

Week 36 Summary of Colossians
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Background:

This is the final letter of Paul that we will be looking at in this series. It was written jointly by Paul and Timothy and was written from an unidentified prison – possibly Rome in the time of Nero.

Colossae was about 100 miles from Ephesus, around 12-15 miles from Laodicea and Hierapolis. His letter to the church in Colossae as also to be read to the church in Laodicea, and his letter to the Laodiceans was to be read in Colossae. There is no record of this letter. Laodicea is one on the churches addressed in Revelation 2-3 but neither Colossae nor Hierapolis are not. (They were probably too small – see resources.) Paul almost certainly never went to Colossae (Col 2:1).



Resources:

For further information about Colossae see:

<https://www.bibleplaces.com/colossae/>

<https://www.theologyofwork.org/new-testament/colossians-philemon/introduction-to-colossians-and-philemon/background-on-colossae-and-the-colossians>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossae>

Scripture:

Read Colossians 1-4 in a Study Bible and also in an Easy-read version (Contemporary English Version ?)

See also Philemon 10-12, 23

Read Colossians 1:15 – 20 and John 1:1 – 18 in 2 or 3 different translation several times (see below)

Questions for discussion:

1. Detective work:

Epaphras worked in Colossae before going to Rome He is in prison there with Paul (Visiting? Prisoner?) He gives some troubling news regarding problems – or perhaps heresies – to Paul. Paul writes to the church in Colossae and argues to counteract them. But in his letter he counteracts these issues *before* as well as after he writes what they are.

What are the problems?

How does Paul counter-argue against them?

Note the 'before' and 'after' layout.

Why did Paul format his letter in this way?

2. Col 3: 5 – 11 contain negative instructions (don't do this), whereas 3: 1 – 4 and 12 – 17 are positives. The subjects in Col 3:18 – 4:1 are now well familiar to our discussions. How do these instructions fit in with the over-arching theme of Col 3:1 – 17?

3. Paul's final greetings (Col 4:7 – 18) occupy a relatively large number of verses, Romans being top of the list. What (if anything) might we learn about the relationships between Paul and his named associates with the believers in Colossae?

4. John 1: 1 – 18 is widely known, frequently read and occasionally referred to. This passage of scripture provides a unique picture of Jesus, the Christ. By contrast, Col 1: 15 – 20 provides a very different, but still unique picture of Jesus, the Christ, yet it is (I reckon) nowhere near as well known or used as John 1. Why might this be? What can we learn from Col 1 that we could not learn from John 1? And what can we learn from John 1 that we could not learn for Col 1? (Please read and re-read these passages as found in the NRSV and the Contemporary English Version, shown below before considering your answer.)

5. And on a very personal level.... Having read the John 1 and Colossians 1 passages as suggested, has what you know and believe about Jesus changed in any way? If so, how? Is there a danger that either we are too pally with Jesus and forget his supremacy, or hold Jesus with such awe that we forget that he is our friend? How do we strike a happy medium?

John 1: 1 – 18	
New Revised Standard Version	Contemporary English Version
<p>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.</p> <p>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.</p> <p>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave</p>	<p>In the beginning was the one who is called the Word. The Word was with God and was truly God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. And with this Word, God created all things. Nothing was made without the Word. Everything that was created received its life from him, and his life gave light to everyone. The light keeps shining in the dark, and darkness has never put it out.</p> <p>God sent a man named John, who came to tell about the light and to lead all people to have faith. John wasn't this light. He came only to tell about the light.</p> <p>The true light that shines on everyone was coming into the world. The Word was in the world, but no one knew him, though God had made the world with his Word. He came into his own world, but his own nation did not welcome</p>

<p>power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.</p> <p>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.</p>	<p>him. Yet some people accepted him and put their faith in him. So he gave them the right to be the children of God. They were not God's children by nature or because of any human desires. God himself was the one who made them his children.</p> <p>The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him the complete gifts of undeserved grace and truth have come down to us. John spoke about him and shouted, "This is the one I told you would come! He is greater than I am, because he was alive before I was born." Because of all that the Son is, we have been given one blessing after another. The Law was given by Moses, but Jesus Christ brought us undeserved kindness and truth. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is truly God and is closest to the Father, has shown us what God is like.</p>
Colossians 1: 15 – 20	
New Revised Standard Version	Contemporary English Version
<p>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.</p> <p>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.</p>	<p>Christ is exactly like God, who cannot be seen. He is the first-born Son, superior to all creation. Everything was created by him, everything in heaven and on earth, everything seen and unseen, including all forces and powers, and all rulers and authorities. All things were created by God's Son, and everything was made for him. God's Son was before all else, and by him everything is held together. He is the head of his body, which is the church. He is the very beginning, the first to be raised from death, so that he would be above all others.</p> <p>God himself was pleased to live fully in his Son. And God was pleased for him to make peace by sacrificing his blood on the cross, so that all beings in heaven and on earth would be brought back to God.</p>