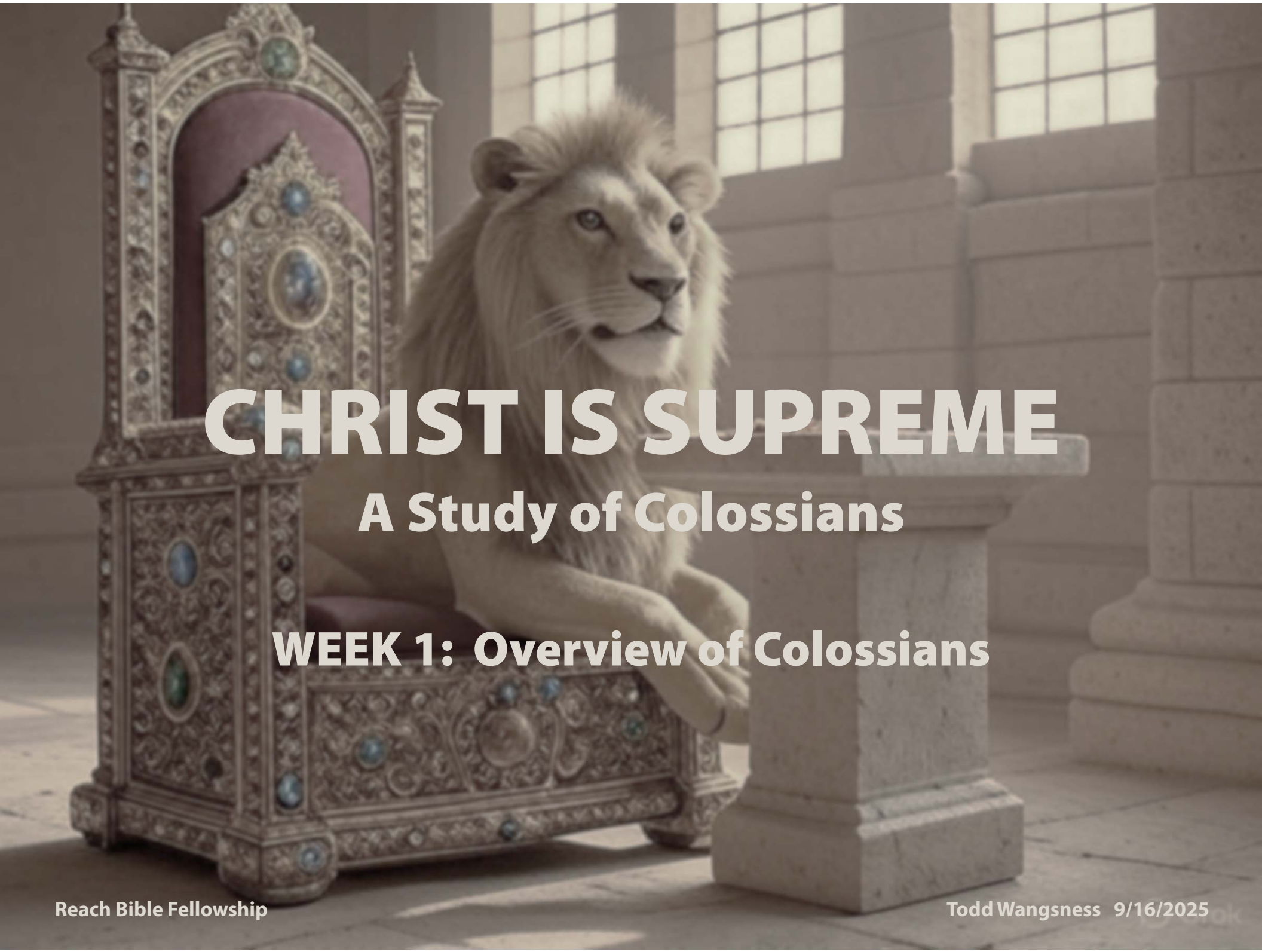


CHRIST IS SUPREME

A Study of Colossians

WEEK 1: Overview of Colossians

Reach Bible Fellowship

Todd Wangsness 9/16/2025

Christ is Supreme: Colossians Overview

WEEK	TOPIC	DESCRIPTION
Week 1	Overview	Overview of the book of Colossians
Week 2	Col 1:1 – 14	Introduction and God's Redemption
Week 3	Col 1:15 – 20	The Pre-eminence of Jesus Christ
Week 4	Col 1:21 – 29	The Mystery of the Ages
Week 5	Col. 2:1 – 20	The Futility of Legalism
Week 6	Col. 3:1 – 17	Set Your Mind on Things Above
Week 7	Col. 4:1 – 18	Exhortation to Prayer and Final Greetings

