



Week 1: Meeting Paul
Week 2: Philemon
Week 3: Enter Colossae

Week 4: Being Colossians I
(1:1-8)

COLOSSIANS: “The highest doctrine concerning Jesus Christ in the New Testament.”

The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible pg
2137

→ “this Epistle ... to express it in one word, **distinguishes the true Christ from a fictitious one.**”
1

→ A customary greeting introduces us to one of Paul’s **most powerful and attractive letters**, written from prison to a young church in the province of Asia. ²

•LETTERS from PRISON: WEEK 5 – Being COLOSSIANS II•

Review: (CEB) Greeting **Colossians 1:1-8**

¹ From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, and Timothy our brother.

² To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

Thanksgiving and prayer for the Colossians

³ We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. ⁴ We’ve done this since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all God’s people.

⁵ You have this faith and love because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You previously heard about this hope through the true message, the good news, ⁶ which has come to you. This message has been bearing fruit and growing among you since the day you heard and truly understood God’s grace, in the same way that it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world. ⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, who is the fellow slave we love and Christ’s faithful minister for your sake. ⁸ He informed us of your love in the Spirit.

Review WK I: COLOSSIANS 1:1-4

1. Heresy or Heretics?
2. What does LOVE got to do with being A Colossian?

3. The Colossian Philosophy – this week

¹ Pao, D. W. (2012). *Colossians and Philemon* (p. 19). Zondervan.

² Lucas, R. C. (1980). *Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon* (pp. 18–20). InterVarsity Press.



1. What does LOVE got to do with being A Colossian? HESED

Colossians 1:4

⁴for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus [how you lean on Him with absolute confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness], and of the [unselfish] ^[a]love which you have for all the saints (God's people);

- a. [Colossians 1:4](#) The key to understanding this and other statements about love is to know that this love (the Greek word *agape*) is not so much a matter of emotion as it is of **doing things for the benefit of another person**, that is, having an unselfish concern for another and a willingness to seek the best for another.

o CHECK UP: Am I a COLOSSIAN?

Review: Last Week: **What agape have I operated in this last week?**

- Naomi & Ruth
 - David & Jonathon
-

WEEK II:

Handout: CEB & AMP of Colossians 1

Colossians 1:9-14 ^(CEB)

⁹Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we haven't stopped praying for you and asking for you to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. ¹⁰We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience; ¹²and by giving thanks with joy to the Father. He made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God's holy people. ¹³He rescued us from the control of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. ¹⁴He set us free through the Son and forgave our sins.

Hymn about Christ's work

¹⁵The Son is the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation,^[a]

¹⁶Because all things were created by him: both in the heavens and on the earth, the things that are visible and the things that are invisible. Whether they are thrones or powers, or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷He existed before all things, and all things are held together in him.

¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church who is the beginning, the one who is firstborn from among the dead^[b] so that he might occupy the first place in everything. ¹⁹Because all the fullness of God was pleased to live in him,²⁰ and he reconciled all things to himself



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through him— whether things on earth or in the heavens. He brought peace through the blood of his cross.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and you were enemies with him in your minds, which was shown by your evil actions.²² But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death, to present you before God as a people who are holy, faultless, and without blame. ²³ But you need to remain well established and rooted in faith and not shift away from the hope given in the good news that you heard. This message has been preached throughout all creation under heaven. And I, Paul, became a servant of this good news.

Paul’s service for the church

²⁴ Now I’m happy to be suffering for you. I’m completing what is missing from Christ’s sufferings with my own body. I’m doing this for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I became a servant of the church by God’s commission, which was given to me for you, in order to complete God’s word. ²⁶ I’m completing it with a secret plan^[a] that has been hidden for ages and generations but which has now been revealed to his holy people. ²⁷ God wanted to make the glorious riches of this secret plan^[d] known among the Gentiles, which is Christ living in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ This is what we preach as we warn and teach every person with all wisdom so that we might present each one mature in Christ. ²⁹ I work hard and struggle for this goal with his energy, which works in me powerfully.

•LETTERS from PRISON: WEEK 5 – Being COLOSSIANS II•

- I.. Young, but not Stupid.
- II..The Source of “Not Stupid”.
- III.The Price Paul Paid – Suffering.

•LETTERS from PRISON: WEEK 5 – Being COLOSSIANS II•

- I. **Young, but not Stupid** [II.the source of not stupid.III.The Price Paul Paid.



