

The Bible Companion Series

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST

**"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.
And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the
beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he
might have the preeminence."**

Colossians 1:17,18

A Study of the Letter to the Colossians

A Bible-Believing Study Guide

an AV 1611 Bible Companion

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Colossians Chapter One

What Christians Need to Know About Their Messiah

Introduction (Colossians 1:1-8)

Focus Verse: Colossians 1:17,18

I. Introduction to the Book of Colossians

- A. The Letter (Epistle) to the Colossians was written to teach Christians about the supremacy and pre-eminence of Jesus the Messiah over EVERYTHING that the world's culture has to offer. That included personal experiences, philosophy, Jewish legalism, and mysticism (which is the majority of the world's religions, including Catholicism).
- B. The time was about 62 AD
 - 1. 30 years after the crucifixion
 - 2. Nero is Emperor of all of Europe, and he is not a nice character. He is a true despot
 - 3. So brutal towards anyone who was not compliant with HIS way of running things
- C. The Apostle Paul learns of some serious errors in doctrine in the Christians in Colosse, and was directed by the Holy Spirit to correct those errors in understanding and thinking amongst the Christians there
- D. This letter was not supposed to stay in the church there, but be passed around to all the churches (Col 4:16) – which is how the New Testament began to be put together!
- E. These four chapters cover several key truths about Jesus Christ that are often missed and ignored by the majority of Christians, simply because they believe what they want to believe instead of what God has already said in the Bible:
 - 1. Jesus is eternally God – not a created deity, or an angel, but all God, in the flesh!
 - 2. Jesus created everything that exists – way back in Genesis 1
 - 3. Jesus is the head of every church and of every Christian home – whether people agree with it or not
 - 4. Jesus reconciled the entire world to God – no one has anything more to do than just believe it to be true and start living like it is true!
 - 5. Christianity has no need for the keeping of the Old Testament laws to make us right with God – we already are
 - 6. Jesus is better than all the philosophies of the world put together
 - 7. Jesus is better than all the world's best efforts and religions put together
 - 8. Jesus is better than all the wealth and power that this world could ever offer you!
 - 9. And Jesus is better than all of your experiences and opinions you will ever come up with
- F. All of the above issues and more may be believed by you, but there was much confusion going on back in the first century, troubling those Christians, and still trouble people today
- G. Line by line, let's listen and see what applies to OUR thinking and carefully swap out wrong thinking for Biblical truths

II. Study of Chapter One

A. The First Part is Paul's Christian Greetings

1. Preview

- a. The Writer of Colossians
- b. The Saints in Colosse
- c. The Servant to the Colossians – Epaphras

2. The Writer of Colossians (1:1)

- a. Paul is writing from prison again (4:18)
 - 1) He ends up writing 14 of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- 2) Several of them were written in the worst of times for him, and yet you would never have been able to tell it (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon)
 - 3) His captivity was first and foremost to Christ (Philemon 1:9; Ephesians 3:1; Colossians 4:18; Philippians 1:12–14). So prison was no problem to him.
 - 4) Paul’s time in prison was NOT punishment – it actually was for the purpose of the spreading of the gospel in the Gentile capital of Rome (Acts 23:11).
- b. Paul was AN Apostle
- 1) Didn’t choose his calling – by God’s will
 - 2) Notice how he refers to himself – as “AN” apostle – not THE apostle. True apostleship was such a humble role – with great power and authority, but never seeking the pre-eminence
 - 3) Peter was not THE apostle either – just AN apostle amongst twelve (1Peter 1:1).
 - 4) Saw himself as the least of apostles, and even the least of all saints (1Cor 15:9; Eph 3:8)
 - 5) Yet, he WAS an apostle and often had to prove it – so many thought Matthias had taken over for Judas in Acts 1:26
- c. With Timothy – Paul’s Gospel Team
- 1) Timotheus was his faithful companion, fellow-soldier, and friend. Paul referred to Timothy as his “son in the faith” (1Tim 1:2)
 - a) Didn’t lead him to faith in Christ – his mother and grandmother did
 - b) But Paul kind of ADOPTED him and became like a father to him, discipling him
 - 2) Paul was always with someone – or someone was always with Paul
 - 3) The ministry is NOT supposed to be a solitary effort – although you may need to go it alone for a while
 - 4) God ALWAYS rebuked His ministers when they tried to do things alone
 - a) John the Baptist was an exception – not the norm
 - b) Moses (Ex 18)
 - c) Joshua
 - d) Jesus – had the 12
 - 5) The men that left everything to travel with Paul were just like the original 12 of Jesus
 - 6) These kind of men are STILL needed today
 - 7) Timothy’s, Silas’, Luke’s, etc!
- d. Calls Timothy “Our” Brother – The Christian Family
- 1) Timothy was not just an adopted “son” of Paul
 - 2) And Timothy was not just the spiritual brother of Paul
 - 3) But he was OUR brother – ONE BIG CHRISTIAN FAMILY!
 - 4) I love how Jesus refers to His believers, His followers...
 - a) As BRETHREN
 - b) Whether Jew, or Gentile, male or female, adult or child – all are family – in the family of God by faith
 - c) A huge household of God
- e. Paul writes this small letter / epistle at the direction of the Holy Spirit of God – inspired, perfect, helpful!
- 1) Just 95 verses
 - 2) 1,998 words in English
 - 3) 4 chapters
 - 4) Would have been the same as a four page letter that YOU or I might write to someone having questions.