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Notable quotes on the Book of Colossians

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. This is the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to his saints. What a glorious mystery this is! That God should dwell in man! That the Infinite should tabernacle in the finite! That the Eternal should unite Himself with the temporal! This is a wonder of divine grace, that Christ should not only be with His people, but in them, forming the very life and hope of their being. It is this indwelling Christ who assures us of glory to come, for if He is in us now, He will bring us to Himself hereafter. Let us rejoice in this great truth, and live in the power of His presence within us."

- **Charles Spurgeon**

"In Colossians, Paul sets forth the majesty of Christ in a manner suited to the circumstances of that time, for there were some among the Colossians who were detracting from His glory. He shows that He is the image of God, not in a figurative sense, but in the truest sense, as He is the eternal Wisdom and Word of God. He is also the firstborn of every creature, not by priority of time, but by dominion and preeminence, having created all things and sustaining them by His power. This passage is a powerful antidote to all heresies that would diminish Christ's divinity and authority."

- **John Calvin**

Christ is Supreme: Colossians Overview

Summary of Colossians

The Book of Colossians, a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Colossae, emphasizes the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Paul addresses the Colossians' faith, love, and hope, encouraging them to remain rooted in Christ amidst false teachings and philosophical speculations.

Key themes include Christ's divine nature as the head of the church and the reconciler of all things, the importance of living a life worthy of the Lord through moral conduct and gratitude, and the unity of believers in Him. Paul also provides practical instructions for household relationships and urges steadfastness in prayer and ministry.

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Outline of Colossians

- 1:1-14 Introduction
  - Greetings from Paul and Timothy
  - Thanksgiving and prayer for the Colossians
- 1:15-23 The Supremacy of Christ
  - The preeminence of Christ
  - Reconciliation through Christ
- 1:24-2:5 Paul's Ministry and Suffering
  - Paul's labor for the Church
  - Warning against false teaching
- 2:6-23 Christian Living in Christ
  - Rooted and built up in Christ
  - Freedom from human traditions
  - Rejection of ascetic practices

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Outline of Colossians (cont.)

- **3:1-17 Practical Exhortations for Holy Living**
  - Setting minds on things above
  - Putting off the old self
  - Putting on the new self
- **3:18-4:1 Household Relationships**
  - Wives and husbands
  - Children and parents
  - Slaves and Masters (Employees and Employers)
- **4:2-18 Final Instructions and Conclusion**
  - Exhortations for prayer and conduct
  - Personal greetings and instructions
  - Benediction

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Background

- The city of Colosse
  - Historically, it was a prosperous city, famous for its fabric dyes
  - Located in modern-day Turkey about 120 mi east of Ephesus
  - It was apparently greatly affected by a major earthquake in 61 AD that hastened its decline
  - By the time Paul wrote the epistle, the city was on the decline
    - It appears Paul sent the letter prior to the earthquake, as he made no mention of it in the epistle
  - Colosse has faded into the annals of history and its remains are an unexcavated mound with some visible ruins of parts of a theatre and a necropolis
  - Likely the smallest and least important city to which Paul ever penned an epistle

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Comparison of Pauline Epistles	
Romans	**Justified / Sanctified in Christ:** Justification by faith, God's imputed righteousness, salvation for all people, sin, grace, and Christian living
1 Corinthians	**Enriched in Christ**: Church unity, spiritual gifts, resurrection, Christian conduct, addressing divisions, and moral issues
2 Corinthians	**Comforted in Christ**: Paul's apostolic authority, reconciliation, suffering for Christ, generosity, and defense against false teachers
Galatians	**Free in Christ**: Freedom in Christ, justification by faith, not works of the law, the role of the Spirit, and opposition to legalism
Ephesians	**Quickened in Christ**: Unity of the church, God's cosmic plan, spiritual blessings in Christ, Christian living, and the armor of God
Philippians	**Happy in Christ:** Joy in suffering, humility of Christ, unity, perseverance, and encouragement to live for Christ
Colossians	**Complete in Christ**: Supremacy of Christ, warnings against false teachings, and living a Christ-centered life

