?

4. Who are the “sons of disobedience”? Why are they called “sons”?

5. Are those (“sons of disobedience”) who are not in a covenant relationship with God subject to God’s moral laws?

Look at v. 8

1. What contrast is suggested by “but now” in v.8?

2. Why the seeming redundancy in saying “you yourselves” (NKJV)?

3. What do the things to be put away in verse 8 have in common?
4. What is the distinction between anger and wrath?

5. In Ephesians 4:26 we are urged to be angry, but not sin. In Col. 3:8 we are commanded to put off anger. Harmonize the apparent contradiction.

6. Maliciousness is difficult to imagine any Christian still possessing. True or false? Explain why the admonition to put it aside.

7. Why is slander or blasphemy wrong?

8. Why is obscene or filthy talk not fitting for Christians?

Look at v. 9-10

1. Why is lying condemned?

2. How do we put on a new man?

3. The new man is to be taking on what appearance?
Look at v. 11

1. What types of divisions were inappropriate among Christians when Paul penned this?

2. What might be the application today?

3. How does “but Christ is all and in all” do away with such distinctions?

4. Who are Scythians? Why mentioned here?

Look at v. 12–13

1. What three ways does Paul address them and what is the significance of each?

2. Contrast the lists of verses 8-9 with 12-13.

3. What is meant by the Christian is to “put on” certain things?

4. Give an illustration of each of the five qualities of v. 12.
5. What does “bearing with one another” connote?

6. Forgiveness of other brethren may involve overlooking complaints. True or false? Elaborate.

7. When forgiving our fellow Christian, what must always be in our minds?

8. Why is forgiving imperative for the Christian?
Look at v. 14

1. Why is love to be "above all else"?

2. Why does love put it all together perfectly?

3. How does love do this?

Look at v. 15

1. What is to rule within us?

2. What is meant by allowing God’s peace to “rule” in our heart?

3. The reference to being called into “one body” may mean the peace under consideration is to be seen where?

4. How does being thankful tie into this discussion?
Look at v. 16

1. What is to dwell within us? What does the parallel passage in Ephesians 5:18-19 call it?

2. To what extent or degree is the word of Christ to dwell within us? How does the word dwell within us? What does “in all wisdom” mean?

3. If the Word of Christ is within us, what will be coming out of us?

4. What is the difference between psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?

5. What are these type songs to be used for? Who are we to teach and admonish?

6. Thought Question: Does God authorize the use of uninspired words to teach the Word of Christ?

7. How are these songs to be sung to one another and explain.

8. When these songs are sung to one another, who else is listening?
Look at v. 17.

1. Verse 17 is a summation of everything said in chapter 3 thusfar. With that in mind, what does the writer mean in this verse?

2. How can we do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus?

3. If everything is to be in the name of Jesus, why must we give thanks to the Father THROUGH Him? Why not just thank Jesus?

4. How does this verse once again speak to the theme of the entire book: The Preeminence of Christ?

Christ’s Preeminence In Relationships
(3:18-4:1)

Look at vs. 18-19

1. What is required of wives?
2. With verse 17 still fresh in mind, what does “as is fitting in the Lord” mean about a wife’s submission to her husband?

3. So much more could be said of a wife’s responsibility to her husband, why this one?

4. What does submit mean?

5. What is required of husbands?

6. So much more could be said of a husband’s duty to his wife, why just this one?

7. Why the negative warning, “do not be bitter toward them”?

8. How could a husband be bitter towards his wife?

9. What effect will it likely have if either spouse waits for the other to perform his or her part before he or she obeys the Lord’s commandment for them?
Look at vs. 20-21

1. Children’s obligation to their parents is summed up in what one word?

2. Is the Scripture addressing children directly or indirectly through their parents? What is the significance of this?

3. Are there limits to how much children are to obey their parents?
4. What is to be the motivation for a child’s obedience to his parents?

5. What one thing are Fathers warned to be certain not to do? Explain.

6. What is the sad result should they not heed the Lord’s instruction along these lines?

7. Name ways a father may tend to provoke and/or discourage his children?

8. Why are only fathers warned? Can mothers not be guilty of provoking her child to resentment?

Look at v. 22

1. Thought Question: Why didn’t the church of the first century openly oppose slavery and seek to destroy it?

2. In a word, what does the bound servant always have to do toward his earthly master?

3. Is simply obeying sufficient to please God? What else does the Lord expect?
4. Give examples of working with eye-service, as a men-pleaser?

5. From the verse, how does one best develop sincerity of heart in the things we do?

Look at v. 23-24

1. What new dimension is added to the work we do? How would this affect the quality of work if all followed these admonitions?

