

Colossians

1:1 Paul, an apostle of the Messiah Jesus through the will of God, and brother Timothy¹ **1:2** to the set-apart ones in Colossae and believing brothers in the Messiah—grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.²

1:3 When we pray, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, for you,³ **1:4** because we have heard of your belief in the Messiah Jesus and the love which you have for all those who are set-apart,⁴ **1:5** on account of the hope which is stored away for you in the heavens, which you heard about beforehand in the message of the truth of the good news,⁵ **1:6** which has come to you. Just as it is certainly bearing fruit and increasing in all the world, to the same degree it is also bearing fruit and increasing in you from the day you heard and understood the grace of God contained in the truth,⁶ **1:7** just as you learned about it from our beloved fellow-slave Epaphras, who is a faithful servant of the Messiah on your behalf.⁷ **1:8** And he informed us of your love because of the Spirit.⁸

1:9 On account of this, we also, from the day we heard, have not ceased praying for you and asking that you be filled with the true knowledge of His desire in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,⁹ **1:10** so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, to the extent that everything you do is pleasing to Him—[1] bearing fruit by means of every good action, and [2] increasing in a true knowledge of God,¹⁰ **1:11** [3] being made capable with all power according to His glorious strength for all perseverance and long-suffering,¹¹ **1:12** [4] with joy thanking the Father who, by means of the light, has made you qualified for a portion of the inheritance of those who are set apart.¹²

1:13 He rescued us from the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His Son of love,¹³ **1:14** in whom we have deliverance, the forgiveness of our sins.¹⁴ **1:15** He is the icon of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,¹⁵ **1:16** because all things in the heavens and on the earth were created in regard to him, all things visible and invisible, whether thrones, lordships, rulers, or authorities. All things have been created with him in view and for him.¹⁶

1:17 Indeed, he is before all things, and all things have been put in their place in regard to him.¹⁷

1:18 For example, he is the head of the body of the gathering. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he may be the one who takes preeminence in regard to the all,¹⁸ **1:19** because He was pleased for all the fullness to dwell in him,¹⁹ **1:20** and through him to reconcile the all to Himself, whether those on the earth or in the heavens, having made peace through his blood of the cross.²⁰

1:21 Certainly, in the past, you were alienated and enemies in your mind in the midst of evil actions.²¹ **1:22** But now He has reconciled you with the body of his flesh through death to present you as set apart, acceptable, and beyond criticism in His presence,²² **1:23** if indeed you continue in your belief, having been established, solidly in place, and without being moved away from the hope of the good news which you heard, which has been proclaimed in all the creation under heaven, for which I, Paul, became a servant.²³

1:24 As it is, I rejoice on your behalf in my sufferings, as I fill up the shortages of the afflictions of the Messiah with my flesh on behalf of his body, which is the gathering,²⁴ **1:25** for which I became a servant for your benefit, according to God's arrangement, which was given to me for you, in order to fill out the message of God,²⁵ **1:26** the mystery which has been hidden during past ages and generations. However, now, it has been manifested to those who are set apart and who belong to Him,²⁶ **1:27** to whom among the Gentiles God desired to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is the Messiah in you, the hope of glory.²⁷

1:28 We proclaim him, while we admonish every man and teach every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man as having accomplished his goal (*telos*) (τέλειον) in the

Messiah.²⁸ 1:29 Indeed, I am laboring towards this goal, as I struggle in accordance with His activity which He is working within me with His power.²⁹

2:1 I want you to know how great a struggle I am having on your behalf and on behalf of those in Laodicea, in fact on behalf of as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,³⁰ 2:2 so that their hearts may be encouraged, while being brought together in [God's] love and towards all the riches of a complete certainty of understanding, which is to say towards a true knowledge of the mystery of God, the Messiah,³¹ 2:3 in whom are all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge.³²

2:4 I am saying this so that no one deceives you with a false argument.³³ 2:5 For even if I am physically absent, nevertheless, I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and watching your orderliness and the steadfastness of your belief in the Messiah.³⁴ 2:6 Therefore, just as you received the Messiah Jesus, the Lord, live in him,³⁵ 2:7 being firmly rooted and built up in him, in addition to being established in your belief, just as you were taught. While overflowing with gratitude,³⁶ 2:8 see to it that there is no one who takes control of you through love for human wisdom and worthless deception in accordance with traditional teachings of men, in accordance with the basic principles of the world, instead of according to the Messiah,³⁷ 2:9 because all the fullness of God dwells in him bodily.³⁸ 2:10 Indeed, you have been fullness-ed in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.³⁹

2:11 In him, you were indeed circumcised with a circumcision done without hands, by the removal of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of the Messiah,⁴⁰ 2:12 and you were buried with him by means of baptism, in which you were also raised together with him in view of belief in the work of God, who raised him from the dead.⁴¹

2:13 And when you were dead in the midst of your moral transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with him, because He has forgiven all our moral transgressions.⁴² 2:14 He has canceled out the record of legal debts that condemned us. In fact, He removed it from our midst by nailing it to the cross,⁴³ 2:15 thereby disarming the rulers and authorities. He boldly disgraced them publicly and led them in triumphal procession because of him.⁴⁴

2:16 Therefore, do not let someone condemn you in regard to food or drink or your taking part in a festival, a new moon, or a Sabbath.⁴⁵ 2:17 These are a shadow of future things, but the real thing has to do with the Messiah.⁴⁶ 2:18 Let no one cheat you out of your prize by taking pleasure in humility and the worship of the *angeloi*, which things he has perceived and goes into great detail, because he is conceited in vain by his mind of flesh.⁴⁷ 2:19 Indeed, he does not hold on to the head, in accordance with which the whole body, while being supported and held together by joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that comes from God.⁴⁸

2:20 If you died with the Messiah with respect to the basic principles of the world, why, as those who are living in the world, would you put yourself under moral obligation to⁴⁹ 2:21 "Do not grasp; do not taste; do not touch,"⁵⁰ 2:22 which all are things for destruction by being consumed? In accordance with the commandments and teachings of men,⁵¹ 2:23 such things, while having a message of wisdom in self-made religion and humility and harsh treatment of the body, are of no value against the gratification of the flesh.⁵²

3:1 Therefore, if you were raised with the Messiah, seek the things above where the Messiah has been seated at the right hand of God.⁵³ 3:2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of the earth,⁵⁴ 3:3 because you have died and your life has been hidden with the Messiah in God.⁵⁵ 3:4 When the Messiah, our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.⁵⁶

3:5 Therefore, put to death the "members" on earth—sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and boundaryless evil, which constitutes the worship of idols.⁵⁷ 3:6 On account of these things, the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience,⁵⁸ 3:7 among whom you also formerly acted as a way of life when you were living by means of these things.⁵⁹

3:8 You should now put all these things aside—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech which comes out of your mouth.⁶⁰ **3:9** Do not lie to one another, because you have taken off the old man with his practices,⁶¹ **3:10** and you have put on the new man, who is being renewed towards a true knowledge in accordance with the icon of the One who created him,⁶² **3:11** whereby there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, neither barbarian, Scythian, slave, nor freeman. Instead, the Messiah is everyone and in everyone.⁶³

3:12 Therefore, as those who are the chosen of God, set apart and loved, certainly put on an inwardness of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,⁶⁴ **3:13** bearing with one another and forgiving one another, whoever has a complaint against someone. Just as the Lord forgives you, so also should you forgive others.⁶⁵ **3:14** Above all these, put on love, which is the bond that makes for reaching the goal (*telos*) (τῆς τελειότητος).⁶⁶ **3:15** And let the peace/*shalom* of the Messiah, to which you were called in one body, dominate in your hearts, and be thankful.⁶⁷

3:16 Let the message of the Messiah dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another—as you sing with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God with thankfulness in your hearts.⁶⁸ **3:17** And whatever you do in speech or action, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, being thankful to God the Father because of him.⁶⁹

3:18 Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.⁷⁰

3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter against them.⁷¹

3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing in the Lord.⁷²

3:21 Fathers, do not irritate your children, so that they do not become discouraged.⁷³

3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters according to everything, not as men-pleasers when they are watching, but with a single-mindedness of heart, because you fear the Lord.⁷⁴ **3:23** Whatever you do, do by virtue of your existence, as for the Lord and not for men,⁷⁵ **3:24** knowing that you will receive the “wage” of the inheritance from the Lord. You are slaves of the Messiah, the Lord.⁷⁶

3:25 He who does wrong will receive the consequences of what he has done wrong, and this without partiality.⁷⁷

4:1 Masters, allow your slaves to experience moral behavior and equality, knowing that you have a master in heaven.⁷⁸

4:2 Be persistent in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving,⁷⁹ **4:3** praying at the same time for us, that God will open for us a door for the message, in order to talk about the mystery of the Messiah, because of which I am in prison,⁸⁰ **4:4** so that I may reveal it just as it is required that I speak.⁸¹

4:5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom towards outsiders, buying up the season.⁸² **4:6** Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, in order that you may know how you must respond to each person.⁸³

4:7 Tychicus, the brother who is loved, a faithful servant, a fellow slave because of the Lord, will make you aware of everything concerning me.⁸⁴ **4:8** I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.⁸⁵ **4:9** I have sent him with Onesimus, the faithful brother who is loved, who is from you. They will inform you about the whole situation here.⁸⁶

4:10 Aristarchus, my fellow-prisoner, sends you his greetings. And Mark, Barnabas’ cousin, about whom you received instructions, if he comes to you, welcome him,⁸⁷ **4:11** as well as Jesus, who is

called Justus. They are from the circumcision. These are the only co-workers for the Kingdom of God. They have been an encouragement to me.⁸⁸

4:12 Epaphras, one of your own and a slave of the Messiah, greets you, always laboring on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand as those who have reached their goal and have become completely filled with the whole desire of God.⁸⁹ 4:13 I bear witness to the fact that he has great concern for you and those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.⁹⁰ 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as well as does Demas.⁹¹

4:15 Greet the brothers in Laodicea and Nympha, along with the gathering that it is in her house.⁹²

4:16 When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the gathering of the Laodiceans, and you should also read the letter that is coming from the Laodiceans.⁹³

4:17 Say to Archippus, "Pay attention to the service that you received because of the Lord, that you may complete it."⁹⁴

4:18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.⁹⁵

¹ Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς – Assuming that Paul wrote this letter while he was under house arrest in Rome awaiting an audience with Caesar Nero, it was written around A.D. 60. As usual, in this first verse Paul introduces himself as an apostle, a commissioned authoritative spokesman on behalf of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, Paul has the knowledge, ability, responsibility, and right to present the biblical message with the same level of accuracy and authority as Jesus himself. He also says in this verse that he was given this responsibility, etc. by God because it was what God desires, i.e., “through the will of God.”

Unlike Ephesians where Paul does not mention a co-author of the letter, he indicates that Timothy is writing this letter with him. From Acts 16, we learn that Timothy has become a faithful traveling companion from Lystra in central Turkey since Paul’s second missionary journey around A.D. 52. Thus, Timothy is an apostolic co-worker with Paul in Rome and writes and sends this letter just as Paul is.

² τοῖς ἐν Ἑκκοσσαῖς ἀγίοις καὶ πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ ὁ, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul and Timothy go on to say that they are addressing those who have been inwardly made different in the world by God, thus being “set-apart ones” or “saints” as some translations use, and who live in the city of Colossae in western Turkey. These are the same ones who are believers, which also identifies them as inwardly changed and open to the truth of the gospel which they have heard from their fellow Colossian Epaphras (cf. 1:7,8). The syntax suggests that the phrase “in the Messiah” refers not to the object of their belief, but to their being in the group which has Jesus of Nazareth as its main member. This primary person in the group is the Jewish Messiah, the advocate and high priest for sinful human beings at the final judgment, as well as the king of the eternal Kingdom of God, i.e., the one who fulfills the role of the final and permanent king of Israel of the Davidic Covenant.

Paul and Timothy also call these Colossians “brothers,” because they are members of the family of God, drawn into a relationship with Him and by Him of being His sons and daughters, those whom He has created to be with Jesus the Messiah in the eternal Kingdom of God.

In several letters, Paul mentions that he would have grace coming from both the transcendent Creator, the Father, and His instrument of mercy within the creation, Jesus the Messiah, who will stand so to speak with believing sinners at the judgment and act as their savior and advocate, which will result in eternal life for them. We know from other Bible passages that the judgment for these believers will be the return of Jesus when those who have died will be raised from the dead and those who are still alive will be lifted from the earth to meet Jesus as he descends to earth to restore the Kingdom of Israel and initiate the messianic and millennial kingdom of Revelation 20k (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4).

³ Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ὁ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Ὁ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε ἑπεὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι – cf. 1 Corinthians 1:4 for the use of πάντοτε, “I thank my God always for you (Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ ὁμοῦ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν), on the basis of the grace of God which was given to you in the Messiah Jesus.” This suggests the translation as I have rendered it for Colossians 1:3.

Paul and Timothy begin the body of this letter by stating that they are praying and very grateful to God for these Colossian believers. They now also identify God, the transcendent Creator, as the Father of the Messiah Jesus. Going back to 2 Samuel 7, we learn that the kings of Israel from the line of David were each the Son of God, which means that they ruled over God’s creation with a level of authority just under that of God Himself, which is what David is expressing in Psalm 8. And Jesus is the final Son of God, who will permanently and eternally rule over the millennial kingdom in the present realm according to Revelation 20 and the new and perfect creation of the future after it according to Revelation 21-22.

⁴ ἀκούσαντες τὴν πίσιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀγίους – Paul and Timothy had never met the Colossians and were not the ones who communicated the gospel to them. It was one of their own, Epaphras, who did so with the result that they believed (cf. vs. 6,7). Now, Epaphras has come to Paul and Timothy in Rome and reported the effect that God has caused of his teaching these people the message of Jesus as the Messiah.

There were two radical effects as mentioned throughout the NT letters which become the obvious and necessary characteristics of people who respond positively to the gospel. The first is that they adopt a new worldview and set of beliefs about the nature of reality, so that they now believe that there is a transcendent Creator who long ago chose the descendants of Abraham through Isaac, i.e., the Jews, to be His instruments of communicating Himself to the rest of the world, to the Gentiles, and that the most important Jew is Jesus of Nazareth, who is both their advocate at the final judgment and the king of the eternal Kingdom of God.

