

Colossians Lessons

Lesson	Topics	Texts
1	<i>Introduction and Overview</i>	
2	<i>Paul's Prayer</i>	1:1-23
3	<i>Paul's Work in the Gospel</i>	1:24-2:3
4	<i>Errors of Men Compared with Truth of Christ</i>	2:4-3:4
5	<i>Things to Put On and Put Off</i>	3:5-17
6	<i>Behavior in Everyday Relationships</i>	3:18-4:6
7	<i>Personal Greetings to and from Friends</i>	4:7-18
8	<i>Colossians Review and Quiz</i>	
9	<i>Philemon</i>	

Key Information for the Colossians Course

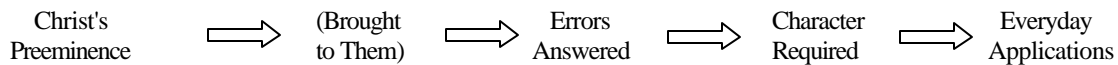
1. Background

- Written by Paul in AD 61-63, from prison in Rome, sent by Tychicus & Onesimus
- Sent with letter to Philemon, Ephesians, and Laodicians

2. Key Themes and Lessons

- **Christ's Preeminence is the Overwhelming Answer** to any philosophy or objection which is a product of human reason (philosophies or religions that are the product of culture), the natural world (science, for example), or even the supernatural realm (angels, and demons, for example).
- **Faithfulness To Christ Is Expressed In Simple Obedience**, worked out in ordinary ways. Traditions, man-made rituals, self-denial, supernatural experiences, or transcendental wisdom are not a part of (and are inferior to) what Christ brings.

3. Flow of the Book



4. The Colossian Errors (see attached chart)

- Origin
 - this world (2:8)
 - traditions of men (2:8)
 - philosophies of men (2:8)
- Practices
 - Keeping feasts, days (2:16)
 - Self Abasement (2:23)
 - Worshipping Angels (2:18)
 - Abstinence from touching, tasting things (2:21,22)
 - Severity to Body (2:23)
- Appeal
 - Persuasive Speech (2:4)
 - Show of Wisdom (2:23)
 - Deception (2:4; 2:8; 2:18)
 - Pride (2:18)
- Authority
 - Traditions of Men (2:8)
 - Philosophy of men (2:8)
 - Principles of the world (2:8)
 - Visions? (2:18)

5. Important Words (Learn Definitions Before Studying Text)

Saint (1:26)
Mystery (1:26,27; 2:2)
Firstborn (1:15,18)
Fullness (1:19)
Reconcile (1:20)
Dominions Principalities and Powers (1:16; 2:10, 15)
Philosophy (2:8)
Written Bond (2:14)
Rudiments/Elements of the World (2:8)
"In the name of" (see 3:17)
Redeeming (4:6)

Colossians Review Quiz

- A. **Background.** List the following information about Colossian Letter:
1. The author, his location and circumstances
 2. The readers and their location and race; and the age and origin of the church
 3. The 2 other churches close by
 4. The approximate date of writing
 5. The letter carriers
 6. The other letters carried at the same time
 7. The reason the letter was written
- B. **Outline.** Fill in the outline below.
- I.
- A.
 - B.
 - C.
- II.
- A.
 - B.
- III.
- A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
- IV.
- A.
 - B.
- V.
- A.
 - B.
 - C.
- VI.
- A.
 - B.
 - C.
- C. **Theme.** Write the theme of the letter, or paraphrase a verse from it that best summarizes its message.
- D. **The Error.** List four appeals of error addressed in Colossians.
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

E. Key Words. Match each word with the best definition for it as it is used in the Colossian letter, then give a key verse to illustrate the definition.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| _____ Firstborn | a. something beyond the ability of uninspired humans to know |
| _____ Fullness | b. all that makes something what it is |
| _____ Mystery | c. the first created or the oldest |
| _____ Reconcile | d. something formerly hidden, now revealed |
| _____ Principalities, etc. | e. to make peace between enemies |
| | f. earthly nations, kingdoms, states |
| | g. to make peace between enemies |
| | h. to balance a ledger sheet |
| | i. spiritual forces with authority granted and bounded by God |
| | j. preeminent, most important, selected above his peers |
| | k. completed blessings, lacking nothing |

F. Questions from the Text

1. What did Paul ask his readers to pray for in his work as an evangelist?
2. Who are the saints?
3. What is “the mystery” as stated in Colossians?
4. List two things each about Christ’s relationship to:
 - a. God
 - b. Creation
 - c. The Church
5. What is the single answer to all of the appeals of error listed in Question D above?
6. What are two reasons that one should not subject oneself to "regulations"?
7. List three things we are told to put off (or put away).
8. List three things we are told to put on.
9. List two concepts contained in the phrase “in His name”.
10. List the six relationships addresses in chapters 3 and 4.
11. Name a character from chapter 4 who began strong and finished weak.