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- **The Colossian Heresy**
  - The church at Colosse was being corrupted by a combination of false teachers promoting legalistic Judaism and early mystic Gnosticism
    - Judaizing Teachers: False teachers claimed that gentile believers needed to adhere to the Circumcision (i.e., keeping the Sabbath and holy days, avoiding unclean foods, ceremonial washings, being circumcised, etc.)
    - Gnosticism: Taught that all matter was evil. They maintained that Jesus never came in the flesh as flesh was evil. They taught He was never incarnate, He just manifested in a spirit form.
  - Apparently, Paul thought the situation at the church in Colosse was serious enough to warrant an apostolic intervention

- **The Solution of the Epistle**
  - Paul dwelt on the solution: A better understanding of Jesus
  - Knowing the real Jesus helps us avoid the counterfeit, irrespective of how the counterfeit is packaged

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Legalistic Judaism

- False teachers emphasized strict adherence to Jewish practices, such as dietary laws, Sabbath observance, and festival celebrations
- Paul counters that these are a "shadow of things to come," but the reality is found in Christ, indicating the heresy placed undue importance on Mosaic Law over faith in Christ
  - ***Col 2:16-17 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.***
  - ***Col 2:20-21, 23 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," … 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.***

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Gnosticism

- False teachers claimed esoteric or superior spiritual knowledge, a hallmark of early Gnostic-like movements
- The heresy involved venerating or worshipping angels as mediators between God and humanity
- The phrase "elemental spirits" (*stoicheia*) refer to spiritual powers, suggesting a belief in supernatural intermediaries that detracted from Christ's supremacy
- While the philosophy admitted to the transcendence of God (that He is above everything), it denied his immanence (that He is also in everything)
- This view ruled out the incarnation of Christ, special divine creation, prayer, faith, miracles, the second coming, and the accuracy of the Bible
- The goal of human life was either morbid asceticism (avoiding all joys of life, and abusing the body for the spirit's sake) or that of unrestrained licentiousness (if it feels good, do it)
- The first was known as Stoicism and the second view Epicureanism. Scofield once observed: "Pure Christianity lives between two dangers ever present: the danger that it will evaporate into a philosophy … and the danger that it will freeze into a form."

Christ is Supreme: Colossians Overview

Colossians Teaches We Are Complete in Christ	
Building Downward	***1:23*** *if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.*
Building Upward	***2:6-7*** *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*
Building Inward	***3:3*** *For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*
Building Outward	***4:5-6*** *Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*

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The Mysteries of Colossians

- **Mystery of the nature of Jesus Christ**
  - ***Col 2:2-3, 9 "… attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge … 9 for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."***
- **Mystery of indwelling of Jesus Christ**
  - ***Col 1:26-27 "The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."***
- **Mystery of the Church (Jews and Gentiles)**
  - ***Col 4:3 "… praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains."***

Christ is Supreme: Colossians Overview

Major Theme of Colossians

- **Christ in us … the Hope of Glory!**
  - ***Col 1:26-27 "The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."***
  - **This is the central focus of the whole book of Colossians!**
  - **We are 'complete' in Christ**
  - **He has translated us (past tense) from Satan's Kingdom into His glorious Kingdom!**
    - ***Col 1:14 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.***
  - **Now that we are 'raised with Christ', we are to have our heart and mind focused on things above**
    - ***Col 3:1-4 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.***

Christ is Supreme: Colossians Overview

Questions to ponder …

- **Does the modern-day church still suffer from legalism?**
  - **If so, what forms does legalism take today?**
  - **Why is it destructive to the believer or the church?**
- **Likewise, is the church of today affected by elements of Gnosticism?**
  - **Personal Revelation: Emphasis on personal spiritual experiences and angelic manifestations**
  - **Dualism in worldview: Portraying anything secular as inherently sinful**
  - **Elitism in spiritual knowledge: Belief that certain groups within the church have an enlightened knowledge of God and and are more highly favored by God**
  - **Mysticism in worship: Prioritizing feelings and emotional response over orthodox doctrine**
  - ***2 Cor 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the [a]simplicity that is in Christ.***
  - ***1 Cor 2:2,5 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified … 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.***