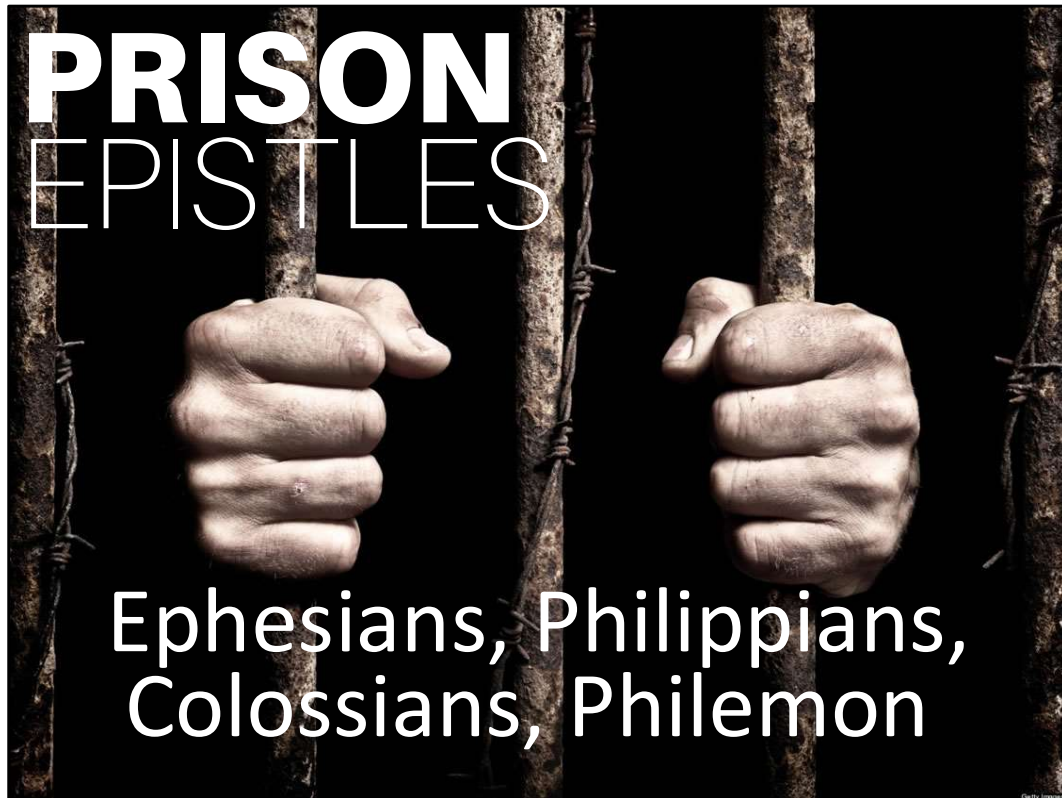
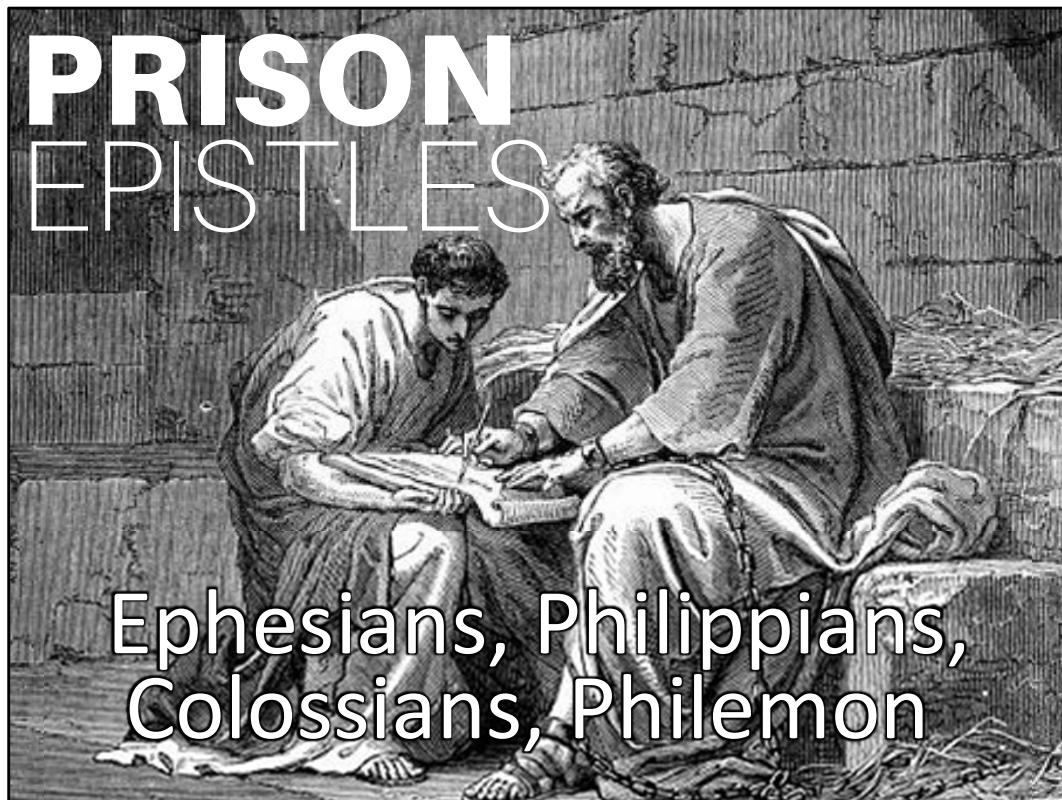


Colossae had been “a great city of Phrygia” it was in the twilight of its influence and importance when Paul wrote to Philemon and Apphia’s house-church there. But this 2,000 year-old letter provides answers to today’s most difficult questions, and has become perhaps the most contemporary book in the New Testament.

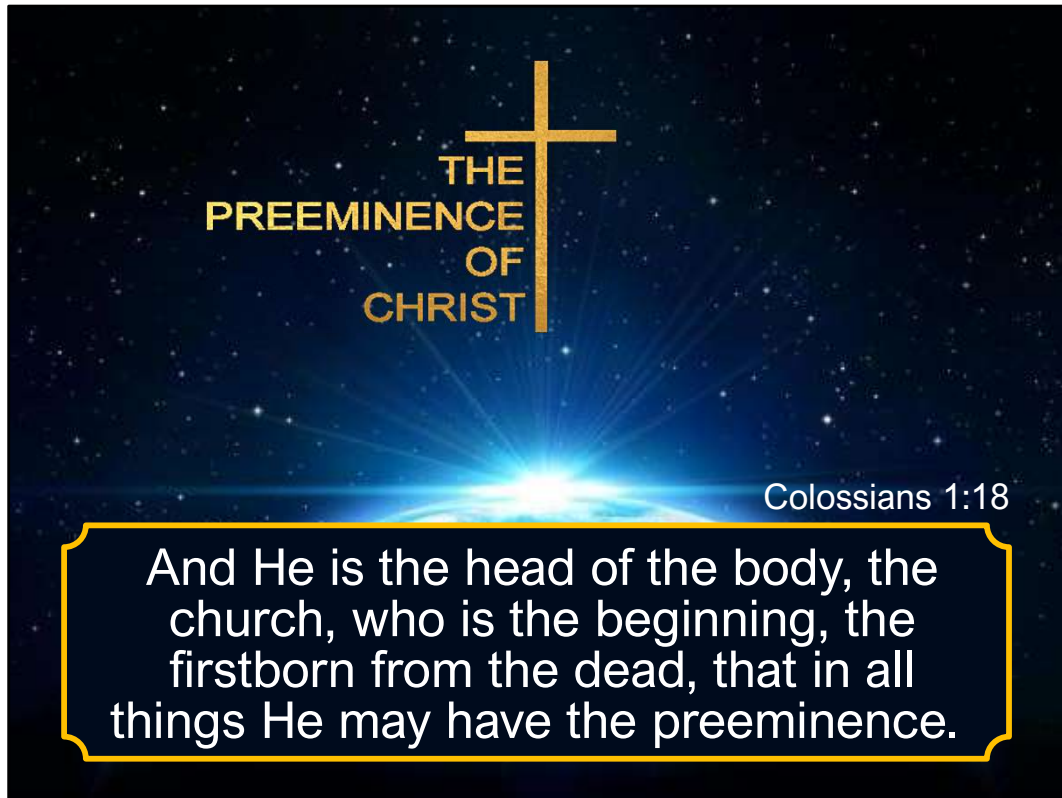


The apostle Paul wrote four of the 27 New Testament letters during his time under house arrest in Rome between approximately 60—62 AD. Each letter — Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon — is addressed to a specific church or individual. There are many parallels between Ephesians and Colossians, but the emphasis in Ephesians is on the church, the body of Christ, but the emphasis in Colossians is on Christ, the Head of the body.



Colossian evangelist Epaphras had visited Paul in Rome with concerning news about the Colossian ekklesia. In the five years of its existence, false teaching and heresy had taken root, which devalued Jesus Christ as the ultimate authority in matters of faith. Paul wrote to the Colossians to refute this heresy and encourage believers to continue in their faith grounded in Christ alone.

In this letter, Paul uses the vocabulary of the false teachers, but corrects their definitions to their true Christian meanings. As we study Colossians, we will find words such as fullness, perfect, and complete, all of which were used by the gnostic heretics. He also wrote about wisdom, which was a key term in the gnostic vocabulary; and he had a great deal to say about angels and spirit powers too. Tychicus and Onesimus carried Paul's letters to Ephesus, Colossae, and Philemon to their destinations, while Epaphroditus delivered the letter to Philippi.



The theme of Colossians is that Jesus Christ is preeminent. The gospel message heralds the supremacy, headship, and the sole sufficiency of Christ to the church, which is His body. This little book shows Paul's "full-length portrait of Christ." There is no need to worry about angelic mediators or spiritual emanations. God has sent His Son to die for us!

[CLICK] The Key verse is Colossians 1:18 "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."

Outline

Doctrine: Christ's Preeminence Declared (Colossians 1)

- A. In the gospel message—1:1-12
- B. In redemption—1:13-14
- C. In creation—1:15-17
- D. In the church—1:18-23
- E. In Paul's ministry—1:24-29

Danger: Christ's Preeminence Defended (Colossians 2)

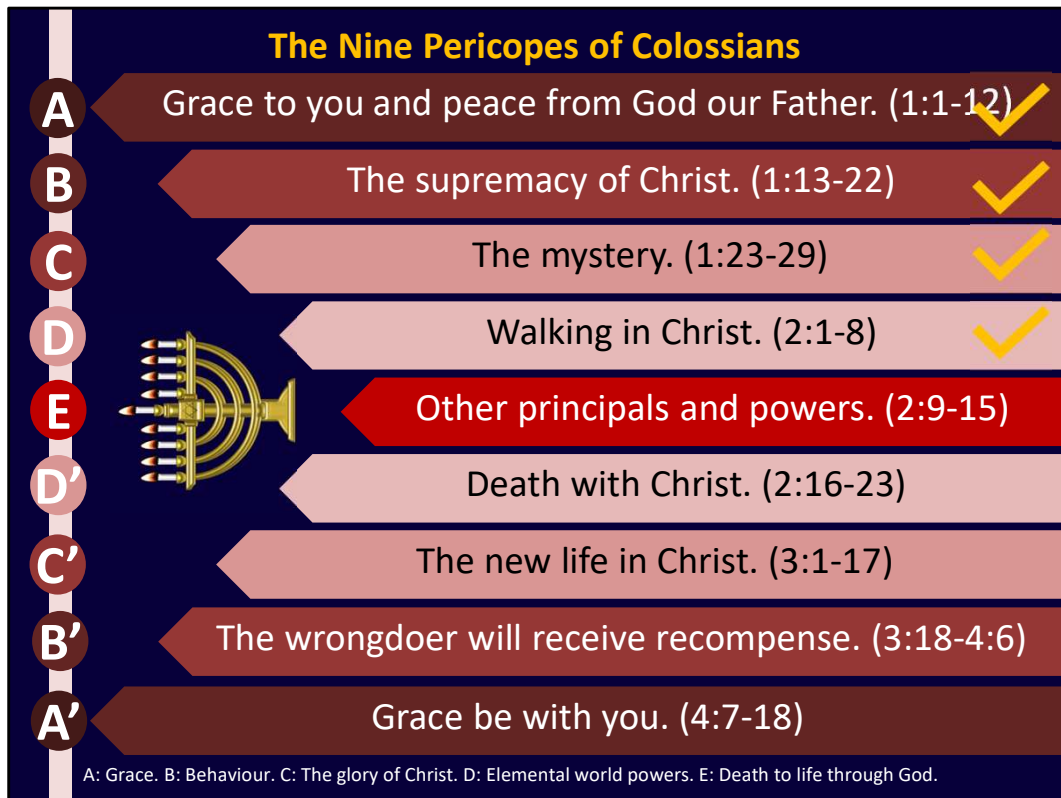
- A. Beware of empty philosophies—(2:1-10)
- B. Beware of religious legalism (2:11-17)
- C. Beware of man-made disciplines (1:18-23)