Perhaps the real mistake was ever to think of the ‘Colossian heresy’ in too pagan terms. The curious amalgam of error, superstition and heathen mythology which some commentators have suggested as the threat to the Colossian Christians would not deceive the youngest convert, far less a church grounded in Christian truth by the conscientious Epaphras. We must give these early believers some credit for being able to recognize religious twaddle when they heard it, especially when they had been so recently delivered from it.³

Your love for others (hesed) is so bearing fruit that.....



Colossians 1:9-14 (AMP)

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about it, **we have not stopped praying for you**, asking [specifically] that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom [with insight into His purposes], and in understanding [of spiritual things], ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord [displaying admirable character, moral courage, and personal integrity], to [fully] please *Him* in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing in the knowledge of God [with deeper faith, clearer insight and fervent love for His precepts]; ¹¹ [we pray that you may be] strengthened *and* invigorated with all power, according to His glorious might, to attain every kind of endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints (God’s people) in the Light.

The Incomparable Christ

¹³ For He has rescued us *and* has drawn us to Himself from the dominion of darkness, and has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption [because of His sacrifice, resulting in] the forgiveness of our sins [and the cancellation of sins’ penalty].

- How much does this “praying over” equate/fill/effect them to being: “Young but not Stupid?”

Why specific ASK for this?

1:9 complete knowledge of his will. Literally, this phrase reads, “filled with the knowledge of his will.”

Prayer to know God’s will is found in **Ps 143:10**

³ Lucas, R. C. (1980). *Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon* (p. 21). InterVarsity Press.



Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God;
may your good Spirit
lead me on level ground.

(cf. the many cases of “seeking/inquiring of the Lord” for direction in the OT, sometimes successfully [e.g., Judg 1:1; 1 Sam 22:10; 2 Sam 2:1; the failure to do so in **Zeph 1:4-6**]

“I will stretch out my hand against Judah
and against all who live in Jerusalem.
I will destroy every remnant of Baal worship in this place,
the very names of the idolatrous priests—
⁵ those who bow down on the roofs
to worship the starry host,
those who bow down and swear by the Lord
and who also swear by Molek,^[a]
**⁶ those who turn back from following the Lord
and neither seek the Lord nor inquire of him.”**

[IT IS A CHOICE☺]

and sometimes without success [e.g., 1 Sam 28:6]), but in most cases Hebrews and Christians were more concerned to *do* the will that was known (**Ps 40:8**; **Matt 6:10**; 7:21; Mark 3:35; ²Mace 4:3) than to *discover* the will that was unknown.⁴

Ps 40:8 I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.”

Matt 6:10. your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Matt 7:21 ²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Mark 3:35 ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

WHY pray for knowing His Will?

The churches of Christ can never be immune from the intellectual and spiritual pressures and fashions of their time.⁵ ↓

⁴ Hoehner, H. W., Comfort, P. W., & Davids, P. H. (2008). *Cornerstone biblical commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (Vol. 16, pp. 249–250). Tyndale House Publishers.

⁵ Lucas, R. C. (1980). *Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon* (p. 21). InterVarsity Press.



As an illustration, we may take the evidence, noticed by many commentators, of an incipient Gnosticism at Colossae (the fully developed system did not pose its greatest threat to the church **until** the second and third centuries). Dr Norman Perrin has it exactly right when he says, ‘**In its early stages Gnosticism was not so much a movement as a mood.**’⁶

?How long does it take to go from a Mood to a Movement?

A. Gnosticism [dem. mee. urge]

[M. A. Williams = ~~Gnosticism~~ rather, “biblical demiurgical traditions,” a scholarly construct]

#1. DEFINING

Gnosticism is a term that designates a variety of religious movements that stressed salvation through *gnōsis*, or “**knowledge**,” that is, of one’s origins. Most scholars would identify as an essential of Gnosticism the element of cosmological **dualism**—an opposition between the spiritual world and the evil, material world⁷

The transcendent God sent down a redeemer, who brought them salvation in the form of **secret gnōsis**. Gnostics hoped to escape from the prison of their bodies at death and to traverse the planetary spheres of hostile demons to be reunited with God. There was for them, of course, no reason to believe in the resurrection of the body.⁸

NOTE: Demiurgic

"Demiurgical" (or more commonly, **demiurgic**) is an adjective referring to a creator, artisan, or powerful, autonomous force that fashions the physical world, often from pre-existing chaotic material. Rooted in Platonic philosophy as a subordinate deity and in Gnosticism as a creator of the material realm, it implies a transformative, shaping power, sometimes used to describe, for instance, highly influential, autonomous business entities

#2. Each TEACHERS of Gnosticism had their “OWN BRAND” of thought.