The second characteristic of authentically changed people is that they demonstrate a heartfelt care and concern for others who have gone through the same inward change by God, becoming believers in Jesus as the Messiah, because they know that these are the people with whom they will spend eternity (cf. v. 5). This love for those in the community of believers would have been far different from any obligation these Gentiles would have felt or considered towards their fellow followers of the pagan gods in the Greek/Roman culture of Colossae. As long as they were obeying the laws of the Roman Empire, they were treating the other pagan idolators adequately. However, now that they have become believers in Jesus as the Messiah and the God who sent him, the ethical behavior to which they had become obligated is much higher than they were used to. Indeed, Paul will go on to liken the ties that bind them together as the same as those which tie the members of a human body together with Jesus as the head (cf. 1:17,24).

⁵ διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – Paul and Timothy identify the intellectual and theological basis for the Colossians’ belief in Jesus and mutual love. It is God’s promise of future, eternal life, which allows the Colossians to have “hope,” an eager and confident expectation, in God’s providing them with the fulfillment of this promise. This thing, eternal life, is like something that God has stored in a safe place, keeping it there until He chooses the time to make it an actuality for authentic believers. It is “in the heavens,” meaning that nothing on earth can get to it and destroy it. It is in the mind of God and therefore indestructible, so that He will bring it about when He sovereignly chooses, i.e., at Jesus’ return and the end of the millennial kingdom.

It is this that is promised by God and which Epaphras (cf. v. 7) articulated to the Colossians “beforehand,” before this letter which Paul is writing them, that was such good news to them, because the ideas about it resonated as truth to them and was much better than the ideas of pagan idolatry that they had believed before. In other words, it really was “good news” and not the pathetic and hopeless ideas of pagan idolatry, like those of modern atheistic and so-called “scientific” Darwinian evolution.

It makes sense that Paul and Timothy finish this sentence with the first words of v. 6, τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, “which has come to you.” In other words, the ideas of Jesus as the Messiah were genuinely presented to them by Epaphras, and they genuinely listened to these ideas (and embraced them!).

⁶ τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἔστιν καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον καθὼς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅφ’ ἥς ἡμέρας ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγυνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ – Paul and Timothy point out that there is a similarity between the effect of the presentation of the biblical ideas in other parts of the Roman Empire and the effect among the Colossians. However, it is not the ideas alone that are having this effect. But it is the inward work of the Spirit of God within the creation that takes hearing of these ideas by human beings and causes them to respond positively to them, thus capturing their imaginations with the correct view of the nature of reality and motivating them to want to learn more and to live their lives on the basis of these ideas.

Thus, the message is bearing fruit and increasing by the fact that more and more people, Jews and Gentiles, are believing it. And it is bearing fruit and increasing by the fact that the Colossians are coming to a better understanding of it.

And this bearing fruit in the Colossians has been happening since the Colossians understood what the grace of God is all about, i.e., His independently and kindly/lovingly choosing to change the hearts and minds of rebellious human beings in the midst of the profound, sinful problem of their not being able to change themselves. If God does not cause this change to occur, then it will not happen.

⁷ καθὼς ἔμαθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὅς ἐστιν πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ἑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Epaphras is mentioned in only this letter and Philemon, not in Acts. We know from Philemon that he is a traveling companion of Paul and one of his apostolic co-workers, along with people such as Luke. We learn here that it was not Paul who presented the message of Jesus as the Messiah to the Colossians, but Epaphras. Thus, Paul and Timothy are following up on what Epaphras has said and done.

They also say that Epaphras is one of those people who is loved by Paul and his companions, because he has become a committed disciple, student, and follower of Jesus as the Messiah, which happens to have been, in one sense, for the sake of the Colossians, because his life’s story resulted in his presenting them with the truth of the message of Jesus.

⁸ ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι – When Epaphras came to Rome to visit Paul, who is under house arrest and waiting for his turn to have an audience with Emperor Nero, he was able to tell Paul and Timothy about his fellow Colossians’ embracing the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah. In turn, this motivated them to love Paul and his companions [or, brought about their love for God? No, probably love in general for each other and all Christians in the light of the context of 1:4], which all occurred because the Spirit of God worked powerfully within them to changed them from pagan idolators to believers in the reality of the transcendent Creator, His story, and the focal point of this story, the Messiah Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

The love which identifies in his letters is not a feeling but a choice to worship and submit oneself to God and His eternal plans and to commit oneself to others who have the same worldview, belief, and obedience to help them in any way in their understanding of God, belief in Him, and obedience to Him.

Paul is going to emphasize in this letter the centrality of Jesus, which certainly in some way he does in every letter—especially in comparison to Moses and the Mosaic Covenant, which has been and continues to be the center of the Jews’ understanding of their relationship with God. Many of them are having a difficult time making the transition to Jesus’ being the center.

⁹ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὅφ’ ἥς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, οὐ πανύμεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, ἵνα πληρωθῇτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ – Assuming Paul is under house arrest in Rome as he describes in more detail in his letter to the Philippians, Epaphras has traveled from Colossae in western Turkey to Rome to visit Paul and, hopefully, be an encouragement to him, just as Timothy and Epaphroditus have been (cf. Philippians 2:19-30). Thus, Paul and Timothy have heard about the Colossians’ spiritual condition from Epaphras. This would also mean that this letter was written around A.D. 60.

As usual, Paul’s and Timothy’s prayer to God in regard to fellow believers in the Jesus Messiah is for as much knowledge which is true and that the human beings can fit into their minds be given to the Colossians. How is he expecting this to happen for the Colossians who unlike us have no Bibles, not even an Old Testament? I would assume

that it is by means of this letter and the letter coming from Laodicea (cf. 4:16), and it would seem with the help of Archippus who probably caught the attention of Epaphras because of his quick and complete grasp of the gospel which he shared with all of them and who encouraged him to continue to remind people of what the truth is (cf. 4:17). And notice that nowhere in this letter does Paul say that he has to correct anything which Epaphras initially taught them. Paul goes on to say that this knowledge includes God's "desire in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." This is accurate understanding of what God is up to within the creation and His purposes for having brought it into existence as well as precisely what God's desire is for Colossians as to how they should live their lives differently from when they were pagan idolators (or Jews). To gain this true knowledge makes a human being wise and a person of correct understanding in the midst of all the foolish and erroneous ideas circulating in the world about what this reality is all about and how people can and should live their lives.

Later in 2:10, Paul will comment that all the fullness of truth dwells in Jesus. This is to say that, if one wants to become a fully educated human being, then learn all one can about Jesus, regardless of how much someone may know about any other subject regarding the created reality.

¹⁰ περιπατήσαι ὁ ἁγίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἄρεσκειαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι ὅτι ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul and Timothy indicate that the purpose of having good and correct knowledge about the nature of reality and God's intentions for the creation is so that human beings can live out their existences on earth in conjunction with or commensurate with what God actually wants, i.e., "to walk worthy of the Lord." The Colossians are to behave in a way that is overall pleasing to God, while it is true that this is in the midst of continued sin on occasion because of a person's inherent sinfulness this side of Jesus' return. Paul mentions four things that are pleasing to God. Two of them are in this verse.

1. The first thing is demonstrating the fruit, the effects, of having genuine, biblical inwardness and correct knowledge of reality by means of the gospel. This fruit is good acts of morality, love, and mercy that in accord with God's moral commandments.

2. The second thing is to make progress however possible in growing in the knowledge and understanding of God as the transcendent Creator and author of this story of the cosmos.

¹¹ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν Μετὰ χαρᾶς – 3. The third thing is supernaturally having the ability to endure any level of suffering and pain with a person's authentic belief remaining intact, because God uses His glorious power to cause a person's belief to persevere by means of the inward work of His Spirit.

As Paul says in Ephesians 1:19-20 – 1:19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 1:20 which He brought about in the Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies.

In other places, Paul also refers to the glory of Jesus' return and his establishing the kingdom of God (cf. Ephesians 1:18). It is this same powerful glory which God will demonstrate when Christians enter into their final state of being characterized by moral perfection and an eternal body.

¹² εὐχαριστοῦντες ᾧ τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί – 4. The fourth thing is a genuine, biblical joy in the midst of any level of pain and suffering that even results in being grateful to God for what He has done and will do by causing an inwardly changed person to qualify to obtain his part in eternal life.

Like love, Christian joy is not so much a feeling but a choice to rejoice in God and all that He is doing for us both now in this age when we desperately need the strength to persevere in our faith and obey Him and later when He transforms us into morally perfect and eternal beings to live with Jesus in the Kingdom of God.

Paul says that God has accomplished this by making the Colossian Christians qualified for their eternal destiny by means of the "light," i.e., by enlightening their minds with the ideas of biblical truth and causing them to respond positively to these ideas by embracing them with genuine belief as the one and only true worldview. This happens to people who become radically different for everyone else in their world who foolishly embrace other ideas about reality that are not true. Light is the truth, and those who authentically believe the light of truth inherit eternal mercy and life.

The word κληρονομία seems to mean in both the OT and the NT a piece of land, a place, that someone can count on receiving later in their life or existence as a created human being, especially from God and because of one's association with and obedience to Him. Thus, based upon what Paul writes in Ephesians 5:5 (quoted below), these Colossians' "inheritance" is their part in the eternal Kingdom of God which He will bring about starting with the return of Jesus.

[Ephesians 5:5](#) For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance (κληρονομίαν) in the kingdom of Christ and God.

¹³ ὅς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ – Paul and Timothy now hitchhike off their mentioning "those who are set apart" in v. 12 to expand the first person plural pronoun to include the Colossian Christians and themselves. They describe not only what God has accomplished vis-à-vis the Colossian Christians and themselves, but also who Jesus actually is.

Here Paul begins his own explanation of what in v. 9 he said he wants to come to the Colossian Christians, "the true knowledge of [God's] desire in a spiritual wisdom and understanding." And this knowledge obviously centers in God's project for Jesus as the Messiah.

While God is really the only ultimate authority over and within the creation, He has written its story such that there two

sub-authorities, one in operation within it now, and another which later will destroy the first and take over. The sub-authority in operation now is Satan and his influence on people and cultures where his goal is to spread as many lies as possible in order to lead people away from God and the truth. The coming sub-authority is Jesus when he returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on this earth and then the new earth.

In this verse, Paul is saying that God has done something to the Colossian Christians such that they have made a break from Satan's sub-authority and committed themselves to submitting to God's and Jesus' authority, which is still possible in the meantime before Jesus' return when he destroys Satan's authority and establishes his own as the only one. In this realm before Jesus' return, we obey God's moral commandments within the context of our continuing to be sinners.

Jesus is God's Son, His proxy and representative as the Davidic king on this earth. He is also the Son "of love," which with the following statements about Christians receiving redemption and forgiveness through him means that he has loved Christians in such a way as to bring about their eternal salvation from God's justice and destruction.

¹⁴ ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν ἡμῶν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν – This is how Jesus has loved Christians. It is in him, i.e., in being associated with him through belief in him and become a member of his "body," that Jesus' death effectively brings about deliverance and freedom from God's condemnation and therefore forgiveness of sins from God that releases a person from being subjected to His wrath and its results.

ἀπολύτρωσις = release and deliverance from a captive condition or from a very, very undesirable situation. Thus, Paul uses a term for release from slavery in the Roman Empire to refer to deliverance from the very undesirable position of being under God's wrath, condemnation, and destruction as His eternal punishment for our sins against Him. This word is used also in Ephesians 1:7,14;4:30.

¹⁵ ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως – This statement identifies Jesus as unique among all other human beings in history. He is the image and representation of God within the human race. In other words, Jesus is God on earth, God as a human being, God within the creation. As God is telling His story about His justice and mercy towards people of the human face, Jesus is the only person who walked this earth and could be said to be God, the morally perfect and just God.

Thus, Jesus is like the image in a photograph, which is the same as the person whom the image represents. Therefore, while it is theologically impossible to see the transcendent Creator in His transcendence, because a person would have to become uncreated, it is possible to see the icon and image of God within the creation, Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, Jesus is the physical and created representation of the non-physical, transcendent, and uncreated God.

cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

In addition, Paul and Timothy call Jesus the "firstborn of all creation," indicating that he has the right as the Son of God to inherit whatever God would leave him as the inheritance of God, which the Bible describes as the whole creation itself. Therefore, Jesus owns the whole creation as its ruler within the creation. But this also implies that those who belong to Jesus as his brothers and sisters, i.e., other believers throughout history, own the creation with him. It is just that he has the highest status within it because first of all he is the icon of God among the human race. We are all "second born of all creation."

¹⁶ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται – Here is an explanation of what it means for Jesus to be the "firstborn of all creation." God made the cosmos specifically for the Messiah, so that he could rule over the entire cosmos and conquer all the evil within it once he qualified to do so through his life, death, and resurrection (cf. Hebrews). Thus, "in him," i.e., in regard to Jesus as the icon of God on earth and firstborn of all creation, God has made the creation.

Sometimes Paul uses τὰ πάντα to refer to the complete aggregate of authentic believers in God. cf. Ephesians 4:4-10, "He who 'descends' is also he who 'ascends' far above all of the heavens, in order that he fill out the all." But because Paul includes thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities in this "all," it refers to all things and especially other authorities who try to impose their worldview on other people. All these things and people have been created for the purpose of Jesus' demonstrating his greater authority and understanding of truth.

cf. Ephesians 6:10-12 where Paul lists some of these things as that which comprise the evil within the present realm. Similarly, here he is saying that these things were created for the purpose of the Messiah's demonstrating his power and authority over them. Any other human being who attempts to exercise religious authority over others with the intent to declare or encourage them to believe what is truth contrary to the biblical message about how to understand reality and live morally within it will find that Jesus is greater in authority than he is and will ultimately crush him because of his rebellion against God.

Plus, there are visible realities which we can obviously see within the cosmos, especially human authorities who are spreading lies and misinformation about reality, and there are invisible realities which are a part of the creation but beyond the ability of our eyes to see, e.g., Satan, angels, and others.

