

# Colossians - Teacher Notes and Student Questions

In this bible study, we're going to be using the techniques that we learned in "How to Read the Bible" and "How to Read the Bible – Part 2".

Week 1:

**The 1<sup>st</sup> thing we want to do is:**

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- 1) Identify the type of literature that Colossians is
  - A) Its didactic or teaching literature, so
    - 1) Colossians was written to the church at the city of Colossae.
    - 2) It deals with a specific issue but does it in a timeless, universal way.
    - 3) It was written in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, so historical and cultural context is critical.
- 2) Paul's letters follow a typical pattern of doctrinal truth followed up by a section of how to apply that truth. 88% of Paul's commands (telling us how to live) occur in the 2nd half of his letters.
  - A) the 1st half of Colossians is devoted to doctrine while the 2nd half is how to live out that doctrine (our duty). Chapters 1&2 are doctrinal while chapters 3&4 are duty.
  - B) other ways of saying this is the 1st half is principle, the 2nd half is practice, or right doctrine leads to right living or orthodoxy leads to ortho-praxis.
- 3) The structure of Paul's letters
  - A) the writer identifies himself – in Colossians, its Paul & Timothy, verse 1
  - B) the names of the recipients, the church at Colossae, verse 2
  - C) he always gives a greeting, verse 2
  - D) there's almost always a thanksgiving/prayer section, verses 3-14
  - E) the main body or thought of the letter, C1V15 – C4V6
  - F) the farewell or good-bye, C4V7-18
- 4) Get some background as to why Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians. In study bibles, this is usually at the beginning of Colossians. A bible commentary will also give you this information. In Colossians, its to combat errors that have crept into the church about who Jesus really is. Some people wanted to combine Christianity with other religions. This is called syncretism. It winds up denying that Jesus is God Almighty and our only Savior. He may only be a great teacher or one of a number of prophets or just one way to heaven instead of the only way. In Colossae, it was Gnosticism that tried to combine Christianity with it.
- 5) The next step is to read Colossians all the way thru in one setting. You can do this if the book is a small book, like Colossians is. Then read it again all the way thru in one setting. Then read it again and again and again. This will help you to get Paul's flow of what he's trying to say. I know this may sound repetitious but its important to really see his flow of thought.
- 6) Now analyze the book's content by making an outline reason of the book. One person's outline may differ from another person's as long as they cover the same things. Here are some examples of an outline for Colossians:
  - Example 1; A very simple outline
  - What Christ has done C1V1-C2V23
  - What Christians should do C3V1-C4V18
  - Example 2;
    - I) Paul's prayer for the church C1V1-14
    - II) Supremacy of Christ C1V15-C2V3
    - III) Paul's warning to the church C2V4-23
    - IV) Rules for holy living C3V1-C4V1