Yamauchi, E. M. (2000). [Gnosticism](#). In *Dictionary of New Testament background: a compendium of contemporary biblical scholarship* (electronic ed., pp. 414–416). InterVarsity Press.

a.) Our most RECOGNIZABLE candidate

AI: Plato – Platonism is a philosophical system based on Plato's teachings, centered on the belief that abstract, unchanging "Forms" (e.g., Justice, Beauty, Numbers) are the only true reality, rather than the physical world. It emphasizes that reason is superior to sensory perception for acquiring knowledge, and that the immortal soul should strive to "recollect" these perfect Forms.

Core Beliefs and Aspects of Platonism

- **Metaphysical Reality (The Theory of Forms):** Platonism posits a two-tiered reality: the sensible, changing physical world (a mere copy or shadow) and the intelligible, eternal realm of Forms.

⁶ Lucas, R. C. (1980). *Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon* (p. 22). InterVarsity Press.

⁷ Yamauchi, E. M. (2000). [Gnosticism](#). In *Dictionary of New Testament background: a compendium of contemporary biblical scholarship* (electronic ed., p. 414). InterVarsity Press.

⁸ Yamauchi, E. M. (2000). [Gnosticism](#). In *Dictionary of New Testament background: a compendium of contemporary biblical scholarship* (electronic ed., p. 416). InterVarsity Press.



These abstract objects (properties, types, numbers) exist independently of space, time, and human consciousness

- **Role of Reason:** True knowledge (episteme) is not found through the senses, which provide only opinion (doxa), but through rational, intellectual contemplation of the Forms.
- **The Soul and Recollection:** The soul is considered immortal and, before inhabiting a body, resided in the realm of Forms, meaning learning is actually the process of "recollection" (anamnesis) of this lost knowledge.
- **Ethics and the Highest Good:** Platonist ethics aim at "likeness to God" (or the divine) and aligning the soul with the ultimate Form of the Good. Virtue is essential for achieving a harmonious, happy life, often emphasizing the "mean" or balance.
- **Structure of the Universe:** Platonism sees the universe as having a systematic, hierarchical unity, where the divine is an essential explanatory category.

Platonism has significantly influenced Western philosophy, theology, and mathematics, particularly through its distinction between the material and the ideal.

- There was NO bible (cannon of scriptures) to combat what they all were saying and doing.
- They each had their "own" spin on what was true "belief" all in their own space to do so unless...**THE CHURCH stood up.**

b.) SOURCES that speak of these candidates

2.1. Patristic Sources. Until recently scholars were entirely dependent upon the descriptions of the Gnostics found in the church fathers. In some cases the patristic sources preserved extracts of the gnostic writings. Our most important sources include

- Justin Martyr of Samaria (d. 165),
- Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 225),
- Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215), *
- Tertullian of Carthage (d. c. 225),
- Hippolytus of Rome (d. c. 236),
- Origen of Alexandria and Caesarea (d. 254) *
- and Epiphanius of Salamis in Cyprus (d. 403) (see Grant).

*Clement and Origen were in some ways sympathetic to the gnostic emphasis of a spiritual elite.

*Tertullian railed against Marcion and Valentinus. Though Epiphanius had some firsthand contact with Gnostics in Egypt, his *Panarion*, while comprehensive, is not very reliable. As one would expect, the earlier sources are the most reliable and the later sources less so. Needless to say, these accounts were highly polemical. **Nothing in the recently recovered gnostic sources from Nag Hammadi supports the patristic description of licentious Gnosticism.**

Yamauchi, E. M. (2000). [Gnosticism](#). In *Dictionary of New Testament background: a compendium of contemporary biblical scholarship* (electronic ed., pp. 414–416). InterVarsity Press.

c.) 2.2. Gnostic TEACHERS

The church fathers, including the historian Eusebius (fourth century), provide a list of prominent Gnostics and their teachings.



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- The church fathers were unanimous in regarding **Simon of Samaria as the arch-Gnostic, though our earliest source**, Acts 8, describes him only as someone who practiced magic. According to the patristic sources Simon claimed to be divine and taught that his companion, a former prostitute, was the reincarnated Helen of Troy. Those who accept the patristic view of Simon believe that Acts has not given us an accurate portrayal of Simon. Most scholars, however, believe that the church fathers were mistaken (see Filoramo, 148).