Duty: Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated (Colossians 3-4)

- A. In person purity—3:1-11
- B. In Christian fellowship—13:12-17
- C. In the home—3:18-21
- D. In daily work—3:22-4:1
- E. In Christian witness—4:2-6
- F. In Christian service—4:7-18

This relatively brief letter has a three-fold message:

- In the first doctrinal portion, Paul declares Christ's preeminence. **[CLICK]** Paul did not begin by attacking the false teachers and their doctrines. Chapter 1 exalts Jesus Christ and showing His preeminence in five areas: the gospel message, redemption, creation, the church, and Paul's own ministry.
- **[CLICK]** He then addresses the danger that has arisen in Colossae and defends Christ's preeminence. **[CLICK]** Paul attacks the heretics on their own ground, exposing the false origin of their teachings and showing how their teachings contradict everything Paul taught about Jesus Christ. The believer who masters this chapter is not likely to be led astray by some alluring and enticing "new-and-improved brand of Christianity."
- **[CLICK]** Finally, Chapters 3 and 4 applies the preeminence of Christ to the daily affairs of life. **[CLICK]** The greatest antidote to false teaching is a godly life, but what we believe determines how we behave. Wrong doctrine **always** leads to wrong living, so right doctrine should lead to right living.



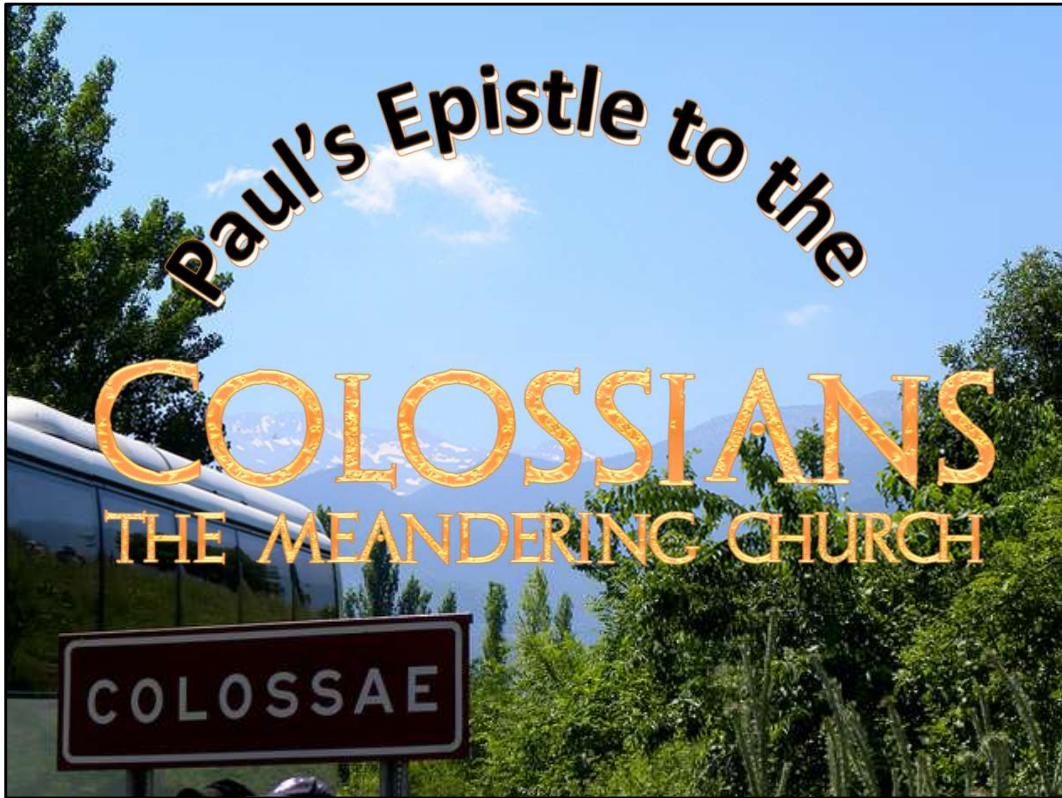
The letter consists of nine pericopes, or thought bubbles, which form a balanced chiasm, or menorah literary structure.

The Nine Pericopes of Colossians

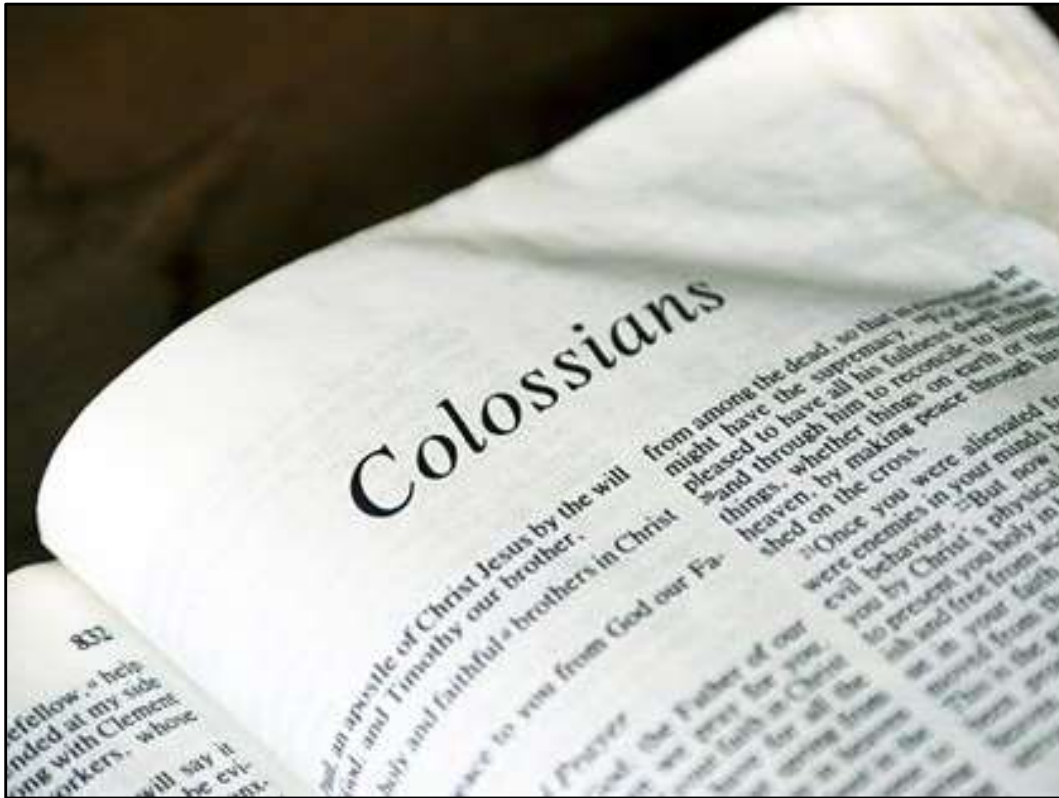
Former half	Relation	Latter half
Salutation (1:1-12) grace to you and peace from God our Father. (1:2)	Grace	Final greetings (4:7-18) Grace be with you. (4:18)
The supremacy of Christ (1:13-22) And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind because of evil deeds (1:21)	Human behaviour	Exhortations (3:18-4:6) For the wrongdoer will receive recompense for the wrong he committed, and there is no partiality. (3:25)
The mystery (1:23-29) to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. (1:27)	The glory of Christ is open to Gentiles	The new life in Christ (3:1-17) When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. (3:4)
Walking in Christ (2:1-8) See to it that no one captivate you with an empty, seductive philosophy according to human tradition, according to the elemental powers of the world and not according to Christ. (2:8)	The elemental powers of the world	Death with Christ (2:16-23) If you died with Christ to the elemental powers of the world, why do you submit to regulations as if you were still living in the world? (2:20)
Christ is Preeminent over all Principalities and Powers (2:9-15) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (2:9-10)		

This is another way to show the chiasmic structure. It adds a little bit more information by selecting the most relevant verse(s) from the pericope to summarise its main thought. As you can see, both salutation and final greetings focus on grace, a concept near and dear to Paul who knew that he could only be saved by God's grace.

Because Colossians is written to remind the local believers what they were initially taught about Christ's preeminence, and because the Colossian heresy apparently attacks that very concept, the centrepiece of the book confirms that Christ is preeminent over all principalities and powers.

