

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

Author & Audience:

the Apostle Paul, writing to Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Colossae

Date:

60-62 C.E.

Purpose:

Classified among the Prison Epistles, Paul's letter to the Colossians confronts a false teaching which denigrated Yeshua the Messiah as being God in the flesh. While Yeshua was considered to be supernatural, perhaps similar to the figure of Wisdom, He was not believed to be someone who was the Deity in human form. The false teaching also advocated rigid asceticism, likely in order to induce visions and join into Heavenly activities of the angels. The false philosophy was probably derived from a fringe branch of ancient Judaism, which itself had been influenced by various mystery cults and sects native to the Lycus Valley.

1

Salutation

¹ Paul, an apostle of Messiah Yeshua by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

² to the holy ones and faithful brothers and sisters in Messiah *who are* at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Paul Thanks God for the Colossians

³ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, praying always for you,

⁴ having heard of your faith in Messiah Yeshua, and of the love which you have toward all the holy ones;

⁵ because of the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth, the good news,

⁶ which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is bearing fruit and increasing, as *it has* in you also, since the day you heard and came to know the grace of God in truth;

⁷ just as you learned it *from* Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Messiah on our behalf,

⁸ who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

The Person and Work of Messiah

⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray and make requests for you, that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

¹⁰ to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, in everything pleasing *to Him*, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, for all patience and longsuffering with joy,

¹² giving thanks to the Father, who qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the holy ones in light.

¹³ He delivered us out of the power of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son;

¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation^a.

¹⁶ For in Him all things were created, in Heaven and upon the Earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and for Him.

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

¹⁸ And He is the source^b of the body, the assembly; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; so that in all things He might have the preeminence.

¹⁹ For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell,

²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His wooden scaffold; through Him, I say, whether things upon the Earth, or things in Heaven.

²¹ And you, having once been alienated and hostile in your mind, in evil works,

²² yet He has now reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and irrevocable before Him—

²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the good news which you heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under Heaven, of which I Paul was made a minister.

Paul's Ministry to the Assembly

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Messiah in my flesh for His body's sake (which is the assembly).

²⁵ Of this body I was made a minister, according to the administration of God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden for ages and generations; but now has been manifested to His holy ones,

²⁷ to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Messiah in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸ We proclaim Him, admonishing every person and teaching every person in all wisdom, that we may present every person complete in Messiah;

²⁹ for which I also labor, striving according to His energy, which operates in me, in power.

2

¹ For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for those at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,

² that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, the Messiah Himself,

³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴ I say this, in order that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech^c.

⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, rejoicing and seeing your good order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Messiah.

Fullness of Life in Messiah

⁶ As therefore you received Messiah Yeshua the Lord, so walk in Him,

⁷ rooted and being built up in Him, and being established in your faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ Beware that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elementary principles of the world, and not according to Messiah.

⁹ For in Him all the fullness of the Deity dwells embodied^d,

¹⁰ and you have been filled in Him, who is the source^a of all principality and power;

^a Grk. *prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs*; the rendering "the firstborn over all creation" (NIV) treats the genitive clause as a genitive of subordination (cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 104).

^b Grk. *kephalē*; more lit. "head," but akin to source, per "the head or source of a river" (LS, 430); "source, origin" (BibleWorks 9.0: LSJM Lexicon (Unabridged)); The Source New Testament has "He is the source of the body, which is the assembly" for 1:18.

^c Grk. *pithanologia*; "enticing words" (KJV); "beguiling speech" (RSV); "fine-sounding arguments" (NIV).

^d Grk. *hoti en autō katoikei pan to plērōma tēs Theotētos sōmatikōs*; "because in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead" (Brown and Comfort, 701). This was inappropriately rendered by the 1998 ISR Scriptures as, "all the completeness of the Mightiness bodily," with a slight improvement in the 2009 edition as, "all the completeness of Elohim-ness bodily."

¹¹ in whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Messiah;

¹² having been buried with Him in immersion, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the foreskin of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

¹⁴ having canceled the certificate of debt in dogmas^b that was against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the wooden scaffold.

¹⁵ *When* having disarmed the principalities and the powers, He made a public show of them, triumphing over them in Him.

¹⁶ Therefore let no one judge you in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival day or a new moon or Sabbaths^c—

¹⁷ things which are a shadow of the things to come^d; and the substance is of Messiah^e.

¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of the angels, taking his stand on the things which he has seen^f, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

¹⁹ and not holding fast to the source^g, from whom all the body, being supplied and held together through the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

The New Life in Messiah

²⁰ If you died with Messiah to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you allow yourself to be dogmatized *by decrees^h, such as,*

²¹ “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!”

²² (things which all perish with use), according to human precepts and doctrines?

²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

3

¹ If then you were raised together with Messiah, seek the things that are above, where Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God.

² Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the Earth.

³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Messiah in God.

⁴ When Messiah, *who is* our life, is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

⁵ Put to death therefore your Earthly members: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

⁶ For it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience,

⁷ and in them you once walked, when you were living in these things.

⁸ But now you also, put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, abusive speech from your mouth.

^a Grk. *kephalē*; more lit. “head,” but akin to source, per “*the head or source of a river*” (LS, 430); “*source, origin*” (BibleWorks 9.0: LSJM Lexicon (Unabridged)); The Source New Testament has “He is the source of every ruler and authority” for 2:10.

