

English: Bible Commentary for Colossians

Formatted for Translators

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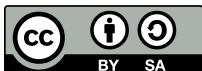
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Colossians 1 Commentary

1:1-2

Who was Paul?

[1:1]

Paul wrote this letter. (See: Introduction to Colossians).

What is an "apostle"?

[1:1]

See: Apostle

Who was Timothy?

[1:1]

Timothy was a young man who worked with Paul. He helped Paul write this letter. (See: Introduction to Colossians).

Who are God's holy people?

[1:2]

See: Holy Ones

What did Paul write in verse 2?

[1:2]

Some ancient copies of the New Testament have the words "the Lord Jesus Christ." More and older copies of the New Testament do not have these words. Scholars do not think Paul wrote these words. Who were the "faithful brothers"?

When Paul wrote "faithful brothers," he was writing about the Christians in Colossae. He called them this because they believed in Jesus. Because of this, they were God's children. So, they were also Paul's brothers and sisters in some way. When Paul used the word "brothers," he was speaking about both men and women.

See: Family of God See Map: Colossae

What is "grace"?

[1:2]

In ancient times, people often greeted each other by saying "grace." Greek people and people who spoke Greek used it. They wanted people to get favor. Paul always wrote this in his letters. This was because many of his readers were Greek. He also wanted the Christians to remember that God gave favor to them. God forgives the sins of all people who believe in Jesus (See: Romans 3:24, 4:16).

See: Grace

What is "peace"?

[1:2]

In ancient times, Jews often greeted one another by saying "peace" (See: Genesis 43:23).

1:3-8

Why did Paul call God the father of Jesus?

[1:3]

Paul called God the father of Jesus. Paul wanted people to know that God is the father of Jesus and that Jesus is God. He wrote more about this in the rest of this letter. Scholars think the some Christians in Colossae did not believe that Jesus is God. Paul wrote this letter to help them to know true things about Jesus. Paul wanted people to know that Jesus is greater than everyone except God the Father.

See: God the Father; Trinity; Jesus is God

What is the "certain hope reserved for you in heaven"?

[1:5]

When Paul wrote "certain hope reserved for you in heaven", he wanted his readers to know that the "hope" he wrote about is a promise from God. God promises that people who believe in Jesus will live with him forever in heaven. Christians can be certain God has "reserved" places in heaven for them.

See: Hope; Heaven

What is the "gospel"?

[1:5]

See: Gospel

Why did Paul write "bearing fruit"?

[1:6]

Paul wrote "bearing fruit" to speak about how the Colossians lived. "Bearing fruit" is a metaphor for the way the Jesus changed the people who believed in him. The Colossians traded fruits for other goods. They understood the value of a tree that made a lot of fruit. Paul wrote "bearing fruit" to get them to think that they were valuable to God because of the things they did to serve and honor God.

See: Metaphor; Fruit (Metaphor); Gospel

What did Paul write in verse 7?

[1:7]

Some ancient copies of the New Testament have the words "on our behalf." More and older copies of the New Testament have the words "on your behalf." Scholars think Paul wrote "on our behalf." Who was Epaphras?

Epaphras was the person who started the church at Colossae. Scholars think Paul told Epaphras about Jesus. After Epaphras believed in Jesus, Paul trained him so he could lead a church. Scholars believe Epaphras came from Colossae (see: 4:12).

See: Church

Why did Paul write "love in the Spirit"?

[1:8]

Paul wrote "love in the Spirit" to tell the Christians in Colossae that he knew how much they cared about him. He knew this because of what Epaphras told him.

Scholars disagree about why Paul wrote "in the Spirit." Some scholars think he wanted to speak about the Holy Spirit. That is to say, in some way, the Holy Spirit caused the Colossian Christians to love Paul. Other scholars think that Paul spoke about their human spirits. That is, God helped them to love Paul.

See: Love; Holy Spirit; Spirit (Spiritual)

1:9-14

Why did Paul write "knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"?

[1:9]

Paul wrote "knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" to tell the Christians in Colossae something special. Paul prayed that God would give the Colossian Christians "full knowledge" of God's will, with "wisdom" and "understanding" (σύνεσις/g4907). He wanted them to know the will of God and how to live in a way that honors God. Knowing this was greater than anything the false teachers taught.

See: Will of God; False Teacher

Why did Paul ask God to "fill" the Colossians with all these things?

[1:9]

When Paul asked God to "fill" the Christians in Colossae with these things, it was a metaphor. He spoke about God "filling" them to get them to think about all they thought and all they did. He wanted them to live in a way that would honor God even more. Therefore, he asked God to help them know more of God's will. He asked God to give them a certain type of wisdom and understanding. He did not want them to ask to know more about things that would make them rich. He wanted to say that if God "filled" them with the things, then they would know what God wanted them to do.

See: Metaphor; Filling of the Holy Spirit; Will of God

Why did Paul write "walk worthily of the Lord"?

[1:10]

When Paul wrote "walk worthily of the Lord," this was a metaphor. He wanted people to think about living in ways that honor God. He used the metaphor of "walk" to write about the things they did.

