



Christ is All: The Message of Colossians

Importance of Whole Book Context--Views/Lenses

The Colossian Context:

Likely scenario--In the summer of 58AD, Paul is under trial. He appeals to Caesar for a trial in Rome. The Philippian church sends aid to Paul by Epaphras (or Epaphroditus Phil 4). Likely, Epaphras first stopped off in his hometown Colosse on his way to Rome where he heard of a new false teaching threatening the church. He comes to Paul in Rome not only with the aid to Paul, but he comes with praise for the Colossian church (1:8-9) and concern of the false teaching rubbing up against the Colossian church.

Authorship: Paul

Theme: **“Jesus Christ is the Preeminent Lord and All-Sufficient Savior”**

Outline:

I. BELIEVING in Christ’s Pre-eminence (Chap 1)

- His Pre-eminence in our Experience (1:3-14) – READ 1:9-12
- His Pre-eminence in Creation (1:15-17) – READ 1:16-17
- His Pre-eminence in the Church (1:18-23) or Redemption. – READ 1:18-20
- His Pre-eminence in Paul’s Ministry (1:24-29) – Paul gets autobiographical here; giving us a personal dimension to how the preeminence of Christ in his experience, in creation, and in redemption of the Church and the world, is lived out in his ministry.

II. DEFENDING Christ’s Pre-eminence (Chap 2)

- His Pre-eminence vs. Empty Philosophy (2:1-10) – READ 2:6-8
- His Pre-eminence vs. Judaistic Ceremonialism (2:11-17) – READ 2:16-17
- His Pre-eminence vs. Man-Made Rules (2:18-23) – READ 2:18, 20-23
 - Man-made rules = asceticism – denigrating, denying, even harming the flesh
 - A hidden, deeper knowledge (an early form of Gnosticism)
 - A spiritual “fullness” they hadn’t previously known
 - special insight into the powers of evil
 - special protection through a communion with or worship of angels

III. LIVING OUT Christ’s Pre-eminence (Chap 3-4)

- His Pre-eminence in Your New Identity (3:1-10) – READ 3:1-3
- His Pre-eminence in the Church’s Unity (3:11-17) – READ 3:11-12
- His Pre-eminence in Your Home and Work (3:18-4:1)
- His Pre-eminence in Proclamation (4:2-6) – READ 4:5-6
- His Pre-eminence in Service (4:7-18) – directions for and acknowledgements of servants.



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Overview

Discussion 1: The Primary text. --Normally we'll read the primary text here. Since this is an overview of the entire letter it may not be something you can do. Here's a helpful summary:

As one of the most thoroughly Christ-centered books in the Bible, Colossians finds its essential unity in the divine and exalted person of the preeminent Christ. The letter presents variations on this central theme, with Christ celebrated as the object of the believer's faith, the image of the invisible God, the creator of all dominions, the head of the church, the firstborn from the dead, the unifier and reconciler of all things, the Savior through his sufferings on the cross, the treasury of all wisdom and knowledge, the triumphant victor over sin and Satan, the exalted Lord of life and glory, and the true pattern for the life of Christian faith. The letter is also unified by Paul's pastoral concern to dissuade the Colossians from getting caught up in useless religious regulations and to awaken exaltation of Christ and exultation in him. [Introduction to Colossians--ESV Study Bible]

[Are you excited to get started in a new book to marinate in for a while? --Share your enthusiasm!].

– *Spend a little time reviewing:*

- *the importance of a big picture view of Scripture* [context--macro and micro... recall the "lenses" description. Some books, especially the letters, were meant to be read in one sitting. Pulling favorite verses from these letters without regard for the greater context can be misleading.]
- *Paul's authorship* [Ryan covered the reliability of the account. What about the significance of the occasion? (*from prison in Rome*) When we see Paul praying for "open doors" (4:3)--isn't it fascinating he's more interested in open doors to mission than in open doors to his cell!]
- *The central theme of the book (read Col 1:15-20)*

"Jesus Christ is the Preeminent Lord and All-Sufficient Savior"

One way to break up this letter in terms of worship, community, and mission follows.

Discussion 2: Worship (upward) --Ch 1 & 2

- ***Why is believing & defending Christ's preeminence important?*** [We'll have lots of time in the coming weeks to dive further into this. Focus on "Jesus + nothing" and the dangers of syncretism (*the blending of this and that*).]
- ***Here are some Ryan mentioned today. Do we still see this today?*** [Are you kidding?--It's all around us.]
 - Jesus + government
 - Jesus + new, secret information
 - Jesus + philosophy
 - Jesus + Jewish legalism
 - Jesus + man-made rules
- ***What responsibilities do we have for "one another" with respect to this?*** [Accountability & encouragement--As you become aware of people practicing/spreading teachings that add to *the Solas*--you have a responsibility to correct and rebuke if necessary. For instance, when we have people spreading teachings such as the importance of Christians observing Jewish festivals, or people confusing the gospel with social/political action or moralism ... many of these should be handled at a smaller community level. *The elders are available for consultation or to step in for difficult or widespread cases.*]

Discussion 3: Community (inward) Ch 3 - 4:2

- ***Discuss the scope of the implications of Christ's preeminence on how we live our lives.*** [step through the notes--our identity, the Church's health/unity, home, work, mission, ... Lord willing, we'll have a lot of time to dive into these later. As time permits discuss how we, in community, can support one another in these]

Discussion 4: Mission (outward) Ch 4:3-6

- ***Note the community context of this call to prayer (for opportunity and clarity in proclamation of the gospel)*** [This is part of how you are to live in community... praying for one another in mission]
- ***How else are we to support one another with respect to mission?*** [Wisdom is also to be prayed for and received through a multitude of counselors, and we need to hold one another accountable for our use of our time, gracious speech, etc.]



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