^b Grk. *to kath’ hēmōn cheirographon tois dogmasin*; “the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us” (NASU); “the handwriting in the ordinances that is against us” (YLT).

^c Grk. noun *sabbaton*; Heb. equiv. *Shabbat*; “the seventh day of the week in Israel’s calendar, marked by rest fr. work and by special religious ceremonies, *sabbath*” (BDAG, 909); “the seventh day of each week, which was a sacred festival on which the Israelites were required to abstain from all work (Exo. 20:10; 31:13f; Deut. 5:14)” (Thayer, 565).

^d 2:16 has the plural *sabbatōn*; while this is the plural “Sabbaths,” there is every reason to think that the weekly “Sabbath day” (NASU) which regularly occurs is in view.

^e Grk. *tōn mellontōn*; “of the coming things” (Brown and Comfort, 702); this is a present active participle, which a version like the NIV incorrectly translated with the past tense, “of the things that were to come.”

^f Grk. *ha estin skia tōn mellontōn, to de sōma tou Christou*; this clause is sometimes rendered as “but the body is Christ’s” (ASV).

A proper rendering will weigh the intended contrast between *skia* or “shadow,” and whether or not *sōma* is intended to represent something akin to “substance” (RSV/NRSV/ESV, NASU) or “reality” (NIV, TLV), or something else. While literally meaning “body,” *sōma* can mean, “**substantive reality, the thing itself, the reality**” in imagery of a body that casts a shadow, in contrast to [*skia*]” (BDAG, 984), with 2:17 communicating that the true substance of the Sabbath, appointed times, etc., is found in the Messiah.

^g The NASU extrapolates this as, “taking his stand on *visions* he has seen,” which is probably justified if self-abasement with the intention to induce a trance is in view.

^g Grk. *kephalē*; more lit. “head,” but akin to source, per “*the head or source of a river*” (LS, 430); “*source, origin*” (BibleWorks 9.0: LSJM Lexicon (Unabridged)); The Source New Testament has “It’s the Source that more than fully supplies the whole body” for 2:19.

^h Grk. verb *dogmatizō*; “of persons, to submit to ordinances” (LS, 207).

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices,

¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator,

¹¹ where there is no Greek and Jew^a, circumcision and foreskin, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Messiah is all, and in all.

¹² Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, inward compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, longsuffering;

¹³ forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if one has a complaint against another; even as the Lord forgave you, so you *should* also do.

¹⁴ And above all these things *put on* love, which is the bond of perfection.

¹⁵ And let the peace of Messiah rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

¹⁶ Let the word of Messiah dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, *and* with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or in work, *do* all in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Social Duties of the New Life

¹⁸ Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter against them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, so that they will not lose heart.

²² Slaves, in all things obey those who are your lords according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as people-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord.

²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people;

²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; you serve the Lord Messiah.

^a Grk. *Hellēn kai Ioudaios*; a Messianic version like the CJB has improperly rendered this as "Gentile and Jew," but the TLV, also working from the ASV, properly has "Greek and Jew," as two proper nationalities are listed.

²⁵ For the one doing wrong will be paid back for the wrong that he has done, and there is no partiality.

4

¹ Lords, give to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Lord in Heaven.

Exhortations

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving;

³ praying at the same time for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Messiah, for which I have also been imprisoned;

⁴ that I may make it clear, as I ought to speak.

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, redeeming the time.

⁶ Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

Final Greetings

⁷ Tychicus will inform you *about* all my affairs, *our* beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know *about* our affairs and that he may comfort your hearts,

⁹ together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will inform you *about* all that is *going on* here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received commands: if he comes to you, receive him);

¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus^b; these are the only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are from the circumcision^c, *and* they have been a comfort to me.

^b Grk. *Iēsous ho legomenos Ioustos*; Delitzsch Heb. NT *Yeshua ha'nikara Yustos*; Messianic versions typically have something along the lines of "Yeshua, the one called Justus" (CJB) or "Yeshua who is called Justus" (TLV).

This is one significant place where it needs to be recognized how Greek-speaking Jews had no problem using the Greek transliteration of *Yeshua*, *Iēsous*, not only a firm indication that it was not derived from paganism to somehow worship "Zeus" (which notably has a different spelling), but even more so that there were Diaspora Jewish men who bore the name *Iēsous*, hence "Jesus."

^c A version like the NIV extrapolates this simply as, "These are the only Jews."

¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Messiah Yeshua, greets you, always striving for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

¹³ For I bear him witness that he has much toil for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for those in Hierapolis.

¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.

¹⁵ Greet the brothers and sisters who are in Laodicea, and Nympha and the assembly that is in her house^a.

¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, make sure that it is read also in the assembly of the Laodiceans; and that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

¹⁷ And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it."

¹⁸ The greeting of me, Paul, with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

^a There are younger textual variants of 4:15 which read, "Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house" (NKJV). It is widely recognized among most modern versions that "Nympha and the community that meets in her house" (TLV) is the better reading, with *Numpha* obviously being a female. The CJB has "Nympha and the congregation that meets in her home," but The Messianic Writings retains the masculine "Nymphas."

Cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 627; Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, pp 638-639.