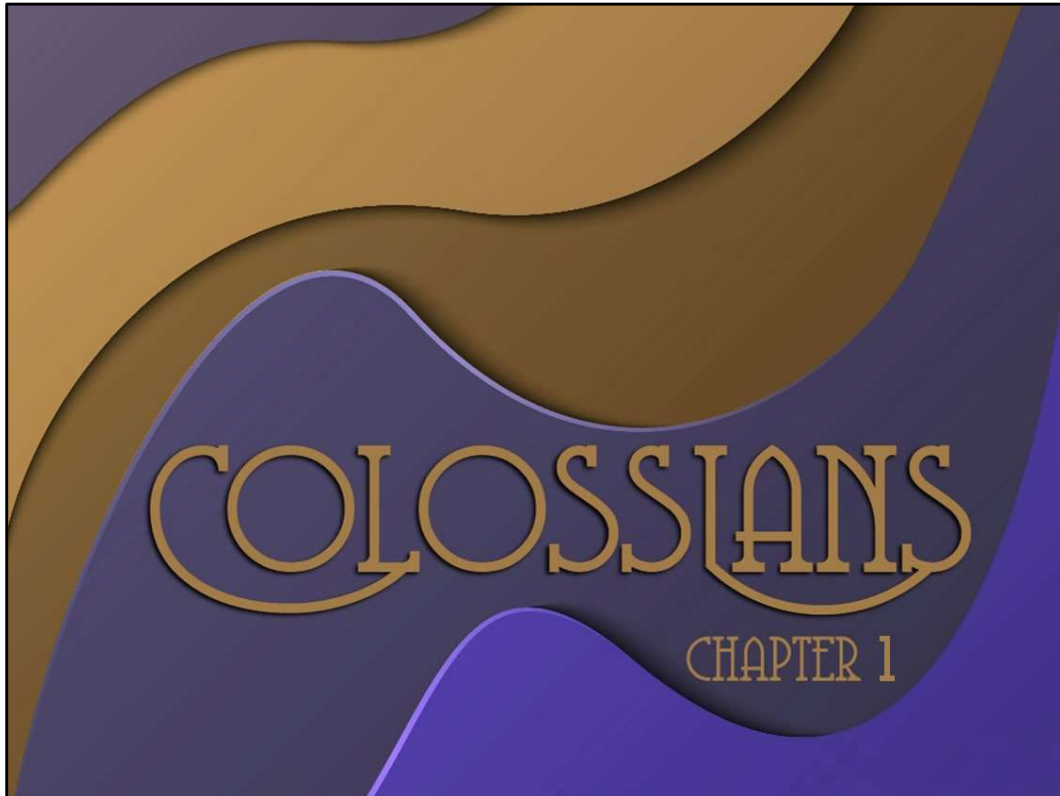


Paul addresses the meandering Colossian ekklesia

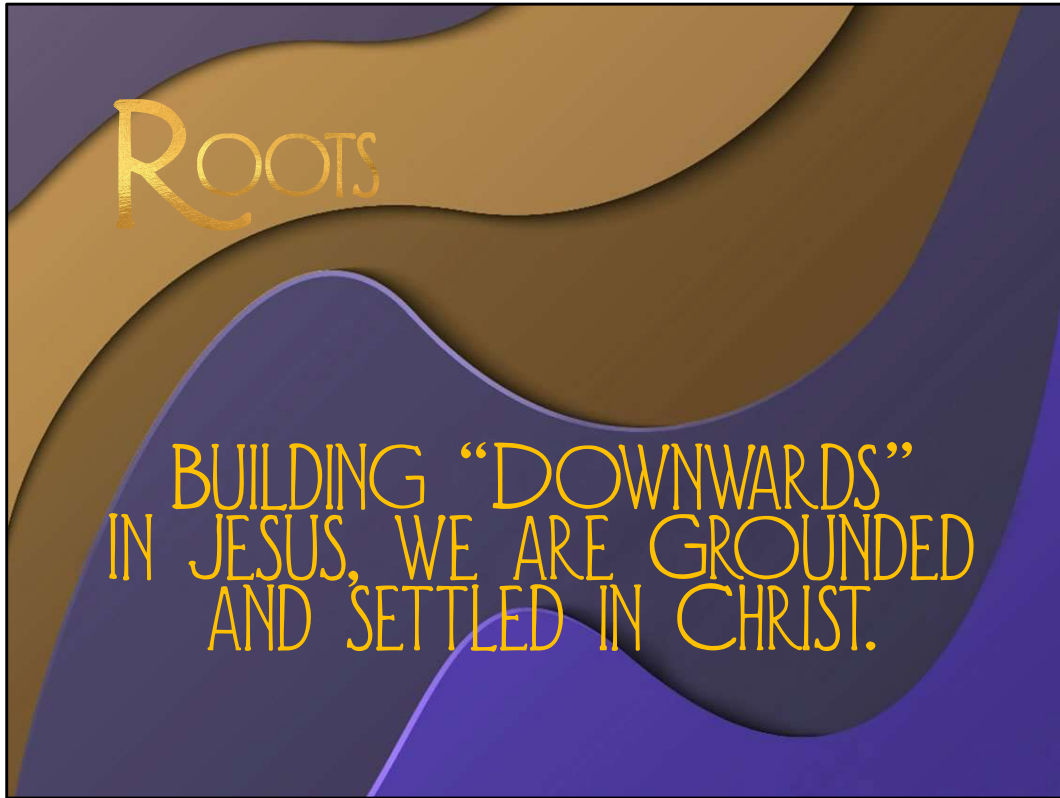


His message is that Christ is preeminent. Colossians 1:18 will state “He is the head (the lifesource and leader) of the body, the church, and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.” So what is pre-eminence? Preeminence is:

- The quality of being superior
- It's a high status or distinction given to anything considered to be the best at something
- To be in front of or have priority over
- To be foremost in time, place, order or importance
- To Hold first place in Rank and Influence.



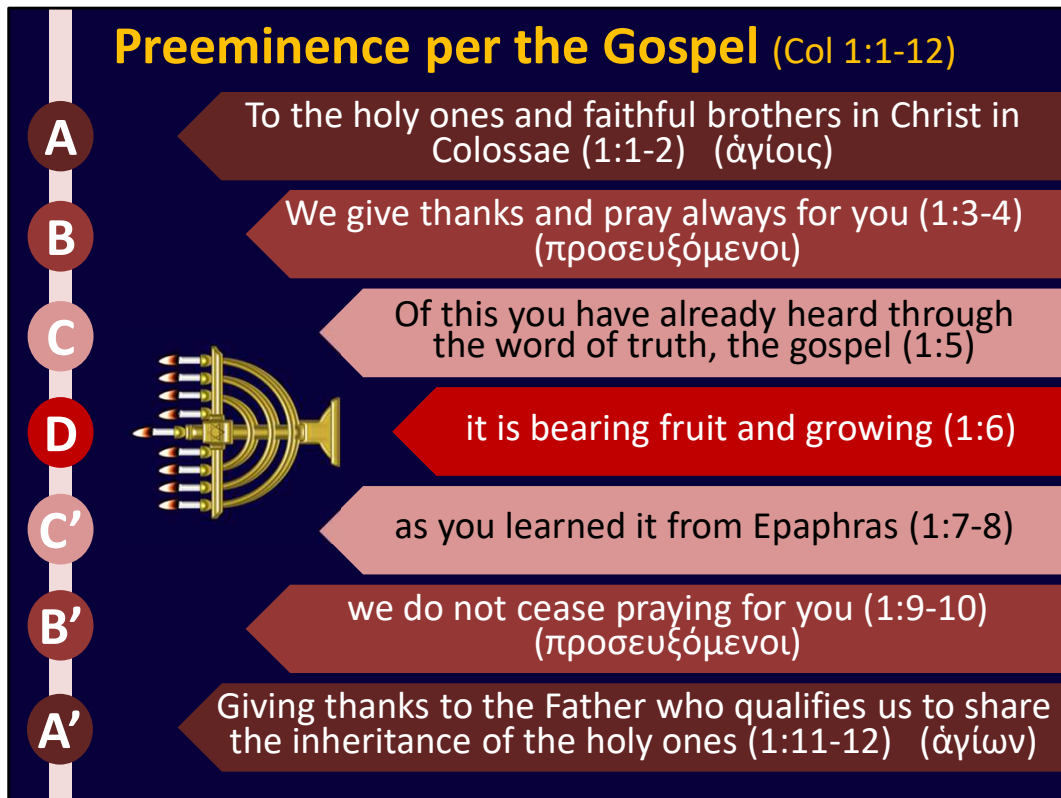
Chapter 1 declares the preeminence of Christ. Colossians was written because a combination of Eastern philosophy and Jewish legalism, with elements of what Bible scholars call gnosticism, threatened the purity and peace of the Colossian assembly. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word gnosis (KNOW-sis), which means “to know.” The gnostics considered themselves “in the know” when it came to the deep things of God. They considered themselves the “spiritual aristocracy” in the church and promised people such a close union with God that they would achieve “spiritual perfection” and spiritual fullness when they entered into the prescribed teachings and ceremonies. There was also a “full knowledge,” a spiritual depth, that only the initiated could enjoy. This “wisdom” would release them from earthly things and put them in touch with heavenly things. Of course, all of this teaching was simply man-made philosophy. Paul will counter this by declaring that Jesus Christ settled the sin question in His work on the Cross. All that the believer needs is Jesus! He alone is Preeminent!



Chapter One is about our ROOTS in Christ. By Building "Downwards" In Jesus, we are Grounded and settled in Christ. (1:23)

Building downwards speaks about digging foundations, going deeper, allowing the roots of our lives to be settled in Christ.

Note that Paul builds this foundation through prayer. Paul and Jesus both model prayer for us. Both gave thanks to the Father for all He has done for us.



The salutation declares Christ's preeminence in the Gospel message, which the Colossians had heard declared truthfully by Epaphras. Paul didn't start his letter by directly attacking the false teachers and their doctrines. Instead, he began by exalting Jesus Christ and showing His preeminence. Paul recognized the Saints, the holy ones, in Colossae and noted that he gave thanks and prayed without ceasing for them and their acceptance of the gospel message brought to them by Epaphras, and Paul reminded them of the foundation of their faith, the word of truth, which was bearing fruit and growing in them. He closed this salutary prayer by

The supremacy of Christ (Colossians 1:13-23)

A

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us to the kingdom of the Son (1:13-14)

B

By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth (1:15-16)

C



He is the head of the body, the church (1:17-18)

B'

to reconcile (ἀποκαταλλάχαι) all things to Himself, whether things on earth or in heaven (1:19-20)

A'

yet He has now reconciled (ἀποκαταλλάχαι) in his fleshly body through his death (1:21-22)

A: Forgiveness. B: Everything in heaven and earth. C: The Head of the church.

The false teachers in Colossae didn't deny the importance of Jesus Christ, they simply dethroned Him, giving Him prominence but not preeminence. In their philosophy, Jesus Christ was but one of many "emanations" through which people could reach God. Paul uses his second pericope to declare the supremacy of Christ.



¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love,
¹⁴ in whom we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

The Messiah came in the flesh and through His blood on the Cross our sins have been redeemed, paid for and forgiven once and for all.



All things were created through Him and for Him.

[CLICK] ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

In Him all things are held together. Jesus Christ is responsible for the four forces in nature: gravity which keeps physical things in their place; electromagnetic force which binds radio and light waves and chemical bonds of molecules; and strong and weak nuclear forces which hold the nucleus of atoms together.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, **that in all things He may have the preeminence.**



'Christ washing the Feet of the Disciples' by Jacopo Tintoretto, 1575-1580.

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.

This is the key verse in the whole book of Colossians, and it is the only place in Scripture where the word preeminence, the theme of this book, is used. Christ is preeminent over all creation, and He also is the Head of the church, the whole body of Christians living and dead.

Reconciled in Christ

¹⁹ For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace **through the blood of His cross.**



1. By His blood Jesus has taken care of all things.
2. Jesus is sufficient; all that we need is in Him.
3. God is pleased when Jesus is given preeminence.

'The Crucified Christ' by Peter Paul Rubens, 1611.

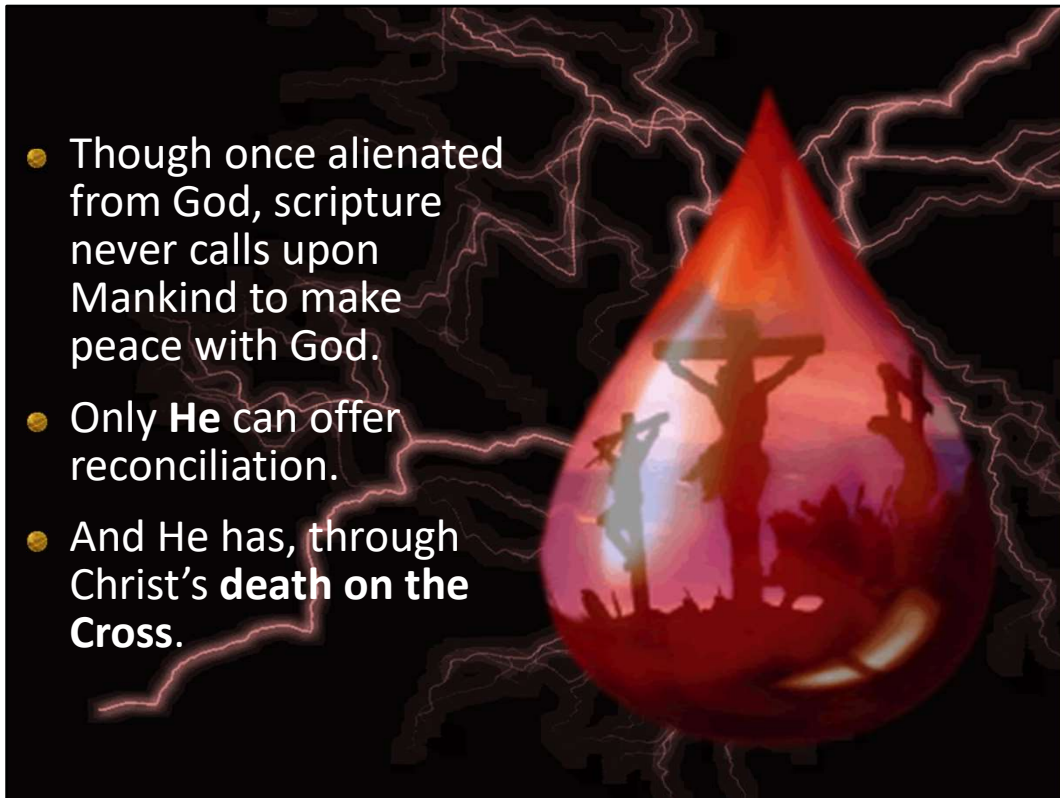
For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

Paul gives three main truths:

[CLICK] By His blood Jesus has taken care of all things.