12. Name a character from chapter 4 who began weak and finished strong.

Lesson 1 - Introduction and Overview

A. Take Pretest

B. Introduction

1. There are two other letters closely connected to the letter to the Colossians. To illustrate, find the references to these people in the letters to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Philemon (if there is one).

	<u>Colossians</u>	<u>Philemon</u>	<u>Ephesians</u>
With Timothy			
With Epaphras			
With Mark & Aristarchus			
With Luke And Demas			
Onesimus Sent			
Tychicus Sent			
Greetings To Archippus			

2. Where was Paul when he wrote? (Col 4:10; Philemon 1:1,9,10; Eph 6:20)
3. How could he do all the sending and preaching while he was in this situation? (Acts 28:16,30,31)
4. What date does this background information suggest?
5. How might the church at Colossae have been established? (Acts 19:8-10, 20, 26, 27; Col 1:7) Were they Jews or Gentiles? (1:27)
6. Had Paul been there? (Col 2:1; but see Acts 18:23; 19:1)
7. How old would this make the church at Colossae?
8. Where did the church in Colossae meet? (Philemon 1:2)
9. What other churches are closely connected with the Colossian Christians? (Col 2:1; 4:13,16)

C. Purpose and Themes. From the verses below, what is the purpose of the letter? What themes do you see? Are there practical applications?

1. 1:23
2. 2:4-6
3. 3:2,3
4. 3:17

D. Organization.

1. The following are the major topics of an outline of the letter which we will use in this course. Find the verse sections for each outline point, and number them in order.

_____ Errors of men compared with the truth of Christ
_____ Behavior in Everyday Relationships
_____ Paul's [Prayer] Thanks, Request, and Praise of Christ
_____ Personal Greetings to and From Friends
_____ Thing to Put Off and Put On
_____ Paul's Work in the Gospel for the Colossians

2. The following are groups of subtopics for the major topics above. Match each group with the major heading and then put the items within the group in order. Copy the full outline on another sheet.

_____ Description of the Duty given to Paul by God
_____ Expression of Concern for, and Closeness to Readers

_____ Things to Put On
_____ Things to Put Off

_____ Thanks to God for Colossians
_____ Thanks for Deliverance into Kingdom & Description of its King
_____ Request to God for Colossian's Growth and Strength

_____ Servant-Master Responsibilities
_____ Family Responsibilities
_____ Exhortations to Prayer and Wise Living

_____ Salutations to Rome
_____ Salutations to Colossae
_____ Introduction of the Letter-carriers

_____ Warning against Persuasive Speech
_____ Warning against Old Law Keeping
_____ Warning against Human Reasoning
_____ Warning against False Religious Practices

- E. **Transitions.** Explain how each of these verses forms a transition between the major divisions of the letter.

1. 1:23
2. 2:4-6
3. 3:2,3
4. 3:17

- F. **Long-Term Assignments.** Read through the letter and make two lists:

1. The attributes of Christ: His relationships to: God, Creation, Supernatural Beings, and the Church (us).
2. The Colossian Errors: Origin, Practices, Appeal, and (Claimed) Authority

Lesson 2 - Paul's Prayer (Colossians 1:1-1:23)

A. General Preparation.

1. Look at the outline of the Colossian letter presented in Lesson 1 and the lists of attributes of Christ and the Characteristics of the Colossian Errors. Write a statement of the theme (most important message) of the letter.
2. Now, find a verse (or verses) that best states the theme.
3. For each of these words which are used in the first chapter, look up its meaning in an expository dictionary (e.g. Vine's) or commentary.
 - Dominions, Principalities, Powers (1:16; 2:15; Eph 1:20,21; 3:10; 6:12; Rom 8:38; Jude 6)
 - Firstborn (1:15,18; Rev 1:5; Rom 8:29; Heb 1:6; John 1:3)
 - Fullness (1:19; 2:9; I Cor 10:26; Eph 3:19; 1:10; 1:23)
 - Reconcile (1:20,22; Rom 5:6-11; Eph 2:12-16)

B. Outline of the Text:

I. Paul's Prayer (Col 1:1-23)

- A. Thanks to God for the Colossians' Hope (1:4-7)
- B. Request to God for colossians' Growth & Strength (1:9-11)
- C. Thanks for Deliverance to Kingdom & Description of King (1:12-23)

C. Questions on the Text (1:1-23)

1. For what does Paul give thanks? (v 3)
2. How had the Colossians learned the truth? (v 7)
3. How had Paul heard of it? (v 8)
4. For what does Paul make request? (vs 9,10)
 - What one thing? ("that...")
 - What things will this produce? ("to...")
5. What has God, the Father done to deserve thanks? (vs 12,13)
6. Over what things does Christ rule, control, and dominate? (vs 14-18)
7. What two things was it the Father's will to do? (vs 19,20)
8. Contrast our before and after states. (vs 20-22)
9. What word describes the change? (vs 20,22)
10. Are there any conditions attached to remaining in this new state? (vs 23)