God has created all these things with Jesus' in view and in mind and for him and what He has purposed for him to become their primary authority—either to destroy them because of their rebellion against God or to rescue them from God's wrath and condemnation because of their genuine belief and obedience.

Here is a portion of the note from Ephesians 6:12 – While one option is that Paul is talking about invisible rulers and

authorities among the spiritual beings who are behind the lies and evil of the world's cultures, as in 2:2 (i.e., Satan specifically as the head of all invisible, evil authority), here it makes more sense to interpret him as referring to earthly religious rulers whose power and force in the context of their man-made religious systems influence people away from God. Thus, Paul views the religious rulers of this world, those who rise to the highest level of power and authority in their respective religious organizations and movements, etc. to be the prime examples of rebellion against God and who influence others the most in rebelling against God. Paul would have in mind, for example, the rulers of Judaism who are featured in the gospels as opposed to Jesus while claiming to be proponents of the OT Mosaic Covenant, and other Jews who reacted in a hostile manner to Paul's message wherever he went. He would also have in mind the religious rulers of the pagan religions in the Roman Empire who reacted in like manner to Paul. In our day, Paul would have in mind the religious rulers who are secularists and even scientists who deny the existence of God and promote and condone behavior in opposition to God's moral commandments. Thus, all these kinds of religious rulers place themselves in line with the *diabolos* (adversary) who lives in the invisible, spiritual realm. Therefore, the enemy of the Christian is religion, any kind of "religion" whether explicitly worshipping other "gods" or implicitly worshipping the natural world, which would seek to seduce us away from the purity and simplicity of belief in Jesus the Messiah and buy into a "system" of religion that actually distorts the biblical message of belief and love of God and people.

Also see Colossians 2:10;15.

¹⁷ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν – Continuing with the thought from the previous verse, Jesus, the Messiah, has a preeminent position in terms of his value and status in comparison to everything else that exists within the creation, especially all other human beings. Jesus is more important than all galaxies, all solar systems, all stars and planets, all animals, all plants, and all other human beings in history.

Thus, Jesus is the focal point of all that God is doing with His creation. This means, too, that every element of the creation exists exactly where it is and in the midst of whatever it is doing and is happening to it in regard to Jesus. Everything is contributing to the story of Jesus exactly as God wants it to, so that literally nothing is out of place. Therefore, everything serves God's purposes of eventually making Jesus the ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God after he exercises the very important responsibility as every authentic believer's advocate and intercessor at the final judgment.

¹⁸ καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὃς ἐστιν ἡ ἀρχὴ πρωτότοκος ὅτι τῶν νεκρῶν ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων – Here it is appropriate to change the interpretation of *πᾶσιν* from all things to all those in the Messiah because Paul is speaking metaphorically of the "body of the Messiah," where Jesus is its "head" and believers are the "body." His body, therefore, includes all those of authentic faith during human history.

Thus, Jesus is the leader and primary member of the entire collection of those who authentically believe that he is God's anointed king and final high-priest—as well as previous authentic believers in OT times such as Abraham, et al. It is as though they comprise his "body," and he comprises the "head" and primary part of this "body." They derive from him their purpose in life and manner of living. In this and other contexts where Paul and his co-writers have mentioned the ideas of head and body to refer to Jesus and his followers, Paul means that Jesus is the ultimate teacher of truth through his apostles who were given the responsibility by God to convey this truth with the same authority and accuracy as Jesus. Cf. 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5.

Thus, Jesus also should be seen as at the "beginning" of a long line of human beings, "the all" from both the past and future, who will inhabit the eternal Kingdom of God after they have died similarly to Jesus. While all believers stand in line after Jesus, he is the first one who has been raised by God from the dead, in the sense that he takes precedence over all other human beings who will obtain citizenship in the Kingdom of God. It really is he who "owns" this kingdom as his inheritance and allows the rest of us to live in it and to occupy a portion of it for his and the Father's sake.

¹⁹ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα ἑαυτοῦ κατακλῆσαι – Here is a theological reason for why Jesus has the highest position of status and value within the eternal Kingdom of God. It is because either—

1) the transcendent Creator chose to manifest Himself in Jesus as a human being, to incorporate Himself into the story of creation through the role of the Son of God and the Messiah, the Davidic king, which obviously makes Jesus vastly different from any previous Son of God and king of Israel, including David, or

2) God chose to have all that people ought to know, acknowledge, and understand that is truly important about God and the nature of reality and that leads to their reaching their existential goal as human beings to exist as this person, Jesus of Nazareth and all that he is about. In other words, everything that a sinful human being ought to know to be considered wise and understanding is everything that this person can learn about Jesus of Nazareth.

Because of the way that Paul uses the verb form in Colossians 1:9 (πληρωθῆτε), the noun form τὸ πλήρωμα and the verb form in Colossians 2:9,10 (τὸ πλήρωμα; ἐστὲ...πεπληρωμένοι), and the verb form in Colossians 4:12 (πεπληρωμένοι, thinking that the MT has the correct word), he is referring to the second point above. This is to say that "fullness" per se is the complete knowledge of God and reality that is possible to learn and understand within the creation. And this is why Paul prays that these relatively new Christians whom he has not personally met would "be filled with the true knowledge of His desire in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Colossians 1:9). The knowledge of Jesus is the knowledge that will fill them to the fullness of what a person can know about Jesus which is the fullness that is even possible for a human being to know about God and His eternal plans and purposes.

A sinful human being obtains "fullness" by virtue of discovering and embracing the ideas involving the Jewish Messiah Jesus, not Moses or any other human being, because Jesus is the embodiment of knowledge in the sense that everything

in the created reality makes sense in the light of who he is and what he does. Thus, the believer who obtains the fullness of this fullness of knowledge of Jesus places himself on the road to the proper existential goal that God has designed into the created reality—eternal mercy and life from God in the Kingdom of God of the next, eternal realm. Our earthly goal is to know all that is possible about Jesus the Messiah (Colossians 4:12) so that we may reach our eternal goal of life in the Kingdom of God. It is not to know all that is possible about Moses and the Mosaic Covenant, which Paul will argue in chapter 2.

There are actually a total of four options for the word “fullness”—

- 1) that which fully reveals God to the extent that a created, human being can do so,
- 2) that in the creation which gives meaning and purpose to everything else, including God, when it is known and understood,
- 3) the entire group of believers throughout history who obtain eternal life through Jesus (cf. Ephesians),
- 4) full, ontological deity.

The fourth option is the most common interpretation in line with the traditional view of the trinity and Jesus’ being the co-eternal 2nd person. The first option is similar to the fourth. But the second option, as stated above, is the most coherent in Colossians in the light of how both “fullness” and “filled” are being used by Paul in this context.

Jesus “takes preeminence among everyone” (1:18) because everything which a sinful human being really needs to know for the sake of his living out his human existence in the best possible manner is found in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 2:2,3).

This is not the same as Paul’s use of fullness in Ephesians (option #3) where it is the entire group of people, both Jews and Gentiles, who make up the “chosen people of God” in regard to the eternal kingdom. This group is “in the Messiah” as opposed to the Jews’ thinking that they must be “in Moses” through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. So, fullness of knowledge and understanding by knowing all one can know about Jesus (here in Colossians) vs. fullness of the entire group of people chosen by God for eternal life (in Ephesians).

²⁰ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς ᾧ αὐτὸν εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ ὅτι αὐτοῦ]· εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς – And the ultimate purpose of Jesus’ being the center of attention within creation history is so that God can use him to make peace between all authentic, sinful believers and Himself. This includes those who have died and are “in the heavens,” thus guaranteed by God to be resurrected from the dead, and those who are still alive on earth when Jesus returns. And Jesus has brought this about by his own sacrifice on the cross, not by the Levitical offerings of bulls and goats according to the Mosaic Covenant.

Paul has said in Romans 1 that all human beings are hostile towards God and fundamentally rebels against Him, without any ability of their own to stop rebelling and escape God’s justice and punishment of destruction which they deserve. However, God has provided Jesus as the very instrument of His granting people mercy. But Jesus had to qualify for this role by willingly dying on a cross. Thus Jesus can take people who were wholly at war with God during their existences on earth and move God to grant them peace and mercy because God has changed them inwardly during the course of their lives to embrace the truth of the biblical message and to look forward to His eternal mercy. This will involve those who have already died and are guaranteed by God to be resurrected from the dead (“in the heavens”) or who are still alive when Jesus returns (“on the earth”).

²¹ Καὶ ὑμᾶς ποτε ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους καὶ ἐχθροὺς τῇ διανοίᾳ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς – Now Paul refers specifically to the Colossian Christians and the transition which has occurred for them by having becoming believers in the Jewish Messiah Jesus.

As stated by him in Romans 1, these Colossian Christians began their lives as abject rebels against God and fundamentally evil in every aspect of their humanity, even if they looked or did that which appeared to be “good.” They were “alienated” from the one, true God to the point that they were choosing to be His enemies, refusing to submit themselves to Him and obey Him.

²² νυνὶ δὲ ᾧ ἀποκατήλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου ᾧ παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἀγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ – Yet, God has done something marvelous with these Colossians. He has brought about peace between Him and them by means of Jesus’ death on the cross by which he qualified to intercede for them when he returns and God judges them. They are now no longer at odds with one another. God is no longer looking forward to getting angry with the Colossians and condemning them and destroying them. And besides not having to fear God’s wrath anymore, the Colossians no longer are themselves unwilling to humble themselves before Him, repent of their sin, and also obey Him. Plus they can always approach God with bold confidence because of Jesus’ having qualified through his death on the cross to be their advocate. This will result in His presenting them to God when he returns as those whom He will forgive, who are no longer liable for punishment because of their sinfulness. They will be beyond criticism and accusation by even God because of Jesus’ intercession for them in the presence of God.

Another way to say this — by virtue of the Colossians’ positive response to the apostolic message that Epaphras presented to them, it can be said that God has destined them to receive the eternally beneficial effect of Jesus’ death, his advocating for them at the final judgment so that they will live eternal lives as those who were hostile enemies of God but now have become friends of God whose relationship has been mended and put right. Thus, God will be able to present the Colossian Christians to Himself as those who qualify for eternal mercy at the final judgment by virtue of His having set them apart as those who have persevered in their belief in the midst of and through the hardships of the

present realm. This means, too, that they will be radically different at the judgment from those who rebel against God during their entire lives, thus being acceptable to God, so that no one can bring a charge against them and prevent God from banishing them from His presence by destroying them when He executes His justice on those who have not been inwardly changed by the work of His Spirit.

²³ εἰ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἐδραῖοι ὡκαὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὐ ἡκούσατε, τοῦ κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ ἡ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν, οὐ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἑδιάκονος – However, the peace and future salvation from His wrath and destruction which God has brought about through Jesus is only good if the Colossians fulfill a very important condition. They must persevere in their genuine belief in God and Jesus throughout the rest of their lives. And this will be because they have been established in their faith such that they are solidly in a place of faith which no wind or storm of life can dislodge them. This will be because they are never moved away in their minds and hearts and wills from remaining spiritually committed to God's future promise and guarantee of eternal life and salvation which they heard about in the good news from Epaphras and which Paul as an apostolic servant of God and the Messiah proclaims everywhere he has the opportunity.

Another way to say this – It will be necessary for the Colossians, and, by implication, any Christian, to believe enduringly through all the difficult circumstances of life that could possibly derail a sinful human being's belief. Also, this kind of endurance happens to and for only people who go through a genuine, theological process of God's changing them. God commits Himself to causing them by His own transcendent power to continue to expect with confidence the promise of eternal life the great ideas of the apostolic message with which they have been presented and to which they have listened with the result that they have embraced these ideas as true.

These ideas are being presented within the creation as far as God has caused it to do so. Paul singles himself out as someone who serves this message by talking about wherever he goes with the apostolic authority that Jesus specifically gave him on behalf of the Gentiles.

²⁴ Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία – Paul continues with the first person singular in order to point to himself mainly here.

He rejoices for the sake of the Colossian Christians that he is suffering house arrest in Rome (and all the persecution which he has endured up till this time), because, from an existential standpoint, there is never enough affliction which the followers of Jesus who make up his "body" while he is the "head" are experiencing—as God tests their belief and as He uses them to reveal to the religious rulers and authorities His power, grace, and steadfastness in accomplishing His ultimate purpose of bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God. Jesus suffered the rejection and persecution of a hostile world, and his followers down through history until his return must expect to do the same to some degree or another. And Paul as an apostle can say that he has a privileged position within the community of believers as a target of persecution in the Roman world.

1 Corinthians 4:9 For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

Thus, he is probably being a bit ironic in saying that "he is filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of the Messiah." While the statement in this verse in other translations may sound as though Paul thinks that Jesus' death on the cross lacked all that was necessary to rescue people from God's justice, i.e., that it was deficient and lacking in complete effect for saving sinners, he does not mean this. He cannot mean it, because he so carefully and completely explains in Hebrews that Jesus did qualify to be our high priest at the judgment by virtue of the suffering that he experienced. Therefore, here Paul means that God's plan was not for the Messiah only to suffer in the present realm, but for his followers to do so also, especially his authoritative spokesmen, the apostles. Even Jesus spoke of what Paul was going to have to endure in order to fulfill his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles, when he said to Ananias in Damascus, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; **for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake**" (Acts 9:15,16).

Therefore, the "shortages" or "deficiencies" (τὰ ὑστερήματα) are not actually shortcomings or flaws on Jesus' part when he suffered, but simply not the only suffering which God has planned within history to demonstrate the sinfulness of mankind and their hostility towards Him and the truth. Included in this didactic suffering is that of Paul, and probably the other apostles as well, as they all encounter a world which is fundamentally hostile (cf. 1:21).

Consequently, Paul, having been falsely accused in Jerusalem, imprisoned in Caesarea Maritima for two years, and now imprisoned in Rome is having to go through some rather extreme suffering on behalf of the rest of the people who are believers in Jesus as the Messiah, as he continues to carry out his responsibility as their authoritative spokesman for Jesus the Messiah.