According to the church fathers, Simon was followed by a fellow Samaritan,

- **Menander**, who taught at Antioch in Syria toward the end of the first century. He claimed that those who believed in him would not die.

Also teaching in Antioch at the beginning of the second century was

- **Saturninus**, who held that the “incorporeal” Christ was the redeemer. That is, he held a docetic view of Christ that **denied the incarnation (cf. 1 Jn 4:3). He also taught that marriage and procreation were from Satan.**
- Teaching in Asia Minor in the early second century was **Cerinthus**, who held that Jesus was but a man upon whom Christ descended as a dove at his baptism. As Christ could not suffer, he withdrew from Jesus before the crucifixion.
- Another early gnostic teacher was **Basilides**, (ba.sil.a.deez) to whom we have attributed both a dualistic system by Irenaeus and a monistic system by Hippolytus. Basilides regarded the god of the Jews as an oppressive angel. He held that Christ did not suffer, but that Simon of Cyrene was crucified in his place, while the invisible Christ stood by laughing. Similar docetic concepts are now attested in two Nag Hammadi tractates, the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (CG VII,2) and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (CG VII,3).
- An important though atypical Gnostic was **Marcion of Pontus** (northern Turkey), who taught at Rome from 137 to 144. He contrasted the god of the OT with the god of the NT. Marcion drew up the first canon or closed list of NT books, including a truncated Gospel of Luke. Jesus simply appeared; his body was a “phantom.” Marcion’s followers spread to Egypt, Mesopotamia and Armenia. His docetic teachings were sharply rebuked by Tertullian. A. Harnack hailed Marcion as the church’s first great theologian and characterized Gnosticism as the acute Hellenization of Christianity (see Helleman).
- The most famous gnostic teacher was **Valentinus**, who came from Alexandria to Rome in 140. He taught that there was a series of divine eons or emanations. He divided humankind into three classes: *hylics*, or unbelievers immersed in nature and the flesh; *psychics*, or common Christians who lived by faith; and *pneumatics* or spiritual Gnostics. The later Valentinians divided into an Italian and an Oriental school over the question of whether Jesus had a psychic or pneumatic body. The many outstanding Valentinian teachers included Ptolemaeus, Theodotus and Marcus. The earliest known commentary



on a NT book is Heracleon's on the Gospel of John, passages of which are preserved by Origen in his commentary.⁹

1 John 4:3

³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus [acknowledging that He has come in the flesh, but would deny any of the Son's true nature] is not of God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and is now already in the world.

•LETTERS from PRISON: WEEK 5 – Being COLOSSIANS II•

II. The Source of “not Stupid” [I.young but not stupidIII.PRICE Paul Paid: suffering]

A. Knowing Christ the person, the history of, the Messiah, the LORD.

What are WAYS we get to KNOW Christ: THE person. THE history of. The Messiah. THE LORD.

1. Scripture
2. Personal Relationship
3. Studying
4. Holy Spirit
5. Community

Paul has a way for this to happen with the Colossians:

[I.young but not stupidI II.THE SOURCE OF NOT STUPID II.PRICE Paul Paid: suffering]

Colossians 1:13-23

Hymn about Christ's work/The Incomparable Christ

¹³ For He has rescued us *and* has drawn us to Himself from the dominion of darkness, and has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

- Literally...HE WHO (this usually means a Hymn is being introduced.)
- Paul is writing in short sentences. Not developing out his thoughts. These sentences are easier to digest and remember as we sing them☺

[intro handout. Two other hymns about Christ]

1 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great:

⁹ Yamauchi, E. M. (2000). [Gnosticism](#). In *Dictionary of New Testament background: a compendium of contemporary biblical scholarship* (electronic ed., pp. 414-416). InterVarsity Press.



He WHO appeared in the flesh,
was vindicated by the Spirit,¹⁶ was seen by angels, was preached among the nations,
was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.

CEB¹⁶ Without question, the mystery of godliness is great: he WHO was revealed as a human, declared righteous by the Spirit, seen by angels, preached throughout the nations, believed in around the world, and taken up in glory.

Philippians 2:6-11

Who, being in very nature^{6a} God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
⁷ rather, **he WHO** made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^{6b} of a servant, being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he WHO humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!
⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

CEB Though he WHO was in the form of God,
he WHO did not consider being equal with God something to exploit.
⁷ But he WHO emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and by becoming like human beings.
When he WHO found himself in the form of a human, ⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
⁹ Therefore, God highly honored him and gave him a name above all names,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus everyone
in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow
¹¹ and every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Chiastic structure (or chiasmus) **kye-ASS-tik** is a literary device that arranges ideas in a symmetrical, A-B-B'-A' pattern, where the second half mirrors and reverses the first to highlight a central, pivotal point.