- 5) The big difference is that **one verse** in Colossians is so packed with doctrine and truth, that no one has exhausted the truths to be found in each and every one of them!

3. The Saints in Colosse (1:2-6)

- a. Writing to BELIEVERS in a city called Colosse
 - 1) A VERY important part of the Gospel Ministry is not just soul-winning, and even Disciplining, but also, holding believers accountable to the Scriptures they claim to be following
 - 2) These were believers, and were supposed to believe the SAME as all other believers (1Cor 1:10)
 - 3) There are NOT supposed to be 1,000 different “Christian” denominations – each with their own flavour and “take” on Jesus
 - 4) But all SHOULD have the same Lord, same Holy Spirit, same purpose and calling, and same doctrine
 - 5) Yet, most have only their own opinions, their personal favourite preachers, their own private interpretations
 - 6) We would do well, to listen to THIS Book, and take its warnings to heart, so that THIS church does not join the ash-heap of empty religious organisations that fill our cities and countries today!
- b. Written to the SAINTS and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse
 - 1) Living believers are Saints! There are NOT two groups:
 - a) Perfect Christians who are saints
 - b) And imperfect, sinful, failing Christians who are NOT saints
 - c) Corinth had the most carnal believers in the world, and yet they were saints to God (1Cor 1:2)
 - 2) Notice the five points of that phrase...
 - a) Saints – What we are – HOLY, separated, clean, like Jesus
 - b) Faithful – What we do (3John 1:5) – whatever it is we are doing, we do it faithfully, trustworthily, constantly
 - c) Brethren – Who we are (Mt 23:8)
 - d) In Christ – Where we are (2Cor 5:17; Eph 1:3) – I’m not really here – just a sojourner
 - e) At Colosse – Why we are – FOR Colosse and her people!
- c. Desiring Grace and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ for them!
 - 1) This is what to wish for other Christians: Grace and Peace!
 - 2) Notice how often Paul wishes this for the believers (Rom 1:7; 1Cor 1:3; 2Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Philp 1:2)
 - 3) Sometimes it was Grace, mercy and Peace, but most often just Grace and Peace!
 - 4) Both Grace and Peace are the foundation and ingredients of true rest in your heart and mind!
 - a) Grace is the ability to overlook hurts and problems in your life
 - b) Peace is the ability to not react to attacks – to be at peace, even though the other person may have declared war
 - 5) And we as believers need BOTH more than we need money, health, houses, cars, and even jobs!
- d. Their Great Testimony (1:3,4)
 - 1) Paul and Timothy were so thankful for these believers in Colosse – “for you”
 - 2) They both had heard of this church full of people
 - a) That had faith in Christ

- (i) What does FAITH look like?
 - (ii) Not just their salvation
 - (iii) But continuing faith and trust in Christ
 - (iv) Blips of experiences don't make good Christians
 - (v) Faith – constant faith – growing faith – THAT is a testimony to have
 - (vi) When hard times, troublesome times came – they trusted Christ to get them through
- b) Heard of their love of the saints
- (i) SOOOOO important
 - (ii) What does love for the saints look like?
 - (iii) Sacrificing for others
 - (iv) Opening their homes to other believers – hospitality
 - (v) Meeting each other's needs
 - (vi) Loving to BE with other believers – preferring one another over workmates, and girlfriends and movies and sports!
 - (vii) Does ANYBODY know of your love for the saints?
- 3) These Christians, not just individuals, but AS A CHURCH, were a bright testimony in the midst of a very dark world (Philp 2:14,15)– THAT'S what WE are called to be
- e. The Reach of the Gospel (Acts 1:8; 8:4) had reached this city of Colosse
- 1) Gospel Started in Galilee first
 - 2) Reached Jerusalem – through the crucifixion
 - 3) Judaea – by persecution
 - 4) Samaria – by more persecution
 - 5) Then throughout Asia
 - 6) And now “in ALL the world!” What an accomplishment!
 - a) History records that Patrick's Dad was already a Christian, and churches abounded all over Scotland! When Patrick came to Ireland, he was not the first to preach here, but the most effective!
 - b) Western India heard of the Gospel from the Apostle Thomas in 45 AD
 - c) China heard in 52 AD – in 638, a monument to Christianity called the Nestorian Monument stated there were churches in a hundred cities in China!
 - d) That means the Gospel went everywhere in just 30 years! NOT that everyone got saved, but that each and every culture and nation was touched with the preaching of the Gospel!
 - 7) The Gospel brought forth fruit as it went (1:6). The fruit of the Gospel is
 - a) Souls saved
 - b) Churches started
 - c) Cultures changed
 - d) Laws and God-given rights established
 - e) True Democracy and real personal freedom grew out of it
 - 8) It's a shame that it did not continue to be true!
 - 9) But it CAN be true today! Anywhere, IF we determine to just speak up and tell the Gospel to everyone, and faithfully teach this Bible!