In this way, he is acting for the "body" so to speak of Jesus, who is its "head" and chief spokesman of the biblical truth. As a result, every Christian to some extent fills up the shortages of the suffering of the Messiah by experiencing the hostility of the world and its effects that bring affliction and suffering to true believers. And this very well may be part of the reason Paul mentions his own suffering, as alerting the Colossians that they too will endure hardship and even persecution for the sake of the gospel. And this will be the case for all Christians until Jesus returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth.

Cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:10, "as we pray earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply the shortage (τὰ ὑστερήματα) in your belief"—by providing the Thessalonian Christians with more teaching about the truth of the

gospel, resulting in the growth of their knowledge and understanding in the midst of their filling up the shortages of afflictions of the Messiah through his community of believers.

²⁵ ἥς ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul was assigned by God the responsibility to serve people, particularly Gentiles, who would become followers of Jesus as the Messiah. This, in turn, has been of great benefit to the people in Colossae through his co-worker Epaphras according to God's sovereign plan and orchestrating history. This has all been part of the story that God has written in His mind and is bringing into existence on a moment-by-moment basis as the transcendent Creator. Thus, Paul's activities are part of the process of God's completing the story, whose end is to gather a group of people who will live eternally with Jesus as their king in the Kingdom of God.

Thus, Paul's serving God is according to His managing the story as He has planned for the sake of the Colossian Christians. In this way, he helps to fill out the message of God in the sense that he proclaims it and assists sinful human beings in becoming full of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of God and what He is up to in the created reality, especially on this earth with Jesus as the focus of His plans.

Cf. **Ephesians 3:1** On account of this, I Paul, the prisoner of the Messiah Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles... **3:2** since, indeed, you have heard of the arrangement (τὴν οἰκονομίαν) of the grace of God which was given to me and intended for you, **3:3** that, according to a revelation, the mystery was made known to me, just as I wrote above in brief. **3:4** In regard to this, as you read, you are able to understand my grasp of the mystery of the Messiah, **3:5** which, in other generations, was not made known to the sons of men as it now has been revealed to his set-apart apostles and prophets by the Spirit, **3:6** to the effect that the Gentiles are co-heirs, co-body members, and co-possessors of the promise in the Messiah Jesus by means of the good news, **3:7** of which I became a servant according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me in line with the operation of His power.

Cf. **3:8** To me, the least of all those who are set apart, this grace was given—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incomprehensible wealth of the Messiah,²⁵ **3:9** indeed to bring to light for all what is the plan of the mystery (ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου), which has been hidden for ages within God, who is the Creator of all things.

²⁶ τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν – νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ – A mystery is information that has not been completely revealed up to this point. It is something which is understandable and spoken of, as the Messiah is spoken of in the OT, but it is not yet clear because the Messiah has not yet appeared. As a result, one's understanding of it becomes full or filled out once the Messiah enters into the created reality and it is made clear.

Thus, the logos and message of which Paul is speaking is regarding the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. God has now made it clear who, what, how, and why the Messiah is the central element of the story of His creation, which includes his having to suffer in order to qualify to be our King and High Priest. Thus, the mystery is the *Jewish* Messiah Jesus as the King and Priest of both Jews and Gentiles.

The Old Testament provided good and accurate information about the Messiah, his suffering, and his goal of becoming both king and priest for Jews and Gentiles. However, deriving a completely clear picture of the Messiah from the Old Testament is not a simple and straightforward task. As a result, we can understand why the Jews, even after studying the Old Testament, were still a little hazy on who and what the Messiah would be. Then, when Jesus arrived on the scene in Israel, performed miracles, and ultimately suffered death on a cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, the “mystery” was cleared up, and God made available to people and even causes authentic believers to learn all the fullness of knowledge of the Messiah which He intended to communicate.

Consequently, those whom God has made different from the rest of the world *among both the Jewish ethnic group and all the Gentile ethnic groups* by changing them inwardly so that they no longer fundamentally rebel against God have had this message proclaimed to them, and they are now owned by God as His people, i.e., as those who understand clearly through the gospel the “mystery” of the Messiah—“Christ in you [whether Jew or Gentile, and there in Colossae mainly Gentiles], the hope of glory.” They have been fullnessed by God through Jesus and his apostles, and now through the New Testament to the extent that we can figure out exactly what it says.

²⁷ οἷς ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς γνωρίσαι τί τὸ πλοῦτος ἡ δόξης τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὃ ἐστὶν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης – Paul said in v. 25 that he became a servant of the people who become believers in the Messiah, but Paul is the apostle specifically to the Gentiles. Therefore, he mentions them in this verse as those to whom he has revealed the truth about the Messiah through his fulfilling his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles such that someone like Epaphras was able to act appropriately as his apostolic co-worker.

Thus, God's purposes have been to involve not only Abraham's descendants through Isaac, the Jews, but also all other kinds of people in the world, the Gentiles. Paul describes the content of the message of Jesus as the Messiah, which has now become clear through his first appearance, as being extremely valuable, because the outcome for people who embrace this message is their own being made glorious and magnificent by God's changing them into morally perfect people in the eternal Kingdom of God. It is this that the Colossian Christians can confidently and eagerly expect, while they hold Jesus the Messiah in their thoughts and retain the ideas that they have learned about him within themselves. This is “the Messiah in [them], the hope of glory.” They believe in Jesus, that are followers of Jesus, and they can confidently expect to share in his glory when he returns and establishes on this earth the first stage of the Kingdom of God.

²⁸ ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες ὅτι πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ, ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ – This is how Paul specifically fills out the message of God. He speaks about Jesus with wherever he goes, and he also encourages each of his listeners with the true wisdom, i.e., “all wisdom,” that is contained in the ideas about Jesus. Paul also says that his purpose in doing so is to be able to bring before God people who have completed the only proper and existential goal for human beings, that of believing in and following Jesus as the Messiah throughout their entire lives from the moment they become believers to the moment of either their death or Jesus’ return, whichever occurs first. Thus, they do this “in the Messiah,” i.e., within the context of being his followers and associated with him.

²⁹ εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει – Paul describes his own existence as a diligent laborer, working hard and struggling against all opposition to the truth of God that comes from rebellious human beings. Yet, his struggle is not on the basis of his own innate, human power. He knows that, because God has chosen him and assigned him the responsibility to be the apostle to the Gentiles, that God is committed to working faithfully and powerfully within him to bring about the actions that Paul engages in to fulfill this responsibility.

Cf. **Ephesians 3:8** To me, the least of all those who are set apart, this grace was given—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incomprehensible wealth of the Messiah.

³⁰ Θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἵνα καὶ ὅσοι οὐχ ἑώρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί – Looking at Paul’s letters to communities of Christians to whom he had personally presented the apostolic message of Jesus the Messiah, it is easy to conclude that his greatest desire was for these people to continue in their belief so that they would ultimately obtain for themselves eternal salvation from God’s wrath and condemnation. This would also affirm his own calling by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles as he worked hard to communicate the message of truth and exhort all the new believers to persevere in their Christianity. Indeed, he struggled to write what would ultimately be the most helpful to these communities so that they would endure various problematic and/or painful situations with genuine belief.

Now, as a result of Colossians, it is possible to imagine how much more Paul is struggling emotionally and spiritually as he writes with respect to the perseverance of the belief of Christians whom he has never met. He trusts Epaphras to have presented them with an accurate rendition of the gospel, but he knows how difficult it is to hold on to one’s belief in this world with its ups and downs of life and the pressures which the world places on Christians to abandon their faith and join them in their rebellion against God.

³¹ ἵνα παρακληθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν ὁμιλοῦσθαι ἐν ἀγάπῃ ὡς καὶ εἰς ἅπαν τοὺς πληροφάνους τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως, εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ – Thus, Paul’s intent as he worked hard to write this letter and the one to the Laodiceans (cf. 4:16) is that these fairly new Christians in Colossae, along with new Christians anywhere who have become such through the efforts of people other than himself, not only continue in their belief because they have grasped the eternal significance of the ideas that they have believed, but also pursue growing in their understanding of Jesus as the Messiah, because true human wisdom consists in knowing as much as possible about him. In other words, here again Paul is emphasizing the importance and value of knowing everything one can about Jesus, because this becomes understanding of God and what He is fundamentally doing within the creation—establishing a kingdom with Jesus as the king for all eternity.

There is nothing more valuable to understand than what God is up to with the Jewish Messiah in this creation, which God has slowly but surely been revealing down through history by means of the creation, the Jews, and the OT scriptures, and has now become just that much more explicit by virtue of the Messiah’s actual appearance on earth as Jesus of Nazareth (and the New Testament which has resulted from his first appearance). In other words, the “mystery” has been cleared up and gone away by virtue of the appearance of Jesus in flesh and blood.

By knowing all they can about Jesus, the Colossians will find their “hearts” and minds, i.e., the inwardness, encouraged as they grasp the process and content of their salvation through him. They will also be united by means of God’s love for them through the Messiah. It is God’s love that has moved Him to change their inwardness such that they grasp the value of the gospel message and they are motivated to increase their understanding of it and settledness in it.

³² ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ ἡ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι – Thus, Paul can say that, if we liken wisdom and knowledge to the greatest treasure for which human beings would hunt, then Jesus the Messiah is the sole repository of this treasure. It simply does not exist anywhere else but within the context of what God is doing with the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus, Paul is being ironic. It is not that these treasures of wisdom and knowledge are actually inside Jesus. But just people tend to hide treasure in order to keep others from finding it, so God has hidden the best knowledge and wisdom in the life, words, and actions of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, He causes people to find this treasure when someone presents the gospel message to them and He opens their hearts and minds to it by changing their hearts.

³³ Τοῦτο ἡ λέγω, ἵνα ἡμῶν παραλογίζηται ἐν πίστεϊ – Paul’s purpose in hammering home the point about the Messiah’s being the object of learning in order to gain genuine wisdom and knowledge is so that the Colossian Christians are not sidetracked by any of the myriad of erroneous religious systems of thought wandering around the Roman Empire, including, and maybe especially, the Judaism of his day that focused so intently on the Mosaic Covenant and earning God’s blessings through purportedly obeying it.

Thus, a “false argument” about the nature of reality and how to live life is one that does not have the truth of Jesus at its

center and promotes him as king and priest of sinners who are called to pursue lives that are in accordance with God's moral commandments.

³⁴ εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῇ σαρκὶ ἄπειμι, ἀλλὰ τῷ πνεύματι σὺν ὑμῖν εἰμι, χαίρων καὶ βλέπων ὑμῶν τὴν τάξιν καὶ τὸ στερέωμα τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν – Paul implies that there will be people who in the Colossians' very presence who will try to be very influential with respect to how they approach God, and he would like to be one of these. However, because he is under house arrest in Rome and cannot leave, he must communicate to them via this letter, and he experiences a certain level of joy in knowing that they are focused on the Messiah as their repository of knowledge and wisdom, and not on the Mosaic Covenant (or any other religious system). Indeed, he has heard from Epaphras that they are relatively steadfast and stable in this belief.

Thus, Paul is watching from afar the persevering authenticity of the Colossians' belief, which is making him rejoice in what God is doing in their lives.

³⁵ Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε – Thus, Paul encourages these Christians to continue to live out their existences on earth on the same basis as their experience of originally hearing from Epaphras about the Messiah, who is Jesus and their king. That implied basis is that the gospel message is true, while any other attempt to explain God and reality will contain elements of falsehood and error and lead a person away from eternal mercy and life from God.

³⁶ ῥριζωμένοι καὶ ἐποικοδομούμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ βεβαιούμενοι 'τῇ πίστει' καθὼς ἐδιδάχθητε, περισσεύοντες 'ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ' – Like big ol' oak trees sitting on the top of the ground with their roots extending underground in order to keep them standing up and unmovable by any forces that would impinge upon them, Paul's desire is for these Colossian Christians to stand in life immovable in their belief and obedience to God, with their intellectual roots extending into the knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah in line with what Epaphras had originally said to them, which Paul implies was the correct and authoritative apostolic message. These solidly biblical intellectual ideas will keep them well situated in this life and on their way towards eternal salvation and life in the Kingdom of God, regardless of what hardships they encounter and how much they are tempted to give up on God and His love and faithfulness. They should also be bursting with gratitude to God for His sovereign grace and mercy towards them to rescue them from His condemnation and to grant them the promise of eternal life.

³⁷ βλέπετε μὴ τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν – Paul wants his readers to remain grateful, indeed so grateful that their gratitude never ceases, as they face into the opposition to the focal point of God's purpose, which is the Messiah, and people try to convince them that something else besides the true knowledge of the Messiah is more worthy of their intellectual attention. Paul identifies these other religious systems of thought as mere "human" wisdom, not that which comes from God, and "worthless deception," not as valuable understanding. In other words, these ideas are invented by human beings and not based upon the truth of the Bible. And they deceive people away from the truth, so that their value in helping people attain God's mercy and salvation is nothing.

Thus, these human religious ideas and systems are right in line with what this world is all about, i.e., human beings' rebelling against God at the core of their beings. This is quite an accusation when he is talking also about Judaism and the Jews' adherence to their traditions that they have purportedly derived from the Old Testament of the Bible, yet from an erroneous perspective. In other words, this is a Judaism which its teachers claim is biblical, and indeed, in certain respects it is. It uses texts from the Bible as its basis. However, because its teachers have fundamentally misunderstood the Bible, Paul can say that they have invented something which is a false religion. It is "in accordance with the traditions of men" instead of in accordance with the thoughts of God.

Consequently, Paul is identifying this Judaism as idolatry just as much as paganism is. Thus, these "traditional teachings of men" are religious ideas and actions which, for the most part, have been invented by human beings, are being proclaimed by human beings, and have been made permanently important and absolutely necessary by human beings within their religious institutions and cultures—even if they come from the Bible.

Most likely, in this context, these "basic principles of the world" (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) are the same which Paul identifies in Galatians 4:3ff. as human thinking which believes that God's blessings can be earned through the performance of religious actions and ceremonies according to the Mosaic Covenant, even if the adherents of these principles firmly and openly assert that they believe in the grace of God and the Messiah's death as the means to gain God's mercy and eternal life.

