

# OpenTheo

## Colossians (Overview) - Part 2



### **Bible Book Overviews** - Steve Gregg

In this overview of Colossians, Steve Gregg emphasizes the preeminence of Christ and the importance of living a truly Christian life. He delves into the themes of spiritual enlightenment and the revelation of truth, highlighting a potential early Christian hymn cited by Paul. Gregg discusses the significance of abandoning old ways and embracing new ones, clarifying that the reference to the "old self" pertains to the old species of humanity in Adam. He also explores the hierarchical relationships within social units and the universalization of the kingdom through the gospel preached to all creatures.

### **Transcript**

Now what I'm going to do right now is give you a detailed outline of the book we just read, Colossians, and then I'm going to go through the book and pick out certain verses. I think people often stumble over them. I'm not sure what that means.

A little tricky. I'm going to try to explain the harder things. Obviously we can't go verse by verse and take all the verses in the time we have.

As far as an outline goes, this is a pretty simple outline. It's like Ephesians in that half of the book is essentially theological and the other half of the book is practical. In Ephesians, which is half again as long as Colossians, you've got three chapters of theology followed by three chapters of practical instruction.

And in Colossians, it's shorter but you still have the first half is theology and the second half is practical instructions for the most part. This is because Christianity really, the bottom line of Christianity is how you live. The practical part is really what distinguishes the Christian life from other lives.

And remember the Bible says when we're judged, we're judged by what he has done. Our behavior is of great importance. But our behavior isn't just a bunch of rules.

The kind of behavior that a Christian conducts is based upon beliefs. They are outgrowths from our faith system because we believe what we do about the body of Christ because we believe we do our Christ himself. We therefore we behave in such a

way.

So in writing to the Ephesians and then the Colossians, Paul spends the first half actually giving that doctrinal foundation. And since he's writing to a church in this case, he's never even visited and they've never heard a word from him and they have no Bible. He has to lay out the doctrinal things he thinks are most important.

And what's most important is Christ. The preeminence of Christ. And then of course he teaches them as he does in Ephesians.

Behavioral things, how it comes down to family relationships and all that kind of stuff. By the way, Romans follows the same pattern. It's just not half and half.

Romans, the first 11 chapters are theological. And then chapters 12 to the end are practical. And although there's not as many chapters of the practical, he crams a lot into chapter 12.

The chapters is full of practical sentences, one after another on different points. I guess he was running out of parchment after he got into all the theological stuff. So he had to cram in the second part.

He probably has almost as much in the second part as in the first part. If he had had time to expand each of those verses that he gave. Well, let's look at this one.

So chapters one and two are theological. Chapters three and four are practical. Now, when it comes to the theological portion, chapter one is kind of preliminary general matters.

And then chapter two has more to do with specific theological issues that he doesn't want them to get entangled in the wrong group with. In chapter one, as we have read actually a couple of times now, the first eight verses is his acknowledging that he's heard about them. He's rejoicing about that.

He's thanking God for them. He's praying for them. And that's pretty much what verses one through eight are saying.

And then he he actually gives the contents of his prayer for the church in verses nine through 12 of chapter one, which has some points of resemblance between his prayer with the prayer that Paul had in Ephesians one. And he also had a prayer for the Ephesians and Ephesians three. There were two prayers for the Ephesians.

Some of the same concerns are here, beginning with the desire for them to have spiritual enlightenment and revelation of the truth. And Paul apparently believes that some of the things he's preaching here are teaching. He cannot possibly make them understand unless the Holy Spirit gives them some illumination.

There are some things that you can hear told to you and taught to you and maybe even kind of get an idea mentally of what they mean. But unless the Holy Spirit reveals them to you, they don't become life changing. They don't become part of you.

It's like when Peter was said to Jesus, you're the Christ, the son of the living God. In Matthew 16, Jesus said, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my father in heaven revealed it to you. Now, actually, that Jesus was the Christ was revealed to Peter by flesh and blood.

His brother Andrew, right after Andrew met Jesus, went and got his brother. We found the Christ. We found him.

Come, it's Jesus of Nazareth. And Peter came and met Jesus. So it was flesh and blood that first told Peter that Jesus was the Christ.

But you said, yeah, but the revelation of that being true came from the father. Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you. You might have heard the information from a man, but you didn't receive the revelation until God gave you that revelation.

That's true. Really spiritual things in general. In First Corinthians, Chapter two, Paul said, The natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit of God.

They are spiritually discerned. They seem foolish to the natural man. So.