See: Walk (Metaphor)

What is "glory"?

[1:11]

See: Glory (Glorify)

Why did Paul call God "father"?

[1:12]

See: God the Father; Trinity

What did Paul write in verse 12?

[1:12]

Some ancient copies of the New Testament have the words "who made us able." More and older copies of the New Testament have the words "who made you able." Scholars think Paul wrote "who made you able." What is an "inheritance"?

See: Inherit (Inheritance, Heir)

Who is "the Son"?

[1:13]

The "Son" is Jesus.

See: Son of God; Trinity

What did Paul write in verse 14?

[1:14]

Some ancient copies of the New Testament have the words "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." More and older copies of the New Testament have the words "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Scholars think Paul wrote "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." What is the "dominion of darkness"?

When Paul wrote "dominion of darkness", he wanted readers to think about Satan. He also wanted them to think about how they used to sin before they did believe in Jesus. A "dominion" is an area controlled by a ruler. Paul wanted to say that before they believe in Jesus, people serve Satan. Satan encourages them to sin.

Scholars also think that Paul wrote about "darkness" because he wanted the Colossian Christians to reject the things the false teachers taught. Scholars think they taught about light and darkness. They believed that a person could move from darkness into light by learning certain things. Paul wanted to say that they really were still in darkness because they thought this way. So the Colossian Christians should not listen to them.

See: Satan (The Devil); Light and Darkness (Metaphor); False Teacher

What is "redemption"?

[1:14]

See: Colossians 1:22; John 3:16; Romans 5:10

See: Redeem (Redemption)

1:15-23

What is an image?

[1:15]

An image is something that is like a person, an animal, or another thing in some way. Jesus is God's perfect image. That is, Jesus is like God the Father in every way, but he is not God the Father. People know about God the Father because of the things Jesus said and did.

See: Image; God the Father; Jesus is God

Why did Paul call Jesus the firstborn (1:15)?

[1:15, 1:18]

Paul called Jesus the "firstborn" to say he has special honor. A first born child is the first child that was born in a family. In ancient times, the firstborn was greater than the family's other children in some way.

The firstborn had a different inheritance than their brothers and sisters. If the firstborn child's parents were a king or a queen, they became the king or queen when their parents died. Paul said Jesus was the first born. This as a metaphor. Jesus deserves to be honored more than any other person. Also, Jesus was the first to come back to life after he died. Because of this, Jesus is the older brother of everyone else who becomes a child of God (see: Romans 8:29). Jesus was alive before God created the universe. Jesus will rule over everyone and everything forever. He deserves to be greatly honored.

See: Metaphor; Inherit (Inheritance, Heir); Resurrect (Resurrection); Family of God; Son of God; Children of God

Who made the universe (1:16)?

[1:16]

God made the universe. That is to say, he made everything. However, Paul wrote that God did this by Jesus and through Jesus (See: Proverbs 8:22-31, John 1:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, and Hebrews 1:2). Scholars do not know how God did this.

See: God the Father; Son of God; Trinity

Why did Paul write "thrones or dominions or governments or authorities"?

[1:16]

Paul wrote about "thrones or dominions or governments or authorities." He wanted his readers to know nothing could happen unless God gave permission for it to happen. Because of this, no one can say they are as great as or greater than God.

Why did Paul write that in Jesus all things "hold together"?

[1:17]

Paul wrote that in Jesus all things "hold together" so his readers would know that Jesus makes the universe stay together. If he did not do this, there would be nothing in the universe (see: Hebrews 1:3).

How is Jesus "head of" the church?

[1:18]

When Paul wrote that Jesus is "head of" the church, he wanted readers to know that Jesus is the leader of all Christians everywhere.

See: Church

Why did Paul write "all his fullness"?

[1:19]

When Paul wrote "all his fullness," he wanted readers to know that Jesus is God. That is, Jesus is completely God. There is nothing God has that Jesus does not have. Also, there is nothing of Jesus that is not God.

See: Trinity; Jesus is God)

What is "to reconcile" and "made peace"?

[1:20]

Paul wrote about God reconciling things. When someone is reconciled to someone else, they are brought together after they fought against each other in some way. When Paul wrote this, he wanted people to think about how everyone sins. Because of this, they fight against God in some way. However, God sent Jesus to "reconcile" or "make peace" between God and people. When Jesus died, he made it possible for God to forgive the sins of people who believe in Jesus. These people are at peace with God. God did what was needed so that people could be at peace with him.

See: Save (Salvation, Saved from Sins); Sin; Atonement (Atonement); Reconcile (Reconciliation)

What is "holy, blameless, and above reproach"?

[1:22]

When Paul wrote "holy, blameless, and above reproach," he wanted readers to think about how Christians should live in a way that honors God. He said that Jesus made it possible for people who believe in him to serve him completely. He also said that these people do not have to sin any longer. And he also said that other people do not think they do evil things.

See: Holy (Holiness, Set Apart)

What is "the faith"?

[1:23]

When Paul wrote "the faith", he wanted to tell readers that they must continue to trust in Jesus. He wanted them to keep trusting Jesus.