Likewise, I think that we can say that religious actions and ceremonies that are purportedly in line with the New Covenant and the New Testament are also "in accordance with the basic principles of the world." In other words, Christianity is religion-free. It involves belief and moral obedience only, but even Christians love to make up religious actions and ceremonies which they think are substantial and even biblically based and commanded by God. Rather than sticking with the simplicity of following Jesus as the Messiah, Christians add all sorts of trappings that they think are necessary enhancements to their belief in Jesus.

³⁸ ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς – cf. 1:19 and 2:3. The reason it makes sense to avoid religious inventions of sinful human beings is that all the fullness of correct and accurate wisdom, knowledge, and understanding about God and His plans and purposes comes from God and metaphorically resides bodily in Jesus. This is to say that he is the very embodiment of true knowledge. Listen to him and watch what he does and a person will become full of the knowledge of God which He desires us to have for achieving eternal salvation and life and

living life well. This is the same as in 1:19 where all the fullness of knowledge dwells in him and as in 2:3 where all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him.

Thus, the fullness of truth and the correct way to understand the nature of reality is with the Messiah as the focal point of one's attention and pursuit of knowledge. The "traditional teachings of men" whereby people invent religious systems in order to control other people (2:8) and to claim that they know what life is all about are nothing in comparison to being taught the simplicity and purity of the Messiah—belief and moral behavior being the only required elements.

As a sinner contemplates the very person of the Messiah, i.e., his bodily appearance in Israel, then he also contemplates the very truth of God and what He is up to within the created reality. In this way, the "the fullness [of truth] from God dwells [metaphorically] in him." This creation is all about Jesus and not about Moses, the Mosaic Covenant, or any other institution of religion such as the Roman Catholic Church or individual churches. Nor is it about any other religion or worldview which is not centered in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and based upon the Bible.

θεότης = divine. This is the only use of this word in the NT. The question, though, is, what does Paul mean by the genitive use of this word after τὸ πλήρωμα? Because he has been referring with this latter word and the verb form to the knowledge of God and the Messiah, it is not coherent with the context to interpret Paul as speaking of Jesus' deity, especially his ontological makeup as God. Instead, he is still emphasizing that the fullness of knowledge that comes from God about Him and His plans and purposes are to be found in the person of Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah.

³⁹ καὶ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας – Jesus is the top teacher and determiner of truth on earth. Every religious, teaching authority must submit to his instruction and perspective on reality in order to be correct. Thus, the Colossian Christians already can find their intellectual, spiritual, and moral fullness in being taught by Epaphras about Jesus, which, as Paul will go on to say, is commensurate with their changed inwardness.

⁴⁰ Ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετιμήθητε περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος ἡ τῆς σαρκός, ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Here we see that Paul mainly has erroneous Judaism on his mind when it comes to the "tradition teachings of men in accordance with the basic principles of the world." Therefore, he dives right into the Jewish error which the Colossians are going to have to face, because Jews have been trying to undermine the gospel ever since Peter first presented it to Cornelius in Acts 9. The Jews are going to insist on the Gentile followers of the Jewish Messiah being physically circumcised according to the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants in order to be genuinely moral in their obedience to God. But Paul says that these Gentile (and perhaps some Jewish) believers in Jesus have been "circumcised," but it was not done with human hands. It was not physical, but spiritual.

Therefore, the "removal of the body of the flesh" is metaphorical for the elimination of the "flesh," a person's natural born sinful humanity, from that which determines existentially what is going to be his eternal destiny, because the person has repudiated his sinfulness, which otherwise would lead him either to live completely apart from God in a religious system that has nothing to do with the Bible or to gain His favor and blessing through religious and moral performance of the Mosaic Covenant (or of the New Covenant within historical Christianity). Implied is that this all involves a changed heart by the Spirit, resulting in a person's no longer being enslaved to sinfulness and rebellion against God, unwilling to submit genuinely to Him, but instead acquiring true belief and understanding in the midst of his sin that whereby his fundamental desire is to repent of his sin and obey God's moral commandments as best he can. Thus, Paul is saying that the Gentile Colossian Christians have undergone a divine and internal circumcision, while at the same time they are not obligated at all to follow the Mosaic Covenants prescription of outward, physical circumcision. This is "the circumcision of the Messiah" in that the person has received from God an inward circumcision that results in belief in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah only for obtaining God's mercy, not in pursuing religious performance to make oneself deserving of God's mercy and salvation.

⁴¹ συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ ῥαβδισμῷ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγήθητε διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν – Paul is speaking metaphorically here. When the Colossians went through the ceremony of water baptism, which was common among the 1st century Jews (such as those who were baptized by John the Baptist) and Gentiles who converted from paganism to Christianity when they heard the correct Jewish message of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah, they did so as an outward sign of their inward repudiation of sin, as if they were being put to death like Jesus for their sin because of their deserving death and not life. This is to say that they adopted the same attitude towards sin as God's and Jesus'. They acknowledged that it deserves death and burial. But because they took this perspective on their sin in the midst of the ceremony of water baptism, it means also that they went through a metaphorical resurrection from the dead by virtue of their becoming alive to the truth of the gospel, just as God raised Jesus from the dead to be alive for the sake of those who repudiate their sin and hunger and thirst for righteousness. And this is because they believed in the "work of God," that the resurrection of Jesus was ultimately His work for the sake of providing a means of salvation for sinners when Jesus qualified for his role as advocate at the final judgment.

Now Paul will go on to describe this process in another way.

⁴² καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας ὅ[ἐν] τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ἡ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν, συνεζωοποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ, χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα – Notice Paul goes on in v. 14 to reference the legal issue of "the record of legal debts that condemned us" sinners, i.e., being condemned by God and subject to eternal

punishment. He does not refer to inward subjective issues. Therefore, “dead” more likely refers to eternal condemnation and destruction, not to their inwardness that was characterized by abject and immovable rebellion against God before a sinner is changed by God and becomes “born again.” This is similar to Ephesians 2:1ff., in that Paul is saying that the Colossian believers are sinful human beings, deserving of God’s eternal condemnation, death, and destruction. Yet, God has inwardly changed them which results in their being destined for eternal life, which with the phrase “with him” means that they have the same destiny as Jesus. This process by God requires and, indeed, includes His not punishing them for their rebellion against Him and acts of evil.

Another way to say this is, “Even though you were as headed towards eternal death, because you deserved destruction from God, He has made you people who are headed towards eternal life with him...” So the emphasis is on the changed destiny, while implying the changed inwardness.

⁴³ ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν. καὶ αὐτὸ ἦρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ – Paul switches to the 1st person plural and includes himself to say that Jesus, by virtue of his death, officially provided a means for God’s forgiveness for us at the judgment. Thus, any record of legal debts that someone, even God, could bring to bear on the decision at the judgment with respect to us Jesus effectively destroyed, so that now we can enjoy his advocacy and appealing to God the Father for mercy on our behalf, an appeal that will work and result in life in the eternal Kingdom of God for us.

This was like taking a list of all with which God could charge us and nailing it to Jesus’ actual cross, as if to say that with his death dies the list and its condemnatory effect on us. The analogy is important here. As Jesus was nailed to the cross by the Roman soldiers at the insistence of the Jewish leaders, our “record of legal debts that condemned us” was nailed to the cross by God. Obviously, the latter is metaphorical, but Jesus’ qualifying to be our high priest and advocate, who with his offering himself obtains God’s mercy for us, becomes the death of our debts to God’s justice to save us from death eternal. No one can bring a charge against us by which God would condemn us to eternal death and destruction.

⁴⁴ ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας ἡ δειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ. θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ – Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, a bold public display of his obedience to God, God Himself strips all other religious leaders, especially Jewish leaders, who would suggest that God’s forgiveness and mercy come through some other means than him, of their authority. These are the same authorities to whom anyone would appeal who is attempting to “deceive [the Colossians] with a false argument” (2:4). Thus, these authorities easily represent all leaders who are satanic and diabolical and who stand in opposition to God with their hostility to His truth. This element of human opposition includes, obviously, the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ and Paul’s day who were promoting what amounted to idolatry through a misunderstanding of the Mosaic Covenant, when they were teaching that it is only through obedience to it that God’s mercy is earned and obtained.

Paul likens God’s handling of these religious rulers to the Roman army’s handling of the prisoners from conquered lands. As the latter are led through the streets of Rome in demonstration of their subjugation to Roman authority, God leads the former through the streets of truth in demonstration of their subjugation and deference to Him, even if they will neither now nor ever bow to Him in their hearts. All this demonstrates the superiority of Jesus as the leader of truth in comparison to all other leaders. It is because of him and his death on the cross which leads to God’s disgracing all other religious leaders.

⁴⁵ Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει ἢ καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων – Paul now lists specific elements of “human wisdom” and “worthless deception” that contemporary rulers might demand that the Colossian Christians follow in order to make themselves worthy of God’s blessings while also believing in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Galatians where Paul condemns these same kind of religious people). These definitely sound very Jewish, i.e., adherence to the dietary laws of the Mosaic Covenant, as well as participating in the three annual festivals that God prescribed and that required that the Jews travel to Jerusalem each time. In addition, the Jewish teachers would claim that the Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah stand condemned before God if they do not adhere strictly to all the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant.

“New moon” refers to the first day of each lunar month, because the Jews used a lunar and not a solar calendar. In Numbers 10:10, God commanded them to blow the festival trumpets over their offerings and sacrifices to Him on the first day of each lunar month. Doing no work on the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exodus 20:8).

Thus, Paul is addressing the common issue of his day that appears in all his letters, the Jews’ requiring that Gentiles follow the Mosaic Covenant and be as Jewish in their appearance as they are while they also believe in the Jewish Messiah (cf. Romans, Galatians, Philippians 3, etc.).

⁴⁶ ὃ ἐστὶν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul states that the ritual requirements of the Mosaic Covenant (and, therefore, the Covenant *per se*) are less than substantive in comparison to the Messiah (and the New Covenant, by implication). God intended the ritual requirements of the Mosaic Covenant to be like a shadow where the thing which is casting the shadow is Jesus himself. It is Jesus who is the substance of a sinner’s relationship with God, while the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant merely point to him as the substance. Thus, the ritual commandments referred to things coming in the future, particularly Jesus himself and then all that God has done and will do with him and through him, i.e., bring about the restored Kingdom of Israel on this earth as the first stage of the eternal Kingdom of God and then the final stage on the eternal earth of Revelation 21.

⁴⁷ μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύετω θέλων ὅεν ταπεινοφροσύνη καὶ θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων, ὃ ἑώρακεν ἐμβατεύων, εἰκὴ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοὸς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ – Two options for τῶν ἀγγέλων – 1) the divinely revealed texts of the OT, especially the Mosaic Covenant; 2) the theophanies of God at Mt. Sinai when He appeared to Moses and gave him the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. The second makes more sense to me, that the Jewish teachers of erroneous Judaism brag about the seeing the theophanies of God in the Pentateuch and claim that they are more authoritative than Jesus.

ἑώρακεν = he has seen, from ὁράω. I think that Paul is referring to Jewish leaders who have perceived in the OT the *angeloi* of Yahweh who appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai and are thinking that they are appropriately being humble and worshipping them by making the MC and its details, not Jesus, the center of their relationship with God.

ἐμβατεύων is used only here in the NT and is difficult to define. It seems to mean to enter, to visit, to acquire, to investigate closely, or to go into detail. Because Paul is talking about Jewish teachers and their emphasis on the details of the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, it makes sense to me that the last meaning is Paul's. He is describing people who go into great detail on these commandments, requiring that the Gentile believers do them exactly as they were presented by God in the MC.

εἰκὴ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοὸς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ – because this Jewish teacher is conceited and proud of his OT knowledge, but it is in vain because his knowledge, which is actually erroneous in its understanding of God's purposes for the MC and the Messiah, comes from a mind that it is dominated by his flesh, i.e., by his natural born sinful humanity.

Thus, the Jewish leaders rightly considered the Hebrew scriptures and specifically the Mosaic Covenant to be divinely provided and authoritative. However, they have failed to interpret them correctly by virtue of focusing on the details of individual statements as opposed to seeing the whole picture that God was painting about His eternal plans and purposes that include the Gentiles as followers of the Jewish Messiah, who themselves are not obligated to the Mosaic Covenant. Paul is saying that, by focusing on the texts without considering the concept of grace, these Jewish leaders themselves do not qualify for God's mercy and eternal life, and the Colossians would, in a sense, disqualify themselves also if they were to abandon the biblical focal point, the Messiah.

In addition, any Jewish leader who claims that his perspective on God is the correct one first asserts that his knowledge comes from a special and trustworthy source, even his own careful perception of the OT, that gives him a level of intellectual status within the Jewish community whereby people should believe what he says to be true. Perhaps the religious leader is referring to the one who has taught him, e.g., Gamaliel, one of the leading rabbis of Paul's day, and who, indeed, taught Paul. It would be like a Christian teacher's using the seminary that he attended, or the worldwide Christian leaders who back him up in his theology as the reason why people should follow him and believe as true what he says about the Bible. However, as Paul says, this kind of appeal to authority to validate one's status within either the Jewish or Christian community is illegitimate and comes from pride, vanity, and a desire to rebel against God rather than from humility and a desire to submit to God.

⁴⁸ καὶ οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφαλὴν ὅτι, ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα διὰ τῶν ἁφῶν καὶ συνδέσμων ἐπιχορηγούμενον καὶ συμβιβασόμενον αὐξήσει τὴν αὐξήσιν τοῦ θεοῦ – The key element of anyone's knowledge of God is that Jesus is the focal point of any sinner's relationship with God, because he is the "head" of the "body" comprised of authentic believers. Jesus as the human body's parts get their instructions from the head and are under the authority of the head, so should each individual Christian look to Jesus, not to Moses, as his source of instruction and authority from God. The joints and ligaments that hold together the body of the Messiah, the individual believers, is the truth of the biblical message with the Messiah at the center of this message. Just as believers come together on the basis of this truth (cf. 2:2), they also remain together on the basis of it. Paul is saying that, regardless of how much this error filled Jewish leader claims that he believes in Jesus as the Messiah, he has actually abandoned Jesus, so that his so-called leadership does not come from God as the continued focus on the true Jesus within the Christian community does come from God. Instead, his knowledge and leadership comes from his fleshly and rebellious mind.

