

## Lesson #12

**PREPARATION FOR LESSON:** Read Colossians 1-4**BACKGROUND**

During Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary trip, he spent over 2 years teaching in Ephesus and *all...who lived in the province of Asia heard the Word* (Acts 19:10). This means the gospel reached small rural towns, including Colosse, 100 miles southeast of Ephesus.

Epaphras, a Colossian, had evidently gone to Ephesus and after hearing Paul's message, had put his faith in Jesus. He stayed to learn more and then returned to Colosse. As he told others about Jesus, many believed. Soon a group began meeting in the home of a businessman named Philemon. Altho Paul never visited Colosse, a church was established with Epaphras becoming their pastor.

Five years later, in 60 AD, Paul is under house arrest in Rome. The Colossian church is growing. Visiting teachers have come with false Jewish teaching mixed with eastern ideas. They are combining it with the gospel message. Epaphras and the church members know the teaching is wrong, but do not know how to refute it. So Epaphras travels to Rome, to get answers from Paul. While in Rome, he is taken prisoner because he is a Christian leader. Philemon 23

However 2 other men, Tychicus and Onesimus will soon be leaving Rome for Colosse, so Paul takes the opportunity to write a letter to correct this false teaching. He sends it with the letters of Ephesians and Philemon, plus letters for other churches.

**THEME** **Correction of teaching** The visiting teachers say believers need more than Jesus to advance in their Christian life.

**OUTLINE****CHRIST AS HEAD**

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|--|---|
| I. What they should <b>know</b> 1-2  | II. How they should <b>live</b> 3-4   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He is Head of the universe</li> <li>• He is Head of the Church</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their position: seen by the Father in the holiness of Jesus</li> <li>• their practice: seek that holiness...               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In their personal life, home life, prayer life</li> <li>In talking with unbelievers</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

**DEFINITIONS**

<b>gnosis</b>	head knowledge; theory
<b>epignosis</b>	practical knowledge from experience 1:9
<b>spiritual</b>	that which comes from the Holy Spirit
<b>image</b>	precise reproduction, eikon 1:15
<b>firstborn</b>	that which comes first – to be first (does <b>NOT</b> mean born first) 1:15
<b>all things</b>	everything that has ever come into existence 1:17
<b>consist, hold together</b>	sustains; keeps from flying out of orbit 1:17
<b>fullness/pleroma</b>	divine power or nature 2:9

**EXPLANATIONS****Chapter 1**

- Paul's logic about **Jesus, His nature**: He is Deity.
  - If Jesus is before creation, then He is not a created being.
  - If He is not created, then He must be eternal.
  - If He is eternal, then He is deity.
- Paul's logic about **Jesus, His position**: He is Head of the Universe.
  - He is before anything in the universe.
  - He is the originator, the life source of the universe.
  - He is the sustainer of the universe; He holds it together.
- **God's mystery** Christ in you (by means of the Holy Spirit), the **certainty** you will live in God's presence thruout eternity.

**Chapter 2:15** Jesus disarmed and triumphed over Satan and his angels.

**Chapter 3** Steps to holiness

- In our personal life: Start with God's viewpoint. Turn from wrong desires, attitudes, speech. Allow the fruit of the Holy Spirit to keep developing. Have peace and thankfulness. Use Scripture as the basis of learning.
- In the home: Show concern for each other, helping everyone to develop in their abilities and character.
- In our prayer life: Have an alert mind to ask for right things. Have a thankful heart.
- In talking with unbelievers: Say what is wholesome, helpful, encouraging, cheerful. *Seasoned with salt.*



### GNOSTICISM: BASIC IDEAS

Gnosticism began in the east as people looked for answers about creation and evil. It began with two assumptions: the Supreme Being was impersonal, spiritual and holy; the world was physical and evil. This led to conclusions.

Since the world was physical and evil, therefore anything physical must be evil. The world was created as an evil world. Since the Supreme Being was holy, he/it could not create an evil world. So they decided it happened thru emanations from the Supreme Being. The first emanation evolved a second, the second a third, etc. until there were 30 of them. These emanations were known as *aeons* or *spirit beings*. The further removed they were from the Supreme Being, the less divine nature they had. Spirit number 30 was so far removed, it could create an evil world and the Supreme Being could still be holy.

From this, the religion of Gnosticism developed. The name comes from the word *knowledge* or *gnosis*. According to them, the Supreme Being could only be reached thru spirit beings/guides. They said most religious people live on a low spiritual level, guided by faith. A chosen few could start with spirit guide number 30, who would give them special **knowledge** (gnosis) that was better than faith. With it, they could understand secret information (**mysteries**). Using this information, they could get greater human wisdom and contact the next highest spirit guide for more knowledge, information and wisdom.

The object was to finally connect with spirit guide number 1 - the one with the most divine nature. Their spirit could then be absorbed into the Supreme Being, the divine cosmos. They would now be *perfect*.