See: Faith (Believe in)

What is the gospel?

[1:23]

See: Gospel

1:24-29

Why did Paul write "I fill up in my flesh" (1:24)?

[1:24]

When Paul wrote "I fill up in my flesh," he wanted his readers to think about how he suffered. He wrote "fill up" as a metaphor to say he accepted whatever happened to him while he preached the gospel.

In another letter, Paul listed the ways he suffered while he traveled to preach and teach (see: 2 Corinthians 11:23-29). In ancient times, it was difficult to travel a long distance. Paul suffered when he traveled to serve God and other Christians. Once he arrived, sometimes people beat him or imprisoned him because they did not like the things he said (see: Acts 16:19-24). Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison (See: Introduction to Colossians).

Paul wrote this so his readers would know that Paul was willing to suffer because he believed in Jesus. He did not try to avoid suffering. He thought it was more important to do what God wanted him to do.

See: Metaphor; Preach (Preacher); Gospel; Suffer

Why did Paul write "what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ"?

[1:24]

When Paul wrote "what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ," he wanted people to think that what Paul did was because of what Jesus did. "Afflictions" is another word for suffering.

Paul taught that Jesus died to completely atone for peoples' sins. Paul did not write that he suffered to atone for peoples' sins. Instead, Paul wrote that he suffered so that other people could learn about Jesus. Then they too could believe in Jesus.

See: Atonement (Atonement); Suffer; Sin

What is "his body"?

[1:24]

When Paul wrote "his body", he used a metaphor. He was writing about the church. In other letters, Paul explained this metaphor (see: Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12). When he wrote the church, he wanted readers to think about all Christians everywhere.

See: Church; Body of Christ

Why did Paul write "secret truth"?

[1:26]

When Paul wrote "secret truth," he wanted to speak about something that people can learn about. It is something that was once a secret (see: Ephesians 3:9, Romans 16:25). Now God has revealed it. So it is not a secret now. Instead it is "truth" that people need to know.

See: Colossians 2:2; 4:3; Ephesians 3:3 See: Reveal (Revelation); Mystery

What specific "secret truth" did Paul reveal?

[1:26, 1:27]

Some scholars think the "secret truth" Paul revealed was that Gentiles could also become part of the people of God. First, God made the people of Israel his people. Now, anyone who believed in Jesus could also be part of God's people. Other scholars think the "secret truth" Paul wrote about was that Gentiles could be at peace with God. Before, Gentiles needed to do the things the Jews did so they could be at peace with God. Now anyone can be at peace with God because they believe in Jesus.

God had hidden this plan from people for a long time (see: Ephesians 3:9, Romans 16:25). Now, God revealed it to Paul (see: Ephesians 3:3). He wanted Paul to reveal it to Gentiles and other Christians.

See: Romans 11:25, Ephesians 3:6, Acts 22:21, and Acts 28:28. See: Reveal (Revelation); People of God; Gentile

What are the "riches" that Paul wrote about?

[1:27]

Paul wrote about "riches." This was a metaphor. He wanted to write that God highly values people who believe in Jesus. That is, God thinks about them the way a rich person thinks about their money. So, when Paul wrote about the "secret truth among the Gentiles," he really wanted the Gentiles to know about Jesus. Paul served God by telling Gentiles about Jesus. This is what God wanted Paul to do.

See: Metaphor; Gentile

Why did Paul write "Christ in you"?

[1:27]

When Paul wrote "Christ in you", he wanted people to think that when they believed in Jesus, Jesus became part of them in some way. Paul did not want to say that Jesus is physically inside of Christians. Some scholars think that "Christ in you" is the Holy Spirit. Other scholars think that a person who believes in Jesus can in some way make themselves like Jesus. That is, they can live in a way that honors God.

See: Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

What is the "hope of glory"?

[1:27]

The hope of glory is something Christians know. They know that they will be with God in heaven. They will be near God who is glorious.

See: Hope; Glory (Glorify)

How did Paul present people mature in Christ?

[1:28]

Paul wrote about presenting people mature in Christ. This was a metaphor. He was speaking about making an offering to God of the people who they taught. They wanted to give them to God to show God how they helped these people serve God. Paul wanted to help these people to live in a way that honors God. He did this to honor God.

Colossians 2

2:1-5

What was Paul's struggle?

[2:1]

When Paul wrote about his struggle, he wanted people to know how he prayed for them very often. He was in prison. Therefore, he could not be with them. This made him very sad. Scholars also think he wanted them to think that he was in some way wrestling with God. That is, he was fighting with God in some way when he was asking God to help them.

Where was Laodicea?

[2:1]

Laodicea was about 16 kilometers west of Colossae. Christians in the two cities knew each other. Christian leaders sent letters to both of them. They usually shared those letters with each other. Paul prayed for both those churches.

See Map: Colossae; Laodicea

Why did Paul write "have not seen my face in the flesh"?

[2:1]

When Paul wrote "have not seen my face in the flesh," he was writing about people who had not seen Paul. Paul did not start the church in Colossae. Therefore, many people were part of that church who had not met him. He still loved them.