And it is growth in knowledge of Jesus and all that God intends for him and through him that causes the growth of proper instruction and learning among individual believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

Ephesians 1:22 And He placed everyone in submission under his feet, and He gave him as head above everyone to the gathering, **1:23** which is his body, the fullness of him who himself provides the fullness of everyone in the all.

⁴⁹ Εἰ ὅτι ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε – Here τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου refer specifically to the religion invented by Jews based upon the Mosaic Covenant in the OT. And Paul asks a rhetorical question of the Colossian Christians based upon the metaphor of joining Jesus on his cross, because a person who understands and acknowledges the complete significance of Jesus' death also recognizes that he, the sinful human being for whom Jesus died, is not only an abject rebel against God, but also completely incapable in and of himself of gaining God's acceptance, mercy, and eternal life. Therefore, the person realizes that the worldly principles of human religion of seeking to please gods or God by making oneself worthy through religious practices, including the erroneous Judaism invented by sinful human beings and that takes the specific part of the biblical message called the Mosaic Covenant and turns it into a human and not divine religion, are fundamentally evil instead of good. Consequently, the true believer wholeheartedly repudiates not only his own sinfulness, but any system of religion that is invented by sinful human beings and not actually prescribed by God in the Bible.

Paul asks his Colossian readers if it makes sense to repudiate their sinfulness on the basis of Jesus' death and then approach God and seek to obey Him on the basis of their sinfulness. Obviously not.

⁵⁰ μη ἄψῃ μηδὲ γεύσῃ μηδὲ θίγῃς – Here, Paul uses the very words that he envisions the Jewish leaders' using who want to impose on the Colossian Christians the dietary and separation laws, i.e., eating only kosher and keeping themselves separate from people who are not following the Mosaic Covenant and from objects that are outside of the Covenant and considered profane by it.

Leviticus 5:2 “Or if a person touches (נִגַּח) (ἅψεται) any unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean beast or the carcass of unclean cattle or a carcass of unclean swarming things, though it is hidden from him and he is unclean, then he will be guilty.”

1 Samuel 14:24 Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, “Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies.” So none of the people tasted (γεύσατο) (ἐγεύσατο) food. [Obviously, this verse does not describe a commandment of the Mosaic Covenant, but there is no verse in the covenant which uses this Greek verb in the LXX. Therefore, I am including it for illustration purposes only.]

Exodus 19:12 “You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch (נִגַּח) (θιγῆν) the border of it; whoever touches (נִגַּח) (ὁ ἀψάμενος) the mountain shall surely be put to death.’” [This is the only verse in the LXX which uses θιγγάνω.]

⁵¹ ἅ ἔστιν πάντα εἰς φθορὰν τῇ ἀποχρήσει, κατὰ τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων – Paul describes the ritual stuff of eating kosher and not touching things considered unclean by the Mosaic Covenant as strictly for the present, temporary realm and, therefore, fundamentally unhelpful for obtaining eternal life in comparison to the stuff of the Messiah. Especially food is “destroyed” by being “consumed” by the one eating it. Or Paul is referring to things being “consumed” by the fire of destruction of the present realm and cosmos at the end of the millennial kingdom (cf. Revelation 20). However, this is the only use of the word ἀποχρησις in the NT, and because Paul goes on to talk about the “flesh” in the next verse, I am inclined to think that the first option is correct, i.e., destruction by bodily consumption, as if bodily cleanliness does anything to help a sinner fight against willful sin of his natural born humanity.

He is implying that the only “thing” within the present creation that helps human beings with respect to their relationship with God is not external, but instead internal. It is their belief along with their choices to act *morally* on the basis of the biblical message, especially their choice to love one another within the community of believers. Everything else will disappear either by eating it or in the fire of the judgment of God at the end of the present realm (even though, as I said, I think the former is what he means by destruction by consuming).

Paul is also claiming that the imperatives that the Jewish leaders use, such as, “Do not eat this unclean food,” are mere commandments of men and not God, even if the words seem to match those of the Mosaic Covenant. This is because the presuppositions underlying them have their source in man's sinfulness/rebellion against God and not in the goodness of God. Such comments by Paul help us realize that people, including and perhaps most especially leaders, can be saying all the apparent right things from the Bible in Christian churches and be completely hostile to God and Jesus, i.e., opposed to the *biblical* God and Jesus.

⁵² ἅτινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας ἐν ἐθελοθησκίᾳ καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἢ [καὶ] ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος, οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός – Paul admits that a human, religious system that uses the Bible as its basis actually contains an element of truth and wisdom, which is what makes it so insidious, cunning, and oftentimes difficult to discern as error. And the people proclaiming this religious, human invention can come across as being so humble and submissive to the Bible. But no human effort, religious or otherwise, i.e., even moral, can solve the problem of man's sinfulness and consequent eternal condemnation and disapproval by God.

Unfortunately, a lot of people are fooled by the outward religious piety of these false Jewish Christians, and Paul wants his Colossian readers to keep their guard up so that they are not taken in by them. These very same religious leaders appear to be humble and promoting that which is good and right, indeed biblical, but, instead, they are advocating evil, because they themselves are ruled by their sinfulness and not by a changed heart and authentic belief.

It is not that religious systems are evil in and of themselves, but believing that they are necessary in order to please God and obtain His eternal (or temporal) blessing is.

⁵³ Εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε, οὐ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος – Rather than focusing on the earthly and temporary ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant with the erroneous perspective of the Jewish teachers who are missing the point about Jesus, these Gentile Colossian Christians should look towards the eternal, i.e., the gospel of Jesus with his commandments of moral purity and perfection and that will be permanent and incorruptible, for their understanding and motivation to obey God. If they have been raised with the Messiah (and indeed they have), i.e., if they have repudiated their sins and sinfulness (died with the Messiah), then they should pay attention to God's promise of mercy, eternal life, and moral perfection through Jesus alone (and not through ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant) of which He has made them aware through the inner working of His grace in their hearts and minds.

The latter constitutes being raised with the Messiah, who metaphorically now sits at the transcendent God's right hand and rules over the entire creation from this position. In other words, whoever “sits at God's right hand” also is the

highest authority within the creation and rules over it, just under the authority of God's Himself, who is outside of the creation and occupies the highest position of authority. This is the teaching of the Son of Man/God in Psalm 8.

⁵⁴ τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς – It is not that Paul is saying that everything on earth is evil, but being persuaded by the erroneous teaching of the Jewish teachers, who would have the Colossians focus on temporary ritual commandments of the MC in order to earn God's blessing, is wrong. Rather a person should focus on learning all he can about Jesus and biblical morality.

The “things of the earth” are in line with the basic principles of the world that are temporary religious practices that miss the point about Jesus and simple morality.

The “things above” are in line with the gospel that focus on knowing and understanding Jesus and eternal morality which Christians will experience.

Thus, to the extent that Christians communicate to the rest of humanity that they are focused on things of the world, even religious practices, they distort and miscommunicate the biblical message of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah.

⁵⁵ ἀπεθάνετε γὰρ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ – Now Paul refers to the Colossian Christians' having gone through a sort of death by facing into their sinfulness and fundamentally desiring and choosing to be different kind of people, especially when God produces eternity for them and changes them into morally perfect people, after first granting them mercy and forgiveness.

In addition, just as the Messiah cannot physically be seen by all the people in the world, giving them a kind of excuse to ignore him, these Colossian Christians' with all that their belief means with respect to the future and their eternal destiny is “hidden” with Jesus and invisible to the world, too. It is their inwardness, invisible to anyone else, not their outward religious actions, whether in accordance with pagan idolatry, the Mosaic Covenant, or Christian denominational practices, that is substantive and pleasing to God.

Thus, they have died to the basic principles of this world, this earth, and this realm. It is not that they care nothing about their existence as it is in this world. But it is not their focus. It is not their goal even to look religious in the presence of others, but to be loving, kind, patient, etc. It is not their goal to save the world and solve its problems, because they know that they cannot and not even God is going to do so completely. Things will only get worse until Jesus returns, and, after the millennial kingdom which he establishes, God will eventually destroy this earth and the present realm and then create a new eternal heaven and new eternal earth. Consequently, it makes no sense for Christians to invest themselves heavily in the efforts of mankind to ensure that the world improves and even to save the world from all its problems, because these efforts will always ultimately fail. Plus, Christians are not intended to bring the Kingdom of God onto and into the world. God will do this through Jesus when he returns. And even then, the world will not remain as a permanent element of reality.

⁵⁶ ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς φανερωθῇ, ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν, τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὡς αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ – Nevertheless, Paul says that when God sends the Messiah back to earth to complete his task of gathering living believers and destroying his enemies, then what it means for the Colossians to be followers of the Messiah will finally become most obvious, too. No one, except God, can actually see what the Colossian readers' Christianity is all about, both now and in the future. But, eventually, it will become clear and visible to everyone when these Christians are raised from the dead and accompany Jesus when he returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel, with the result being so marvelous that they will share in the spectacle of the glory of the Messiah by God's transforming them into morally perfect beings. All the world who survive the judgments of God just before Jesus returns will see who the real Christians are and what they are all about when they see the glorious nature of their moral perfection. The world really does not care about Christian's morality now. But they will observe how magnificent it will be when Jesus returns.

Paul also calls the Messiah “our life.” While the Colossians have “died” in this life by repudiating their sin so that their “life” is not hidden with the Messiah in God, i.e., their real life is what is happening inside them as it pertains to their future, eternal life, the Messiah is Paul's and their “life” because he will be the means by which they gain eternal life. And this is how they will be revealed with Jesus in the glory of his return and establishment on this earth of the first stage of the Kingdom of God.

⁵⁷ Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, πορνείαν ἀκαθαρσίαν πάθος ἐπιθυμίαν ὀκακὴν, καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν, ἣτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρία – Paul has already made it clear that erroneous Judaism is a kind of worship of idols, that is, the worship of elements of the creation, in this case human religious performance, instead of the Creator. Now, he makes it clear that the worship of idols can be manifested in obvious, non-religious behavior—sexual immorality, etc., all of which he may be saying exist easily within Jewish religious communities just as much as in Gentile religious communities.

Thus, this segue into these issues of mainly sexual immorality demonstrates Paul's close association of them in his mind with Judaistic legalism, which he has just been discussing. Both legalism and abject sexual immorality originate within man's sinfulness and rebellion against God. In other words, Judaistic legalism is on the same par with pagan idolatry which promoted unbridled sexual immorality. And, as I said above, maybe he was aware of this same immoral behavior existing within the Jewish community as it obviously did within the Gentile community. But both erroneous Judaism and Gentile paganism, along with their immoral behavior, whatever it might be, will incur God's anger, justice, condemnation, punishment, and destruction. Thus, repudiating one's sins and sinfulness leads to repudiating immoral inwardness and actions that coincide with it, especially in this context sexual immorality which was so prevalent in the various cultures of the Roman Empire.

Paul also reveals by his thoughts here that outward worship of pagan gods is no different in its evil quality as inward sinfulness that is accompanied by other immoral actions. Both constitute the worship of idols, i.e., the things of the present realm, in contrast to the worship of the one true God. Hence, any rejection of the biblical God and adherence to another view of reality is idolatry, whether small figurines in temples are involved or religious practices which have been invented by people of unchanged hearts is involved. Therefore, this would include any religious practices with Christianity which people considered necessary in order to please God.

“Members on earth” (τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), here, refers to various parts of the corporeal (bodily) package in which the Colossian Christians reside as human beings that is fundamentally hostile towards God and the biblical message, so that they are a metonymy for the immoral behaviors which Paul goes on to list. They “do” these behaviors. Therefore, putting to death these “members” is to choose not to engage in these sinful behaviors because a person recognizes that it is because of them that Jesus died. So just as Jesus died, the Christian wants to put to death his sin for which Jesus died.

Ephesians 5:5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater [worshiper of idols], has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

⁵⁸ δι’ ἧς ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας – Paul states that man’s sinfulness as it is manifested in immoral behavior will produce at some time in the future a response of anger, justice, eternal condemnation, punishment, and destruction from God. And it will be because people have chosen to be the children of the spirit of the world that is committed to disobeying God and violating His moral commandments.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

⁵⁹ ἐν οἷς καὶ ὑμεῖς περιπατήσατέ ποτε, ὅτε ἐζήτε ἐν τούτοις – Paul also reminds his Colossian readers that, prior to their embracing the biblical message of Jesus as the Messiah, they wholeheartedly joined their unbelieving friends and fellow Colossians in pursuing immorality. This was their natural and accepted lifestyle.

⁶⁰ νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόθεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα, ὀργὴν, θυμὸν, κακίαν, βλασφημίαν, αἰσχρολογίαν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν – Paul further delineates exactly what comprises immorality. He lists first anger and then wrath, both probably coming from pride and selfishness when people do not get their own way. He then lists malice and slander that people use when they want to get back at others whom they dislike and want to encourage mutual dislike of them in their society. Finally, Paul mentions abusive speech that comes out the Colossians’ mouths, that was probably so common and accepted in the culture of the Roman Empire and that provided people with a means to beat up on people they hated without actually hitting them physically.

At the same time, these could be common among Jews practicing erroneous Judaism (or Christians practicing a religion invented by sinners) as they observe people who are not living up to the religious standards which they believe are appropriate. Thus, these can definitely come from a sense of self-righteousness.

⁶¹ μὴ ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ – Paul then exhorts the Colossian Christians not to lie to one another. Is he speaking of mundane lies that someone might use, for example, in business transactions or by boasting falsely about themselves in order to look better in the eyes of other people? He probably means something more profound than these kinds of lies. Notice in the next two verses that Paul talks about having been renewed for the purpose of having true knowledge in accordance with the image/icon of the One who created him, “whereby there is neither Greek nor Jew,” etc. Therefore, I think the lying to one another of which Paul is speaking here is the same as a person’s worldview, the lies which people concoct in their rebellion against God that are definitely self-serving and intended to enhance their status and allow them to claim that they are different from others, but where these lies also completely ignore and reject God, His moral commandments, the biblical worldview, and even rationality and clear evidence to the effect that God exists and we are morally accountable to Him. This, for example, is what the modern, critical theories are doing.

