

Colossians 1:1-14 The Truth to Keep

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1. Introduction

- a. We start a new series today, a study of Colossians, called Colossians Complete. “Complete” because the message through this 95 verse letter is that You who are in Jesus have been made complete in Him. Everything you need spiritually is found in Him.
- b. God inspired Paul to write this message because the church at Colossai was starting to take their eyes off of Jesus and His message and shift toward a mixture of Jesus plus Greek philosophy, mystery religions, and Jewish mysticism. False teachers in Colossai were taking what they heard about Jesus and morphing it, mutating it into something different that mixed more easily with their pre-existing cultural beliefs.
- c. Through this letter the Spirit of God is bringing them back to the truth, the true gospel—the truth about Jesus, about what he has done and who they are now in Him. The Spirit is drawing their hearts, minds, eyes back to Jesus.
- d. And through this letter, the Spirit of God is still speaking. The Holy Spirit wants to help you and me today to get our eyes fixed clearly on Jesus
- e. We need this letter today because we too live in a culture that seeks to take Jesus and morph him into something different—something that people are more comfortable with, something different that fits the beliefs our surrounding culture

2. Here are 2 popular ways that our culture alters Jesus today:

- a. First, The Naturalist Jesus: This view of Jesus begins with the worldview—a framework for seeing and interpreting reality—called Naturalism. This worldview begins with the premise, the presupposition that Nature is all there is. There is no supernatural, there is no God. Creation is all there is.
 - i. So, when people with this worldview read Matthew Mark Luke John and the NT, -- those ancient eyewitness records – what do that do with Jesus? They strip away all the supernatural and downplay all of Jesus’ claims to be God. People who see Jesus through the lens of Naturalism see and then promote a shrunk down, human sized Jesus. This movement says Jesus was a good moral teacher, a Jewish rabbi who was a reformer—one of many from that time. When the question comes up, did Jesus do the supernatural, did he do the things that the eyewitnesses said he did, like did he really feed 5000, did he calm the storm, did he walk on water, raise the dead, cast out evil spirits, and rise back up from the dead himself—did Jesus do those things and thereby demonstrate that he truly was the eternal Son of God, is Lord

of Lords and King of Kings who requires our allegiance? The Naturalist says, No, no, we know that there are no such things as miracles, come on. We need to as enlightened historians sift through all of that and tease out his actual his teaching.

- ii. Jesus claimed to be fully God and fully man and that is what the early church claimed. But people with the Naturalism worldview throw out the God side and just want Jesus to be human. This human-only Jesus what you'll read about in Time, Newsweek, CNN, National Geographic—mainstream cultural media, the Discovery Channel and History Channel where non-Christian scholars are interviewed and 2000 years later claim to know more about Jesus than men like Matthew, Mark, John, Peter—who were actually there—who ate, talk, saw, heard Jesus with their own ears and eyes
 - iii. That's how people conditioned by Naturalism view Jesus.
- b. The New Age Jesus: Another popular view of Jesus that contradicts what Jesus said about himself and what the first believers taught about Jesus is the New Age Jesus. This view of Jesus begins with the New Age worldview.
- i. In this worldview, God is everything or is in everything, and the goal is to become aware of your divinity and to live from that place. So, when people with this worldview like Oprah, Deepak Chopra, the interfaith movement, the New Age movement read Matthew Mark Luke John and the NT -- those ancient eyewitness records -- what do they do with Jesus? They say yes, Jesus is a great example of a person who was fully conscious of His divinity and lived that out and we can also. The New Age Movement raises humanity up to the same level as God, as Jesus.
 - ii. And this group usually throws out the cross—Jesus dying for our sins—and instead say you don't need that, there are many ways to reconnect with the divine within you. Problem? What they are saying about Jesus and what they are saying in general totally contradicts what Jesus and the first believers said.
 - iii. Biblical Jesus: This is what you will always get here. This view of Jesus starts and ends with the words of the eyewitnesses preserved for us. And these words are trustworthy because:
 - 1. Written by or accredited by eyewitnesses
 - 2. Recognized broadly by the very early church as authentic and therefore authoritative
 - 3. Logically consistent
 - 4. We can be confident they have been preserved with a high level of accuracy because of the work of textual criticism which compares thousands of copies made through the centuries.

- iv. The Bible presents this worldview: Christian Theism: Genesis 1: God created all things by the power of his word, sustains all things by the power of his word. We see that all through Scripture God is highly involved with creation. Especially as Jesus' coming when the eternal Son of God enters into creation by taking on human flesh and blood and lives among us. And the 27 books of the NT give us a clear picture of Jesus and His words.
- v. The question for us, is will allow God's word, His revelation to us transform us, transform our thinking, transform our way of seeing, or will we change His words to conform to our own personal preferences, our own pre-existing culturally conditioned beliefs?
- vi. The Colossians were starting to shift away from Jesus and his words and be pulled toward their culture's attempt to redefine Jesus. So, Jesus through Holy Spirit, inspired Paul to write this letter to help them get back to the truth. And the Spirit of God has been using this letter to get His people's keep their eyes fixed on the truth ever since. So let's take a look.