See: Church

Why did Paul write "hearts"?

[2:2]

See: Heart (Metaphor)

What is the "secret truth of God"?

[2:2]

The "secret truth of God" is that Jesus is the Messiah.

See: Colossians 1:26

Why did Paul write "hidden"?

[2:3]

Paul wrote "hidden" to make his people think about God. He wrote that Jesus is God. God is very great, and he can do anything. However, Jesus was also a person. This meant that other people could not see everything he could do because he was God but he was also a man. Therefore, Paul wrote that some of the things Jesus could do were "hidden." That is, people could not see them.

See: Jesus is God

Why did Paul write "with you in spirit"?

[2:5]

Paul wrote "with you in spirit" to tell people that he knew they believed in Jesus. They believed in Jesus the same way he did. They prayed for the same things (see: Colossians 1:3,9).

Paul also knew that they heard the gospel he taught. He knew this because Epaphras started the church in Colossae. Paul trained Epaphras. So Epaphras taught them what Paul taught Epaphras. Paul wanted to say that in some way it was as if he taught them himself.

See: Gospel, Church

Why did Paul write "faith"?

[2:5]

See: Faith (Believe in)

2:6-15

Why did Paul write "received Christ the Lord"?

[2:6]

When Paul wrote "received Christ the Lord", he wanted people to think about when they believed in Jesus, who is the Messiah. He used the metaphor of receiving a gift. This is because when a person believes in Jesus and God saves them from their sins, it is a great gift from God.

See: Metaphor, Messiah (Christ)

Why did Paul write "walk in him"?

[2:6]

See: Walk

Why did Paul write "be rooted in him"?

[2:7]

When Paul wrote "be rooted in him", he used a metaphor to speak about how Christians should follow Jesus. He wanted people to think about how a plant is rooted in the ground. The ground keeps the plant strong. It keeps the plant growing. In some way, when a person believes in Jesus, God keeps that person strong and helps them to live in a way that honors God.

See: Metaphor

Why did Paul write "be built on him"?

[2:7]

When Paul wrote "be built on him", he used a different metaphor to speak about Christians should obey Jesus. He wanted people to think about how a building is built on a foundation. The foundation keeps the building from falling down. In some way, Jesus keeps Christians from falling away from God.

See: Metaphor

Why did Paul write "captures you"?

[2:8]

When Paul wrote "captures you", he warned people not to start believing the wrong things. He used the metaphor of a soldier being captured by an enemy in war. That soldier became the slave of the enemy. Paul wanted to say that it is in some way like this if a Christian starts to believe wrong ideas about God or Jesus. That person does the wrong things and they cannot stop doing the wrong things because they believe the wrong things.

See: Metaphor

What is "philosophy and empty deceit"?

[2:8]

Paul wrote "philosophy and empty deceit" to warn people not to believe something other than the gospel.

"Philosophy" is a word for ways of thinking. Paul used it to speak about ideas that people make up. That is to say, they are things people teach that are not from God.

When Paul wrote "empty deceit", he wanted people to know that these ideas are worthless. If people believed them, they did not help them. Also, he wanted them to know that these ideas are lies. That is, other people tell them these things to deceive them.

Advice to translators: An idea is something someone thinks.

See: Gospel

What are the "elements of the world"?

[2:8]

Scholars disagree about what "elements of the world" are. Some scholars think when Paul wrote "elements of the world," he wanted people to think about spirits that are not from God. These spirits are demons. Other scholars think he wrote this to get people to think about things the world. The ancient Greeks thought that everything in the world was composed of the "elements" of earth, air, fire, and water. Other scholars think Paul wrote about ways the false teachers spoke. These false teachers would speak about ideas as if they were people.

Advice to translators: An idea is something someone thinks.

See: Spirit (Spiritual); Demon

What is the "fullness of God"?

[2:9]

When Paul wrote "fullness of God," he wanted people to know that Jesus is God. That is, Jesus is completely God. There is nothing God has that Jesus does not have. Also, there is nothing of Jesus that is not God.

See: Trinity; Jesus is God

Why did Paul write "filled in him"?

[2:10]

When Paul wrote "filled in him," he wanted people to know that Jesus in some way completed or perfected them.

See: Colossians 1:9

What is the "circumcision of Christ"?

[2:11]

See: Circumcise (Circumcision)

Why did Paul write "you were buried with him in baptism"?

[2:12]

When Paul wrote "you were buried", he used the metaphor of death and burial to speak about what happens when someone believes in Jesus. When a person dies, their body is buried in the ground. That is, people no longer see it. When a person is baptised, it is a symbol of that they no longer have to do the things they used to do. They do not have to sin. They begin a new life. That is, they begin obeying Jesus instead of sinning.

Paul wrote "with him" to make people know that Jesus changes people who believe in him. When a person is baptised, it is also a symbol that the person in some way is joining in Jesus' resurrection.

See: Metaphor; Symbol; Sin; Baptize (Baptism); Resurrect (Resurrection); Born Again (New Life, Regeneration)

How are people "raised up" in Christ?