- V) Farewell C4V2-18
  - Example 3;
    - Chapter 1
      - Paul and the church at Colossae
        - 1) Pauls' praise for this church (C1V1-14, 24-29)
        - 2) Paul's prayer for this church (C1V9-14)
        - 3) Paul's proclamation to this church (C1V24-29)
      - Christ and the church at Colossae
        - 1) Who Christ is (C1V15)
        - 2) What Christ has done (C1V16-23)
        - 3) He is the head of the church (C1V18-19, 21-23)
    - Chapter 2
      - 1) Paul's wish for the 2 church's (C2V107)
      - 2) Paul's warning for the 2 church's (C2V8-23)
    - Chapter 3
      - 1) Holy living, the principles (C3V1-17)
      - 2) Holy living, the people (C3V18-25, C4V1)
    - Chapter 4
      - 1) Paul's challenge (C4V2-6)
      - 2) Paul's co-workers (C4V7-14)
      - 3) Paul's greetings (C4V15)
      - 4) Paul's commands (C4V16-17)
      - 5) Paul's good-bye (C4V18)
  - Example 4;
    - 1) Intro (C1V1-14)
    - 2) the Preeminence of Christ (C1V15-C2V3)
    - 3) the Freedom in Christ (C2V4-23)
    - 4) the Practice of the believer (C3V5-C4V6)
    - 5) the Conclusion (C4V7-18)
  - Example 5;
    - 1) the person and work of Jesus (C1V1-C2V3)
      - Paul's greetings C1V1-8)
      - Paul's prayer (C1V9-14)
      - Supremacy of Jesus C1V15-18)
      - Supremacy of work (C1V9-C2V3)
    - 2) the Heresies (C2V4-23)
      - Standing up against false teachers (C2V4-8)
      - The Truth (C2V9-15)
      - Obligations of the Truth (C2V16-23)
    - 3) Living like Jesus (C3V1-C4V1)
      - Think like a 'live' person (C3V1-4)
      - Live like a 'dead' person (C3V5-10)
      - What unity looks like (C3V11-17)
      - What Christ looks like (C3V18-C4V1)
    - 4) in conclusion (C4V2-18)
      - What message are you sending to other people (C4V2-6)
      - What Jesus are you worshipping (C4V7-18)
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- 7) Identify Paul's reason for writing to the Colossians
  - (Its in C2V4, 8-10 Anything that makes Jesus less than He, is a false religion/philosophy.)
- 8) What is the difference between chapters 1&2 and chapters 3&4?
  - (Chapters 1&2 are doctrinal while chapters 3&4 are how to live out that doctrine.)
- 9) What is the main message of Colossians? (That Jesus is God alone (C1V15-20))
- 10) For the more advanced student:
  - A) Notice important word/phrase 'connectors' like:
    - C1V9 "For this reason..." this is related to the previous set of verses. It connects C1V3-8 to C1V9-14.
    - C2V6 "So then..." Is C2V6 related to the previous paragraph C1V24 – C2V5? Yes, the connector is "So then..." The subject is the same. See C2V4 and C2V6.
    - C2V16 "Therefore..."
    - C3V1 "Since then..."
    - C3V12 "Therefore..."
  - These 'connectors' connect the next paragraph to the previous paragraph but add something more important to it. They are saying that what's about to follow is very important, so listen up.
  - Example1: C1V9-14 connects to the previous paragraph of C1V3-8. It completes the thought from C1V3-8 from being thankful for the Colossian believers strong faith to saying why Paul is praying that their faith be even stronger.
  - But not all paragraphs are related to the one before them or the one after them.
    - Question 1: Does C1V24-29 connect to C1V15-23? (NO! Paul is starting a new thought in C1V24. He goes from talking about Jesus and the state of the Colossian believers to talking about what he is doing for them.)
    - Question 2: Can you tell if there is a link or connection between C4V2-6 and C4V7-18? (There is no link. Paul switches from giving some rules for holy living to giving his final greetings).
    - Question 3: Can you tell if there's a link between C3V12-17 and C3V5-11? (Yes, Paul goes from talking about putting things to death in C3V5-11 to talking about doing godly things in C3V12-17. Notice the connector "Therefore" in C3V12).
  - B) Chiastic structure in Colossians: A symmetrical arrangement of words with the main meaning being the unusual lettered point.

[1]Salutation (Col 1:1-12)

A(1:1-2)	1:2 to the holy ones and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae (1:2) (ἁγίοις)
B(1:3-4)	1:3 when we pray for you (1:3) (προσευξόμενοι)
C(1:5)	1:5 Of this you have already heard through the word of truth, the gospel (1:5)
D(1:6)	1:6 it is bearing fruit and growing (1:6)
C'(1:7-8)	1:7 as you learned it from Ephras (1:7)
B'(1:9-10)	1:9 we do not cease praying for you (1:9) (προσευξόμενοι)
A'(1:11-12)	1:12 the holy ones in light (1:12) (ἁγίων)

A: The holy ones. B: Prayer. C: Hearing Gospel. D: Bearing fruits.

A relates to A' B relates to B' C relates to C'

“D” is the main point of this chiasm.

[2]The supremacy of Christ (Col 1:13-22)

A(1:13-14)

1:13 transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son (1:13)

B(1:15-16)

1:15 Everything in heaven and earth

C(1:17-18)

1:18 He is the head of the body, the church (1:18)

B'(1:19-20)

Everything in heaven and earth (ἀποκατάλλαχαι)

A'(1:21-22)

1:22 he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through his death (1:22) (ἀποκατήλλαχεν)

A: Forgiveness. B: Everything in heaven and earth. C: The head of the church.

A relates to A' B relates to B'

“C” is the main point of this chiasm.

[5]Other principals and powers (Col 2:9-15)

A(2:9-10)

2:10 who is the head of every principality and power. (2:10)

B(2:11-14)

2:12 you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead (2:12)

A'(2:15)

2:15 despoiling the principalities and the powers (2:15)

A: Principality and power. B: Resurrection. A relates to A'

“B” is the main point of this chiasm.

