

# Living Christ

An Overview –Thanksgiving and Prayer

Colossians 1:1-8

Overview: To gain an understanding about the epistle, its purpose and occasion. The value of prayer, the value of relationship, the value of not succumbing to cultural pressure,

Outline for Colossians:

There are four major movements in this letter:

I. Colossians 1:1-23 – Jesus the Savior – His supremacy.

II. Colossians 1:24-2:5 –The suffering, sold out apostle.

III. Colossians 2:6 – 2:23 – The external pressures that were tempting the church to lose their way.

IV. Colossians 3 & 4 – The New Way of life.

Detail outline:

I . Greetings, Col 1:1,2

II. The Supremacy of Christ (topics 1-10 taken from NKJV paragraph outline)

1. Faith, Hope and Love in Christ, Col. 1:3-8

2. The Preeminence of Christ, Col. 1:9-18

3. Reconciliation in Christ, Col. 1:19-23

4. Sacrificial service for Christ, Col. 1:24-29

5. Not philosophy, but Christ, Col. 2:1-10

6. Not legalism, but Christ, Col. 2:11-23

7. Not carnality, but Christ, Col. 3:1-11

8. Put on Christ, Col. 3:12-17

9. Let Christ affect your home, Col. 3:19-4:1

10. Let Christ affect your daily life, Col. 4:2-6

III. Paul's messengers, Col. 4:7-9

IV. Paul's friends send their greetings, Col. 4:10-14

V. Paul sends greetings, Col. 4:15-17

VI. Paul's closing in his own hand, Col. 4:18

**This study uses the WISDOM acronym:**

**W** – What is the main point, or key thought, and we work the issue

**I** – Investigate the scriptures. Study God's word.

**S** – Seek counsel from other sources, voices and articles.

**D** – Develop a response. The best response is a written one because there is many a slip from the mind to the pen.

**O** - Openly discuss your study with others; this is especially valuable in a small group or learning community setting.

**M** - Move to action. This is where we apply what we have learned to our lives. It is in application that we find that God's word is indeed living and active. And transformation occurs as the heart is impacted.

**Please note:** *This is a study guide, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. We need to walk in the truth therefore: It's you, the Holy Spirit and the Scripture in the interpretation process. Try not to relinquish your personal study to reading and repeating commentaries, check in with them as resource to make sure that your interpretation is not way off.*

## Living Christ

An Overview –Thanksgiving and Prayer

Colossians 1:1-8

Overview: To gain an understanding about the epistle, its purpose and occasion. The value of prayer, the value of relationship, the value of not succumbing to cultural pressure,

Read the overview in consult other sources

There are four major movements in this letter:

I. Colossians 1:1-23 – Jesus the Savior – His supremacy.

II. Colossians 1:24-2:5 –The suffering, sold out apostle.

III. Colossians 2:6 – 2:23 – The external pressures that were tempting the church to lose their way.

IV. Colossians 3 & 4 – The New Way of life.

Key verse: Colossians 1:15-20; 1:4,5; 1:27b,28; 3:2; 3:16; 4:6

**W** [What is the issue] In reading the scripture the objective here is to determine the main point or points that Peter is trying to make.

**Read** *Colossians*

Ask yourself questions while discovering the main points in this text:

Ask the Who What Why When Where and the So what [what difference does this make – or it's the application question] questions to discover the main issue or issues that are in this text. Command to obey; doctrine to understand; life in the church to live out; and application (to myself) to apply.

Write down your questions...as you write clarity regarding the text of scripture will emerge.

In reading the overview develop your own questions to discuss:

- The supremacy of Jesus
- The connection between Grace and Peace. Define both terms.
- The faith, hope and love in the church and how these biblical values impact us today.

**I** Investigating Scripture: Read Colossians (It has only 4 chapters). If possible in one sitting.

### **Colossians – An Overview.**

Paul shows the Colossian believers how Jesus is the key to understanding all of reality. His death and resurrection as Lord demand and require that every aspect of our lives be transformed by His love and grace.

This letter was written was written by Paul in prison (4:8). Paul wrote to a church he did not start and had never met. The church was planted by Epaphras (1:7; 4:12,13) and he visited Paul in prison to let him know how the church well was doing but as always in life there are issues, challenges and pressures. And the brethren at Colossae were facing pressures and challenges.

So, Paul wrote this letter to them to encourage them to live for Christ and to address the issues that they were facing.

There are four major movements in this letter:

I. Colossians 1:1-23 – Jesus the Savior – His supremacy.

II. Colossians 1:24-2:5 – Paul – The suffering, sold out apostle.

III. Colossians 2:6 – 2:23 – The external pressures that were tempting the church to lose their way.

IV. Colossians 3 & 4 – The New Way of life.

The first movement:

#### **I. Colossians 1:1-23 – Jesus the Savior – His supremacy.**

Paul prays for the church as they are now a new humanity. They live this out by their faith – in Jesus; their love for the believers and the lost; and their hope which is stored up for them in heaven. Along with this Paul prays for greater wisdom.

Paul then makes the point that all reality is understood through the lens of the exalted and crucified Messiah. (1:15-20): For he created all things; He is the image of the invisible God; he is first born over all creation, we are redeemed and reconciled with God through him, we (the church) are a new creation; we are a new humanity

#### **II. Colossians 1:24-2:5 – Paul – The suffering, sold out apostle.**

Paul is in prison for preaching and proclaiming that Jesus is lord and that only Jesus is the way to salvation. Paul's position is that his imprisonment and suffering is not weakness as some believed but it is his way of participating with his Lord Jesus and the fellowship of his suffering. For joy is not the absence of sorrow but the presence of Jesus in our lives. The Lord Jesus Christ is creating a new cross-cultural, multi-generational, and multi-ethnic family. Christ in us the hope of glory (1:27b).