If if all the theology we've learned is something you can learn from a teacher. Or from our college professor, a seminary professor, a book. Then you've only learned what can be revealed to you by flesh and blood.

Those are human beings. We need additionally to have the Holy Spirit make those things alive, plant those seeds that can grow and change who we are and change what we are. And that's what the Holy Spirit does.

And so Paul prays for that for the Colossian Christians. Then. In verses 13 and 14, he tells us who Christ is to us.

And then in chapter and same chapter, verse 15, who Christ is somewhat more broadly, more generally. And but who he is to us is he's the one who has rescued us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom. Actually, says God has done that.

But Christ is the one whose kingdom it is. And we've received redemption through his blood, Christ's and the forgiveness of sins. That exact statement comes also from Ephesians 1 7. In him, we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

So Christ is the redeemer. He is the king of the kingdom wherein he has forgiven our sins. But then in verses 15 and following, we have this.

But most scholars think is perhaps Paul citing an early Christian hymn. I'm not really sure how they decide these things. There's quite a few passages in in Ephesians and in Colossians and in the pastoral epistles that scholars say, well, this little part here, that was probably an old Christian hymn.

Now, we don't have any other record of it being a Christian hymn, but something in the way its contents are arranged or maybe a sort of a poetic arrangement in the original. They think it might be him, but it's in verses 15 and following. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation or of all creation.

I'm going to comment on that later. For by him, all things were created and so forth. And goes on.

And then in verse 20, it says that he wants to reconcile all things to himself also, which also is stated in Ephesians 1:10. We'll have more to say about that when I go through and pick out some verses to comment on. Then the next verses, 21 through 23.

It basically says we've been reconciled to God and to each other and we need to persevere. It's a basic exhortation. And then in the last portion of chapter one and into the beginning of chapter two, we have Paul relating to this church, how he how he relates to it, how I heard about you from a path person.

And he's told me about you and that kind of stuff. So he's given that kind of personal connection there before he goes into chapter two, verse six and seven, which is basically saying you don't want to you don't want to move on from Jesus. You don't want to.

There's no place more advanced to go. He says, as you therefore have received Christ Jesus, the Lord. So walk in him, stay with him, rooted and built up in him.

The reason for this, no doubt, is because certain heretics were asking him to move into more advanced stages of spiritual knowledge if they were Gnostic or spiritual righteousness if they were Judaizers. Basically, yeah, you got Jesus. That's good.

But hey, you're you're spiritual life really needs this to to be really good. And frankly, this is what I see as a real temptation for people today, although not maybe the same errors. But I do find that not only cults, but also weird versions of Christianity, the Hebrew roots movement, the hyper grace movement, the.

What was a kingdom culture movement, which is about doing signs and wonders all the time? These kinds of things are are very popular movements and they seem to be drawing people who were otherwise bored with Jesus. That's how I see it. If you're not bored with Jesus, these things will be a whole home to you.

Why would you care about these things? You care about these things. If your relationship with Jesus isn't really very productive, isn't very fruitful, isn't very exciting. And

therefore, you think, well, what are we missing of these people? You know, they keep these Jewish rules.

Maybe if I did that or these people say that we're supposed to be out praying for the sick on every street corner. So maybe I should be adding that or these people have this or that new wrinkle on on the truth. And it's it's even Calvinism, frankly.

I mean, I'm not saying Calvinism is quite like some of these others, but it can be for people. I know people who get into Calvinism and they and they suddenly they feel like they've had a revival. Because they've got a whole bunch of new ideas that they've added that they hadn't thought of before.

And just adding some different dimension to their life other than just Jesus is I was under why? Why Bob? I was just talking to Perry here about somebody who recently left an evangelical church and joined the Eastern Orthodox. And I know people who do the same thing, go to Catholic church, think, well, they were they were Christians. They were.

I mean, I'm not saying they're not Christians now. I'm not saying you can't be a Christian, be in those churches. I think they were evangelical Christians who suddenly opted for an entirely different kind of religious experience, much more ritualistic, much more formal, much more liturgical.

I think. Do they think that's better? I mean, what? Why? Why make that move? And I know the answer, because I've talked to somebody who is a well, I just didn't feel like the church. I was going to where is reverent.

I feel closer to God when I'm when they're lighting the candles and we're doing all these different rituals and stuff. And you see, that's adding stuff to Jesus. Now, if your church you were going to wasn't a good church and you weren't very close to Jesus in it, then by all means, get closer to Jesus and maybe find another church.