D. Application and Analysis

1. If Paul had neither started the church in Colossae and had never visited there, what advantages and/or disadvantages might he have in addressing a doctrinal problem there in a letter? How does he appear to address the disadvantages in these opening remarks?
2. In describing the new kingdom into which we are translated, why do you think Paul spends so much time in the description of the King? (vs 14-20)

3. Do the phrases in vs 21 suggest gentile readers? (see also vs 27; 2:13) Considering the theme and purpose, what challenges from the Gentile culture present to the Colossians' faith?

Lesson 3 - Paul's Work in the Gospel (Colossians 1:24-2:4)

A. General Preparation

1. Study carefully the way in which Paul uses these two words in the verses listed.
 - a. Mystery (Col 1:25-27; 2:2; 4:3; Eph 3:4-6; 1:8,9; 6:19; I Cor 2:6-12; 4:1; I Tim 3:9; and see I Cor 15:51, Rom 11:25, and Phil 4:12 – “I have learned the secret”)
 - b. Saints (Col 1:26)
2. Compare the usage here with other places in the New Testament. What can you conclude about their usage here?
3. Continue to fill in the details of your outline.

B. Outline of the Text

- II. Paul's Work in the Gospel for the Colossians (1:24-2:4)
 - A. Description of the Duty Given to Paul by God (1:24-29)
 - B. Expression of Concern for, and Closeness to, the Readers (2:1-4)

C. Questions from the Text (1:24-2:5)

1. Why did Paul rejoice in his sufferings?
2. On whose behalf did he suffer? (1:24,25)
3. What job did he have? For whose benefit did he work? (See part D below)
4. What is the mystery, as stated here (compare to Eph 3:6)? (1:25-27; 2:2)
5. Who knows it? Who didn't (or doesn't)?
6. How was it found out (revealed)?
7. How is this mystery related to Paul? (4:3)
8. What was Paul doing to present every man perfect?
9. Why did Paul want them to know of his struggles for them? (that is, what did he hope to bring about ... see 2:2)
10. "I say this," in verse 4 refers to what?

D. Analysis and Application

1. List the names and phrases Paul uses to describe his work
 - a. 1:1
 - b. 1:25
 - c. 1:28,29
 - d. 4:3

2. Describe how the term mystery fits the plan of salvation worked out by God through the ages. How might this term be important to counter the influence of human philosophies at Colossae?

Lesson 4 - Errors of Men Compared with Truth of Christ (Colossians 2:4-3:4)

A. General Preparation

1. This section begins "...this I say that". What, in the previous chapters, is Paul referring to?
2. Note how these words are used in the text, and use an expository dictionary to define them:
 - a. Philosophy (v 8)
 - b. Rudiments, elements, or basic principles (v 8)
 - c. Written Bond, or Handwriting of Requirements (v 14)
 - d. Principalities & Powers (v 10, 15)

B. Outline of the Text

- III. Errors of Men Compared with the Truth of Christ (2:4-3:4)
 - A. Warnings Against Persuasive Argument (2:4-7)
 - B. Warnings Against Human Reasoning (2:8-15)
 - C. Warnings Against Being Judged by the Old Law's Practices (2:16,17)
 - D. Warnings Against False Religious Practices (2:18-3:4)

C. Questions from the Text (2:4-3:4)

1. Why has Paul described his work, and the greatness of the gospel? (2:4)
2. How was Paul "with" them, and "watching" them? (2:5)
3. What description is given of the way in which the Colossians might be captured? (2:8) What kind of deceit is it? What reason is given in vs 9, 10 for not being captured? Could Christ be any more than He is? Could the Colossians be any more than they were?
4. What two types of circumcision are compared in vs 11? When and how does the spiritual circumcision take place (v 12)? (see also Rom 2:28,29)
5. Describe the before and after states that are contrasted in vs 13.
6. What did the taking away of the "bond" do for us (see vs 13,14)? In what act was this accomplished? Who was defeated?
7. What other standard of judgment might be imposed on us? (v 16) If these things were shadows, what casts the shadows? (v 17)
8. In what other way might the prize be taken from the Colossians (v 18) One who follows these errors (vs 18) is not doing what? (v 19)
9. Verses 20-23 of chapter 2 describe a state of deadness, while 3:1,2 describe a state of resurrection. To what are Christians dead? To what are they alive? What should be the consequence? (3:2-4)

D. Analysis & Application

1. In this section, Paul states what he is trying to prevent in at least four different ways. List the four warnings (hint: look for the phrases like: "let no one," in vs 4, 8, 16, 18).
2. If this section of the text were divided into these four parts, each introduced by vs 4, 8, 16, and 18, to what topic does each part return? (see vs 6, 9-15, 17, 19-20) How is this protection summarized in 3:1-4?