Thus, the metaphor of clothing refers to our inner commitment just as our clothes identify to a degree what kind of person we are. In other words, what kind of person am I resolved to be? Do I “wear” the old man who is resolved to rebel against God and gratify my insatiable, immoral desires with reckless abandon. Or do I “wear” the new man who is resolved to act in a manner that corresponds to God’s destiny for me, i.e., a morally perfect person. So strive to emulate this morally perfect person which you will be. Paul is not talking a new nature per se. It is not a matter of power, but of inward resolve and commitment to the new desire along with the wisdom and clarity regarding reality which we have acquired because God has changed our hearts.

Paul is consequently encouraging the Colossians to change their erroneous understandings of the nature of reality and themselves (centered either in pagan idolatry or erroneous Judaism in their day or in atheistic evolution, socialism, etc. in our day) and, instead, adopt God’s understanding which they had in the OT and the apostolic message of Jesus and as we now have in both the OT and the NT.

Paul also says that their lies constituted the former person who they were and their “practices,” which would be the way they operated according to the basic principles of the world (either through abject immoral behavior of pagan idolatry or through legalistic ritual practices supposedly according to the Mosaic Covenant), which should now be taken off (like a garment) and set aside, because, as he goes on to say, they each have become a new person—with a new worldview and therefore with new practices, operating according to God and His truth and moral commandments (cf. Ephesians 4:22-24).

Ephesians 4:20 However, you did not learn about the Messiah in this way. **4:21** Because, indeed, you have heard about him and were taught about him, just as truth is in Jesus, **4:22** you should lay aside the old man, who, in line with your former manner of life, is causing destruction in accord with strong, deceitful desires. **4:23** Instead, be renewed in the spirit of your mind, **4:24** and put on the new man who, according to God, was created in righteousness and devotion to the truth.

⁶² καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν – The new way of being for the Colossian Christians Paul calls “the new man,” and says that they have gone through a divinely caused transition that is intended to motivate them to understand reality from a perspective completely different from that of either pagan idolatry or erroneous Judaism and that is absolutely true and right, i.e., the biblical perspective. Implied is their “practices” are now different, too, which Paul will go on to describe explicitly starting in v. 12. Thus, after taking off the old man (like a garment), they should then put on the new man (like a garment). They are to think and act radically differently from the way they used to now that they have learned about Jesus the Messiah and God’s authentic moral commandments.

Paul has already identified the biblical perspective as that which corresponds to all that Jesus as the Messiah was and now represents, because in him are “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). Now, he says the same thing by stating that the “new man,” which is every Christian, is being renewed according to the “image/icon of the One who created him,” i.e., the new man. This “image” is again probably Jesus as Paul has called him, the “image/icon of the invisible God” in 1:15. Thus, the “true knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) is that of Jesus as the central figure in all created reality and the focal point of any sinner’s relationship with God.

Another possibility is that Paul is saying that “true knowledge” is in line with each Colossian Christian’s being made in the image of God and thereby morally obligated to think rationally and understand reality in line with God’s thoughts and understanding, instead of making up lies and falsehoods that ignore and reject God. But, because Paul has been so emphatic about the intellectual importance of Jesus, I am inclined to think that the first option is correct.

⁶³ ὅπου οὐκ ἐνι ᾧ Ἕλληνα καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δοῦλος, ἢ ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ ὅ[τα] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός – The Mosaic Covenant rightly makes a distinction between the Jews as the chosen people of God and Gentiles, so that the Jews who appropriately follow the MC have a higher status than Gentiles who pursue pagan idolatry from unchanged hearts. In addition, the different cultures of the Roman Empire make a distinction between other kinds of people, such as slaves and their masters.

However, the Messiah, even though he is Jewish, makes no distinction like this among his followers, because God has basically created a new person who is a *bona fide* follower of Jesus the Jewish Messiah, who advocates equally for all his followers, regardless of their ethnicity, station in life, status in society, etc. (including gender – cf. Galatians 3:28). Thus, after someone is presented with the message of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the only distinction that is valid for him to embrace is that of belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah vs. unbelief. Nevertheless, none of us can correctly assess the authenticity of authentic, inward belief in people. Only God can and should. Thus, a person’s ethnic, social, religious, etc. condition is not important in establishing his identity and status before God. Only his association with the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, is.

As Dostoevsky says in *The Brothers Karamazov*, “Equality is only in man’s spiritual dignity, and only among us will that be understood” – Elder Zossima as quoted by Alyosha on pg. 316 of the translation I have read.

Greek vs. Jew is the same as circumcised vs. uncircumcised. Barbarians and Scythians were members of cultures outside the Roman Empire. Slave vs. freeman was a common societal distinction within the Roman Empire.

“The Messiah is everyone and in everyone” means that as long as any sinful human being is an authentic believer in Jesus, he is equally rescued from God’s condemnation by Jesus’ advocacy. He is what these people are all about when it comes to their having, worth, status, position, and identity in the world. Thus, all the various distinctions which we can point to in human beings are a test from God as to whether or not we are willing to ignore them and grab onto the only distinction worth having, being a follower of Jesus the Messiah.

⁶⁴ Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν, ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιοι καὶ ἡγαπημένοι, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ χρηστότητα ταπεινοφροσύνην πραύτητα μακροθυμίαν – While the Jews are definitely the earthly chosen people of God as a distinct ethnic group, any Gentile who becomes an authentic belief in Jesus as the Messiah has been chosen of God even before the beginning of the creation—but not for the purpose of following the Mosaic Covenant on earth. Instead, a Gentile is called by God to pursue moral obedience through love among especially his fellow believers that results in obtaining mercy and citizenship in the eternal Kingdom of God.

The believer’s love is founded on his being loved by God and chosen by Him, before He even began to create this present cosmos, to become a believer in the Jewish Messiah. His love also comes from being set apart inwardly by God through the “circumcising of the heart” work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Deut. 10:16; Romans 2:29), so that he is now fundamentally committed to treating other believers kindly, humbly, gently, and patiently, while he feels with them in the midst of any pain or suffering that they are enduring.

Ephesians 1:4 just as He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

Ephesians 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.

⁶⁵ ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς ἂν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη ῥιμωπήν καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν ἡμῶν, οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς – Paul includes in his exhortations to the Colossians that they should not hold against their

fellow believers any mistreatment which they have performed towards them. Instead, they should grant them the same kind of mercy that God will give them at the judgment. It is certainly a fact that Christians are going to do wrong towards one another, but God's call to morality and righteousness requires that they not demand that another Christian pay the penalty of his mistreatment, either in the present life or in eternity. But this is so hard to do when we not only are wired to sense when justice is appropriate, but also tend to desire justice above forgiveness, especially when our pride gets involved and demands that we be avenged.

Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

⁶⁶ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ἥ ἐστὶν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος – Paul clearly identifies love as the catch-all for what he is exhorting the Colossians to do. By treating each other with love, the Colossian Christians will bind themselves together to reach their common goal of God's eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God with Jesus as their advocate and king.

Hebrews 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity (τελειότητα = the goal), not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith/belief toward God.

⁶⁷ καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Ἰησοῦ βραβεύετω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε – Two options for the εἰρήνη "of the Messiah" – 1) The peace between God and sinners which Jesus brings about for the two parties by reconciling them to one another through his death; 2) The eternal existence of total well-being which Jesus provides to believing sinners through his death.

If it is #1, then, in the light of the work which the Messiah brings about, particularly reconciling sinful human beings to a wrathful God, thus changing their status before God from enemies to friends and bringing about peace between the two warring parties, God and man, Paul exhorts the Colossians that it be this peace, which comes from the Messiah's work, that dominates the hearts and minds of the Colossian believers. Indeed, it is to this reconciled relationship with God that they have been "called," summoned by God into this kind of relationship with Him. And they should be most grateful for this, because peace with God through Jesus results in escaping God's wrath, condemnation, and destruction. In addition, they were all called to be at peace with God together as a group who will remain together into eternity with all other genuine believers throughout history.

If it is #2, then, if Paul were writing in Hebrew, he would have said the *shalom* of the Messiah, referring to the future eternal realm of the kind of life that will be whole and completely satisfying by virtue of its inhabitants being morally perfect. Paul would be saying that the knowledge and hope of this future existence, that will be the result of the Abrahamic promise, should be the basis for each and every decision that the Colossian Christians make in the present realm. Also, it is to this eternal *shalom* that the Colossians have been "called," summoned by God as one group, the body of the Messiah, for this eternal destiny. And of course it is for this eternal life of well-being for which they should all be most grateful to God.

If I am correct that τελειότητος means "that makes for reaching the goal," then I am inclined to think that option #2 is correct. Paul wants their future *shalom* to dominate the hearts and desires of the Colossians. And this is why I even include this verse in the paragraph of verses before it. Being reconciled to God is a wonderful thing, and Paul mentions it often, but acquiring eternal well-being in the Kingdom of God is going to be the greatest thing we experience as a result of being reconciled to God through Jesus the Messiah.

⁶⁸ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς, ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν ᾧ ἡ χάρις ᾗ ᾗ ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ – Paul is saying here that the ideas about the biblical purpose of the Jewish Messiah, which Epaphras first presented to the Colossians and that constitute the apostolic message, are so important that they should be the main ideas that they ponder.

Epaphras must have also taught them a selection of OT psalms, along with current, Christian hymns and spiritual songs, which all contain important theology and which they continue to sing to one another. Therefore, whatever appropriate manner that the Colossians want to use to remind each other of these ideas and encourage each other to preserve in their belief in them and living according to them, even by singing them, is fine.

In addition, Paul exhorts the Colossians to express genuine gratitude to God from their hearts, their core beings, because God has changed their inwardness. As a result, these ideas remain the basis for how they live their lives and treat one another, in contrast to the ideas of pagan idolatry that used to dominate their minds.

⁶⁹ καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ – Then, outside their meeting with one another and continuing to teach each other the apostolic message, the Colossians should choose what they say and what they do to be "in the name of the Lord Jesus," as fully representing their Messiah by being as morally obedient to him as they can. And, just like their encouraging one another when they meet, they should express their gratitude to God for all that He means to them while they engage in their daily lives in the world.

Thus, just as Jesus' goal was to qualify to be the Son of God as King and High Priest through his death on the cross, so should Christians' goal be to mimic him and act like him in regard to their moral behavior in order to acquire the same kind of eternal destiny that he has obtained of living forever in the Kingdom of God. This should include a gratitude towards God for what He has done in bringing them to an understanding of and belief in the biblical message with its accompanying promise of life in the eternal kingdom. In this way, Jesus as the Messiah, along with all that will happen

in the present and future cosmos, will be the basis for whatever the Colossian Christians say and do in the presence of others, whether publicly or privately.

⁷⁰ Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἰσχυροῖς ὡς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν κυρίῳ – It seems surprising that Paul writes so briefly about the husband/wife relationship here when his explanation was much longer in Ephesians. But maybe Epaphras spent a lot of time teaching them about this, and Paul is relying on their remembering what he said, so that he merely summarizes the main points. For the wives, it is following their husbands appropriately within their new *Christian* marriage.

One has to wonder how radical this concept was women living in the Roman Empire in central Turkey. Assuming that women were not very well treated, Paul is encouraging those who are married to be led by their husbands down their path of life in being obedient to God and the Messiah. In addition and maybe primarily as in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is indicating that becoming subordinate to God does not release a person from being subordinate to those human beings where this was the relationship before his readers became Christians—whether wives being subordinate to husbands, or children to parents, or slaves to masters, while the ones in the superordinate position should act lovingly in the light of their being subordinate to Jesus.

⁷¹ Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας ὡς καὶ ὁ ἰσχυρὸς ἐκείνος ἐν κυρίῳ – Likewise, assuming that men who were sinners were prone to abuse their superordinate position and mistreat their wives in the Roman Empire, Paul is exhorting these former pagan Gentile men (and any Jewish men), now turned believers in the Jewish Messiah, to behave towards their wives in the same way that the Messiah has behaved towards them—with love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, etc. I assume that bitterness, i.e., anger and disappointment, was common in husband's attitude and treatment of their wives in both the pagan and Jewish cultures.

Thus, here, Paul is encouraging these new Christian men to act in a way that will enhance their wives understanding and obedience to God. That is true love.

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness (πάσα πικρία) and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

⁷² Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσι κατὰ πάντα, τοῦτο γὰρ εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν ὅτι ἐν κυρίῳ – Similarly, Paul's exhortation to young people is to be willing to be instructed by their parents in how to live before God and as followers of the Jewish Messiah. Presumably, Christian parents are going to have more wisdom than their children.

⁷³ Οἱ πατέρες, μὴ ἠρεθίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν, ὥστε μὴ ἁθροῦσιν – We can imagine that fathers as sinners were used to irritating their children freely and maliciously in the rather violent and immoral environment of the Roman Empire. Indeed, they may have abused them freely out of their own sin and selfishness, which would be quite discouraging to the children as they sought to live their own lives. Paul would instead have the fathers act completely differently in the light of their new belief in the biblical God and being subordinate to God. They should do everything they can to nurture, help, and instruct their children in who they are before God, how He has designed them, and how they should behave as followers of Jesus the Messiah, thus encouraging them to become the people whom God wants them to be, not whom the parents might want them to be.

⁷⁴ Οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε ὡς κατὰ πάντα τοῖς κυρίοις, ὡς κατὰ τὸν κύριον – It is interesting that Paul uses more words to instruct the slaves than husbands and wives. He right away exhorts them to obey their masters in everything they want them to do—excluding of course anything immoral. He also tells them that their obedience should come from their hearts of belief in Jesus and appropriate fear of God's punishment for being disobedient to Him. Their obedience should also be characterized by their single-mindedness in their hearts towards the truth of the gospel and for the sake of obeying it. In other words, they should have in mind primarily obeying God all the time, not obeying their masters sometimes just for the sake of not being punished by them and then obeying God in order to please Him. Thus, the foundation of their obedience to their masters should be their single-minded commitment to obeying God for the one main goal in life, to obtain mercy from Him and escape the condemnation of His judgment.