[CLICK] Jesus is sufficient; all that we need is in Him.

[CLICK] God is pleased when Jesus is honored and given preeminence.



- Though once alienated from God, scripture never calls upon Mankind to make peace with God.
- Only He can offer reconciliation.
- And He has, through Christ's **death on the Cross.**

Though once alienated from God, scripture never calls upon Mankind to make peace with God.

[CLICK] Only He can offer reconciliation.

[CLICK] And He has, through Christ's death on the Cross.

The purpose of our reconciliation with God is our personal holiness.


But while God's election does not waver, we must affirm it through our faith, conduct, and witness of the Spirit in our lives.

The unsaved are without hope, but our hope is in Christ and false teachers will not move us away from Him.

The mystery (Colossians 1:24-29)

A Mission of the apostles (1:24-25)

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,
 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

B  The mystery (1:26-27)

26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.
 27 **To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles:** which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

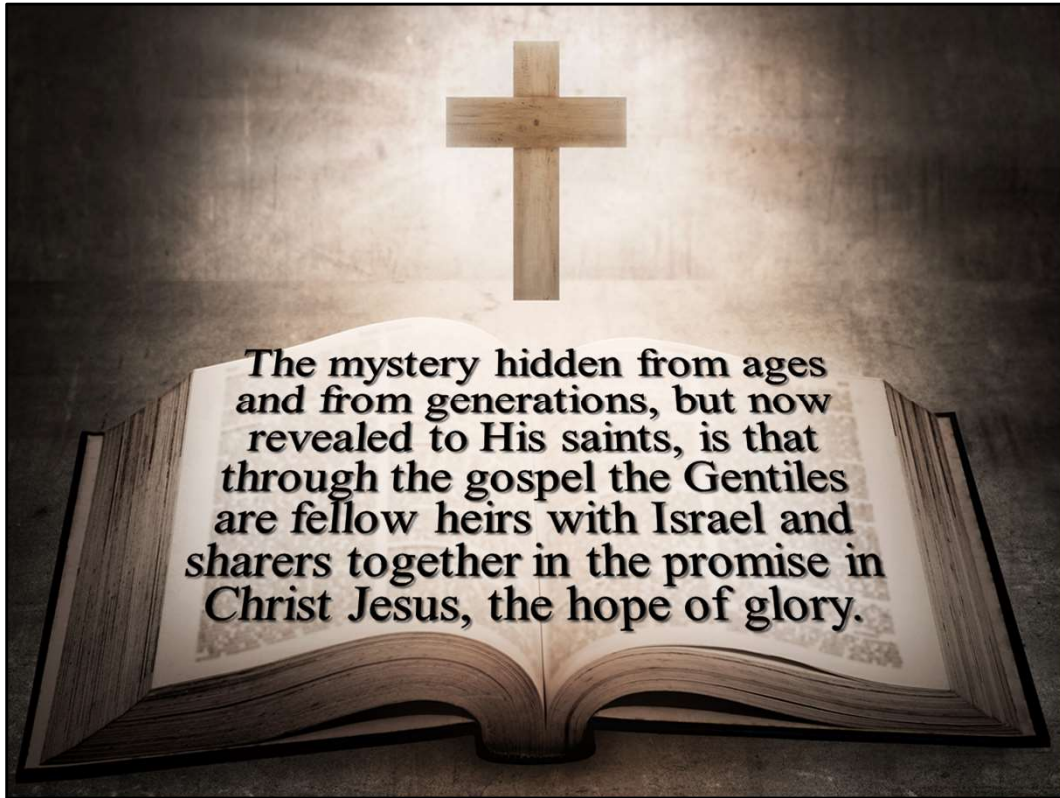
A' Mission of the apostles (1:28-29)

28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.
 29 To this [end] I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

And now we come to Paul's third pericope, or major thought, in Chapter 1, which is a **divine secret** that Paul has been honored to present, a mystery hidden from the beginning of time which Paul is about to reveal by divine revelation.

Wow! Paul is playing the Gnostics at their own game here!

- Paul's mission is to fulfill the Word of God.
- Now he's blessed to be able to reveal a real mystery, that salvation is available to the Gentiles as well as Jews.
- And everything that has gone before in the letter is focused on this mission.

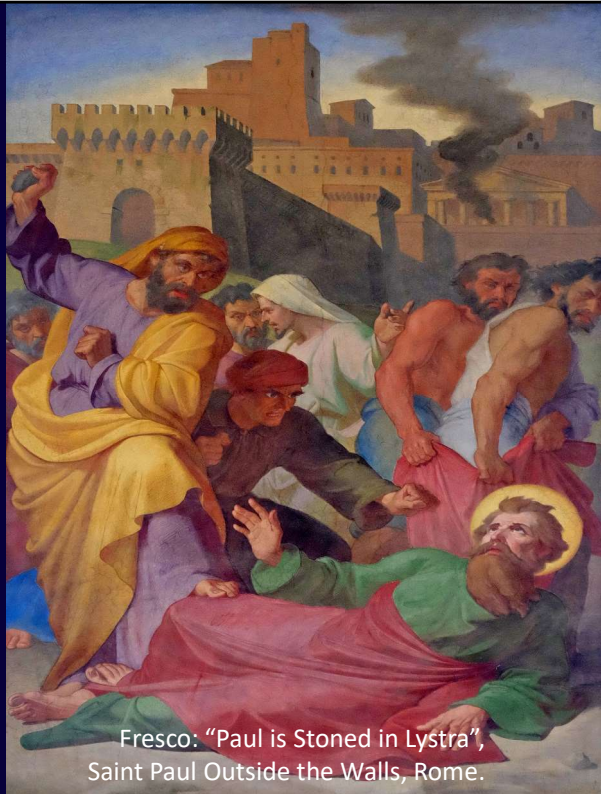


The mystery hidden from ages and from generations, but now revealed to His saints, is that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus, the hope of glory.

This is not only revealed here in Colossians 1:26-27, but also in Ephesians 3:6 sent by Paul at the same time to Ephesus. Paul had also alluded to the Gentiles receiving the promise of the Spirit through faith 4 years earlier in his letter from Corinth to the Galatians.

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you... for the sake of His body, which is the church,²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God,

Paul will now announce a **Great Mystery!**



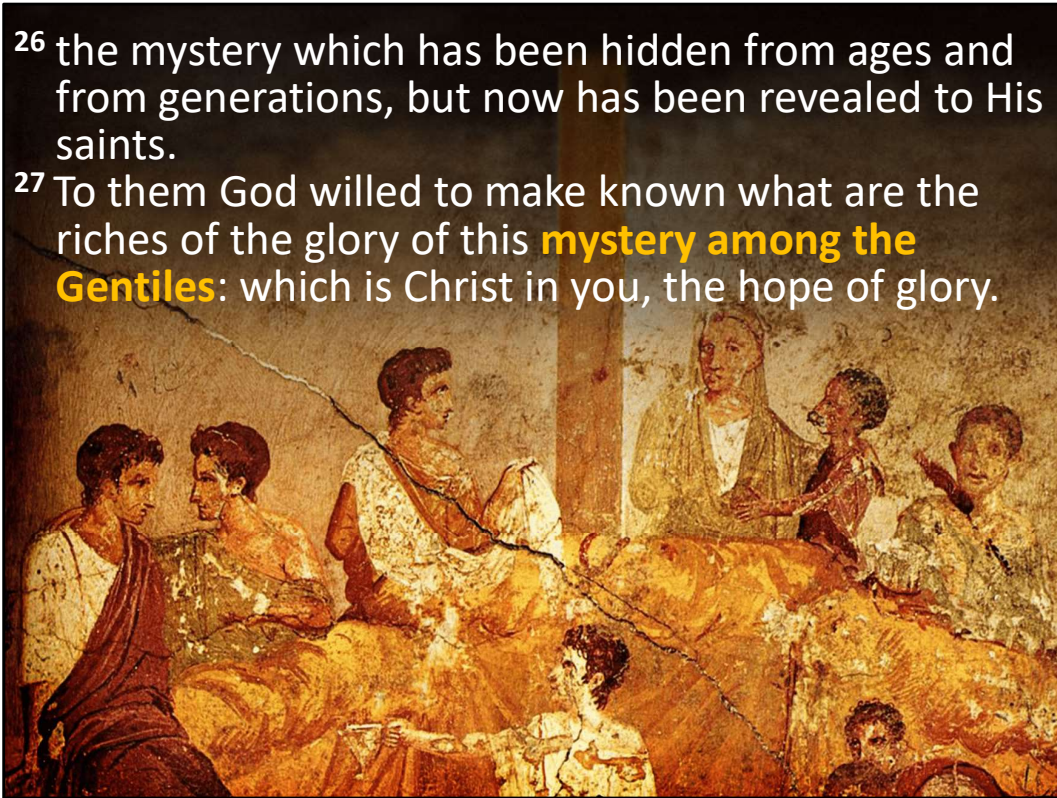
Fresco: "Paul is Stoned in Lystra",
Saint Paul Outside the Walls, Rome.

²⁴I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God,

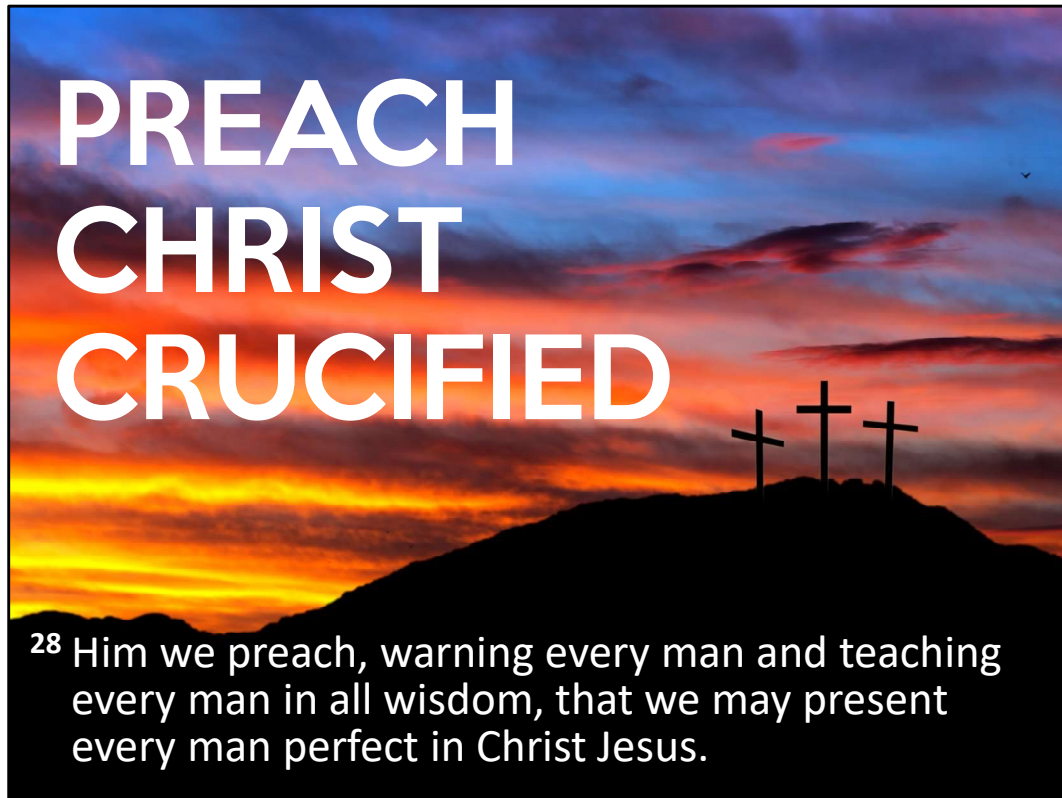
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²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this **mystery among the Gentiles**: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.