Chiastic story structure derives its name from the Greek letter “Chi,” resembling the English “X.” This structure involves arranging key elements of a story or phrases in a symmetrical pattern around a central pivot point, creating a mirror-like effect.

Colossians 1:13-23 (AMP)

B. The Incomparable Christ/Praise to the Father and Son for Salvation (1:13-23)



¹³ For He has **rescued** us *and* has drawn us to Himself from the dominion of darkness, and has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption [because of His sacrifice, resulting in] the forgiveness of our sins [and the cancellation of sins' penalty]. ¹⁵ He is the exact living image [the essential manifestation] of the unseen God [the visible representation of the invisible], the firstborn [the preeminent one, the sovereign, and the originator] of all creation. ¹⁶ For [by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, [things] visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things were created *and* exist through Him [that is, by His activity] and for Him. ¹⁷ And He Himself existed *and* is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. [His is the controlling, cohesive force of the universe.]^(a) ¹⁸ He is also the head [the life-source and leader] of the body, the [church]; and He is the beginning, [the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will occupy the first place [He will stand supreme and be preeminent] in everything.]^(a) ¹⁹ For it pleased the *Father* for all the fullness [of deity—the sum total of His essence, all His perfection, powers, and attributes] to dwell [permanently] in Him (the Son), ²⁰ and through [the intervention of] the Son to reconcile all things to Himself, making peace [with believers] through the blood of His cross; through Him, [I say,] whether things on earth or things in heaven.

²¹ And although you were at one time estranged *and* alienated and hostile-minded [toward Him], *participating* in evil things, ²² yet Christ has now reconciled you [to God] in His [physical] body through death, in order to present you before the Father holy and blameless and beyond reproach— ²³ [and He will do this] if you continue in the faith, well-grounded and steadfast, and not shifting away from the [confident] hope [that is a result] of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed [in all creation under heaven, and of which [gospel] I, Paul, was made a minister.

Colossians 1:13-23 (AMP)

¹³ For He has **rescued** us *and* has drawn us to Himself from the dominion of darkness, and has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

- **rescued.** This is a term commonly used in NT prayers for deliverance (e.g., “rescue us from the evil one” in the Lord’s Prayer, Matt 6:13), which was perhaps borrowed from the LXX where it commonly means for deliverance from all types of danger, including deliverance from Egypt, enemies, etc. Here it is used to praise God for salvation.
- **kingdom of darkness.** More literally “the authority of darkness” or “the power of darkness” (NRSV), here translated “kingdom” to underscore the parallel with the Kingdom of “his dear Son,” a parallel that Paul surely intended in a sense, although he never used the term “kingdom” for anything other than God’s rule. He may not have wanted to dignify the powers of darkness with the term “kingdom,” either because they



are not legitimate enough or because they are not organized enough (see commentary below).

THE WISE person would:

14 in whom we have redemption [because of His sacrifice, resulting in] the forgiveness of our sins [and the cancellation of sins' penalty].

1:14 purchased our freedom. This is the reading in several good and early manuscripts: ⱼ A B C D F G 044 075 33 1739. Some later scribes (614 630; so TR) added “with his blood” to make this verse parallel to Eph 1:7. It is theologically correct but not what Paul wrote here (see 1:20, where Paul does mention “Christ’s blood on the cross”).

THE WISE person would:

15 He is the exact living image [the essential manifestation] of the unseen God [the visible representation of the invisible], the firstborn [the preeminent one, the sovereign, and the originator] of all creation.

1:15 the visible image. An image in Hellenistic Greek could mean

- (1) a literal image such as a statue,
- (2) the universe as the reflection or image of God (so Plato),
- (3) human beings and thus Adam (encompassing both male and female, Gen 1:27) as the image of God, or
- (4) Wisdom as the image of God, pointing to the way God made himself visible (“For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness,” Wis 7:26, NRSV). While Paul elsewhere uses an Adam Christology (Rom 5:12–21), here he seems to be using a Wisdom Christology. The focus is probably more on Jesus as the embodiment of God’s Wisdom than on Jesus as essentially, ontologically being “Wisdom.” In Jesus, the Wisdom of God, that revelatory reflection of God, was totally present.