[2:12]

Paul wrote that Christians are "raised up" in Christ. In some way, God gives Christians the benefit of Jesus' resurrection. That is, Christians will be resurrected. However, Paul said that in some way, Christians are changed when they believe in Jesus. In some way, this is like being resurrected, or being given a new life.

Scholars think this was part of the metaphor of baptism. That is, when a person comes up from the water when they are baptised, it is a symbol of their new life. This new life is because of Jesus. Baptize (Baptism) See: Resurrect (Resurrection); Symbol; Baptize (Baptism); Born Again (New Life, Regeneration)

What was Paul writing about being "dead in your trespasses" and "alive together with" Christ?

[2:13]

Paul wrote about being "dead in your trespasses" but now "alive together with" Jesus to get readers to think about how different their lives were before and after they believed in Jesus. Before they believed in Jesus, they sinned against God. In the Bible, people often used the metaphor of being dead to speak about this (see: Romans 5:12-21). But when a person believes in Jesus, God saves them from their sins. Paul wanted people to know that in some way, this is like getting a new life. They now live in some way "with" Jesus, who is the Messiah. Paul said that this new life is in some way like the new life Jesus got when he was resurrected.

See: Sin; Metaphor; Save (Salvation, Saved from Sins); Resurrect (Resurrection); Die (Death); Born Again (New Life, Regeneration); Messiah (Christ)

Why did Paul write "nailing it to the cross"?

[2:14]

When Paul wrote about peoples' sins being "nailed to the cross", he wanted to say that God cancelled their sins completely. God will no longer judge them or punish them for their sins. Nailing to the cross is a metaphor or symbol for completely ending something.

See: Metaphor; Cross; Sin; Atone (Atonement)

What was Paul saying in 2:15?

[2:15]

In 2:15, Paul was saying that when Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected, he defeated forever all "powers and authorities" that are opposed to God (see: 1:16, 2:10). That is to say, they still exist on earth. But they never can defeat God. Paul used the metaphor of "disarming" them to speak about this. Then he wrote that Jesus "made a public spectacle of them". That is to say, he defeated them in a way that all people can know about it. Also, it was a way that shames them. People may still follow the "powers and authorities". But if they do, they are foolish.

These "powers and authorities" included Satan and demons.

See: Metaphor; Cross; Atone (Atonement); Satan (The Devil); Demon

2:16-23

Why did Paul write "a shadow of the things to come"?

[2:17]

When Paul wrote "a shadow of the things to come," he wanted people to know that any religious rules or laws are less important than eternal life.

Some teachers wanted the Christians in Colossae to go back to obeying the Law of Moses. They taught that people are saved from their sins by following the Law of Moses.

However, Paul said these things were only a "shadow." That is they were not as great as something that happened later. He wanted people to believe in Jesus and obey the things Jesus taught. This is how people are at peace with God.

See: Eternal Life; Law of Moses; Save (Salvation, Saved from Sins)

What is "humility"?

[2:18]

In 2:18, Paul used the word "humility" differently than he did in the rest of the New Testament. He used it to speak about certain things people did to please God. These were things such as fasting, that a person did to make other people think he was serving God. This is different than other places the word "humility" is used in the New Testament (see: 3:12; Acts 20:19; Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3). In those places, it is written to say that a person knows they are not greater than God or other people. The person is not proud.

See: Humble (Humility)

What is "the worship of angels"?

[2:18]

Scholars disagree over "the worship of angels." Some scholars think he was speaking about people worshipping angels instead of worshipping God. Other scholars think he was speaking about people worshipping God the way the angels worship God.

Paul wanted his readers to reject both of these things. He wanted them to worship God through Jesus, who is the Messiah.

See: Worship; Angel; Messiah (Christ)

What is "fleshly thinking"?

[2:18]

"Fleshly thinking" is when a person thinks too much about their body and what they feel. Paul warned his people that this way of thinking was not what God wants. God wants people to think about other things. He wanted them to think about serving God and helping other people.

What is the "head"?

[2:19]

When Paul wrote about the "head", he used a metaphor to speak about Jesus. Paul wanted people to know that Jesus is the leader of all Christians. The head is the part of a person that determines what the body will do. That is to say, in some way the head leads the body.

See: Metaphor; Body of Christ; Church

What is the "body" that Paul wrote about?

[2:19]

The "body" that Paul wrote about is a metaphor for the church.

See: Body of Christ; Church

What did Paul write about in 2:20-23?

In 2:20-23, Paul wrote again that a person should not think that they will be saved from their sins if they follow certain rules. Paul said that these are part of "the world", that is to say of things that are opposed to God. These rules were part of the wrong things that false teachers taught in Colossae. Paul said that Christians need to believe in Jesus and obey the things Jesus taught.

See: Save (Salvation, Saved from Sins); Law of Moses; World

How can a person "die together with Christ"?

[2:20]

When Paul wrote that a person "die together with Christ," he used the metaphor of dying to speak about a person believing in Jesus and being saved from their sins.

See: Colossians 2:13, 15 See: Metaphor; Save (Salvation, Saved from Sins); Die (Death)

Colossians 3

3:1-4

How are people "raised with Christ"?