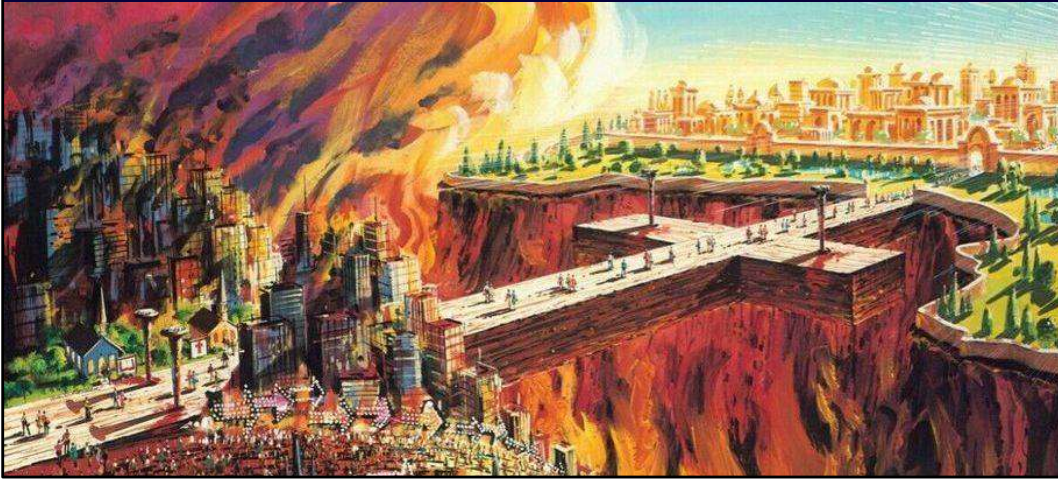
the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them (the Saints) God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.



²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. [CLICK] Preach Christ Crucified.

Paul Declares Christ's Preeminence:

- In the Gospel message (Col. 1:1–12)
- In redemption (Col. 1:13–14)
- In Creation (Col. 1:15–17)
- In the church (Col. 1:18–29)



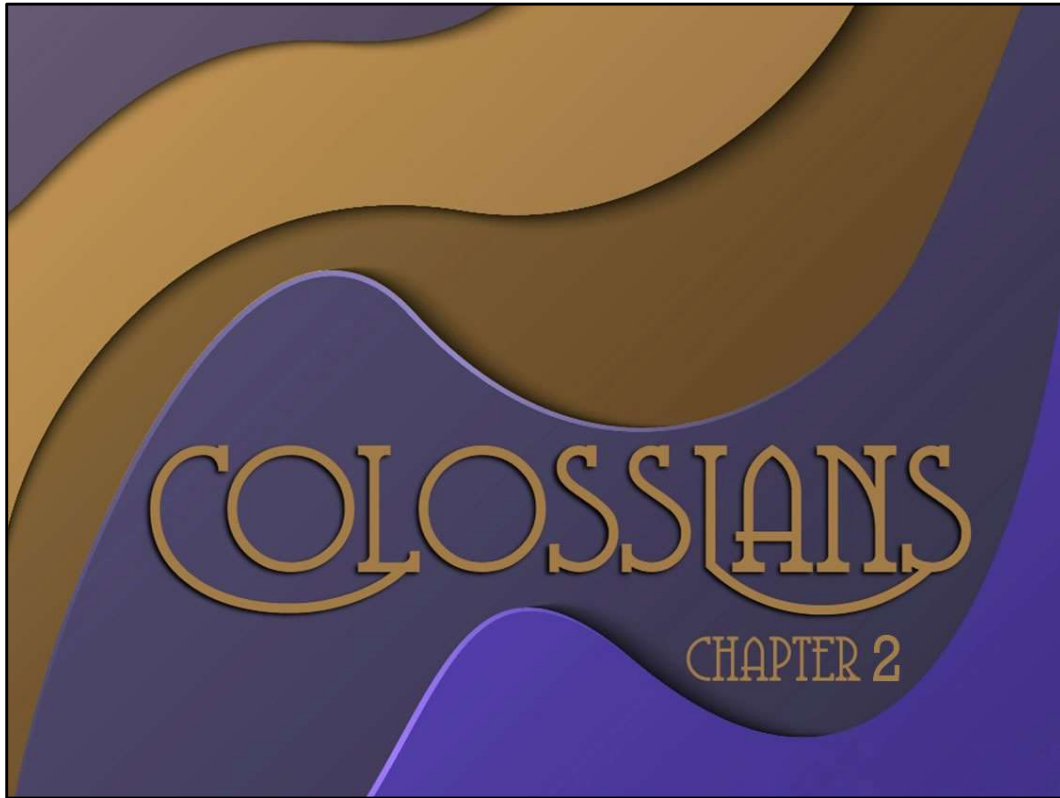
This ends Chapter 1, where Paul declared Christ's preeminence:

[CLICK] In the Gospel message (Col. 1:1–12)

[CLICK] In redemption (Col. 1:13–14)

[CLICK] In Creation (Col. 1:15–17)

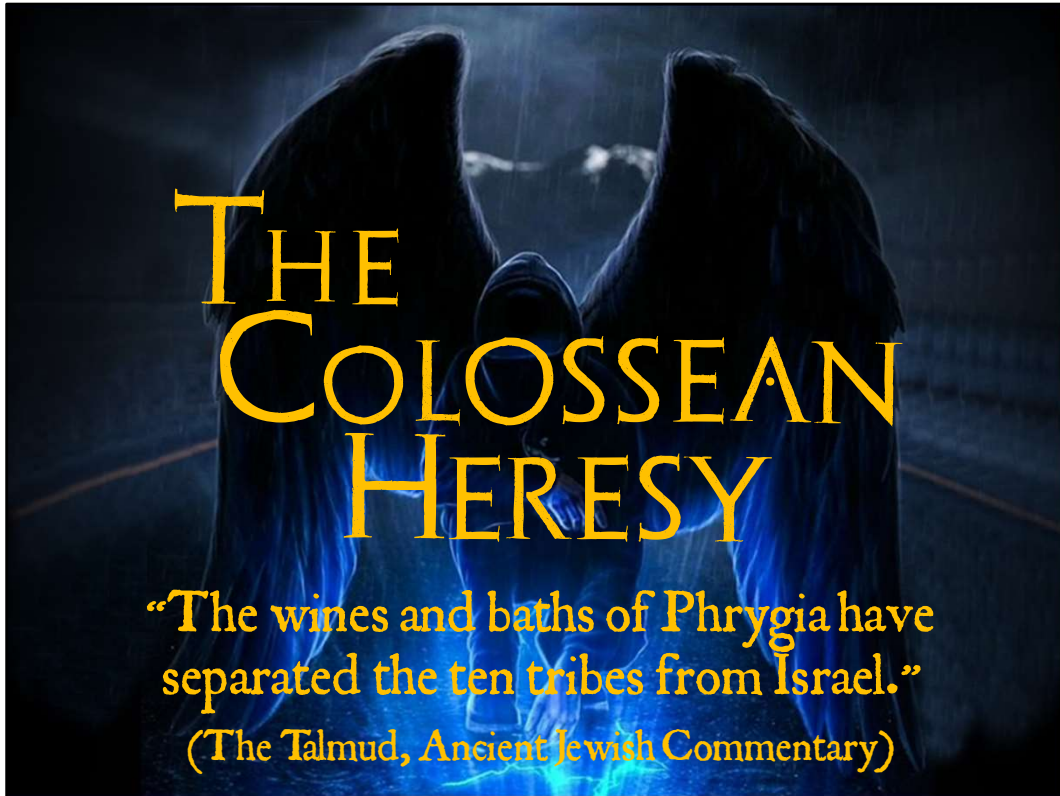
[CLICK] In the church (Col. 1:18–29)



Paul has declared the doctrine of the preeminence of Christ.
Paul will now defend Christ's preeminence against the danger of empty philosophies, religious legalism, and man-made disciplines.



Chapter 2 builds "Upwards" to build up our "RELATIONSHIP" with and in Him. In this chapter, Paul will defend Christ's preeminence. Knowing that there were enemies attacking the Lycus River Valley ekklesia, Paul offers encouragement. By heeding his admonitions, the Colossians and others can overcome their enemies. The Christian life doesn't stand still: believers either go forward or gradually slip backward. Paul's call is "Let us go on to maturity!"

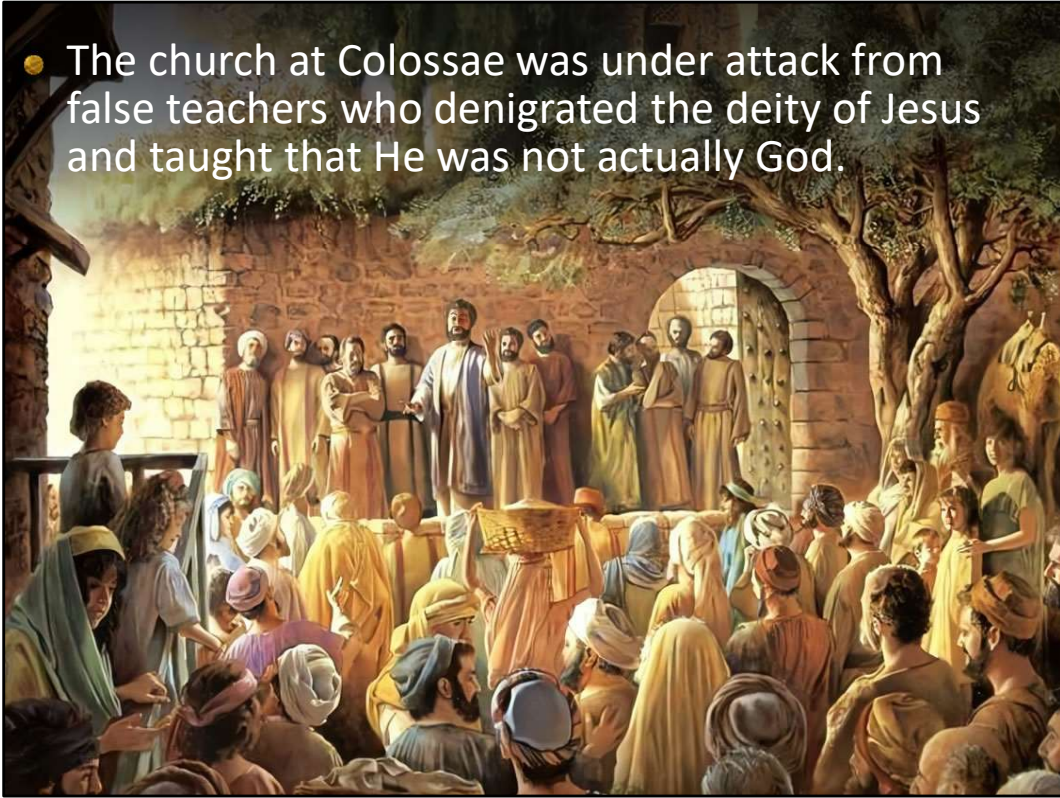


This all brings us to the actual heresy in Colossae that Paul was concerned about. The Lycus River Valley Jews seemed to enjoy the gay life of the Roman Empire as much as anyone. The Talmud, the ancient Jewish commentary on the Old Testament, states, "The wines and baths of Phrygia have separated the ten tribes from Israel."