But finding another movement altogether is not going to be satisfying, because frankly, if you've received Christ, Paul says, remain in him. Stay rooted in him. Don't be uprooted and move to other things.

I've just never been able to relate with people who need Jesus plus something. Because when you really know Jesus, there is no plus, you know, there's no other thing that that even on the charts, it's like the fine dust in the balances as far as the way they move the needle. Nothing is once you have Jesus, none of that other stuff.

To my mind can improve your spiritual life. And Paul knew that the Colossians were if they weren't already doing it, they were targets for people who wanted to sign them up for circumcision and Jewish rituals or for Gnosticism or for some other mystery religion. And his answer is that Jesus is actually everything.

It pleased God that all the fullness would dwell in Jesus. And later in verse nine, he says in him, don't all the fullness of the Godhead or Godness bodily. That's so that's what he gets into being a first verse six in verses eight through 19.

Some of the things I just mentioned are what he talks about. Stay away from people who are trying to distract you basically from the simplicity in Christ. It's in that place.

He says, don't let anyone judge you about whether you keep festivals and Sabbaths. Those things are a shadow. They're not even real.

They're not spiritual. So this is what he does in that section. And of course, at the very end of this, he kind of concludes this in the first four verses of chapter three, that you were raised with Christ when he rose from the dead.

If you're in Christ, you're risen from the dead. You're seated in heavenly places. He doesn't say anything about being seated in places here.

He doesn't in Ephesians chapter two and verse six. He doesn't mention it, but he implies it because he says, if you are risen with Christ, seek those things that are above where Christ sits. That's where you're sitting in him.

And so, you know, set your mind on things that are in heaven, not on earth. By that, he means spiritual things. Let's be interested in eternal things, not carnal, temporal things.

And therefore, we get into chapter three and. In chapter three, he talks at length about what we could call abandoning the old man's ways and embracing the new man's ways. Now, the expression, the old man and the new man are found only in Colossians three.

And in Ephesians and in one verse in Romans six, six, where he says, our old man was crucified. With him now, the expression old man and new man are not even found in many modern translations, so that's a shame because Paul's words actually are old man and new man. For some reason, modern translations usually think it might make things more clear if they translate these expressions, the old self and the new self.

Like the word man should be rendered self, but Paul isn't talking about a self, he's talking about a man. And we need to understand what he means by the old man and the new man. When if you have any translation that says new self or old self, and most of the new ones say that instead of old man and new man.

I would strike that on there and write in the margin man, old man, not old self. I mean, what's it mean, my old self and my new self? I mean, what's that communicate? That can be so my old self is the way I used to be. My new self is the way I am now.

And my old self, you know, I used to be an angry man. I'm not angry anymore. My new self is not angry.

I used to be greedy. I'm not greedy anymore. Those kinds of things describe me the way I was, as opposed to the way I am.

Well, those may be good, good thoughts, but that's not the concept that Paul is talking about. The old man in Paul's mind is the corporate humanity. The word man, anthropos, also means humanity.

Man or humanity is the meaning of the word anthropos. The old humanity in Adam is a corporate entity and the new humanity in Christ is a corporate entity. In fact, Paul says in Ephesians 2.15 that God took the Jews who believed and the Gentiles who believed.

They broke down the middle wall of partition between them and made in himself one new man. That's the new man. The new man is the Jews in Christ and the Gentiles in one new body.

The body of Christ corporately is the man and the body of Adam corporately is the old man. And this is frankly, when you read what Paul says, that makes sense to have an old self. Not so much.

I mean, for example, in Chapter three, when he talks to the old man and the new man. Let me give you a passage here. Chapter three, verse eight.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man. When you became a Christian, you became part of a new humanity.

You put on the body of your now in the body of Christ, not the body of Adam, who is who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him. Where? What's where? In the new man. Where you are.

You're from new man. In the new man, there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free. But Christ is all in all.

That's the church where there's no Jew or Gentile, no slave or free. That's in the body of Christ. That's the new man.

The new man is the body of Christ. Again, that's what Paul actually said in Ephesians 2, 15, the Jewish believer in the Gentile believer, middle wall of perdition broke down, God made in himself a new man in which is the body of Christ. So when Paul talks to the old man, he is talking about the old species of man in Adam and in Christ, we are a new species of man.

We're in we're in Christ, that man has the head Jesus and we're the arms and the flesh and the bones and and the members of that body. But there's more to it than just that

little metaphor. There's simply it's a different species or a different it's a new humanity.