In addition, Paul wants them to be obedient to their masters in accordance with all that they understand of the biblical message, that calls people who are in positions of subordination and following others to comply with those who are in positions of superordination, which includes the relationship of slaves/masters respectively—in spite of the fact that this is basically an evil institution brought into existence by evil men. This will demonstrate that the slaves are willing to recognize their current lot in life within their own existential reality. In other words, Paul probably never expected slavery to disappear suddenly within the Roman Empire during his lifetime or any time soon thereafter. Therefore, Paul is in no one condoning slavery. He is accepting it in a situation where he has no control over it.

⁷⁵ ὃ ἐὰν ποιήτε, ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐκ ἄνθρωποις – These Christian slaves have a new ψυχή, which is to say a new existence. They were most likely followers of pagan false gods from their hearts of unbelief.

Now they are followers of Yahweh and His Messiah Jesus from hearts of belief. Therefore, he is telling them that “whatever” they do, they should do it by virtue of their new existence, not their old existence. This is the same as obeying their earthly masters “as for the Lord and not for men.”

The implied truth here is that people who operate in life on the basis of “the basic principles of the world” are ultimately interested in pleasing people, even if it just themselves as abject narcissists, who are all just created beings and not the transcendent Creator.

⁷⁶ εἰδότες ὅτι ἀπὸ κυρίου ῥαπολήμψετε τὴν ἀνταπόδοσιν τῆς κληρονομίας ῥ. τῷ ῥ κυρίῳ Χριστῷ δουλεύετε – Even though slaves, by virtue of their being slaves and not paid employees, earn no real wage from their earthly masters, Christian slaves can count on receiving the best “wage” possible, and this from God. It is the wage of their “inheritance” which comes from God. This word, κληρονομία, seems to mean in both the OT and the NT a piece of land, a place, that someone can count on receiving later in their life or existence as a created human being, especially from God and because of one’s association with and obedience to Him. Thus, based upon what Paul writes in Ephesians 5:5 (quoted below), these slaves’ “inheritance” is their part in the eternal Kingdom of God which He will bring about starting with the return of Jesus.

And Paul says directly that these slaves are slaves of the Lord Messiah, of Jesus—first and foremost, while they are also slaves of their earthly masters.

The benefit that a Christian slave is counting on as a result of his obedience to his earthly master is eternal life because of his primary obedience to Jesus. Thus, subordination to the man, Jesus the Messiah, should include subordination to any other human beings where it simply is what life calls for—regardless of whether or not the institution, such as marriage, family, slavery, business/corporation, a government, etc., has been biblically prescribed by God or it has simply been brought into existence by man.

Ephesians 5:5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance (κληρονομίαν) in the kingdom of Christ and God.

⁷⁷ ὁ γὰρ ἀδικῶν κομίζεται ὁ ἡδίκησεν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν προσπολημψία – Paul ends his exhortation to the Christian slaves with a warning, that any slave who persists in doing unrighteousness (obviously out of a heart of unbelief) will receive that which is appropriate and justly consequential. Of course, Paul is implying that it will be the wrath and God along with His condemnation, punishment, and eternal destruction.

Paul also indicates that God does not judge any person and his heart commitments differently from the way He judges any other person. Here is another element of equality among human beings that is more important than anything else people try to put forth as that where they demand equality. It is their eternal status and experience based upon the quality of their commitment to God, His moral commandments, and Jesus.

Thus, Paul’s exhortation to these new, Gentile believers and to those who are specifically slaves in Roman households is to obey their earthly masters on the basis of the fact that people who are unwilling to become committed to biblical truth and righteousness, even unwilling to obey their earthly masters as followers of Jesus, will incur the consequences of God’s justice, which is eternal condemnation. And God does not play any favorites. Either a person genuinely and authentically pursues obedience to Him in the present realm, or he is unwilling to do so. The former will acquire God’s mercy through his advocate Jesus. The latter will experience God’s condemnation and eternal destruction.

⁷⁸ Οἱ κύριοι, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχσθε, εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔχετε κύριον ἐν ῥουρανῷ – Of course Paul is speaking to Christian men who have slaves in their household. He wants them to provide their slaves with an environment that would be far different from that of others who serve masters who are pagan idolaters, who have no good reason to treat them kindly, graciously, patiently, and with a sense that they both will appear before the same judge, the transcendent Creator, at the end of history, thus making them equal in accountability before God and status as justified sinners. Paul wants the Christian masters to do just exactly this, because it is only right as followers of their common master, the Jewish Messiah Jesus, to whom they all subordinate themselves.

As Dostoevsky says in *The Brothers Karamazov*, “Equality is only in man’s spiritual dignity, and only among us will that be understood” – Elder Zossima as quoted by Alyosha on pg. 316 of the translation I have read.

But this is true equality because it is before God and eternal.

⁷⁹ Τῇ προσευχῇ ῥπροσκαρτερεῖτε, γρηγοροῦντες ἐν αὐτῇ ῥἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ – Paul always encourages people to pray. But the question is, for what? It makes sense to me that it would be in the manner which Paul expressed in chapter 1, verses 9-12, for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah, so that the Colossians may live moral lives while persevering in their belief by the inner power of God and looking forward with joy to eternal life and salvation which God has promised them through the gospel.

1:9 On account of this, we also, from the day we heard, have not ceased praying for you and asking that you be filled with the true knowledge of His desire in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **1:10** so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, to the extent that everything you do is pleasing to Him—[1] bearing fruit by means of every good action, and [2] increasing in a true knowledge of God, **1:11** [3] being made capable with all power according to His glorious strength for all perseverance and long-suffering, **1:12** [4] with joy thanking the Father who, by means of the light, has made you qualified for a portion of the inheritance of those who are set apart.

In the next verse, Paul encourages them to pray for Silvanus, Timothy, and him, that God will allow them to speak the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah to those in Rome, i.e., whomever would be willing to listen to him in Rome. Paul is under house arrest in Rome, waiting for an audience with Caesar Nero in regard to his arrest in Jerusalem and the Jews’ accusing him of violating the temple laws.

⁸⁰ προσευχόμενοι ἅμα καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ὁ θεὸς ἀνοίξῃ ἡμῖν θύραν τοῦ λόγου ῥ λαλῆσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ ῥΧριστοῦ, δι᾽ ῥὸ καὶ δέδεται – The lesson here is that Christians’ praying that other other Christians may fulfill their roles properly within God’s story is entirely appropriate and good, especially in the case of the contemporaries of Paul, and apostle, and his proclaiming the gospel.

The “mystery of the Messiah” is what which was hidden during OT times because the Messiah was not actually present

yet, but then became clear when Jesus appeared on the scene.

Paul is under house arrest in Rome and awaiting an audience with Emperor Nero for his “crime” in Jerusalem of Acts 21.

[Ephesians 6:19](#) and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, [20](#) for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

⁸¹ ἵνα φανερώσω αὐτὸ ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι – Paul feels not only a sense of obligation to be the apostle to the Gentiles but also a sense of urgency. He basically can never get enough of fulfilling his responsibility as Jesus’ authoritative spokesman to the Gentiles.

⁸² Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι – Paul is saying that God’s call to Christians is not only to love one another, but also to be wisely gracious to non-believers, even as Jesus was. If an unbeliever is genuinely interested in the truth, then share the gospel with them in as patient and loving a way as possible. If not, and especially if the person is hostile, the shake the dust off your feet and walk about in as gracious and loving a way as possible.

“Buying up the season” = making the most of the time and opportunity to interact with unbelievers, having the perspective that this may be the last time that they have the opportunity to “hear” the gospel before they experience death and eventually face the judgment of God at the end of the millennial kingdom (cf. Revelation 20).

⁸³ ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἁλατι ἡρτυμένος, εἰδέναι πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ἐν ἑκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι – In addition, Paul says that gracious conduct towards non-believers means being ready to provide whatever elements of truth (“salt”) to the conversation.

⁸⁴ Τὰ κατ’ ἐμὲ πάντα γνωρίσει ὑμῖν Τύχικος ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ πιστὸς διάκονος καὶ σύνδουλος ἐν κυρίῳ – Thus, Tychicus is the bearer of this letter. He is mentioned as Tychicus of Asia in Acts and as a traveling companion of Paul (Acts 20:4). Paul also mentions him in Ephesians as the bearer of that letter, so that he probably was carrying both at the same time from Rome to these two cities. Paul also mentions in 2 Timothy that he has sent Tychicus to Ephesus, but this is probably later around A.D. 68 after his second arrest and imprisonment in Rome.

Thus, Tychicus will explain further all that is going on with Paul in Rome during this first imprisonment.

⁸⁵ ὃν ἔπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα ‘γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν’ καὶ παρακαλέσῃ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν – Paul expects Tychicus to provide the Colossians with much more information about their situation in Rome than he is giving in this letter. He also expects him to encourage them even more than he is doing in his letter. Thus, it is implied that Paul trusts this man with presenting the apostolic message accurately and completely.

⁸⁶ σὺν Ὀνησίμῳ τῷ πιστῷ καὶ ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ, ὃς ἐστὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν πάντα ὑμῖν γνωρίσουσιν τὰ ὧδε – Onesimus is the slave mentioned in Philemon and is the one whom Paul is “returning” to Philemon. So this latter letter was probably written and carried at the same time as Colossians. We notice in what high regard to his understanding of the truth and ability to express it Paul holds Onesimus, even though he is a slave. Onesimus’ calling in life means nothing to Paul. Only whether or not he has a changed heart and understands the biblical message.

⁸⁷ Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἀρίσταρχος ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου καὶ Μάρκος ὁ ἀνεψιὸς Βαρναβᾶ (περὶ οὗ ἐλάβετε ἐντολὰς, ἐὰν ἔλθῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς, δέξασθε αὐτόν) – It is interesting that Mark, Barnabas’ cousin, is back in Paul’s good graces after Paul would not allow him to accompany him on his second evangelistic excursion (cf. Acts 15:37-39). Aristarchus, perhaps from Thessalonica, is mentioned with Tychicus in Acts 20:4 as a traveling companion of Paul.

⁸⁸ καὶ Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰούστος, οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς, οὗτοι μόνον συνεργοὶ εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, οἵτινες ἐγενήθησάν μοι παρηγορία – Not too many people have hung in there with Paul in his experience of being arrested in Jerusalem, incarcerated in Caesarea Maritima for two years, and then transported to Rome to be imprisoned until he can meet with Caesar Nero. If that is true of him, what about Christians in other times of history and other places and their hanging in there with Paul through his letters and with one another through persecution and suffering?

⁸⁹ ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ ἐξ ὑμῶν, δοῦλος ‘Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ]’, πάντοτε ἀγωνιζόμενος ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς, ἵνα ‘σταθῇτε τέλειοι καὶ ‘πεπληροφορημένοι ἐν παντὶ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ’ – In chapter 1, verse 7 Paul says that Epaphras was the first person to present the message of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah to the Colossians. Obviously, he is from Colossae, has reported to Paul regarding the Colossian Christians, and is going to remain with him in Rome while Tychicus and Onesimus carry this letter to them. We notice that Epaphras prays for the perseverance of the Colossians’ belief, so that they may stand at the judgment and qualify for eternal mercy by virtue of the fact that they did what God required of them in the present realm.

While τέλειοι = “those who have reached their goal” could refer to the goal of eternal life, it seems better here to interpret here as reaching the goal of fully knowing and understanding the gospel and Jesus the Messiah in the light of the next part of the sentence, “have become completely filled with the whole desire of God,” i.e., God’s desire for what sinful human beings should know in regard to Jesus and how sinful human beings should live as disciples of Jesus the Messiah, thus qualifying them for their eternal goal (cf. 1:5,9,19; 2:9,10).

From my own experience with studying the Bible, and even just the NT, I think that Christians never reach this goal of accurately and fully knowing the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah. But it is still something to shoot for and to pray for on the part of each Christian.

⁹⁰ μαρτυρῶ γὰρ αὐτῷ ὅτι ἔχει πολὺν ῥόνον ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἱεραπόλει – Epaphras is genuinely hoping that the Christians in Colossae and nearby Laodicea and Hierapolis will truly hold on to their new belief in Jesus the Messiah and thereby obtain entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God.

⁹¹ ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Λουκᾶς ὁ ἰατρός ὁ ἀγαπητὸς καὶ Δημᾶς – Demas is listed here as basically being on the same page as Paul, but a few years later in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul possibly speaks of him (if it is the same Demas) as having loved the present world and left Paul to go to Thessalonica. Right now though, here are two more people who have accompanied Paul to Rome and are with him in his prison circumstances.

⁹² Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἀδελφοὺς καὶ Νύμφαν καὶ τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν – Paul wants the Colossians to be encouraging and loving towards their fellow believers in the nearby city of Laodicea. He also wants the same towards this woman whom he names, Nympha, and the Christians who are meeting (I assume regularly) in her house.

⁹³ καὶ ὅταν ἀναγνώσθῃ παρ' ὑμῖν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ποιήσατε ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ Λαοδικέῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀναγνώσθῃ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀναγνῶτε – This indicates that three letters are going out by means of Tychicus and Onesumnus—one to the Ephesians, one to the Colossians, and a third to the Laodiceans. We have the first two but not the third.

⁹⁴ καὶ εἶπατε Ἀρχίππῳ βλέπε τὴν διακονίαν ἣν παρέλαβες ἐν κυρίῳ, ἵνα αὐτὴν πληροῖς – We have no idea why Paul feels this must be said, but more than likely it is because he has heard from Epaphras that he, as best he could, encouraged Archippus to be an elder among these new Christians in Colossae. Thus, Paul wants him to do the best he can at fulfilling this responsibility.

⁹⁵ Ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ Παύλου. μνημονεύετε μου τῶν δεσμῶν. ἡ χάρις μεθ' ὑμῶν – Finally, in typical fashion, Paul writes this last sentence instead of some secretary who wrote the rest of the letter while he dictated it. There is nothing he wants more than for God's grace to be extended towards the Colossian Christians and to continue to be extended until they reach their existential goal of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.