The Phrygian Jews were impressed by Greco-Roman philosophy, which was very different from Hebrew thought. While Western philosophers elevated "gnosis" "knowledge", an intellectual understanding of things, to the highest pedestal, the Eastern Hebrew mindset valued "wisdom", the application and use of knowledge to the glory of God. No wonder the Phrygians, many of whom not long before had been known as barbarians, were confused and gullible. Gnosticism wasn't a separate religion; rather, it was a fusion of religious influences that suggested secret ways to get closer to God.

Colossae was known for a religious philosophy that blended Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, and pagan influences into an angel cult.

- The church at Colossae was under attack from false teachers who denigrated the deity of Jesus and taught that He was not actually God.



The false teachers at Colossae denigrated the deity of Jesus; who they taught was not actually God. So in response in this letter, Paul describes Jesus the Son of God with some of the loftiest language in all the New Testament.

For theology scholars, ancient Colossae is an extremely important site because Paul's letter to the Colossians addresses local Phrygian-Jewish-Pagan syncretistic practices adopted by many 'Christians' from the latter 1st century. They speculate that excavation of Colossae may reveal some of the religious practices Paul faced.

- The most noteworthy are the “self-imposed piety” and ascetically rigorous practices adopted by the Colossians and their worship of angels [Colossians 2:18].

General issues in gnosticism

- Gnosticism denied the deity of Christ.
- It falsely concluded that matter is evil and spirit good.
- It was Jewish and legalistic, stressing the need for observing Old Testament laws and ceremonies;
- It was philosophical, laying emphasis on some special or deeper knowledge (gnosis);
- It involved worship of angels as mediators to God, believing that emanations associated with heavenly bodies influenced earthly events.
- It was exclusive, stressing the special privilege and “perfection” of those select few who belonged to this philosophical elite.

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Paul addressed these heresies head-on:

- Christ is **preeminent** and **sufficient** in all things.
- He is **Creator** and **Redeemer** and the centre of the universe, not only as the active Creator but also as the **recipient of creation**—in His taking on of human flesh.
- Christ was and is the **visible image of the invisible God**, containing within Himself the **fullness of Deity**.
- Because of His divine nature, Jesus is **sovereign**, above all things with an **authority given Him by the Father**. He is also Head over the church.
- He has **reconciled all things** to Himself through His death on the cross, making believers alive to God and setting them on the **path to right living**.

Paul addressed these issues head-on describing Jesus with some of the loftiest language in all the New Testament. His messages include:

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What to look for in Colossians

1. Gnostic heretics said Christ's work was incomplete and sought to add to His work by calling for human works of religion or asceticism.

Paul stresses the divine person and finished nature of the creative and redemptive work of Christ (1:14-22; 2:8-15).

2. It claimed to be *human philosophy* based on the *traditions* of men, and included a form of Greek dualism that believed all matter was evil and that only pure spirit was good.

Paul warns against philosophical or religious arguments based on human tradition that appeals to its antiquity as a reason for acceptance. Don't accept empty speculations of man instead of the sure revelation of God (2:8, 18 with 2:3).

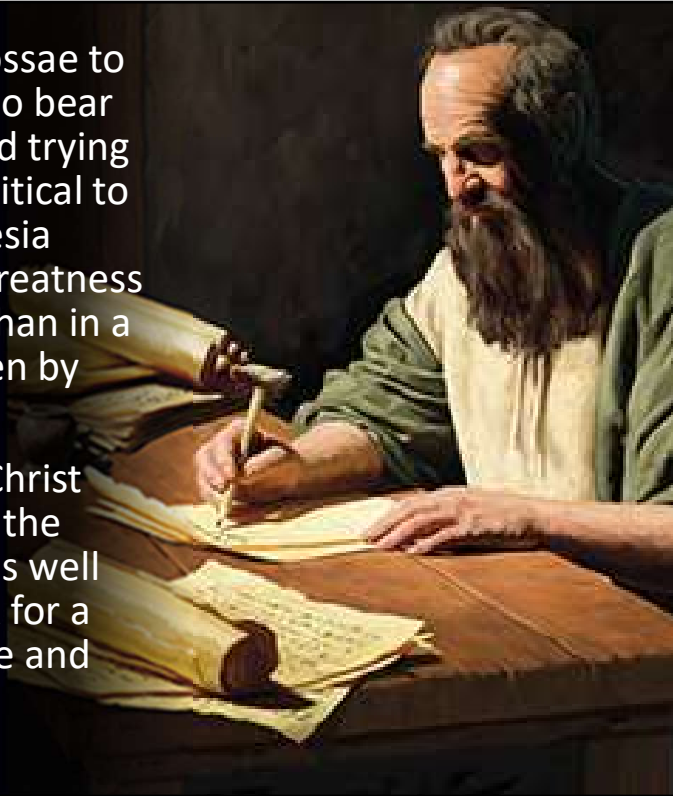
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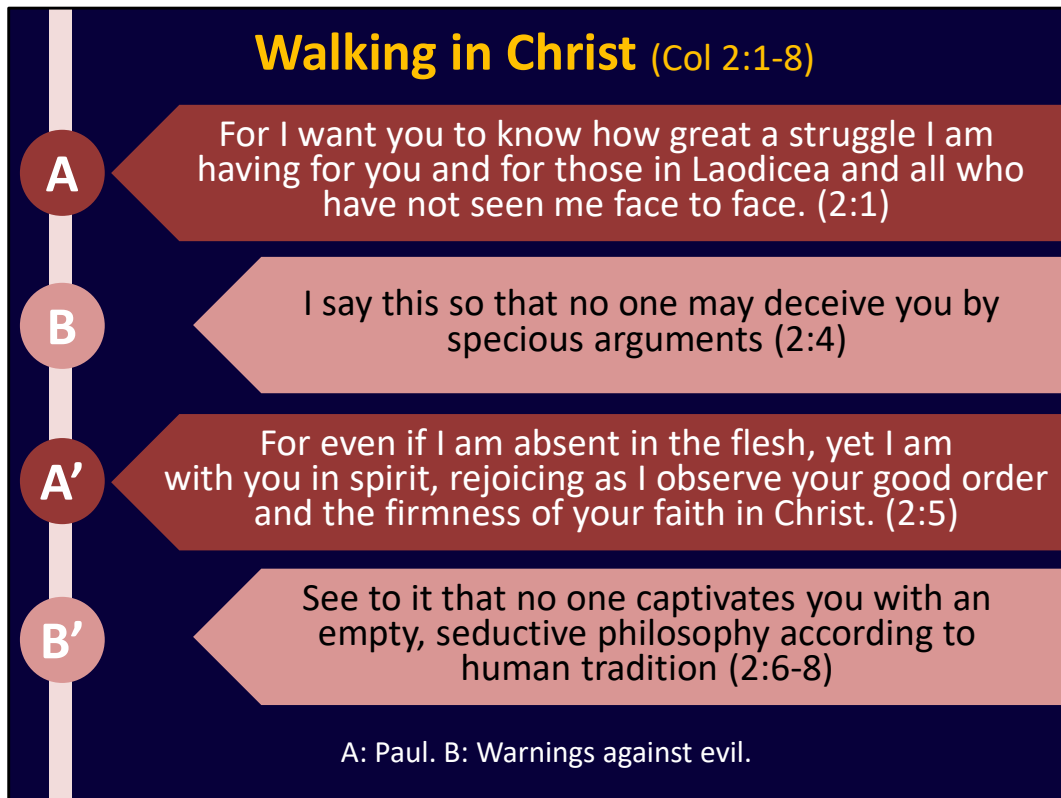
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- Paul wrote to Colossae to bring his wisdom to bear on this difficult and trying situation. It was critical to him that this ekklesia know God in His greatness and glory, rather than in a deficient view given by the false teachers.
- A proper view of Christ is the antidote for the Colossian heresy as well as a building block for a sound Christian life and doctrine today.



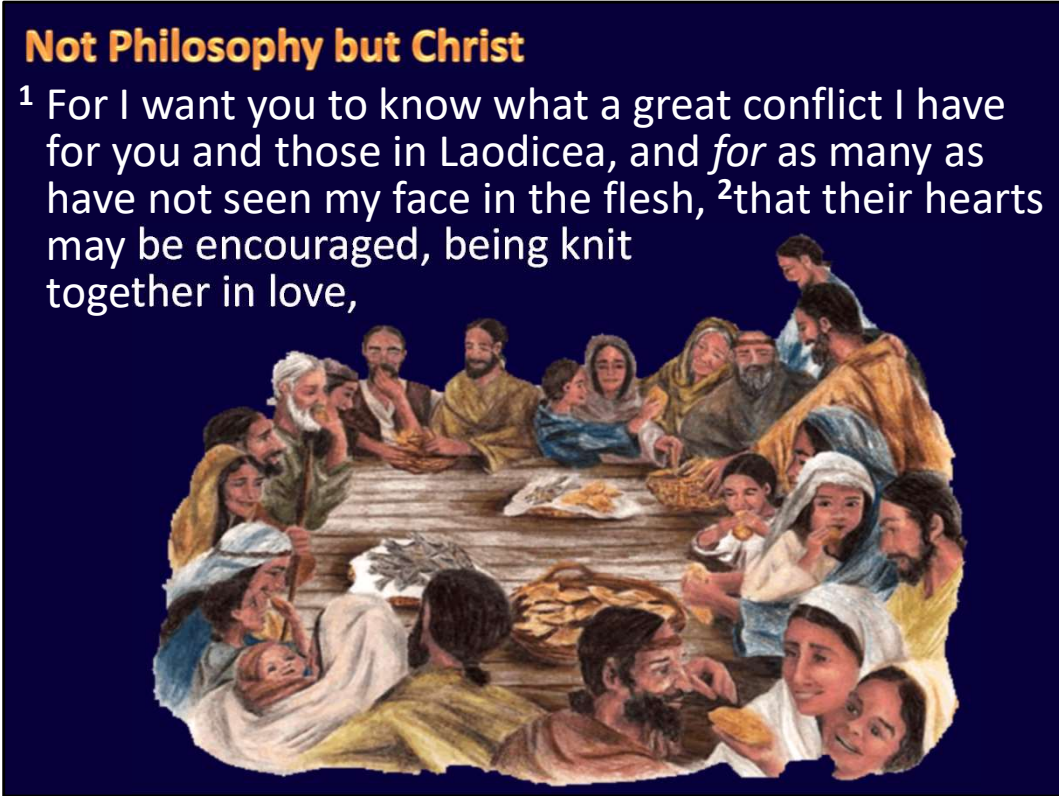
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The first pericope in Chapter 2 shows a different form of parallelism. It's not concentric anymore. Unsurprisingly, the central message of this section on the supremacy of Christ is on Christ as the Head of the body, the church.