And and we have the characteristics and the spirit of Christ. And therefore, when you put on the new man, it's as soon as you're putting on those behaviors that are consistent with being in that new humanity, those things that belong to that humanity. The things we're told to put off are the things that belong to Adam's race, the sinful race.

Not the sinful self, per se, although I'm not denying that myself was sinfuller at one time than it is now. I'm a newer my newer self is different than my older self. That's just not what Paul's talking about.

He's not talking about the change in me. It's not about the change in humanity and me being in it. It's not talking about something in me.

It's about me in something. You know, putting on is the the imagery of putting on a garment, put on a coat or something. I don't put a garment in me.

I get me into the garment. It's something I surround myself with and I become. Embraced by and so this is what the new man, old man is now.

I mean, what it comes down to are, I mean, many similar things would be true when he says put off line and anger and all these bad things. Those are part of the old man. Well, putting them off would mean the same thing, pretty much whether I'm thinking of an old self or an old man.

But it's just not Paul's idea. If we miss if we get the old self translation there, which is not what the Greek says, then we're missing Paul's theology. We're missing one of the key things about Paul's theology that he sees redemption as a corporate thing in Christ.

Everything is in Christ. It's not so much in me. In fact, this is one reason why people get confused when you even talk about the possibility, maybe of ceasing to be saved.

Have you been saved? They say, wait, I thought that was eternal life, that the life I've received is eternal life. How can I not be saved at some point? Well, but the Bible says that life is in Jesus. It's not in me, it's in him.

And if I abide in him, I abide in eternal life. If I don't abide in him, I don't take the life with me and leave him behind. It's in him.

That's where it is. The only place that eternal life is, is in him. When I'm in him, I have all those things that are true in him that Paul talks about, especially in Ephesians and Colossians.

But if I am not in him, if I cease to be in him, I don't have any of those things that are true in him. It's not like God handed me a big bunch of Christmas gifts and says, these are from me to you. Enjoy them forever.



No. And I can walk off and leave him behind and have these gifts. Everything is not separate from him, but in him.

And if you abide in him, they're all yours. If you abide in him forever, they're yours forever. If you don't abide in him, they're still forever those who are in him, but not in you because you didn't abide.

Because you're not in him anymore. Anyway, this is why it's pretty important to understand Paul's corporate understanding of things. This is like this, what Paul called the great mystery that was not known to previous generations, but was made known to the apostles and prophets through the spirit.

That's the New Testament revelation that Paul got, which he says no one got it in the Old Testament times. And only the apostles have gotten it through the spirit in his day. And that is this corporate body, this corporate identity.

I'm one with Christ. He mentions that in many places, of course. After talking about the old man and the new man and putting on and putting off over the chapter three verses five through seven in chapters in chapter three, verse 18 through the first verse of chapter four, we have what's usually called the household code.

This household code is also found in Ephesians. It's found in part in the pastoral epistles as well. And basically, this is one of those things that scholars think was maybe some kind of Paul drawing upon a common stock, sort of like when they think he quotes certain hymns and stuff, that there was a certain code that was kind of codified and that Paul just draws on that and all Christians knew it.

Or maybe not. Maybe maybe his writing it was the creation of the code. But essentially, he talks about three kinds of relationships that between a husband and wife, between servants and their masters and that between children and their parents.

And he gives instructions to both sides. So all of those relationships are what we call hierarchical relationships, not egalitarian relationships. What's the difference? An egalitarian relationship is one where neither party is automatically expected to obey the other.

For example, all of us in this room have an egalitarian relationship with each other. I'm not expected to obey you. You're not expected to obey me.

We're just friends. Children in all multiple children, they have egalitarian relationship among themselves. But a hierarchical relationship is one where there is somebody that is by default the one who is to be submitted to.

It is a relationship where somebody is an authority and somebody is by definition subordinate. OK, so a hierarchical relationship has subordinates, an egalitarian

relationship has equals. Now, even in a hierarchical relationship, the people may be equal in the sight of God, but not in function.

I mean, Paul did say in Galatians 3:28 in Christ, there's no male or female, no bond or free, no Jew or Gentile. I mean, those those things are there. No distinction in Christ.

But in in terms of function in society, servants and masters do do different things. Husbands and wives do do different things. There is a hierarchical relationship within the social units that they occupy.

But before God, they're equal. So to say that I'm subordinate to the policeman is not to say that he and I are not equal before God. It just means that he and I are in a social arrangement where he has a defined authority.