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- Keywords and how they're used in other scriptures;
- C1V15...the word “image” is also used in 2nd Corinthians 4:4
- C1V15...the term “first born” is also used in John 1:18. It is not a term that means that He was born first into a family but that He has a place of pre-eminence, that He is above all else. This is made clear by C1V15-20.
- C1V16...the term “authorities” is also used in Ephesians 1:20, 21
- C1V18...the term “head” is also used in Ephesians 1:22, 23

End of advanced student section

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Week 3:

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- 11) The 3 step interpretive method:

- 1) What was the original meaning to the Colossians (Answer – to show that Christ is different and unique from all other religious people and religions – C2V4,8)
    - 2) Bridging the gap – this focuses on timeless principles while recognizing there are differences between the 1<sup>st</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. (See C2V16-23.)
    - 3) 21<sup>st</sup> century significance – what Colossians means to us right now. (See C2V4,6-8; C3V8-10, 15-17, 23-24 & C4V5-6.)
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  - Now let's analyze the sections of the book based on your outline. My outline is example 2.
- I) C1V3-14 Paul's prayer for the church.
  - A) Why does Paul praise the church in verses 3-8?
    - 1) Because of the church's faith & love for Jesus and the effect its having on the world.
    - 2) Though we may not always see the results of our work for Jesus, they are definitely affecting people for God's kingdom.
    - 3) God's word is not just for information but for transformation, to change our lives.
  - B) What does Paul pray for the church in verses 9-14?
    - 1) For it to increase in wisdom and knowledge so that we may live a life worthy of Jesus.
    - 2) Knowledge isn't just for accumulating. It should give us direction for living.
    - 3) God's word is not just for information but for transformation, to change our lives.
- II) The supremacy of Jesus, C1V15-C2V3
  - A) C1V15-20 tells us who Jesus really is. (He is God Almighty, the Creator of everything, the Head of the Church, etc. He is not just another prophet or teacher or a god...)
  - B) C1V21-23 tells us who we are. (We were alienated from God but now we're reconciled to God.)
  - C) C1V24-C2V1-3 tells us what we should be doing for Jesus in this life. (We are to proclaim Jesus & display wisdom in all aspects of our lives. This means consulting the bible in areas like finances, child rearing, in our marriage and business dealings, etc.)
- III) Paul's warnings to the church
  - A) C2V4-8 tells us to beware of false teachers.
  - B) C2V6...how did you receive Christ into your life? Thru a decision of your will. Emotions may or may not have accompanied this decision. Don't run your life on emotions but on what you know to be true.
  - C) C2V9-10 reminds us again who Jesus really is.
  - D) C2V11-15 tells us what we have become because of Him.
  - E) C2V16-23 Further warnings against false teachings. How might you be ensnared by false teachings about Christ? By someone saying He's just a prophet or a god or that other people are equal to Him or that He's an ascended master (one of many).
- Additional questions:
  - 1) What is the goal in studying Colossians? (C1V10-12)
  - 2) What has Jesus done for us in Colossians? (C1V13, 14, 21-23 & C2V11-14)
  - 3) Who is Jesus? (C1V15-20 & C2V9,10)
  - 4) What is Paul's warning to us? (C2V4,8)
  - 5) What has Jesus done to demons? (C2V15 & 1st John 4:4)
  - 6) Can we earn our salvation by doing certain things for God? (No, C2V16-23)