Not Philosophy but Christ

¹ For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love,



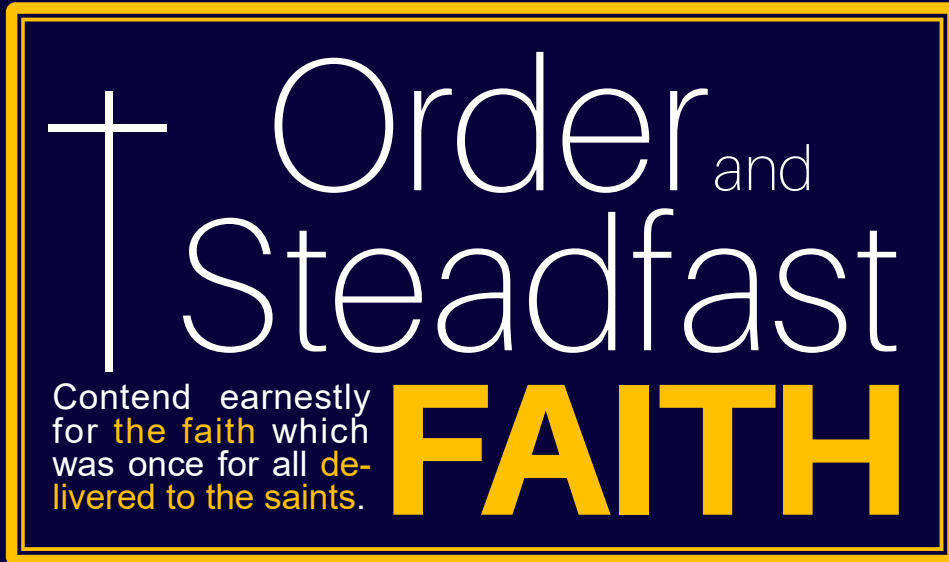
For I want you to know what a great conflict, I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love,



⁴ Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.



⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints,” as Jude may write around the same time.

⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.



Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

COLOSSIANS 2:8

BEWARE

**LEST ANYONE CHEAT YOU THROUGH
PHILOSOPHY AND EMPTY DECEIT, ACCORDING TO
THE TRADITION OF MEN, ACCORDING TO THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD,
AND NOT ACCORDING TO CHRIST.**

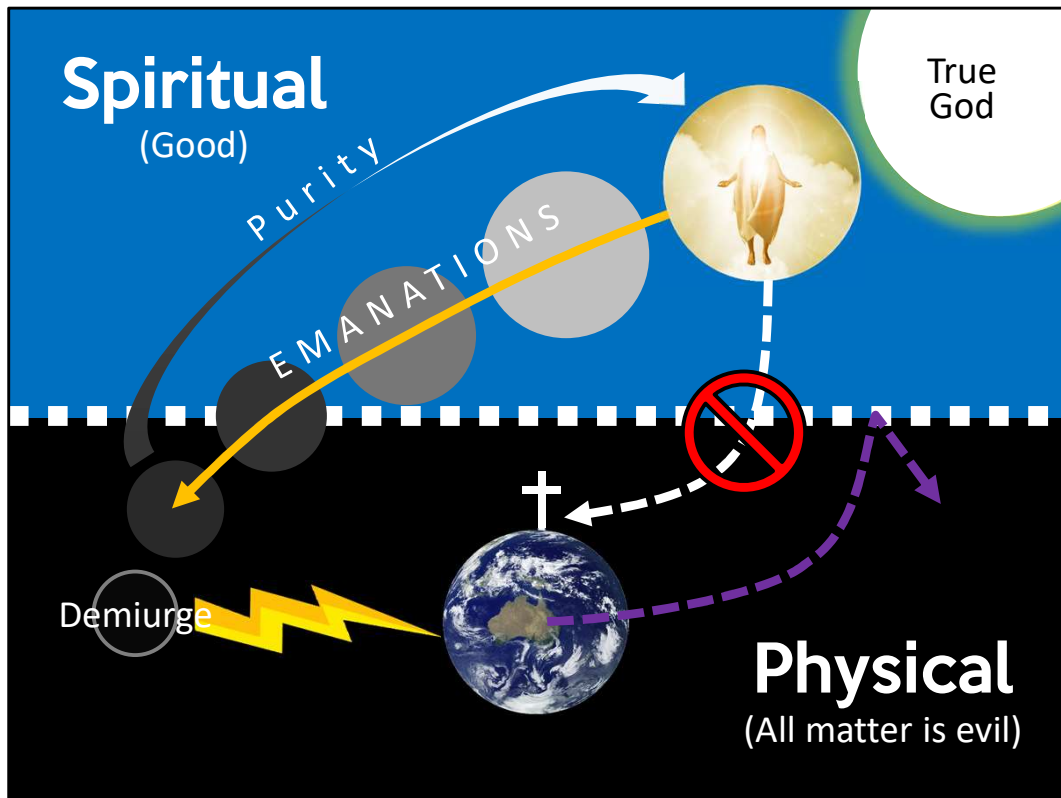


Spiritual beings may be godly or ungodly: Archangels (ruling angels), Angels, and Shedhim (rulers or lords) and Seirim (he-goats or hairy ones). Demons seek a body to inhabit. Angels can appear in bodily form.

There is lots written about angels and demons. Most of it is pure fantasy and far more likely to be harmful than helpful.

But the Bible takes this topic seriously, therefore, so should we. Our methodology must depend first and foremost on the Bible. We will need to understand what the biblical authors were saying about angels and demons, as well as what the cultural understanding was at the time they wrote. The people of the 1st century believed in the existence of evil spirits. This crossed all religious, ethnic and geographical boundaries, and there was also a parallel belief in magic, including spells and divination and though the Old Testament condemned the heathen practices of magic and divination, this did not prevent some Jews or early believers from making illicit use of such measures. For example, the book of Acts records four separate instances involving the use of magic. In three of these instances Luke directly connects the magic with the work of Satan or his demons.

Whatever we find should be reviewed in the light of Scripture.



As a review, and since some of you weren't here last week, here are some of the common characteristics of most varieties of Gnosticism.

1. God is pure Spirit and therefore Holy.
2. Matter is physical and therefore corrupt and evil.
3. Therefore, there must be total separation between Spirit and matter or spirit will be corrupted.
4. Emanations (or angels) serve as mediators between a holy supreme God and corrupt matter. None were pure, but the higher the up order the purer they were.
5. A perfect God couldn't create a sinful world; so a third party **[CLICK]** called a **demiurge (di-me-ahge)**, between God and the world, did. This dude was the Jewish Jehovah of the Old Testament.
6. The way to get closer to God was through a Spiritual life and bodily denial and suffering. This is called asceticism. **[CLICK]** Of course, you can never become perfect.
7. Jesus was the highest emanation, so High He was divine! But a divine Jesus couldn't **[CLICK]** become human or suffer on the Cross and maintain the separation between spiritual purity and physical corruption, so the Gnostics had to get really creative.



Various different groups of Gnostics came up with different solutions to this quandary.

Muhammed al-Samman from

Here are a few examples:

1. Docetists believed that Christ was pure spirit and only had a phantom body. He was an aeon without real humanity.
2. Cerinthians admitted that Jesus was indeed human but stated that Christ was an aeon who came on Jesus as the dove at His baptism and left Him on the Cross to die as a man.
3. Others taught that Jesus was just a man.

There were other guesses about the nature of Jesus as well. The gist is that the Gnostics more or less mixed Jewish and Christian doctrines that they didn't clearly understand with other philosophies.

Let's return to Colossians.

Other Principals and Powers (Col 2:9-15)

A

Principality and power (2:9-10)

⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

B



The resurrection (2:11-14)

¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,
¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.
¹⁴ (And He has) taken the list of sins that was against us, and nailed it to the cross

A'

Principality and power (2:15)

¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

This is the second and middle pericope in Chapter 2, which is the divine secret that Paul has been honored to present, a mystery hidden from the beginning of time which Paul is about to reveal by divine revelation.

Wow! Paul is playing the Gnostics at their own game here!

But the main reason for this slide is to demonstrate the concentric parallelism of this pericope.

- Paul's mission is to fulfill the Word of God.
- Now he's blessed to be able to reveal a real mystery, that salvation is available to the Gentiles as well as Jews.
- And everything that has gone before in the letter is focused on Paul's mission.

⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.



For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

“Fullness” (pleroma) means the sum of the qualities of deity. John’s Gospel also covers this by saying in verses 14:7-9 that, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

⁸ Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

“Complete” means “filled to the brim.” There’s no more room for any more love of God!

¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,



CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, Circumcision was a sign of the Old Covenant (Gen 17:9-14). It was a physical emblem with a spiritual significance. All too often, the physical sign tended to replace the actuality of the covenant.

In Christ and by His work, believers are circumcised with the “...circumcision made without hands”: in other words, believers inherit the New Covenant in the blood of Christ rather than taking on a physical emblem created with their own blood.

¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,



- External surgery
- Only part of the body
- Done by human hands
- Symbolic-doesn't help to conquer sin.



- Internal – the heart
- The whole body of sins
- Done without hands
- Spiritual-helps believers to overcome sin

God warned the Israelites numerous times not to let the physical sign replace what it stood for, but they still did. People make the same mistake today when they rely on any ritual or dogma to save them. Let's contrast the symbolic Jewish circumcision and the believer's spiritual circumcision in Christ:

- External surgery
- Internal-the heart
- Only part of the body
- The whole body of sins
- Done by human hands
- Done without hands
- Symbolic-doesn't help to conquer sin.
- Spiritual-empowers believers to overcome sin

When Jesus Christ died and rose again, He won a complete and final victory over sin. What the Law couldn't do, Jesus Christ did! The old nature ("the body of the sins of the flesh") was put off—rendered inoperative—so that we need no longer be enslaved to its desires. The old sinful nature is not eradicated, for we can still sin, but its power has been broken as we walk in the power of the Spirit.

¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

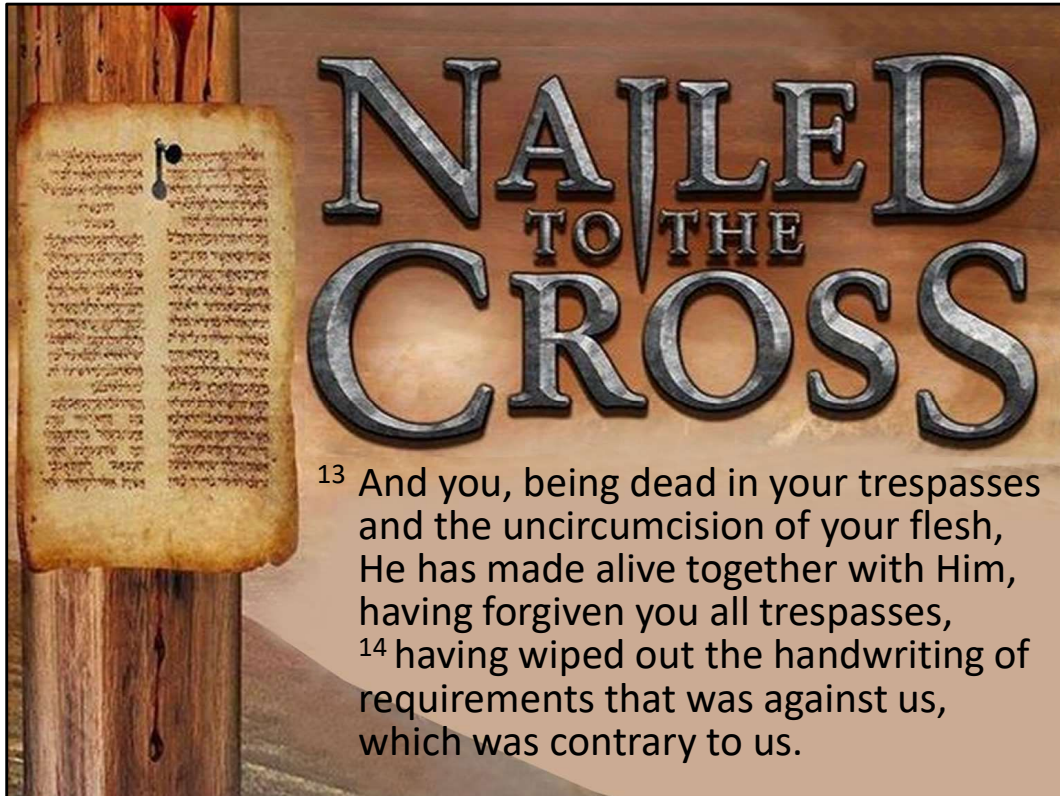


¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Paul emphasizes His death as an essential part of the Gospel: when a person is saved, he is immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13).

