HARVEST SPRINGS
COMMUNITY CHURCH

SUNDAY | November 8, 2026

JESUS FIRST: A STUDY OF COLOSSIANS | WEEK 03

Complete Through Him

Primary Text: Colossians 2:6-23 | Michael Stambaugh

> *Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead.* ***So he is first in everything****.*
>
> *Colossians 1:18*

False teachers in Colossae were saying, "Jesus is good, but to reach fullness you need this too." They were persuasive (2:4). They mixed Jewish practices like food laws, festivals, and Sabbaths (2:16) with harsh self-denial (2:21-23) and claimed visions of joining the angels in worship (2:18). In plain words, they taught **strict self-denial used as a ladder to climb into heaven.** Paul takes their favorite words (wisdom, mystery, knowledge, fullness) and shows that every one is found in Christ.

Continue to Follow Him (2:6-7)

- **Continue by grace.** "Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him" (2:6). You don't start with grace and graduate to something more advanced.
- **Jesus is your Lord.** Paul reminds the Colossians that Jesus is King of their lives, and that they live under his rule.
- **Grow deeper, not elsewhere.** "Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him" (2:7). A tree grows by going deeper into the same soil. A building remains on the same foundation.
- **The test is thankfulness.** "You will overflow with thankfulness" (2:7). Added religion produces anxiety and judgment. A life rooted in Christ produces gratitude.

Nothing is Missing (2:9-10)

- **All the fullness of God lives in Christ.** "For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body" (2:9). *Fullness* (the Greek word *plērōma*) was the false teachers' word. Paul says all of, not most of, the fullness of God lives in Christ. God's fullness hasn't come to visit. It has moved in to stay (see 1:19). Jesus reveals God.
- **In a human body.** By pointing to the incarnation that Jesus was human, Paul says, “You don't have to escape your humanity to find God. God came to find you in yours.”
- **You are complete in him.** "So you also are complete through your union with Christ" (2:10). “Complete” comes from the Same word family in verse 9 that the fullness of God is in Jesus, and **you have been filled full in him.** It is done to you, and it lasts. Like a marriage, everything that is his becomes yours.
- **He is over every power.** He is "the head over every ruler and authority" (2:10). You don't have to fear or appease spiritual power. Jesus is first in everything.

Union with Christ Begins at Baptism (2:11-15)

- A new heart, not a ritual. "Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature" (2:11), the fallen part of you that is opposed to God.
- Buried and raised with him. "For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God" (2:12). Baptism is the doorway into God's new creation. It is not a ladder to climb. It is a grave and a resurrection, and only God raises the dead.
- The record nailed to the cross. "He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross" (2:14). Every debt, paid in full.
- The powers on parade. "He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross" (2:15). The powers that tried to take you captive (2:8) are captives in Jesus' victory parade.

Empty Philosophies Today (2:8, 16-23)

"Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense" (2:8). The pitch is the same today: *Jesus is good, but you need something more.*

- The performance list: God's approval depends on how you're doing. *(adds to Jesus)*
- The prosperity formula: the right faith, words, or giving unlocks your blessing. *(adds to Jesus)*
- The next-level experience: you need this encounter or secret insight to go deeper (2:18-19). *(adds to Jesus)*
- The life coach Jesus: follow your heart and be a good person. *(takes away his cross and lordship)*
- One path among many: Jesus is one great teacher among others. *(takes away his fullness, 2:9)*

The rules and rituals "are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality" (2:17). Rules can only manage behavior. They cannot change a heart (2:23).

What am I trusting to finish what Jesus already finished? Adding to Christ and substituting for Christ grow from the same root: believing something is missing. Name your "missing piece," and leave it at the cross where Jesus nailed the record.

Bible Engagement this Week

- Read the whole letter of Colossians (ch. 1-4) each day. This should take about 15-20 minutes. Memorize Colossians 2:10

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