To access these spirit beings, they had to separate themselves from the evil, physical world. Some did it thru self-denial - sparse diet, no marriage and self-affliction. Others said only the spirit had value. To prove they had rejected their evil body, they let it do all the evil it wanted to - self-indulgence.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, in the Middle East, the death and resurrection of Jesus was so well-known, Gnosticism had to include Him in their explanations. Some considered Jesus to be only a man since He had an "evil" or physical body. Others thought He was the lowest spirit being (30<sup>th</sup>) with the least amount of divine nature. His body was only an illusion.

Some or all of these Gnostic ideas mixed with the religion of the area and varied according to location and time period. Gnosticism combined with Judaism to form the Essene religion, which was connected with the Dead Sea Scrolls. In Colosse, the visiting teachers had already mixed Judaism and early Gnosticism and were trying to add that to the Gospel message about the Christian Life.



Gnostics offered head knowledge (theory) and human wisdom to a chosen few of the Gnostics.

The Gospel offers practical knowledge and wisdom from the Holy Spirit to all believers.

Gnostics said to become perfect and unite with god, they needed secret information - mysteries - available to only a few.

The Gospel says uniting with God is thru information available to all and can be known by all.

Gnostics said holiness was thru keeping Gnostic rules about food, religious days, angel worship, etc.

The Gospel says holiness comes, not thru keeping rules, but thru Jesus.

Gnostics said salvation is thru Jesus, but you need something beyond Jesus to advance in the Christian life.

The Gospel says **there is nothing beyond Jesus**. As Deity and Head, He is all we need.



## EXPLANATION OF VERSES

### 1:22-23

*God has reconciled you...in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, **IF** indeed you continue in your faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the **hope** of the gospel that you heard.*

This sounds conditional - that God will only see us as holy if we are faithful and do not fail. The problem is our English translation. In the Greek, the word “if” in this verse means “since or because”. So it should be translated, *God has reconciled you... in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, **because you continue in your faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the **certainty** of the gospel that you heard.***  
(hope in Scripture – when used as a noun - always means certainty)

### 1:24-25 *I do not regret the physical sufferings I experience in order to give you the truth about Jesus. As He experienced sufferings of persecution and rejection in His life and ministry for speaking truth, now it is my turn to experience that same kind of suffering. This is the way His body, the Church is developed. God appointed me to have a special ministry in this development so you Gentiles could be included.*

The sufferings of Christ in His **death** were complete. There is nothing lacking or unfinished in our salvation. The sufferings of Christ in His **ministry** are incomplete. These include rejection, misunderstanding and rejection for saying He was deity and was the only way to the Father. Suffering for speaking the truth about Jesus did not end when He returned to heaven. To this day, all who continue to speak the truth about Jesus will also suffer. This suffering will be “filled up” or ended when Jesus returns in glory to bring an end to evil.

Paul tells the Colossians he has taken his turn to suffer so they could hear the message of Jesus.

It has been worth it because local churches are established and there are many more believers.

He rejoices he has been able to have a part in the development of the Church, the Body of Christ.

### 3:13 *Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

God only forgives us if we meet His conditions: go to Him, admit our wrong, ask for forgiveness.

This means I cannot forgive others “as the Lord forgave me” unless they meet the same conditions.

If they will not admit their wrong, I “forgive” them by living without an apology in this life.

I ask Jesus to collect their apology at His Reviewing Stand.

Forgiveness always requires an admission of wrong, either in this life or in front of Jesus.

### 3:14 *Love - doing what is right (“tough love”) keeps the fruit of the Spirit in balance so we set boundaries and hold others accountable when there is abuse, evil, addictions or destructiveness.*

### 4:6 *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

Salt gives flavor, makes food enjoyable and keeps food wholesome.

Our conversations with non-believers should:

...be wholesome, helpful, encouraging or cheerful, so others enjoy talking with us.

...not be preaching at them, always giving advice or trying to change them.

## APPLICATION

The Christian Life is not about all the things we have to do to be a “good Christian.”

It is not about the experiences we should have, in order to show we are spiritual.

The Christian Life is about our relationship with God.

The most important part is what God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have done for us after salvation.

God the Father sees us in Jesus as holy and free from accusation.

Christ as Head gives life and direction to us as His Body.

The Holy Spirit teaches, guides and corrects us. He gives us the desire and ability to obey.

God’s commands for the Christian life are not to make our life miserable or burdensome.

God’s commands are not even to control the sin nature. It is now the Holy Spirit that controls the sin nature.

### The purpose of God’s commands

To deepen our relationship with Him while we are still here on earth.

To lead us to spiritual maturity.

To lead us to fulfillment - becoming all He created us to be.

To lead us to reflect the qualities of Jesus so others also want to know Him.

