

Colossians 1:1-8

Our Hope is in Heaven

Introduction

Colossians is the third book in our series on the Prison Epistles . . .

As with the other prison Epistles, Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul approximately A.D. 60-62 while imprisoned in Rome. Written to Christians living in Colosse, a small city located on the Lycus River in present-day Turkey, the letter was delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus alongside those Paul wrote to the Ephesians and to Philemon.

Epaphras had planted in Colossae, who was assigned by Paul to preach to the Gentiles in the Lycus Valley. The Christians there were mostly Gentiles, although there was a significant Jewish population in Colossae. Interesting to note, Paul never actually visited the church in Colossae.

The church at Colossae was under attack from false teachers who were denying the deity of Jesus; they were teaching that He was not actually God. Paul addressed these issues directly as the nature of Jesus Christ as Creator and Redeemer is nonnegotiable, probably the most essential of Christian doctrines.

If Ephesians can be labeled the epistle portraying the 'Church of Christ', then Colossians must be seen as the 'Christ of the Church'. Ephesians focuses on the Body, Colossians focuses on the Head. Similar to Ephesians, Colossians is neatly divided into two parts; Chapters 1 & 2 are doctrinal and Chapters 3 & 4 are practical application.

Most importantly, Colossians presents the all-supremacy, the all-sufficiency, the uniqueness, and the fullness of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the God-man Savior, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and the total solution for man's needs both for time and eternity.

Colossians

[1](#) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
[2](#) To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
[3](#) We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,
[4](#) since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;
[5](#) because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,
[6](#) which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;
[7](#) as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf,
[8](#) who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

Paul's Salutation

(V1-4) – “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints . . .”

Here we have the ‘from’ and ‘to’ of the letter . . .

- Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother
 - Paul
 - An apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God . . .
 - This is no small thing for Paul to say this . . .
 - Chosen by God as an Apostle, establishing his role and authority
 - So when Paul speaks, not to just the church Colossae, but to all the churches throughout the region; Ephesians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Corinthians and even the church in Rome . . .

- Timothy
 - Our brother . . .
 - But we really know Timothy is far more than this . . .
 - Paul’s spiritual offspring, probably trusting Timothy more than any single individual . . .

- To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae
 - We spoke to this earlier, that while there was a significant Jewish population in Colossae, the saints and faithful brethren were primarily Gentile.
 - The letter intended for the church in Colossae, but probably distributed around the region . . .

- Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you . . .
 - Paul always speaks blessings upon the hearers of his words . . .
 - Grace and peace from God, giving thanks and praying . . .

The Hope of Heaven

(V5) – “Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.”

- Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven . . .
 - The hope of heaven, not unique to the Believer . . .
 - Everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die . . .
 - The unbeliever is hoping they will go to heaven, they have no assurance of heaven, their hope is no hope at all . . .
 - The Believer has a hope, an assurance, a hope that is laid up for us . . .

Romans 8:23-25 – “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

- For in this hope we were saved, the hope of heaven . . .
- That is forever with God . . .
- Speaking of heaven . . .

What is Heaven?

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word [šāmayim](#) is the primary word translated as heaven. This word is defined as “region above the earth: the heavens: place of the stars, sky, air; heaven: the invisible realm of God.”

In the New Testament, the Greek word [ouranos](#) is the primary word translated as heaven. This word is defined as “sky, air, firmament, any area above the earth; heaven(s), the place of sun, moon, and stars; heaven, in which God dwells.”

The primary Biblical view is that of three heavens; two in the physical realm, the sky and space, and the dwelling place of God.

Matthew 6:26 – “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”

- The first heaven - The word ‘air’ here is *ouranos*, or heaven, referring to the earth’s atmosphere. It is a physical place, a part of the natural world.

Psalms 19:1 – “To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.”

- The second heaven - The word ‘heavens’ here is [šāmayim](#), referring to the celestial bodies, these heavens being visible to humans.

Psalms 11:4 – “The Lord is in His holy temple, The Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.”

Psalms 103:19 – “The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.”

Isaiah 66:1 – “Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?”

II Corinthians 12:2-4 – “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

- The third heaven – The supernatural realm where God dwells.
- And this is the heaven where our hope is laid up . . .
- The heavenly abode of God . . .

What is Heaven Like?

Scripture does not give us a lot of information about what heaven is like, but there are a few things we do know about heaven . . .

I Corinthians 15:51-53 – “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

I John 3:2 – “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

- We know that we will experience Heaven with glorified bodies . . .

Matthew 22:30 – “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.”

- In some ways we will be like the angels . . .

Revelation 21:4 – “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

- The pain and sorrow of this life will be left behind . . .

