

## Notes on Colossians 1. July 21, 2024

**Introduction:** In the Roman period, Colossae was a city in the province of Phrygia in central Asia Minor about 125 miles east of Ephesus. Colossi was a small, mostly Gentile, but also had a substantial Jewish population. The Apostle Paul, the author, was writing to a new house church in Colossae, that met at the house of Philemon. At the time of the writing, Paul was a prisoner for the sake of Jesus. Epaphras, from Colossae, had led this church to Christ.

While Paul was imprisoned, false teachers, taught a form of Hellenistic Jewish mysticism that included the worship of angels, similar to the early strands of Gnosticism, and in conjunction with Judaizers, the Jesus legalists, who claimed that these Gentiles from Colossae, had to follow the Torah, get circumcised, keep the Sabbath and other festivals, and be circumcised. In short, Paul's letter to the Colossians exalts Jesus to the point where he is superior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Period Jewish mysticism and is himself, the fulfillment of the Law.

**The author:** Paul identifies himself as the author (1:1, 4:18). No one doubted this until the 1800's. Then based on style, new language, gnostic undertones, and differences with his other letters, critical scholarship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century challenged this notion and some ascribed this to a pseudo Paul who wrote this in the 70's (after Paul's death) or even further toward the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, which would have placed it in a period when Gnosticism was full blown throughout the Roman Empire.

However, one would expect unique vocabulary about what's being discussed, especially in 1:15-23, which is jam packed with new lingo addressing the Colossian heresy. The focus how Jesus is pre-eminent and supreme to anyone, visible or invisible. Those who believe Paul wrote this epistle place it during the time of his imprisonment in Rome.

### Jewish Mysticism with strands of early Gnosticism.

- Speculation of Angels. (The elementals). Worship of angels. Hierarchies. Wondering where Jesus ranks in the angelic hierarchy. (The ranks, Thrones, Dominions, Rulers, Authorities )
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Literature: Included writings that focused on ascending to heaven, visions, divine spiritual temples. Curiosity about the Star, visions of God's throne room, visions of the flying chariot thrones like the one found in Ezekiel. The Dead Sea Scrolls are full of this mystic imagery. All before Christ.

### 1. The Greeting

1 Paul, an **apostle of Christ Jesus** by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 To the **saints** (Holy Ones) and faithful **brothers** (and sisters) **in Christ** at Colossae:  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

- What is an apostle, and do we have them today?
- Is the term, "saints" an incomplete portrait of those in Christ?
- If you do an OT Search in Plural Form: Mostly used for Spiritual beings. Only one time is it human (Daniel 8). Would Paul be familiar with this term based on his consistent references that connect with the OT in his letters. Psalm 89:5. The assembly of the Holy Ones. 89:7. The counsel of the Holy Ones.

The Church is composed of believing human beings. A link between humans who are believers, is a conceptual link between them and God's Holy Ones in heaven. Our destiny is glorification. We are made fit to occupy space with God's family. That was God's intent. A blended family. Humans are made to be a part of sacred space. Co-partners with spiritual beings on earth. The Edenic reality realized once again.

- **Kene: Pet Peeve:** The Translation of adelphoi (brothers) should contextually include women if it is warranted.

## 2. Thanksgiving

<sup>3</sup> We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup> since we heard of your **faith** in Christ Jesus and of the **love** that you have for all **the saints** (Holy Ones), <sup>5</sup> because of the **hope** laid up for you in heaven.

- **An Important Paulism: Faith, Love, Hope.** Faith that is “in” Christ leads to Love for all God’s Holy Ones because of the Hope that we have for our Saviors return.
- **Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**

## 3. How the Colossians Heard the Gospel

Of this you have heard before in the **word of the truth, the gospel**, <sup>6</sup> which has **come to you**, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, <sup>7</sup> just as **you learned it** from **Epaphras** our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf <sup>8</sup> and **has made known to us your love in the Spirit.**

- Paul did NOT plant the church at Colossae, he had only heard that through Epaphras that NOT only did they become followers of Jesus, but that they were growing in the Lord.
- No doubt Paul was amazed how the gospel was being received by the nations. He was in jail, which tells us that spreading the gospel is NOT a one person job. The success of the gospel is based on faithful followers who allow the Holy Spirit to do the converting.
- Epaphras is following the Jesus mandate to make disciples. The power of the gospel only manifests when we walk in faith and obedience to share it. If we don’t share it with others, we nullify its power along with the joy of seeing someone come to Christ.

## 4. Praying for Spiritual Needs

<sup>9</sup> And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased (**Regularly practice throughout the day to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding**), <sup>10</sup> so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, **fully pleasing** to him: **bearing fruit** in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- The way to understand this is to be aware that we have not ceased praying for you must be understood as meaning that Paul and his associates made it a regular practice to pray for the Colossians church. I imagine that being in prison (4:18) gave him more time to be in prayer with God. It made him dependent on Him.
- Epi-Gnosis: Some believe Paul is picking up the Gnostic language. He is not. There is no evidence of Gnosticism during Paul’s time. This is not about secret knowledge. Verse 10 defines what Paul means by knowledge, it is not inner knowledge, but knowledge and wisdom that is connected with God. The combination if these two nouns are repeated many times in OT. Jewish writers. Focusing on the knowledge of God. Not inner enlightenment. Not inner knowledge. The source of the wisdom is the God of Israel. The readers of the OT know what Paul is talking about.

- Our Knowledge of God's will, spiritual wisdom and understanding must not be based on intellectualism alone but lead to action. Too many Christians are one dimensional. Loving God with our heart, our soul, our body, and our mind shows us that we are supposed to walk the talk, when it comes to being in Christ.

## 5. In Preparation for our Inheritance

<sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified **you to share in the inheritance of the saints** (Of the **Holy Ones**) in light. <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>13</sup> He has delivered (rescued) us from the **domain of darkness** (We are Lost) and **transferred** us to the **kingdom of his beloved Son** (Present reality)

- Inheritance (Claros). Used in land, but not the whole story. Are there people in OT that God can describe as his inheritance (Deuteronomy 32)? Israel is God's inheritance. Inheritance of the Holy Ones. Deuteronomy 32. Calaronce also includes people, not just dirt. We are grafted into a supernatural family.
- At salvation, we share in the inheritance of the Holy Ones. We are members of a remnant family. The idea of a heavenly humans that live with spiritual beings on earth is a Jewish teaching. A remnant community, which includes men and women, who are heavenly Holy Ones are Jewish teachings. Bad translation. Saints.
- The Colossians are full heirs. One day they will rule the nations. We are grafted into a heavenly home. At conversion, we are part of the remnant community of heavenly Holy Ones. Jewish 2nd century Jewish writings / theology.
- Delivered can be translated as rescued. It gives you the idea of being lost. More emotional. This action has occurred. The kingdom is already, but not yet. Jesus delivers the kingdom of God after he destroys all the powers and authorities at the end time.
- Aorist tense: **A snapshot of action. A completed event, not in process.** Action as a whole. Already but not yet. This is the Kingdom. The kingdom already but not yet delivered. This happens in the end, when he defeats the satan. This is day of the Lord language. Paul looks at the present take of Day of the Lord. Both the already not yet are going to be accomplished. They are destined events because of the work of Christ. Normandy happened. The war is basically won. There are still enemy soldiers at Normandy, who will fight you to the end, but they know that once the land was breached, the war was over. The already is just as real as the not yet. The aorist tenses teach this.
- Domain of darkness: The cosmic geology is everything outside God's kingdom. The domain of Azezal. Leviticus.