He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation. More literally expressed this would be, “firstborn of all creation.”

- Firstborn can mean “first created within the creation” (as the firstborn child) or
- “preeminent over the creation” (referring to the position of the firstborn son as future leader of the family or clan).

Dunn (1996:90) may well be correct that Paul is using the image of Wisdom, which allows a certain ambiguity here given the dual role of Wisdom: Wisdom as created (Prov 8:22; Sir 1:4; 24:9) versus Wisdom as Creator (Ps 104:24; Prov 3:19; Wis 8:5; Philo *Worse* 54). **Paul may be using this image to show that the Son is the bridge between the unseen Father and visible creation, although the next verse will make clear that, like Wisdom, the Son is also the agent of creation.** Thus, in taking the thought of the two verses together, the NLT is correct in avoiding the English connotations of the word “firstborn” (i.e., temporal priority among created things) and choosing to put the emphasis on Christ’s supremacy where Paul will put his. This phrase with its emphasis on “firstborn”/“first” may be the beginning of a meditation on Gen 1:1 (which begins with the Hebrew term “in the beginning” that is constructed from the term “first”) combined with Prov 8:22 (Davies 1955:151–152 citing the work of C. F. Burney).



Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God (^[a]*Elohim*) ^[b]created [by forming from nothing] the heavens and the earth. (AMP) **Paul wants us to recognize this verse...**

THE WISE person would:

¹⁶ For ^[a]by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, ^[things] visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things were created *and* exist through Him ^[that is, by His activity] and for Him.

1:16 through him God created. The NLT expands the passive “were created in him” or “were created by him” by adding the ultimate agent, God. While this is theology with which Paul would certainly agree, and while it is implied in the passive, Paul appears to use the passive deliberately in order to avoid naming God and keep the focus on Jesus as creator.

THE WISE person would:

¹⁷ And He Himself existed *and* is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ^[His is the controlling, cohesive force of the universe.]^[a]

1:17 *He existed before anything else.* The Greek *pro pantōn* [4253/3956A, 4574/4246] can mean existing temporally before all things, which is the interpretation of the NLT, or it can mean ranking first before all things. Thus, it is ambiguous. Paul probably intended this ambiguity, which is virtually impossible to convey in English, because for Paul temporal precedence would also mean precedence in rank.

holds all creation together. Possibly an allusion to divine Wisdom, as in Wis 1:6–7, “that which holds all things together,” and Sir 43:26, “by [God’s] Word (*logos* [3056, 3364], which is equivalent to Wisdom in Sirach) all things hold together.” Wisdom and Sirach express the idea, but I am not sure that there is a direct allusion to them, for the idea of personified divine Wisdom is too widespread. I DISAGREE

THE WISE person would:

¹⁸ He is also the head ^[the life-source and leader] of the body, the ^[c]church; and He is the beginning, ^[d]the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will occupy the first place ^[He will stand supreme and be preeminent] in everything.^[b]

1:18 *head.* “Head” can have the sense of “leader” in the Hebrew OT and occasionally in Greek (although the LXX translates the “head = leader” references with a term for “ruler,” not with the Greek term for “head”) but tends to emphasize rank more than control. (The ancients did not normally think of the brain as controlling the body—Aristotle thought it cooled the blood.) In **Greek it more often has the sense of “source” or “origin,” which fits well with the creation references in this passage** (Moule 1968:68).



body. In 1 Corinthians it was the church, especially the local church, which was thought of as a body in its entirety. Here the idea of “head” as contrasted with “body” is introduced and the “body” transcends the local gathering. In Greek thought, the physical creation was often thought of as a body, sometimes with Zeus as the head, sometimes with Logos (divine reason) as the head, and often with reason as the soul within the body. Thus “body” would first have struck the readers as a creation reference before Paul suddenly qualified it by “the church” (in the Greek, “body” is mentioned before “church”), which thus becomes the locus of new creation (Dunn 1996:94–96).

beginning. The Greek word for “beginning” is also ambiguous, for **it can mean “ruler”** (the plural form is so translated in 1:16) **or “source”** as well as **temporal “beginning.”** While temporality could be the more prominent focus of the passage, Paul may have chosen a deliberately ambiguous word so as not to distinguish among these meanings.

supreme. As in 1:15, this is the term traditionally translated “firstborn,” that is, “firstborn from the dead.”

first in everything. The NLT preserves the ambiguity of the Greek, which can mean “first in every respect” or “first among all things.” The latter fits well with Christ’s supremacy over the various principalities and powers, but the former fits both his eschatological and his creational supremacy.