Revelation 7:9-11 – “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.”

- Believers from every nation and angels will praise God together . . .

Maybe the best description of heaven is a non-description . . .

1 Corinthians 2:9 – “But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

- This we know to be true . . .
 - Everything will be perfect . . .
 - Everything will be right . . .
 - And we will be with Jesus . . .

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 – “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

- We will be with the Lord forever . . .
- Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- Of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel . . .
 - Heaven is a ‘gospel’ truth and reality . . .

“That man, since Adam, has been separated from God, that is estranged from God, dead to God, because of sin. God, knowing that the blood of rams and bulls can never restore a man to God, sent His only begotten Son, in the person of Jesus Christ, to come as a man, to live a perfect life on this earth, a life that we cannot possibly lead, fulfilling the law on our behalf. Jesus, proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven, went to the cross and shed His blood, because without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin. He died, taking on the penalty of death that belonged to every one of us. He was buried in a grave, descended into the depths and defeated death once and for all, and on the third day rose from the grave, living and glorified. He ascended into to Heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father.”

Romans 10:8-13 – “But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

- The truth of the Gospel saves us from the wrath of God, making us right with God unto eternal life, that is life everlasting, dwelling with God forever in Heaven . . .
 - For those who place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ . . .
 - To them and them alone He makes this promise to His people . . .

John 14:1-4 – ““Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

- The truth of the Gospel also determines who will be in heaven, because Jesus is the way, the only way to God and to Heaven . . .

John 14:5-7 – “Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

- Heaven is promised only to those who have placed their faith in the person of Jesus Christ . . .
- The Believer, and only the Believer, has the hope and assurance of heaven, eternity with God . . .

The Gospel Presented

(V6) – Which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”

- The Gospel has come to you . . .
 - How did the Gospel come you?
- It was preached . . .

Romans 10:14-17 – “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

- It was shared . . .
 - Not all of us are preachers, not all of us are teachers or evangelists, but we are all called to give an answer for the hope that is us . . .
 - We have the answer of heaven for those who are bound for hell . . .
 - We have the answer to life for those who are dead . . .
 - We have the answer of hope for the hopeless . . .
 - This is not a secret to be kept to ourselves, but something to be shared as God gives us opportunity . . .

- It was revealed . . .
 - We are called preach and share, introducing Jesus to the lost . . .
 - We can all look back at our lives and remember those who shared Jesus and the Gospel with us . . .
 - But it is God Himself that reveals Himself to the sinner . . .
 - We must meet the Savior . . .

- As it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit . . .
 - The world for most at this time was the Roman Empire and the Lord used this Empire for the expansion of Christianity . . .
 - Paul himself exercised his Roman citizenship as his ticket to proclaim the gospel in Rome . . .
 - And the fruit was obvious, look at all the churches that were planted, the thousands that came to the Lord during the first century church . . .
 - When the Gospel is presented it will bring forth fruit, because the Word of God does not return void . . .

- As it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”
 - And the church in Colossae was certainly the beneficiary of the Gospel that was preached and the grace of God . . .

Epaphras

(V7-8) – “As you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.”

How often Paul speaks to those fellow servants, who ministered to him and the body. I enjoy taking the time and giving them their due, not always notable or famous, but their names being immortalized in Scripture.

- Who is Epaphras?
 - It is believed that Paul led Epaphras to the Lord in Ephesus, where he then went to Colossae, preached the Gospel and planted the church of the Colossians.
 - Epaphras was in Rome with Paul, ‘who also declared to us your love in the Spirit’ . . .
 - Paul also spoke of him in Philemon 23, “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you.”
 - Epaphras is ‘our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ’.

Final Thoughts

While we looked at eight verses tonight, we primarily focused on Verse 5 . . .

‘Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel . . .’

Concentrating on two primary topics Heaven and The Gospel . . .

Simply put, no one gets to heaven without the Gospel . . .

The Gospel being the presentation of God’s salvation of man through the work and person of Jesus Christ . . .

And those that have placed their faith in Jesus Christ have these assurances . . .

I John 5:11-13 – “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

- That we have eternal life, we will not die but live forever with God . . .

Philippians 3:20-21 – “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

- We are citizens of heaven, we are identified with heaven, heaven is our home.

Ephesians 2:4-7 – “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

- Not only are we going to heaven, but God also sees us seated in heaven with Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

- And in the here and now, every blessing we have comes from Heaven . . .

We have a hope, the hope of Heaven, our eternal home with Jesus Christ, it is a hope that needs to be shared, the Gospel . . .

When we all get to heaven
What a day of rejoicing that will be
When we all see Jesus
We'll sing and shout the victory