The word baptize has both a literal and a figurative meaning:

- The literal meaning of the Greek root word baptizein, of course, is “to plunge or to immerse; hence, to wash.” Baptizing was an ancient Jewish ritual well before John the Baptist. From Jewish rules of purification from uncleanness the word gained a technical religious connotation implying purification. When gentiles sought admission to Israel, they were required to publicly repent, accept the Mosaic Law, and be immersed in water to symbolize religious, moral, and ritual cleansing from the defilement of paganism.
- The figurative meaning is “to be identified with.”



And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.

It was impossible for us to meet all of the holy demands of the Law. “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight” (Gal 2:16)

Paul notes in Romans 2:12-16) that even though God didn’t give the Ten Commandments to the Gentiles, the righteous demands of the Law were “written in their hearts.”

The somewhat clumsy expression “handwriting of requirements that was against us” means a “Certificate of Debt”. Greco-Roman legal practice involved a literal certificate of debt when a convicted person was sentenced. The debt was paid as the person served his or her sentence. If the person escaped, the jailer was liable for any unpaid remainder. That’s why the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:23 was about to commit suicide when he thought that the earthquake had freed Paul and Silas. When a sentence was completed, the jailer would endorse the Certificate of Debt with the word **Tetelestai**, “It is finished”, which were the last words of Jesus on the Cross (John 19:30).

And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having **disarmed principalities and powers**, **He made a public spectacle of them**, triumphing over them in it.



And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

So our Certificate of Debt, the list

Religious Extremism (Col 2:16-23)

A

Let no one, then, pass judgment on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to a festival or new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. (2:16-17)

B

Let no one cheat you of your reward through self-abasement and worship of angels, not holding fast to Jesus. (2:18-19)

A'

If you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why then subject yourself to regulations that accord with human precepts and teachings. (2:20-22)

B'

Rigor of devotion and self-abasement have an appearance of wisdom, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (2:23)

A: Human precepts. B: Self-abasement and false worship.

Paul now examines some issues that differentiate Christianity from Judaism. Should we worship on Sunday or Saturday? Can we eat Levitically unclean food like shrimp and pork? Can we have a glass of wine with dinner? Do we need to “keep” the feasts of the Torah?

This pericope shows a different form of parallelism.. It’s not concentric anymore. It will focus on religion (man’s attempts to get closer to God) and religious externalism, the exaggerated or excessive emphasis on outward forms of religious worship.



So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, Christians are freed from the law (Lev 11; 17; Deut 14). God does not condemn those who eat everything (Rom 14:1-). In fact, God says that all foods may be eaten since they were “created to be received with thanks-giving by those who believe and who know the truth” (1 Tim 4:3). The teaching that forbids this, Paul wrote, is “taught by demons” (1 Tim 4:1) whom Christ has disarmed (Col 2:15). The Old Testament Law (including the Sabbath) was only a shadow of the things that were to come.

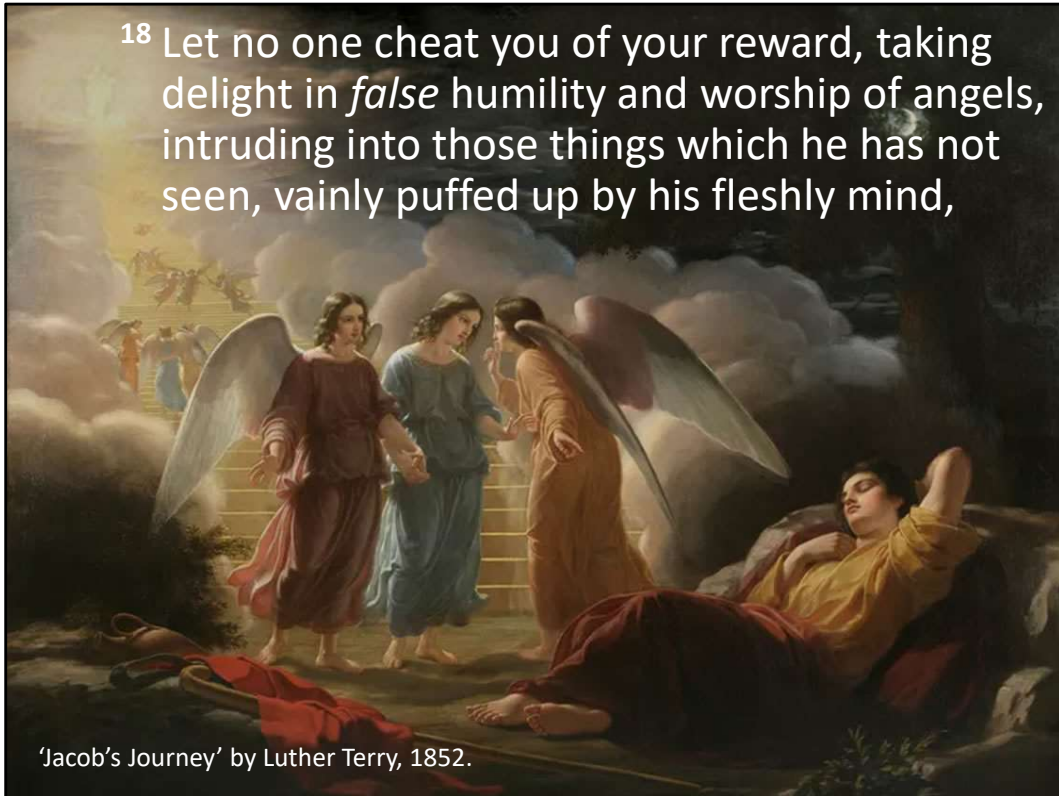
but the substance is of Christ.



but the substance is of Christ.

The reality or “substance” (soma, lit., “body”), however, is to be found in Christ (cf. Heb 8:5; 10:1). What the Old Testament fore-shadowed, Christ fulfilled (cf. Mt 5:17; Rom 8:3-4). Once one finds Christ, he no longer needs to follow the old shadow. The Feasts of Israel—in fact, every element of the Torah—are not just historically commemorative, but prophetically significant and they have been fulfilled in Christ!

¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,



'Jacob's Journey' by Luther Terry, 1852.

Whether disillusioned by the self-imposed blinders and myopia of contemporary “science,” or frustrated by the moral bankruptcy of unbridled materialism, increasing numbers of desperate people seek “answers” outside the realm of natural phenomena and many pursue the supernatural. The anguished plea of the disenfranchised now begs the question, “Is there anyone or anything out there?” Ancient peoples were no different.

¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,



"The Crucifixion of Christ" by Jacopo Tintoretto, 1565

And there were two cataclysmic challenges that exploded upon the Jewish Religion in the 1st century AD that shook Judaism to its core: 1) The rejection of Christ as the Messiah in AD 32 and

¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,



'Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem' by Francesco Hayez, 1867.

2) The subsequent destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

The Jewish religion relied upon temple sacrifices specified in the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, which at least four separate groups of editors compiled over some 300 to 500 years by about 1000 BC. The Torah was passed down through oral tradition for many centuries.

But how could Judaism continue without an altar and a Temple after Titus destroyed both in 70 AD? After all, they were the only authorized places of sacrifice.

¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,



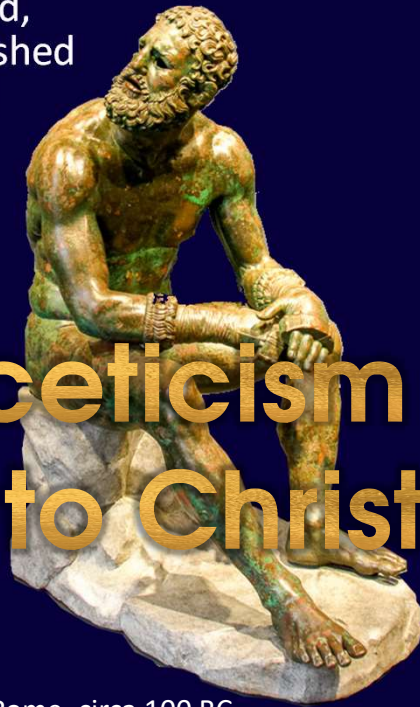
The Council of Jamnia met in AD 90 and began redefining Judaism away from Temple sacrifice. Jewish rabbinic law developed during the first five centuries A.D., culminating in the editing of the body of Jewish civil and religious law known as the Talmud in the sixth century AD. Publishing the Talmud in the 6th Century AD ended the general practice of Oral Tradition.

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,



The Talmud includes commentaries on the Torah, or Pentateuch, also called the Miqra, and the oral laws handed down through tradition, known as the Mishnah, which codifies the Oral laws; The Gemara is a commentary on the Mishnah; The Halakhah (from Hebrew, “to go”) are scholarly materials on disputed legal questions; and the Haggada includes illustrations and amplifications of the ethical, political, and religious principles involved in the laws.

¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.



Reject Asceticism and Cling to Christ

COLOSSIANS 2:18-19

Bronze boxer at rest, from Rome, circa 100 BC

¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.

The word translated “ligaments” (Gk. *sundesmos*, σύνδεσμος) is literally a fastener or something that holds things together. In this context it refers to ligaments that hold joints together. This bronze statue of a boxer gives evidence that its sculptor had a good knowledge human anatomy, including at least some of the ligaments that held together the various joints. Some of these are visible, particularly around the knees and feet. This statue comes from the Via IV Novembre on the Quirinal slopes in Rome. It was photographed at the National Museum of Rome.

²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—

²¹ “Do not touch,
do not taste,
do not handle,”

DO NOT TOUCH!

DO NOT TASTE!

DO NOT HANDLE!



²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—

²¹ “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”

²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—

²¹ “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”
²² which all concern things which perish with the using

— according to the commandments and doctrines of men?



²¹ “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”

²² which all concern things which perish with the using

— according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

In Paul’s day, as now, observant Jews closely followed strict rules about cleanliness. This sign announces that the establishment has been approved by Jewish authorities as kosher, that is, it follows Jewish food laws.



Paul's point seems to be simply that things like food are consumable and thus of no lasting value. Like bread, they are here for a short time and then gone, having no lasting, much less eternal, value.

²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

**APPEARANCES
CAN BE
DECEPTIVE.**

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Christ's Pre-eminence Defended

Beware of:

- Empty philosophies (Col. 2:1–10)
- Religious legalism (Col. 2:11–17)
- Man-made disciplines (Col. 2:18–23)

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- Empty philosophies (Col. 2:1–10)
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Warnings

Lest any one beguile you (Col 2:4);

Lest any man spoil you (Col 2:8);

Let no one judge you (Col 2:16,17);

Let no one cheat you (Col 2:18,19);

Let no one enslave you (Col 2:20-23).

- Lest any one beguile you (Col 2:4);
- Lest any man spoil you (Col 2:8);
- Let no one judge you (Col 2:16,17);
- Let no one cheat you (Col 2:18,19);
- Let no one enslave you (Col 2:20-23).

SO WHAT'S
THE
SOLUTION?

So what's the solution?

EMBRACE THE SIMPLICITY OF JESUS CHRIST!

Embrace the simplicity of Jesus Christ!

Remember that Jesus Christ is all in all. Without Him, the finest minds in antiquity, and the weakest minds today, had to invent a untestable and unprovable complex theory of emanations to speculate how the vast gap between a perfect and pure God and corrupt and immoral Mankind might be bridged.

But, as usual, God solved the most complex of problems with a simple solution... so embrace the simplicity of Jesus Christ!