

**Adult Sunday Bible Study Lesson**  
**The Letter to the Church at Colossae**  
**October 17, 2021**  
**The Divine Son doing the Divine Work**

**Situational Context:** Paul never visited Colossae (2:1). The church there was founded by a Colossian named Epaphras, apparently in the wake of Paul's ministry in Ephesus (A.D. 53–55), from where “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks”, **Acts 19:10 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> **This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.** Some five to seven years later, the founder of the Colossian church joined Paul in prison at Rome (Acts 28; Col. 4:12, 13) to tell the apostle of a strange teaching, the Colossian Heresy, threatening the health of his home church and to remain with Paul to pray for the churches of the Lycus Valley.

**The Letter Theme:** The Christians Paul addresses in this letter were struggling with a Greek-influenced form of Jewish philosophy that viewed Christians as still vulnerable to spiritual forces. It was thought that these forces needed to be placated through veneration, through some sort of asceticism of food and drink, and by honoring certain days prescribed in Old Testament ceremonial law. The epistle is designed to help Christians understand that in order for them to gain acceptance before God, they need Christ only. God has already accepted them by virtue of their union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

**Lesson Theme: Christ is enough to save! Colossians 1:13-14 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> **He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,** <sup>14</sup> **in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

**1. A Divine Transfer: Colossians 1:9-14 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> **And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,** <sup>10</sup> **so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.** <sup>11</sup> **May you be**

**strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,<sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.<sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,<sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

**Interpretation:** Biblical knowledge is not merely the possession of facts. Rather, knowledge and wisdom in the Bible are practical, having to do with godly living. Knowledge, wisdom and understanding result in a life worthy of the Lord. We live consistent with what we know. Paul assures them that as sons they have a share in the kingdom of light with all the saints. Christ, through His work of atonement believed by believing the gospel has transferred them, His work, not their work, from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light.

### **Supporting Texts:**

**Ephesians 4:1 (ESV)**<sup>1</sup> I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

**Acts 20:32 (ESV)**<sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

**Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)**<sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

**2 Peter 1:11 (ESV)**<sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **Discussion Starters:**

**Given the situation in Colossae, why did Paul pray what he did?**

**Where do we get the knowledge of His will?**

**Why is it important that Paul would remind these believers what Christ has already done for them?**

## What then is the application of this kingdom transfer?

**2. A Divine Plan: Colossians 1:15-20 (ESV)** <sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**all things were created through him and for him.** <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> **and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.**

**Interpretation:** Paul breaks into a doxology to the grandeur and glory of Jesus Christ. Many believe Paul is appropriating an early Christian hymn. By pointing to the supremacy of Christ both in creation (vv. 15-17) and in redemption (vv. 18-20), he points out what was missing in the false teaching at Colossae—an adequate view of the person of Christ. By doing this in a kind of hymn, he invites the readers to worship the Son of God.

Christ is called the “image of God” here and in 2Co 4:4. In Heb 1:3 he is described as the “radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being.” This figure of the image suggests two truths: (1) God is invisible (“No one has ever seen God,” Jn 1:18); and (2) Christ, who is the eternal Son of God and who became the God-man, reflects and reveals him. Just as the firstborn son had certain privileges and rights in the Biblical world, so also Christ has certain rights in relation to all creation—priority, preeminence, and sovereignty.

### Supporting Texts:

**2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

**John 1:18 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

### **Discussion Starters:**

**How is Christ the image of God?**

**In what way was all things created for Him?**

**What are the implications of verse 17?**

**As the first born of all creation what is Christ entitled to?**

**What does Christ's headship over the church mean for us?**

**What does verse 19 mean? What is Christ's body?**

**3. A Divine Work: Colossians 1:21-23 (ESV)** <sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

**Interpretation:** Having considered Christ's majestic role in creation and in the reconciliation and pacification of the universe, Paul returns to the Colossians themselves. Once God's enemies and alienated from His life, they have now been given peace with God (Ro 5:1, Ro 5:2).

### **Supporting Texts:**

**Romans 5:1-2 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

**Ephesians 2:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

**Ephesians 1:4 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

### **Discussion Starters:**

**How does verse 22 describe what it means to perfect the saint?**

**What is these believer's responsibility?**

**What is Christ's promise?**