3. If Christ is shown to be the origin, predecessor, reality, ruler, etc. of all earthly (human) products, such as philosophy, religion, science, does that mean that His instruction (to follow) would change as civilization evolves?

Lesson 5 - Things to Put Off and Put On (Colossians 3:5-17)

A. General Preparation

1. Study the Meaning of the Phrase "In the name of..." as it is used in 3:17 and other places in the Bible (see Handout: "In His Name")
2. Make a list of things to put off (3:5-9) and the list of things to put on (3:12-16) using at least three different translations (for example: ASV, NKJV, NIV) to understand the meaning. Do you see any correspondences between these two lists?

B. Outline of the Text

- IV. Things to Put Off and Put On (3:5-17)
 - A. Things to Put Off (3:5-9)
 - B. Things to Put On (3:10-17)

C. Questions from the Text (3:5-17)

1. Verse 5-17 is a conclusion ("therefore," vs 5) based on the previous section. What does it mean to "put to death your *members* on the earth"? Is there a connection to the location of our *mind* (v 2)?
2. For what things does the wrath of God come? (v 6) Is it merely because men haven't heard the gospel? Are those ("sons of disobedience") who are not in a covenant relationship with God subject to God's moral laws?
3. What things should be set aside? (v 8ff)
4. To what is the "new" self renewed? (v 10) What is this new image? (v 10)
5. Why then, are there no distinctions between races or earthly status? (v 11)
6. Do you see a relationship between the lists in vs 8,9 and 12,13?
7. What is the bond of perfectness? (vs 14)
8. What two things are "within" us? (vs 15,16)
9. If the Word of Christ is within us, what will be coming out of us? (v 16)

D. Analysis and Application

1. From vs 5-13, list the reasons and motivations to put off the old behavior and adopt the new.
 - vs 3,4
 - vs 9
 - v 12
 - v 5,6
 - v 10
 - v 13

2. This section warns of classes of sins to avoid and general characteristics (attitudes) to put on. The conclusion is, "Whatever you do..., do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Note that the next section applies that principle to everyday relationships.

Lesson 6 - Behavior in Everyday Relationships (Colossians 3:18-4:6)

A. General Preparation

1. Think about the characteristics that we should "put on." listed in Lesson 5 (Col 3:10-17). How and when are these expressed? Should they be the most obvious to our family, co-workers, and neighbors?
2. Look up the word "redeeming," as used in 4:5.

B. Outline of the Text

- V. Behavior in Everyday Relationships (Col 3:18-4:6)
 - A. Family Relationships (3:18-21)
 - B. Servants and Masters (3:22-4:1)
 - C. Exhortations to Prayer and Wise Living (4:2-6)

C. Questions from the Text

1. Describe a Christian's responsibility toward:
 - a. Her husband
 - b. His Wife
 - c. His Parents
 - d. His Children
 - e. His Master (employer)
 - f. His Slaves
 - g. His Job of any Kind
 - h. His Everyday Religious Activities
 - i. Paul (preachers)
 - j. Outsiders
2. Now for the responsibilities listed above, note those that mention "the Lord" or an equivalent term as part of the explanation or motivation for this responsibility. List the phrases used above. How does this reference fit with the theme of the book?
3. What should be our prayer for an evangelist? (4:3,4)
4. What is involved in living wisely? (4:5,6) Explain the use of the term "redeeming".
5. Describe the character of (and preparation required for) acceptable speech.

D. Analysis and Application

1. In this section, what is said about the responsibility of others to us (that is, our "rights"?) What is said about prayer for ourselves? Who was praying for the Colossians? (Remember 1:3,9,13)
2. For the relationships in part C.1. above, put a check by the ones that apply to you. Now rate yourself (**P**oor, **F**air, **G**ood, **E**xcellent) in your compliance with the commands given. For any that

are not excellent, list at least two specific actions that you could take this next week to move toward better obedience to these commands.

Lesson 7 - Personal Greetings to and from Christians (Colossians 4:7-18)

A. **Biographies.** Pick three of the characters below (choose at least one from #1-3) and find other places in the Bible where they are mentioned, giving the references in chronological order. List what is known of the events of their lives, especially work for the church (with locations, if possible), and association with Paul. Then list what may be surmised about their character and faithfulness.

1. Luke (v 14)

2. Barnabas (v 10)

3. Mark (v 10)

4. Onesimus & Philemon (v 9)

5. Tychicus (v 7)

6. Aristarchus (v 10)

7. Demas (v 14)

8. Epaphras (vs, 12,13; also 1:7)

B. **Analysis and Application.** Why might Paul have included so many personal references in this letter (in contrast to the Ephesian letter which has very few)?