That's why I, by definition, have to submit to wives, submit to their husbands, children, to their parents, servants, to their masters. And so Paul gives instructions to those who are subordinate and tells them to be obedient and so forth. This pleases God and so forth.

In Ephesians, when he's giving the same information about husbands or wives, he says specifically that the wife submits to her husband because she resembles the church in relation to Christ. And the husband has to lay his life down for his wife because he resembles Christ in that relationship. So Paul doesn't mention that specifically in Colossians, but he gives the same instructions, but without as much explanation.

The idea here is that hierarchy is built in to the universe. Paul says that in First Corinthians, chapter 11, verse three, he says, I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ. The head of Christ is God.

And the head of the woman is the man. So there's hierarchy there. Christ submits to God the father.

We submit to Christ. Wives submit to their husbands, children to their parents. The goldfish submits to the kids.

So that's not in the list. But I mean, there's hierarchy. So Paul gives directions to those who are in authority to be kind, gentle, not harsh, considerate, even masters their servants.

And he gives instructions to those who are in the subordinate roles, too. Now, at the end, then, after he's done that, we just have mostly miscellaneous winding down of the epistle. He gives a variety of exhortations in verses two through six of chapter four.

Then, of course, he has his introductions and greetings to people that he knows, telling about who's with him, sending greetings from them and so forth. That's in verses five

through seven, seven through 15. And then, of course, his closing remarks in chapter 16 through 18.

So basically, the teaching of the epistle is pretty much over by mostly by chapter four, verse one. And the rest of chapter four is a wind down of the epistle. Now, I do want to, in the time we have left, look at some of the verses throughout that when we were reading it together.

I'm sure there's some things that caught your mind. But what? What's that mean? That's weird. And there are some things that are not weird, but important enough.

I should mention them. And other things that are weird enough in the way they're worded that I should probably try to explain them. I can't.

So some of the important things in chapter one, for example. Include the fact that Paul said in Ephesians or Colossians one six, that the gospel, he said, had been preached in all the world. So he says in verse six, he says, the gospel has come to you as it has in all the world.

And it's bringing forth fruit also in the same chapter on the same subject in verse twenty three. He says, if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven. Of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Now, we know that the gospel is to go to every creature, at least in Mark's version of the commissioners preach the gospel to every creature. In Colossians one twenty three, Paul says the gospel has come to every preacher creature. It's been preached to every creature.

And it's been heard in all the world. Now. Had it been.

Well, certainly not literally. Some people point out that Jesus said that the gospel has to be preached to all the world as a witness to all nations, then the end can come. And they say, well, Paul said it has been preached all over the world.

So the end could come any time after that. Some, in fact, would think that the end that's referred to is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Could be the end of that.

And after all, Paul wrote these things before that. If you said the gospel must be preached in all the world as witness all nations and the end, if he means AD 70 shall come. Well, Paul, in the year probably 62 prior to 70 AD, says, well, it's happened.

The gospel has been preached in all the world. And so some people think that those ideas should be juxtaposed. And maybe they should be.

It's not impossible that the end that Jesus speaks of is the end of Jerusalem. He had,

after all, in that same chapter, predicted the end of the temple, that not one stone be left standing on another. It can be taken that way.

But then that raises questions. Oh, then is there no more Great Commission? If the gospel has been preached all the world and the end came, then what are we supposed to do? Do we are still supposed to preach the world? Is the mission of the church, you know, mission accomplished? No more to be done. Well, we know for a fact that when Paul wrote Colossians, he knew of regions that had not yet been evangelized, one of which was Spain, which he was hoping to go to because Spain had not been evangelized.

He probably knew about Britain, which had not been visited either. Some traditions say Paul later went to Britain, but we don't know. But the thing is, Paul knew there were areas that had not heard the gospel.

So he said the gospel and preach in all the world. We have to assume he's using what we call a hyperbole. What it means has been preached broadly.

He told the Romans in chapter 15 that he had preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum, which is modern Yugoslavia, more modern times, Yugoslavia area. And he said that he had preached all the area in there. But certainly there were cities he hadn't preached.

He's he's making a sweeping statement, just like if somebody who's widely traveled just I've been all over the world. I've traveled to the whole world. And in a sense, that's true.

If we take it in the hyperbole, that is, we're not saying there are no exceptions. Certainly, Paul knew that the Far East had not been evangelized by that time. And he probably knew that parts of Africa, south of Ethiopia, had not been evangelized yet.

He probably knew a lot of that. He's not arguing that there's no more area to reach. That's why he was continuing to evangelize.