3. Colossians 1:1-14

- a. ^{NIV} **Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.**
 - i. So, who's the author? Paul – and by piecing the info in this letter, Paul's other letters and Acts it's most likely Paul is in prison in Rome when he is writing this, around 60 AD
 - ii. To whom is this letter written? Believers at Colossai - Colossai is a little town not far from Ephesus which is the major city in that region—the region today in Turkey. Paul preached in Ephesus around 52-55 AD – and it's likely that Paul's co-worker named Epaphras, around that time when to Colossai and Laodicea—both nearby to preach the gospel there and helped start the church there. So about 5 years has passed between the time the church at Colossai began and the receiving of this letter from Paul to help them back to the truth that they were originally taught.
- b. **1:3 ³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus** [belief/trust in Christ Jesus—who he is, who He claimed to be] **and of the love you have for all the saints—**[the Colossians are living out Jesus' command to love each other] **⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven** [the hope, the expectation for the life to come—this short life is not all there is—it's a prelude for life eternal with God and His

people] **and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel⁶ that has come to you.** [the word “gospel” is a unique word from the Greek which means ‘a declaration of good news’—in this case the declaration of the good news about Jesus...]

- c. [Paul continues to speak about that message in the second half of **1:6b**] **All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace [His kindness, His favor] in all its truth.** [this gospel about Jesus is bearing fruit and growing—it’s doing this because as Romans 1:16 puts it, this gospel is the power God for the salvation for the rescue of everyone who believes – it is powerful—it has transformative power in the lives of those who hear and believe it, who allow it to take root in them.
- i. This word of God was growing and bearing fruit back then...it’s growing and bearing good fruit today—all over the world. It’s a big deal, it’s powerful, it’s why we spend time in it during the week, why we spend time in it on Sundays—the church, the people of God everywhere are the people who gather around this Word to hear the voice of Jesus who is using it to shape His people.
- d. **1:7** [Paul continues] **⁷ You learned it** [you learned this good news message about Jesus] **from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.** [there’s their love again—love is some of the fruit that the word of God and the Spirit of God work to produce in us. If you listen to God’s word and His Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit will grow in your life—Gal 5:22 the fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness...
- i. On Wednesday, Becky was distant, it felt to me that she was mad at me for something. The best part of me knew I should go to her and check in, see what’s happening but the worst part of me delayed. But we just did a series in here about loving others and Jesus said in Mt 5:23 if you know someone has something against you go to them and be reconciled to them—so I saw her at lunch and said, without being defensive, knowing I may have done something wrong—pushed through the dread of that and said, hey, what’s your problem?—no, no, hey—I feel like we’re distant—and then she, calmly and without sticking a finger in my chest said yeah, I feel like you’ve been really harsh toward me and the kids lately. Don’t get defensive—don’t explain why that’s not true—I don’t want to be that way, help me see what you mean. We aired it out, we reconciled. And on the other side it was good—we were close again, the strained feeling was replaced with peace. When we obey the Word and Spirit of God—it’s hard, but

it's good, he bears good fruit in our lives, in our relationships—through those hard steps of obedience...I keep seeing it.

- e. **1:9** ¶ **For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.** ¹⁰ **And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way** [that's what God through His word does—he calls us to live a life worthy of Him—a life that pleases God—a life that is aligned with God, remember Jesus' command: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength—to love the Lord is to obey the Lord—to do what pleases Him—to do the right things—to be honest, loving, forgiving, compassionate, generous, good like Him...then listen to this list...]: **bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,** ¹¹ **being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience** [These are the things Paul and His team are asking God to do in the believers at Colossai—and these are the very things God wants to do in this church here, you and me. Through his word and His Spirit, He wants to
- i. 1) fill us with a knowledge of His will
 - ii. 2) help us live a life that pleases Him—that makes Him smile
 - iii. 3) He wants to bear that good fruit in our lives, and
 - iv. 4) He wants to help us endure, and stay true to him when things get hard, or when the voices of our culture pull at us
- f. [So Paul and his team are praying for these things, asking God for these things and they are giving thanks to God for them as well...end of verse 11 going into 12] **and joyfully** ¹² **giving thanks to the Father, who has** [done what? who has] **qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.** [wow, what? he has qualified us to belong to the kingdom of light—His kingdom—we didn't qualify on our own to have a part of it, to have an inheritance, a portion of it—none of us did anything to qualify for that, no, He qualified us—He did it. Now verse 13...] ¹³ **For he has rescued us** [this is what God did for us...He rescued you and me...] **from the dominion of darkness** [darkness—not being able to see the truth, see God, blind] **and brought us into the kingdom of the Son** [the kingdom of light is the kingdom of His son whom...] **he loves,** ¹⁴ **in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.** [God qualified us, he transferred us—and now we are redeemed, forgiven—accepted and reconciled to God <<we'll look more closely at that in 3 weeks]
- g. God has rescued us out of the darkness and now through this letter, the Spirit wants to help us stay in the light, to see clearly, to know and to keep a firm hold on the truth and not be drawn back into the darkness. He wants to continue to bear good fruit in our lives.

4. Conclusion

- a. So, let's stay close to Him this week. Let's keep our ears open and responsive to His Spirit. Let's get some time in His word—allow Him to speak to us through His word this week.
- b. A couple questions for you to consider before we give you a few moments to consider your next steps:
 - i. What are some ways that our culture is pulling you away from God, or clouding your vision of Jesus?
 - ii. Who's words are influencing you and shaping you most during the week? God's voice, God's words, or words that conflict with God's voice, God's words? Who or what has the most influence in your life?