

*“Equipping believers for growth and service by encountering God through his word.”*

**THE BIBLE FOR TODAY**  
**MAY 19, 2010**



# OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS

Greetings (1:1-2)

The Themes (1:3-2:5)

A. Thanksgiving

B. Prayer and Meditation

C. Paul's Ministry and Reason for Writing

Appeal for Christian Maturity (2:6-4:6)

A. Continue in Christ

B. Let No One Exclude You

C. Live in Accordance with Life of Christ

Final Greetings (4:7-18)

# COLOSSIANS 1:15-20: A HYMN

- Full agreement by scholars that this is an early hymn of the church; no agreement on where it came from/ who may have written it
- Paul adopted the hymn for Colossians' teaching
- The hymn is about the supremacy of Christ—his preeminence in all things

## Structure:

Vss: 15 & 16

Vss: 17-18a

Vs: 18b

Vs:19

Vs: 20

# COLOSSIANS 1:15-20: A HYMN

- The one who made creation has become human and through him salvation by the cross (incarnation)
- Not a preexistent human, but God, who became human—who is the Messiah (of the Torah)
- God restores humanity and the created order to himself through Christ; his birth, death, and resurrection
- “The Colossians have not given allegiance to some cult figure but the divine Lord through whom the world was made...they can know the full truth of God through the gospel.” (NT Wright)

# COLOSSIANS 1: 15 & 16

*15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through (by) him and for him.*

- No one has seen God; Jesus reveals him; not a copy, but the very nature of God
- The invisible is now visible in Christ
- In Christ is the full expression of the image of God and what humanity should be

# COLOSSIANS 1: 15 & 16, CON'T

- ‘firstborn:’ (*prototokos*) supremacy of function NOT in time; the rank and priority before all things; the preexistent God—Christ is the agent by which all things are made [ Arius AD 250–336; Jehovah’s Witnesses—Christ is a first created being, not God, not preexistent]
- The whole of the universe with all its structures are all created by God in and through Christ (all creation will ultimately bring glory to Christ; even though we do not use them rightly)

# COLOSSIANS 1: 15 & 16, CON'T

- Past: Christ is the agent of creation; Present: Christ is the one to whom the world owes allegiance; Future: the sovereign Christ will be worshipped universally (Revelation)—Even though the powers/ world are in rebellion now, Jesus is STILL Lord.
- By (*dia*) for (*eis*) Christ is both the agent AND the goal of creation; “all creation finds its goal in Christ alone.”
- False teachings: there are alien powers that are a threat to humans—No/ Christ is Lord over all things.

# COLOSSIANS 1: 17-18A

*17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church;*

- Everything is held together by him and continues to be held together; without him the world would fall into chaos.
- “*synesteken*:” “The Lord who created the universe sustains it also.”
- Christ is Lord of the church: he is head of the whole world, but only the church, the redeemed, are his body; Christ gives vitality and energy to the church through his resurrection.

## COLOSSIANS 1: 18B

*18b he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

- ‘firstborn from among the dead:’ Christ is the ruler over the final great enemy of humankind, sin and death
- Christ brings the new creation into the world, power over death; exalted and supreme over all things—Philippians 2:5-11
- Divine purpose exists behind all of this act—redeeming love

# COLOSSIANS 1:19

*19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,*

- Paul works with the Hebrew, *reshith*, “firstborn, sum total, head”—Christ is the dwelling place of God
- Not a copy, but the full nature of God in Christ

# COLOSSIANS 1:20

*20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

- Hostility and estrangement that must be corrected
- Not just the church reconciled, but the whole created order
- Reconciliation is not automatic; some may reject God's offer of salvation—people still have to make a choice—judgment in the end for those who reject the offer
- Cf. Romans 2:21-31, 5: 6-10, 6:1-11—love of God is demonstrated in Christ's death and resurrection; reconciliation of all things

# COLOSSIANS 1:15-20: THE SEQUENCE OF PAUL'S TEACHING/THOUGHT

- The Colossians can thank God for Christ who as God is creator and redeemer
- Christ is not another god (the false teaching creeping into Colossae) but supreme over all
- Christ came into his world to restore relationships with sinful humanity and establish a new people—his body, the church
- Thus, when you are in Christ, you have all you need; you are new creations and can grow into a new person within Christ's body (Romans 12:1-2)
- This new life does not hinder us with rules, but liberates us to be what we were created to be

# THE BIBLE FOR TODAY

- We serve the one and only God in Christ: there is no other way to God (the church seen as intolerant)
- There is truth in the world, but it is only part of the truth; only Christ is the **WHOLE** truth
- Constant conflict in the world is happening every moment; God is sovereign over all things and thus a constant attempt to counterclaim this sovereignty by Satan
- Evangelism—Jesus is Lord; he has broken into history and all people are summoned to submit to his love, worship, and obedience

# THE BIBLE FOR TODAY CON'T

## Forefront issues for the church and believers:

- We are to be involved in and create conditions in which people can live as God intended.
- Ethically: live respectfully with others because they are in the image of Christ, live well in life/relationships, be concerned and involved in the ecology of creation, be involved in justice issues

*Christ has come to restore and reconcile what he has created; invites his church to be in this work as well—to share the good news of what God has done and can do.*