[3:1]

See: Colossians 2:12, 2:13 See: Resurrect (Resurrection); Messiah (Christ)

What are "things above"?

[3:1]

"Things above" are things about heaven. When Paul wrote this, he wanted people to think about the kingdom of God. He did not want them to keep thinking about things on earth. He wanted them to think about serving God.

See: Heaven; Kingdom of God

Why did Paul write "you have died"?

[3:3]

Paul wrote "you have died." This is a metaphor (see: Colossians 2:13, 20). He wanted them to repent of their sins completely.

See: Metaphor; Repent (Repentance); Sin Offering

Why did Paul write "your life is hidden with Christ"?

[3:3]

When Paul wrote "your life is hidden with Christ", he wanted people to think about the way God changed them when they believed in Jesus. He used the metaphor of hiding. He wanted them to know that because they

believed in Jesus, they could honor and serve God. And because they honored and served God, they did not serve other gods. It was as if they were hidden from the gods they used to worship.

See: Messiah (Christ); Metaphor; False gods

When will Christ "appear"?

[3:4]

Nobody knows when the messiah will "appear" again. That is, no one knows when Jesus will return to the earth. Paul wrote this so his readers would think about Jesus returning to the earth.

See: Jesus' Return to Earth; Messiah (Christ)

Why did Paul write "you will also appear with him in glory"?

[3:4]

Paul wrote "you will also appear with him in glory" because he wanted people to think about eternal life with God.

See: Eternal Life; Glory (Glorify)

3:5-17

Why did Paul write "put to death"?

[3:5]

When Paul wrote "put to death," it was a metaphor. He wanted Christians to completely removing certain things from their lives. That is, he wanted them to completely stop doing these evil things. When a person dies, he cannot affect the people who know him any more. In the same way, when a Christian completely stops doing certain things, those things no longer affect him any more.

See: Metaphor

Why did Paul write "members"?

[3:5]

Paul wrote "members." This was a metaphor. He was writing about anything a person desires that is wrong.

Who are the "sons of disobedience"?

[3:6]

The "sons of disobedience" are people who do not honor God. They do wrong things. They do not follow what Paul and Epaphras taught the Christians in Colossae.

Why did Paul write "walked"?

[3:7]

See: Metaphor; Walk

Who is the "old man with its practices"?

[3:9]

The "old man with its practices" is a way of speaking about how people are before they believe in Jesus. That is, how they live before they become Christians. Paul often wrote about believing in Jesus as if it is the beginning of a new life. So, he also wrote about a person before they believe in Jesus as the "old man".

See: Born Again (New Life, Regeneration)

Who is the "new man"?

[3:10]

The "new man" is a way of speaking about people after they believe in Jesus. Paul often wrote this way as a metaphor. That is, he wrote about believing in Jesus as if it is the beginning of a new life. That is, as if the person becomes a "new man" when they believe in Jesus. He is different than he was before he believed in Jesus.

See: Metaphor; Born Again (New Life, Regeneration)

How does a person "put on the new man"?

[3:10]

When Paul wrote that a person should "put on the new man." It was a metaphor. He wrote about putting on clothes. That is, a person chooses to put clothes on. Sometimes, the person chooses which clothes to put on. So Paul wrote this to get people to think that a Christian needs to choose to live a certain way. That is, Christians are to live in a way that honors God.

See: Metaphor

What is the "image of the one who created it"?

[3:10]

When Paul wrote the "image of the one who created it," he spoke about God. He wanted people to remember that they were created in God's image (see: Genesis 1:26-27). He also wanted people to think about how God forgives their sins when they believe in Jesus. When God does this, it is as if he creates them as new people (see: Colossians 3:10).

See: Image; Sin; Atonement (Atonement); Born Again (New Life, Regeneration)

What did Paul want readers to think when he wrote 3:11?

[3:11]

When Paul wrote 3:11, he wanted to say that God cares whether someone believes in Jesus. God will forgive the sins of anyone who believes in Jesus. However, God does not care where someone was born. He does not care if someone is rich or poor. He does not care who someone worshipped before they believed in Jesus. God wants people to believe in Jesus.

See: John 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:11-22 See: Messiah (Christ); Sin; Atonement (Atonement)

What is to "put on a heart"?

[3:12]

When someone "put on a heart," they choose to live in a certain way. Paul continued to use the metaphor of a person putting on clothes (see: Colossians 3:10). He did this to tell people that they should choose to live in a way that honors God. He wanted to say that Christians need to choose this every day.

See: Metaphor

What is "bear with"?

[3:13]

When someone "bear with" someone, they are patient. That is, they do not get angry or upset with someone else.

Why did Paul write "bond of perfection"?

[3:14]

Paul wrote "bond of perfection" to get people to think that if they love each other, God will keep them together. "Bond" is a metaphor for joining things together forever. So Paul wrote this to write about God joining people together who are different. God does this because they all believe in Jesus. So, they love each other. The bond "of perfection" was a way of saying that this is the best way for people to live.

See: Metaphor

What is "peace" ?

[3:15]

"Peace" is when someone is calm does not often get upset.