4. The Servant to the Colossians – Epaphras (1:7,8)

- a. Paul is in awe of this man named Epaphras! (Col 1:7; 4:12; Philem 1:27)
 - 1) An unusual name – not common – no one calls their son this name today
 - 2) But he was an exceptional person! His name has been immortalised in the Bible!

- a) What was his greatness in? CEO of a massive business? Super weather inventor? Famous Music or Movie Star? Great boxer? Olympian?
 - b) No!
 - c) Who was this guy?
 - d) How can ANYBODY become famous to God?
- b. Epaphras was NOT
- 1) An apostle – no special powers
 - 2) A Jew – an ignorant Gentile of the things of God – had to start from scratch
 - 3) Another Paul – he was himself
 - 4) A Know it All – he needed to get preaching, and learn from other men, and get answers
 - 5) Well Known
- c. Epaphras was
- 1) He was Paul’s “fellow-servant”
 - a) What a way to be known
 - b) How do you see yourself, and each other?
 - c) What do YOU strive to be?
 - d) A servants amongst servants – a slave amongst slaves
 - 2) A “servant of Christ” – not of men, even though we serve one another (Col 3:23,24)
 - 3) Paul’s “fellow-prisoner” – both had experienced prison time for being Christians (Philm 1:23)
 - 4) And a “faithful minister” – the pastor of the church in Colosse
 - 5) A local man – a native of Colosse (4:12)
 - 6) A soul-winner
 - a) The whole city of Colosse had learned of the Gospel from this ONE guy, Epaphras! (1:7)
 - 7) A serious student of the word
 - a) This man had travelled to Rome to find Paul to get help with dealing with some problems in the church in Colosse – that is the reason for this letter.
 - 8) A Pastor of the church in Colosse
 - a) Evidently, Epaphras was the one who started this church – Therefore:
 - b) A strong, vibrant church can be started and exist without an apostle Paul leading it!
 - c) God sometimes makes use of the ministry of those who are not “great”, and have few gifts. God uses whatever life He thinks will work for Him, so that the excellence of the power would be known **to be of God and not of men** 2Co 4:7
 - 9) A Praying man (4:12)
 - a) Epaphras’ hardest labours
 - b) He Never stopped praying for his people
 - c) Knew the necessity of prayer
- d. Summary of Epaphras’ labours
- 1) Won an entire city to Christ – I am sure with help
 - 2) Taught them the word of God
 - 3) Laboured fervently for the new believers in prayer
 - 4) Had GREAT passion and zeal for HIS people (Colosse and Laodicea and Hierapolis) – loved them closest to him – not just people far away!
 - 5) Sought to keep them doctrinally pure
- e. The key ingredients of a great church are:

- 1) Developing the people into servants
 - a) Serving the Lord first (Acts 13:2)
 - b) Serving others at all costs
 - 2) Winning the lost – not just having a church, but evangelizing! Evangelize or fossilize
 - 3) Discipling the Christians (2Tim 2:2)
 - 4) Loving absolutely everyone
 - 5) Walking WITH and LIVING WITH the people you are ministering to – not TV or YOUTUBE churches!
 - 6) Constancy of life – nothing wavering – no need to constantly change
 - 7) Zealous Prayer FOR the people in your church
- f. Don't take servants of the Lord for granted
- 1) Being a servant is our highest calling, and we dare not ignore the need for us all to be like Epaphras (according to 4:12, Epaphras was of Colosse).
 - 2) This Epaphras stayed with Paul all the way to Rome (Philm 1:23)

B. Next Week, Some Things Paul Prayed for