

Sunday, November 17, 2019—Introduction to Colossians: Outline & Overview

### Introduction

- Two weeks ago, we began an expository study of Colossians. Thus far we have looked at the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the church in Colosse as well as the place of this letter in the canon.
- This morning we want to finish our introduction by presenting an outline of the book in terms of its chief theological and practical contents.

### Outline of the Book

- The book of Colossians is a four-chapter powerhouse. The first of its four chapters are doctrinal and the second two are practical.
  - “In its doctrinal half the one is polemic, for Paul is combating the semi-Judaistic mysticism and asceticism which we have described, with its false cosmogony, angel worship, and supposedly penetrative insight into spiritual secrets. . . The dominant theme is the fullness and pre-eminence of Christ, and the full completeness of Christian believers in Him, against the mysticism and asceticism enjoyed by the philosophies and tradition of men.” (Baxter, 202)
- Colossians 1:9-10—present the outline and structure of the book.
  - Verse 9—“that ye **might be filled** with the knowledge of his will”
  - Verse 10—“that ye **might walk worthy** of the Lord unto all pleasing”
  - Knowledge of what God is doing produces a worthy walk in the believer. Therefore, Colossians is both doctrinal and practical. It presents the doctrine of what God is doing in the most pointed manner and then instructs us how to walk that doctrine out in our lives.

#### THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Christ the fulness of God to Us

Introductory thanksgiving (1:1-8)

Opening prayer for “fulness” and “worthy walk” (1:9-14)

- DOCTRINAL—“THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED” (Cps. 1-2)

- Christ the fulness of God in the creation (1:15-18)
- Christ the fulness of God in redemption (1:19-23)
- Christ the fulness of God in the Church (1:24-2:7)
- Christ the fulness of God versus heresy (2:8-23)
- PRACTICAL—“THAT YE MIGHT WALK WORTHY” (Cps. 3-4)
  - The new life—and believers individually (3:1-11)
  - The new life—and believers reciprocally (3:12-17)
  - The new life—and domestic relationships (3:18-21)
  - The new life—and “them that are without” (4:1-

Personal addenda (4:7-18)

### The Christology of Colossians

- Regarding the view of Christ presented in Colossians J. Sidlow Baxter states the following:
  - “However spiritually superior the heretical compound of incipient theosophy and Judaism and ascetism may have seemed outwardly, its actual effect was to depose Christ from his solitary all-supremacy and all-sufficiency as Lord and Savior. It was this which called forth, in our Colossian epistle, its superlative presentation of the all-pre-eminent God-man Savior who is the very “fulness of the Godhead bodily.” (Baxter, 203)
- Colossians 1:15-18—give a glorious full-length portrait of the real Christ who became our Savior by setting forth seven super-glorious features.
  - Image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)
  - First born of every creature (Col. 1:15)
  - Creator of the universe (Col. 1:16)
  - He IS before the universe (Col. 1:17)
  - In Him the universe consists (Col. 1:17)
  - He is the head of the body the church (Col. 1:18)
  - He is the first born from the dead that he might be the preeminent one in all things (Col. 1:18)
- Colossians 1:19-27—the sevenfold identified of the true Christ is followed up by three simply tremendous aspects of His person, passion, and purpose.

- Colossians 1:19—all fullness dwells in the person of Jesus Christ.
- Colossians 2:20-23—the cross of Christ has both a cosmic and universal comprehensiveness. Sin was in the universe before ever it entered the human race through, Adam. If all the universe centers in the Lord Jesus Christ, so then the peace-making or His cross has a universe impact and application.
- Colossians 2:24-27—with the revelation of the mystery in min, what they were are the petty “mysteries” of the Gnostics and their philosophical theorizing? The mystery revealed to Paul pertaining to the church the body of Christ spans all the ages and generations.
- “Mark well, then, these three titanic aspects. First, the “fulness” of Christ comprehends the whole Godhead (verse 19). Second, the “cross” of Christ comprehends the whole universe (verse 20). Third, the “mystery” of Christ comprehends all the ages (verse 26).” (Baxter, 205)
- See now the sevenfold salvation that God the father was pleased to give us through the work of “his dear Son” (Col. 1:13).
  - Inheritance—“. . . partakers of the *inherence* of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12)
  - Deliverance—“Who hath delivered us form the power of darkness. . .” (Col. 1:13)
  - Translation—“. . . and hat translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (Col. 1:13)
  - Redemption—“In whom we have redemption through his blood. . .” (Col. 1:14)
  - Forgiveness—“. . . even the forgiveness of sins.” (Col. 1:14)
  - Reconciliation—“. . . yet now hath he reconciled.” (Col. 1:22)
  - Presentation—“. . . present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.” (Col 1:23)
- Regarding all this Baxter states the following:
  - “Oh, how could those Colossians every turn away from, or try to add to, such a full Divine eternal salvation as that? Or how can enlightened minds in our own times be dazzled away from it by vain vagaries of human philosophy—“ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (II Tim. 3:7)? Yet still today, alas, there are the superior intellectuals, ritualists, traditions, who insist on holding up their paltry little tapers to help the glorious sun to shine! What fools are the wise! How wise are the simple!” (Baxter, 206)

## Practical Section

- The order of teaching in all of Paul’s epistles is doctrine first then practice. How we live is always determined by what we believe. Doctrine is the basis of practice.
- Paul begins the practical section of Colossians by presenting Christ as the highest of all inspirations for the believers conduct and the basis for a worthy walk.
  - Colossians 3:1—“. . . seek those things which are above. . .”
  - Colossians 3:5—“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. . .”
- Notice the three tenses in Colossians 3:1-3 that serve as the basis for our life and service to Christ.
  - Past Tense—“If ye then be risen with Christ. . .”
  - Present Tense—“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”
  - Future Tense—“When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”