Why did Paul write "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts"?

Paul wrote "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" to tell people to keep obeying Jesus. He used the metaphor of a person ruling other people. He wanted to say that Christians need to remember that Jesus is their king. That is, they need to do things he said to do.

If they do this, then God will give them peace that is better than any peace they can have without Jesus. That is why Paul wrote peace "of Christ."

See: Metaphor; Messiah (Christ)

What is to be "called in one body"?

[3:15]

Paul wrote about all Christians when he wrote "called in one body." In the Bible, the church is spoken about as if it is a body. Paul wanted people to think that God called them to be part of his church. That is, God did certain things so they could believe in Jesus. When they do this, it makes them part of the church.

See: Body of Christ; Church; Call (Calling)

What is the "word of Christ"?

[3:16]

The "word of Christ" is the gospel about Jesus. It is also all the things that Jesus taught while he was on the earth.

See: Gospel

How can the word of Christ "live in you richly"?

[3:16]

When Paul wrote about the word of Christ living in you richly, he wanted people to keep learning about Jesus and thinking about what Jesus taught people to do. If someone does this, they will do things that honor God. This will help other people to know that this person believes in Jesus.

See: Messiah (Christ)

3:18-25

Why did Paul write "masters according to the flesh"?

[3:22]

Paul wrote "masters according to the flesh" to get people to think about people who owned slaves. He wrote "according to the flesh" to say that a person was only a slave while they were living on earth. That is, people were not slaves because God wanted them to be slaves. It was only because of what other people did.

What is "eyeservice"?

[3:22]

"Eyeservice" was when a slave obeyed his master only when the master watched him. Paul told people that this was wrong. They should obey all the time.

What are "people pleasers"?

[3:22]

"People pleasers" are men or women who do things just to get other people to think they were good people. Paul told people that this was wrong. They should think about pleasing God.

What is working "as to the Lord and not as to people"?

[3:23]

Working "as to the Lord and not as to people" is another way of saying what Paul wrote in 3:22. That is, he wanted people to always do things that honor God. He wanted people not to do things because of what other people will think.

What is "the inheritance"?

[3:24]

See: Colossians 1:9 See: Inherit (Inheritance, Heir)

What is "favoritism"?

[3:25]

"Favoritism" is when one person or group of people receives a gift or favor just because of who they are. That is, it is not because they have done something to deserve the gift. Paul told people that God does not do this. He loves all people (see: John 3:16). He forgives the sins of everyone who believes in Jesus.

See: Sin;Atonement(Atonement)

Colossians 4

4:1-6

Who is the "master in heaven"?

[4:1]

When Paul wrote "master in heaven," he wanted people to think about Jesus. Jesus is the master who all Christians serve. He is in heaven now. That is, he went to heaven after he was resurrected. He will be in heaven until he returns to earth.

See: Heaven; Resurrect (Resurrection); Jesus' Return to Earth

What is "thanksgiving"?

[4:2]

See: Thanksgiving

Why did Paul write "open a door for the word"?

[4:3]

Paul wrote "open a door." This was a metaphor. He was writing about being able to tell other people about Jesus. Opening a door allows a person go into another room. So Paul wanted people to know that he asked God to allow him in some way to tell people around him about Jesus.

Paul wrote "the word" because he wanted people to think about the gospel.

See: Metaphor; Door (Metaphor); Gospel

What is the "mystery of Christ"?

[4:3]

See: Mystery

Why was Paul "chained up"?

[4:3]

Paul was "chained up" because the Romans had arrested him. He was a Roman citizen. Because of this, he wanted the Roman emperor to judge him (see: Acts 25). While he waited to see the emperor, the Romans kept him chained up so he could not escape.

See: Citizen

Why did Paul write "seasoned with salt"?

[4:6]

Paul wrote "seasoned with salt." This is a metaphor about the gospel. Salt makes food taste better. That is, salt makes the food seem better to people. In some way, Paul wanted readers to explain the gospel to people so that it would seem better to them.

Jesus also used the metaphor of salt to speak about how Christians should speak to other people and live (see: Matthew 5:13).

See: Metaphor; Gospel

4:7-9

What were the "things concerning me" and "matters about us"?

[4:7]

When Paul wrote "things concerning me" and "matters about us," he wanted people to think about what they heard was happening to him. They heard about him from the people who brought this letter to them.

Who was Tychicus?

[4:7]

Tychicus was a man who traveled with Paul. He went with Paul to Jerusalem (see: Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in Rome. He took this letter to the Christians in Colossae.

See Map: Jerusalem; Rome

Who was Onesimus?

[4:9]

Onesimus was a man who met Paul when Paul went to Rome. Before this, Onesimus was a slave. In fact, he was a slave in Colossae. He believed in Jesus, so he was a Christian.

Onesimus became a Christian after he escaped from slavery. Paul wrote a letter to Onesimus's owner (see: Philemon). In that letter, Paul asked Philemon not to punish Onesimus. Instead, Paul wanted Philemon to treat Onesimus in the same way he treated other Christians.