### **III. Colossians 2:6 – 2:23 – The external pressures that were tempting the church to lose their way.**

There were two primary influences that were the cause of stress and pressure in the life of the Colossians. They were mystical polytheism – from the Greek and Roman traditions and legalism – to observe the dietary laws and holy days. Consider how this occurs and surfaces in 21<sup>st</sup> century America and in our day to day life.

The Romans and the Greeks had various gods that they needed to appease for they governed and influenced every aspect of life in a variety of ways.

The legalists wanted the new believers to observe the dietary laws and the high and holy days.

For Paul both sides were wrong because both sides failed to grasp the reality that Jesus was supreme and sufficient for in Christ we lack nothing and he fulfills all the requirements of the law and the elemental spirits (2:8, 2:20) were not gods to be appeased, for Christ triumphed over all spiritual powers (2:20).

### **IV. Colossians 3 & 4 – The New Way of life.**

His new humanity (3:1-17)

– sets their minds on things above (3:2) and seeks the things that are of God and from God (3:1) till Jesus appears and we will be revealed in him (3:4).

The Old way is distorted, disobedient, and disgraceful (3:5; 3:8).

The challenge is to live in the new humanity – mercy; generosity, love and forgiven.

In Christ there is no Greek or Jew; slave or free; rich or poor – we are all equal in Christ a new multi-ethnic family of God. Therefore let the word of God dwell in us richly (3:16).

Life and culture in the new Humanity (3:18 - 4:1)

– where Jesus is Lord of the home. Paul is reshaping culture around Jesus who rules with a self-giving love.

Relationships and Mission

- Prayer and devotion
- Relationships with one another

No part of human existence remains untouched by Jesus.

## S Consult other sources

### Date and Occasion

The date of Colossians is linked to one of Paul's imprisonments (Ephesus, Philippi, Caesarea, or Rome). A Roman imprisonment best fits the facts of Acts.

Acts records that Paul was imprisoned in the early 60's. However, he was released and wrote the Pastoral letters (I & 2 Timothy and Titus) and was then rearrested and killed before June 9, a.d. 68 (the date of Nero's suicide), probably in a.d. 67.

The best guess for the writing of Colossians (Ephesians and Philemon) is Paul's first imprisonment, in the early 60's. (Philippians was the last of the prison letters, probably written toward the mid 60s.)

Tychicus, along with Onesimus, probably took the letters of Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon to Asia Minor. Later, possibly several years later, Epaphroditus, recovered from his physical illness, took the letter of Philippians back to his home church.

The church was apparently started by Epaphras (Col. 1:7,8; 2:1; 4:12-13), who was probably converted by Paul at Ephesus (Col. 1:7-8; Col. 2:1). It was mostly made up of Gentiles (Col. 1:21; 3:7). Epaphras came to Paul in prison to report a problem with false teachers who taught a mixture of Christianity with Greek philosophy called Gnosticism (Col. 2:8) and Jewish legalism (Jewish elements, Col. 2:11, 16, 17; 3:11; angel worship, Col. 1:16; 2:15, 18 and asceticism Col. 2:20-23). There was a very large Jewish community in Colossae which had become very Hellenistic. The essence of the problem centered around the person and work of Christ. The Gnostics denied that Jesus was fully man but affirmed that He was fully divine because of their eternal antagonistic dualism between matter and spirit. They would affirm His Deity but deny His humanity. They also denied His mediatorial preeminence. For them there were many angelic levels (aeons) between a good high god and humanity; Jesus, even though the highest, was only one of the gods. They also tended to be intellectually elite (Col. 3:11, 14, 16, 17) and emphasized a special exclusive secret knowledge (Col. 2:15, 18, 19) as the path to God instead of Jesus' atoning, vicarious sacrifice and mankind's repentant faith response to His free offer of forgiveness.

Due to this theological, philosophical atmosphere, the book of Colossians emphasizes

1. The uniqueness of the person of Christ and His finished work of salvation.
2. The cosmological ownership, reign and significance of Jesus of Nazareth - His birth, His teachings, His life, His death, His resurrection and His ascension! He is Lord of all!

### PURPOSE

Paul's purpose was to refute the Colossian heresy. To accomplish this goal, he exalted Christ as

1. the very image of God (Col. 1:15) the Creator (Col. 1:16)

2. the preexistent sustainer of all things (Col. 1:17)
3. the head of the church (Col. 1:18)
4. the first to be resurrected (Col. 1:18)
5. the fullness of deity in bodily form (Col. 1:19, 2:9)
6. the reconciler between God and mankind (Col. 1:20-22)

Thus, Christ was completely adequate. Paul uses the title “Christ/Messiah” 25 times. Believers “have been given fullness in Christ” (Col. 2:10). The Colossian heresy was a hollow and deceptive philosophy (Col. 2:8).

A recurring theme in Colossians is the complete adequacy of Christ as contrasted with the emptiness of mere human philosophy.

**O** [openly discuss] After we have our written response this is where we interact with our community or connect group and learn from one another. Share openly and honestly what our Lord has taught you from scripture. Your understanding may change as a result of your discussion with others. Let the Holy Spirit lead and be open to learn from one another. It is an amazing experience as the Spirit of the Lord shows up in our discussion and lives are touched and changed.

**M** [Move to action.] Apply God’s word to your life, this where transformation occurs as the Spirit of God moves in your life and you respond to His prompting. This is where the heart connects with the head and the hands. Without application we will gain knowledge and remember what the apostle Paul says, ‘Knowledge puffs up but love builds up.’

My personal application: { write it down and share it with someone who will hold you accountable }.

An application to ponder:

No part of human existence remains untouched by Jesus.