THE WISE person would:

19 For it pleased the *Father* for **all** the fullness [of deity—the sum total of His essence, all His perfection, powers, and attributes] to dwell [permanently] in Him (the Son),

20 and through [the intervention of] the Son to reconcile all things to Himself, making peace [with believers] through the blood of His cross; through Him, [I say,] whether things on earth or things in heaven.

1:19 fullness. While sometimes viewed as Gnostic or proto-Gnostic, the idea of God or Wisdom filling the universe was as common in Jewish thought (see Ps 139:7–8; Jer 23:24; Wis 1:6–7; see also Philo) as in Greco-Roman thought (e.g., Seneca, *De beneficiis* 4.8.2). Furthermore, in both the OT and intertestamental literature it was also common to speak of God living in individuals (e.g., “In [the Elect One] dwells the spirit of wisdom,” *1 Enoch* 49:3; “the Lord dwells in [the good person],” *Testament of Benjamin* 6:4). So what we have here is not a later Gnostic development but an insistence that it was not merely a piece of Wisdom/the Spirit/God that lived in Jesus but the totality, i.e., “all the fullness.” Grammatically “all the fullness” is the subject of both parts of the couplet found in verses 19 and 20.

THE WISE person would:

21 And although you were at one time estranged *and* alienated and hostile-minded [toward Him], *participating* in evil things,

1:21 far away from God. The Greek term, *apēllotriōmenous* [526, 558] (“alienation” or “estrangement”), occurs in the NT only here and in Eph 2:12; 4:18. In Ephesians the focus is on gentile alienation from God and/or from Israel. Here it is the Colossians’ alienation from God in their (largely gentile) past.

THE WISE person would:

22 yet Christ has now reconciled you [to God] in His \square physical body through death, in order to present you before the Father holy and blameless and beyond reproach—



1:22 he has brought you into his own presence. The Greek reads “to present you before him” (similar to Eph 1:4) and implies that this is something that will happen in the future, not something that has already happened. This presentation is, in typical Pauline fashion, **Jesus presenting the Christians before the Father, not their presentation before Jesus himself.**
THE WISE person would:

²³ [and He will do this] **if** you continue in the faith, well-grounded and steadfast, and not shifting away from the [confident] hope [that is a result] of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed ⁱⁿ in all creation under heaven, and of which [gospel] I, Paul, was made a minister.

1:23 you must. The Greek phrase is *ei ge* [1487/1065, 1623/1145], often translated “if indeed” (NKJV), “provided that” (NRSV, NAB), or simply “if” (NIV). While **the phrase does express conditionality**, in its NT appearances (2 Cor 5:3; Gal 3:4; Eph 3:2; 4:21), the expression indicates conditions that are expected to be fulfilled, which is why the NLT translates it “you must,” although the imperative does not exactly get at the sense of “if you X (and indeed you will X).” It is difficult to pick up this nuance of conditionality **along with the confidence** that is expressed here (Dunn 1996:110). [SUPERNATURAL LAW?]

believe this truth. “Remain in this commitment” expresses the thought better, for our term “believe” is often intellectual while **Paul’s concern was with a commitment to Jesus as Lord** (cf. Rom 10:9–10).

assurance. The Greek word here, *elpis* [1680, 1828] (traditionally translated “hope”), in Paul’s writings usually points to a concrete eschatological expectation. “Assurance” can indicate this sense of future hope in God’s promises, but it can also indicate a particular evangelical doctrine of the conviction that one has been “saved” (note the past tense) that is not entirely congruent with Paul’s meaning here.

THE WISE person would:

There is not only HESED in the Church of Colosea but also WISDOM

Question: Wisdom as in a name of God/Jesus or Wisdom accrued in Jesus?

•LETTERS from PRISON: WEEK 5 – Being COLOSSIANS II•

III. The PRICE PAUL PAID (suffering) [I.young but not stupidIII.The Source of “not Stupid]

v.s. 23

²¹ And although you were at one time estranged *and* alienated and hostile-minded [toward Him], *participating* in evil things, ²² yet Christ has now reconciled you [to God] in His ^[a]physical body through death, in order to present you before the Father holy and blameless and beyond reproach— ²³ [and He will do this] if you continue in the faith, well-grounded and steadfast, and not shifting away from the [confident] hope [that is a result] of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed ⁱⁿ in all creation under heaven, **and of which [gospel] I, Paul, was made a minister**



Colossians 1:24-29 (AMP)

Paul's service for the church

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf.