Now, Onesimus was with Paul while Paul was in prison at Rome. Paul sent him to Colossae with Tychicus. He wanted the Christians in Colossae to know that Onesimus was also a Christian. That is, he wrote about Onesimus so the Christians in Colossae would treat Onesimus in the same way they treated each other.

See: Serve (Servant, Slave) See Map: Rome; Jerusalem

4:10-18

Who was Aristarchus?

[4:10]

Aristarchus was a man who traveled with Paul (see: Acts 20:1-6). He came from Thessalonica.

Scholars disagree about why Paul wrote that Aristarchus was Paul's "fellow prisoner." Some scholars think the Romans kept him in prison with Paul. That is, they arrested Aristarchus for being a Christian. Other scholars think Paul used "prisoner" as a metaphor. He was writing about Aristarchus being a fellow Christian who was there to help Paul while in prison.

See Map: Thessalonica

Who was Mark?

[4:10]

Mark was a man who traveled with Paul (see: Acts 12:12, 12:25, 15:37-39, 2 Timothy 4:11). He was also called John Mark. He wrote the gospel of Mark.

See: Gospel

Who was Barnabas?

[4:10]

Barnabas was a man who traveled with Paul (see: Acts 11-15).

Who was "Jesus called Justus"?

[4:11]

"Jesus called Justus" was a man who traveled with Paul. He is not Jesus who is the messiah. Scholars do not know much about this man. He was a Jew who believed in Jesus the messiah, so he became a Christian. Some scholars think he worked with Christians who were born Jews and also Christians who were born Gentiles. They think this because "Jesus" is a Jewish name, but "Justus" is a Latin name.

See: Messiah (Christ); Gentile

Why did Paul write "of the circumcision"?

[4:11]

When Paul wrote "of the circumcision," he wanted people to know that three of the men he wrote about were Jewish. Jewish people circumcised their boys when they were 8 days old. At this time, the Gentiles did not do this. Therefore, people knew a man was Jewish if he was circumcised.

See: Circumcise (Circumcision)

Who was Epaphras?

[4:12]

See Colossians 1:7-8

Why did Paul write "slave of Christ Jesus"?

[4:12]

Paul wrote "slave of Christ Jesus." This is a metaphor. Some scholars think he was writing about someone who believes in Jesus and obeys Jesus. That is, he obeys Jesus in the same way a slave obeys his master. (See: Colossians 3:11, 3:22).

Other scholars think Paul wrote about someone who chose to serve Jesus. Christians choose to serve Jesus. They did this because they love him.

See: Serve (Servant, Slave); Metaphor

Why did Paul write "strives for you in prayer" ?

[4:12]

Paul wrote "strives for you in prayer" to speak about how hard Epaphras prayed for the Christians in Colossae. When someone strives for something, they work very hard to do it. Therefore, Paul wanted to say that Epaphras prayed especially hard for the Colossian Christians.

Where was Laodicea?

[4:13]

See: Colossians 2:1.

Where was Hierapolis?

4:13]

See Map: Hierapolis

Who was "Luke the beloved physician"?

[4:14]

He was a "physician." A "physician" was someone who healed people who were sick or injured.

Paul said Luke was "beloved" because they were close friends. He loved Luke. Also, many other Christians knew and loved Luke.

See: Gentile; Gospel; New Testament

Who was Demas?

[4:14]

Demas was a man who traveled with Paul. However, scholars believe he stopped working with Paul (see: 2 Timothy 4:10). Some scholars think this is because he stopped believing in Jesus. Other scholars do not think this is why he stopped working with Paul

Who was Nympha?

[4:15]

Nympha was a Christian who lived near Colossae. Scholars do not know if Nympha was a man or a woman. More scholars think Nympha was a woman.

Why did Paul write "the church that meets in her house"?

[4:15]

Paul wrote "the church that meets in her house." He was writing about Christians who met at Nympha's house. That is, they worshipped God together in Nympha's house. Scholars think they did this because they were too far from Colossae to meet with the Christians in the city. Nympha's house may have been in Laodicea. Or it may have been somewhere in between Colossae and Laodicea.

See Map: Colossae; Laodicea

Who was Archippus?

[4:17]

Archippus was a Christian man in Colossae. Scholars think he was a leader in the church there. However, they do not know what he did in the church. Scholars think he could have been part of Philemon's family (see: Philemon 2). Perhaps he was Philemon's son.

Scholars disagree about why Paul wrote "Look to the ministry that you have received in the Lord, that you should fulfill it." Some scholars think Paul said this to encourage Archippus. That is, Paul wanted Archippus to keep doing the things he was doing. Other scholars think Paul said this because Archippus was no longer serving the church for some reason. So Paul wrote it to warn Archippus to go back to serving God in this way.

See: Church

Why did Paul write "this greeting is with my own hand"?

[4:18]

When Paul wrote "this greeting is with my own hand," he wanted people to know that he really sent the letter. Often Paul spoke words and one of his companions wrote them down as a letter. But he wrote these last words himself. This way, readers could see that the handwriting was his own. Therefore, they would know the things in this letter were what Paul taught.

See: Ancient Letters