2. What is meant by doing all things “heartily”?

3. What is meant by “as unto the Lord”? How does one do that?

4. Explain what the writer means when he says, “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance”.

5. Ultimately, who are we serving in all our mundane earthly endeavors?

6. Do these instructions to slaves have any application to employees today? If so, what.
Look at v. 25

1. What are the immediate wrongdoings under consideration in the verse?

2. The repayment mentioned in this verse has a counterpart in the previous. What is it?

3. Explain the meaning and import of there being no partiality.

Look at 4:1

1. How were masters to treat their servants?

2. What was always to factor into their thinking along these lines?

3. Does this seem to indicate that Christians were sometimes owners of bond servants? How could this possibly be? Isn’t having servants immoral?

4. Give an Bible example of a Christian “master”.

5. Give practical examples as to how 4:1 could apply today.
General Admonitions And Salutations
(4:2-18)

Look at v. 2

1. List the four things Paul says ought to characterize our praying.

2. What does “continue” in prayer connote?

3. Where is “pray without ceasing” found in the New Testament?

4. What does it mean to earnestly pray?

5. How can one be vigilant in prayer?

6. Why and how does mixing in thanksgiving factor into all prayers?

7. Give one other New Testament passage where thanksgiving and prayer are joined?
Look at vs. 3-4

1. What did Paul ask them to pray for? What might he have meant by that?

2. The open door was for “the word”. Explain how that can be.

3. He continues to call something the “mystery of Christ” (see also 1:26-27; 2:2-3). What did we say about such when studying those passages?

4. How could Paul call “the word” the reason for his incarceration?

5. What else did Paul hope prayers would help accomplish (vs. 4)?

6. How can prayers affect this?

Look at v. 5

1. How can we conduct ourselves wisely toward outsiders?

2. Why are they called outsiders? What is the significance?
3. Explain what the Spirit means by “redeeming the time” (NKJV).

4. In Ephesians 5:16, what additional thought is added to the idea of redeeming?

5. How can one make the best use of time?

Look at v. 6

1. How often should our speech be gracious?

2. How is speech gracious?

3. What is the significance of seasoning speech with salt.

4. What qualities does literal salt possess that would figuratively apply to speaking?

5. Discuss the latter part of this verse with 1 Peter 3:15 and Ecclesiastes 10:12.
Look at v. 7

1. How was Paul getting this letter from Rome to Colossae?

2. Where else in the Bible is Tychicus mentioned?

3. Comment on the three ways Paul describes Tychicus.

4. What was Paul also hoping he could tell the Colossians?

Look at v. 8

1. What can be inferred from the things said in this verse?

2. What does this say about the love of the brotherhood?

Look at v. 9

1. Where else in the Bible do we read of Onesimus?
2. How does this then likely connect the two books?

**Look at v. 10.**

1. Where do we hear of Aristarchus elsewhere in the Bible?

2. What is his condition in Rome with Paul?

3. In Acts 15:36-40, what do we learn about Mark?

4. How does Paul seem to regard Mark these years later? See also II Tim. 4:11.

5. What lesson is there in this?

**Look at v. 11.**

1. Were there many Jewish Christians assisting Paul in prison in Rome?

2. There are two other places in the NT the name Justus appears. Locate them and does it seem one, both or neither is the same as this one?
Look at vs. 12-13

1. Where else in the Bible have we heard of Epaphras?

2. How can prayers be something we labor in fervently?

3. What was the ultimate aim of the prayers of Epaphras for the Colossians?

4. Why is this important?

5. What other two churches did Epaphras have a relationship with?

6. How can one have a great zeal for congregations?

Look at vs. 14-15

1. What was Luke’s occupation?

2. What else do you know about Luke from other places in the Bible?
3. Where else do we read of Demas and what seems to have transpired after the writing of Colossians?

4. Where else do we read of the Laodicean church?

5. What sadly has taken place over the years?

6. What does “the church that is in his (or her) house” mean?

Look at v. 16

1. Was this letter to the Colossians meant only for their eyes and ears?

2. What does this imply?

3. Why do we not have in the NT the epistle sent to the Laodiceans?

Look at v. 17.

1. Where else do we read of Archippus?
2. What charge is given him?

3. With this verse joined with II Tim. 4:5, what might we deduce about the work Archippus did?

Look at v. 18.

1. Why might Paul have included so many personal references in this letter (in contrast to the Ephesian letter which has very few)?

2. In II Thessalonians 3:17, what is the significance of Paul’s salutation being by his own hand? What else do we know about this? Why is it important?


4. What is always needed by all saints? Why?

5. Is it ok to say amen to your own remarks? As opposed to others “amening”?

6. What stands out in your memory as this study of Colossians concludes?