- Have I suffered for other Believers in Jesus?
- How does one REJOICE in that?

And with my own body I [Ⓐ]supplement whatever is lacking [on our part] of Christ's afflictions, on behalf of His body, which is the church.

- [Colossians 1:24](#) I.e. since the church is Christ's body, figuratively speaking, whatever the church suffers can be considered additional sufferings by Christ Himself, and all such suffering was ordained and destined by God; what is left to suffer in God's plan is what is "lacking of Christ's afflictions." Paul, as a member of the church, was destined to suffer through persecution etc., thereby taking his share of the church body's divinely-ordained suffering.

²⁵ In *this church* I was made a minister according to the stewardship which God entrusted to me for your sake, so that I might **make the word of God fully known** [among you]—

- What then is a **God-given ministry**? What is **authentic service**, which we may recognize as such? It was important for the Colossians, as it is for us, to have some standards by which to measure the claims people make for themselves, and by which true spiritual leadership may be known in the churches. **The permanent value of this great passage is that it provides the church in every generation with just such a standard.**

Lucas, R. C. (1980). [Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon](#) (pp. 66–80). InterVarsity Press.

- **Ministry means service....**For it is precisely by teaching the Word of God that the church of God is to be served.

“It is by the truth of the gospel that the church is formed, sustained and equipped. Without a satisfactory ministry of the Word, the church must either wither and die, or assume more or less grotesque forms.”

Lucas, R. C. (1980). [Fullness & freedom: the message of Colossians & Philemon](#) (pp. 66–80). InterVarsity Press.

The Ministry of the Church is to make the word of God fully known.

The Ministry of the Church is to make the Word of God fully known.

John 1:1 (AMP)

In the beginning [before all time] was the Word ([Ⓐ]Christ), and the Word was with God, and [Ⓑ]the Word was God Himself.² He was [continually existing] in the beginning [co-eternally] with God. ³ All things were made *and* came into existence through Him; and



without Him not even one thing was made that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life [and the power to bestow life], and the life was the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it *or* overpower it *or* appropriate it *or* absorb it [and is unreceptive to it].

²⁶ *that is*, the mystery which was hidden [from angels and mankind] for ages and generations, but has now been revealed to His saints (God's people).

- Revealed because of Jesus, the Messiah timeline has begun.
- **1 Peter 1:10-12**

¹⁰ Regarding this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace [of God] that *was intended for you*, searched carefully and inquired [about this future way of salvation], ¹¹ seeking to find out what person or what time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories [destined] to follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that their services [their prophecies regarding grace] were not [meant] for themselves *and* their time, but for you, in these things [the death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ] which have now been told to you by those who preached the gospel to you by the [power of the] Holy Spirit [who was] sent from heaven. Into these things even the angels long to look.

²⁷ God [in His eternal plan] chose to make known to them how great for the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is **Christ in and among you**, the hope *and* guarantee of [realizing the] glory.

- #1 reason to learn, practice, **care** how we love and treat one another. Carrying offense. Gossip.

James 3:5-11

⁵ Even so (a) the tongue is a little member and (b) boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! ⁶ And (c) the tongue *is* a fire, a world of (d) iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it (e) defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of (f) nature; and it is set on fire by (g) hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, (h) full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made (i) in the (j) similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening?



WNC: Winter Series
LETTERS from PRISON: WEEK 5 – Being **COLOSSIANS II**
1:9-29
Philemon*Colossians*Ephesians*Philippians

28 We **proclaim Him, warning and instructing** everyone in all wisdom [that is, with comprehensive insight into the word and purposes of God], so that we may present every person complete in Christ [mature, fully trained, and perfect in Him—the Anointed].

CEB - This is what we preach as we warn and teach every person with all wisdom so that we might present each one mature in Christ.

NIV - He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.

29 For this I labor [often to the point of exhaustion], striving with His power *and* energy, which so greatly works within me.

- **What price do I pay?**

Footnotes

- [Colossians 1:24](#) I.e. since the church is Christ's body, figuratively speaking, whatever the church suffers can be considered additional sufferings by Christ Himself, and all such suffering was ordained and destined by God; what is left to suffer in God's plan is what is "lacking of Christ's afflictions." Paul, as a member of the church, was destined to suffer through persecution etc., thereby taking his share of the church body's divinely-ordained suffering.
- [Colossians 1:26](#) I.e. that believing Gentiles would be united with believing Jews into one body of believers.