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- IV) Rules for holy living C3V1-C4V1
  - A) C3V1-17 tells us how to live as individual believers in Jesus.
    - 1) C3V1-4 Put your mind on positive things like the bible, getting to know Him better, finding out what the bible says about marriage, raising kids, what spiritual gifts He has given you, what full time job He has given you, how blessed you are, etc. Don't give in to negativity, bad or lustful thoughts.
    - 2) C3V5-11 tells us what NOT to do. Ask God for the strength to stop doing these things. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Your life as a Christian will change but only with God's help. V11 says we're all equal before God. Whether you're an American, an Italian, an Arab, a Jew, a man, a woman, etc., as long as you've accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you're of equal value to any other believer to Him. Are you doing any of these things? If you are, you can stop doing them by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit.
    - 3) C3V12-17 More rules for holy living. Which of these things are you doing now? Which of these things do you want to be doing or doing better? Are you treating all people as equals? Are you a forgiving person? Do you show compassion to those less fortunate than yourself? Do you saturate your life with God's Word?
    - 4) Notice how V5-11 is sandwiched between V1-4 and V12-17. V1-4 & V12-17 are positive rules for godly living while V5-11 are what NOT to do.
    - 5) Key verses are C3V17 & V23-24. Read them and memorize them.
  - B) C3V18-C4V1 tells us how to live in our personal life. Husbands, are you loving your wife as Christ loved the church? Wives, are you supporting your husband? Slaves (employees), are you working as if your boss is Jesus? Employers, are you treating your employees like you would want to, be treated? Would you want Jesus to see how you're treating your employees?
  - C) C4V2-6 gives us further instructions on how we should live as individuals. Are you praying? Is your speech godly? Would you talk that way in front of Jesus?
  - D) Notice how C3V18-C 4V1 is sandwiched in between C3V1-17 and C4V2-6. C3V1-17 and C4V2-6 give us instructions on how we should live as individuals while C3V18-C4V1 gives us specific instructions on how to live in our home life.
  - E) How can the peace of Christ rule in our hearts? By doing verses 16-17 ("Let the message of Christ (the bible) dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts (worshipping). And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (in your lifestyle).")
 

Also read Psalm 119: 16, 105 ("...I will not neglect your word... Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.")
- V) C4V2-18 In this final section on being raised up in Christ, Paul draws their attention outward – to the Colossians responsibility to make Christ known to their city V2-6 asks "What message are you sending to the outside world?" C7-18 asks "What Jesus are you worshipping?" This should remind us of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:26 that there are people proclaiming false Christs. So be careful that you're worshipping the true Christ. Paul ends his letter with the same subject that he started it with (C2V4,6) – make sure that you're worshipping the real Jesus.
  - - In this last chapter, Paul gives 3 basic instructions or commands;
      - 1) Pray continually – be dependent on God.
      - 2) Live godly lives

- 3) Speak the truth in love, both to people and the culture around you.
  - The way to do these things comes out of a godly life and a mouth that is both gracious and bold.
- C4V7-18...Final good-bye's.
  - A) Traveling teachers can be a good thing. Sajid would be a good example of this as would a visiting pastor coming to speak at your church.
    - 7) Finally, when Christians do not understand their faith, they will likely water down the gospel and accommodate it to their culture's expectations. They will easily be shaken by challenges. They will be engulfed in anxieties and be tempted to look for security in something other than Christ. Colossians says that Christians must be solidly grounded in the faith that transforms our lives. This transformed life will show unbelievers who Jesus really is. Our goal should be C1V10-12, which says "...so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God., being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of His holy people in the kingdom of light."
- Additional questions:
  - 1) How, then, should we live? Give some specific examples in your own life (C3V1-C4V6)
  - 2) What are some of the negative things that need changing in my life? Give some specific examples from C3V5-11.
  - 3) In God's eyes, are some people better than others? (No, C3V11)
  - 4) What are some practical ways that reflect our relationship with the Lord? (C3V1,2 & 12-C4V6)
  - 5) What are some of the positive things that I'm doing that draw me closer to Christ? (C1V9-14 & C3V1-C4V6)

Week 5:

- Write down what key verses stand out to you and why they do. Do this in class. An example of this would be:
  - A) C1V15-20 because this defines who Jesus really is. He is NOT a prophet, an ascended master, a good teacher, etc. He is God Almighty. If I don't see Him as God Almighty, I'm believing in a false Christ.
  - B) C2V6 I received Christ by a decision of my will. Emotions may or may not have accompanied this decision. Once I make this decision, I should not have to question it. When I'm going thru a hard time, one of Satan's weapons is to make me think that I didn't really accept Jesus into my life or that I didn't really mean it when I did.
  - C) C2C4, 8-10 False teachings always have a little bit of truth to them. They always sound good, reasonable or rational at some level. But there's enough falsehoods in them to be a lie.
  - D) C3V17 & 23, 24 A job worth doing is a job worth doing right. Would Jesus be satisfied with what I'm doing? Would He be satisfied with my work? Am I working as if Jesus was my boss and I had to report directly to Him?
- In class, have the students give the scriptures for these statements:
- Colossians wants us to;
  - 1) know who Jesus is...(C1V15-20)
  - 2) know who we are, especially in relation to Jesus...(C1V21-23)
  - 3) live a life pleasing to God (C3V1-C4V6). This involves, among other things, knowing what your spiritual gifts are (1st Corinthians 12:1,4-7, 11) and using them to draw closer to God and to live a life that pleases Him.