If he thought it was mission accomplished. Why is he still preaching? Why is he still making plans? Now, in other words, when he says something like that, we have to recognize hyperbole in it. But it doesn't mean that that's all that God wants.

OK, so maybe the world had been preaching today as much as it needs to be. No, because Jesus gave the commission go and make disciples of all nations and baptize them and teach them to observe all things. Let's remember, that has not been done.

Even the even the churches that Paul had evangelized by this time had not all been thoroughly taught to do everything Jesus had commanded. That's that takes years to teach congregations that. I think that we need to not get hung up on Paul's hyperbole here.

There still are a lot of nations that we are commissioned to disciple. So even if we no

matter what Jesus meant, we said, then the end will come. What he means 70 AD or the end of the world, it doesn't make any difference.

We still have the same commission to go and make disciples of all the nations. He says in chapter one, verse 13, that we have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the son of his love or the king James as his beloved son. OK, so we know that Paul believed the kingdom of God had come and we had come into it.

We are already in it. We've been translated into the kingdom. Now, Paul's and Jesus's theology of the kingdom was that the kingdom is a growing proposition.

It was introduced by Jesus at his first coming. He said the kingdom of God is in your midst. He said to his contemporaries, he said, the kingdom has overtaken you.

He said the kingdom of God is drawn near. And now Paul says we have been translated into it. Christ is the king.

His movement is the kingdom. His followers and the king together make the kingdom. And it is a growing proposition.

Jesus said it was like a mustard seed starts out small and it'll grow real big. Daniel said it's like a little stone that grows into a big mountain to fill the whole earth. That's exactly what's been happening for the past 2000 years.

The kingdom has come and the kingdom is coming and the kingdom will come because Paul and Peter both speak also the time of a future arrival of the kingdom, which I believe simply refers to the time when the kingdom, which has been a growing thing, embraced by the those who have embraced it, will someday be a universal thing when every knee shall bow and every time will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's the future phase of the kingdom. That's the ultimate goal.

Paul said of Jesus, who's reigning right now at the right hand of God. In first Corinthians 15, Paul said he must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet. And then when he has put all his enemies under his feet, he'll turn the kingdom over as a finished project to his father.

And Christ will be subject to his father. And God will be all in all. So there's a there's a finished result still anticipated when he has put all his enemies under his feet, when every knee is bowed and every time confessing that Jesus Christ.

That's the fulfillment of the universalization of the kingdom. But it's a it's a kingdom that began with Jesus and his disciples has been multiplying as more people join it. And Paul says we are in it.

And therefore, what is true of the kingdom and its inhabitants is true of us. And, of course, Paul said in Romans 14, 17, the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Certainly we have the Holy Spirit and righteousness, peace and joy are benefits of the Holy Spirit.

Two of them are said to be fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 22. So we're in the kingdom now. But the kingdom is a future.

Now, Paul has a very strong emphasis on the deity of Christ in Chapter one. Of course, in verse 15, he says that he's the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Now, I keep reading it, the firstborn of all creation, though almost at least most of the modern translations seem to say the firstborn overall creation.

Why do they translate that way? It's not in the Greek that way. The word over is not in the Greek. Paul didn't say he's the first one overall creationist, the first one of all creation.

So what's up with these translators changing it? I'll tell you what's up. When the King James was translated, which says he's the firstborn of all creation, they translated correctly, but the Jehovah's Witnesses hadn't come along yet. All modern translations translate in the awareness of the Jehovah's Witnesses and their standard arguments.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was the first created thing, not God. They believe Jehovah was God and Jesus was created first and then other things were created. And they say, see, Paul said, if you look at the Greek, he's the firstborn of all creation.

And they think that means he is the first of all created things to come into existence, to be born. And this is a tricky passage for Trinitarians and people like myself who believe Jesus is God. And and translators decide, I think we're going to make this easier.

What you say is the firstborn over all creation, which is a different idea. But they don't believe it's a different idea. They believe what Paul's saying means that that he's the firstborn of all creation.

They say that doesn't mean the first one born literally, which is the literal meaning of the word. But it's referring to firstborn as a rank. Because in ancient times, the firstborn son held authority over the other children eventually, and was the heir to the position of highest authority and inheritance in the family.

Being the firstborn of the family was being essentially the ruler of the family under the father. And so in Psalm 89, it is talking about the Messiah and it says there he will be my firstborn, God says. Over the kings of the earth.

That sounds a lot like what Paul said, firstborn of all creation, firstborn over all the kings of the earth in Psalm 89. So to say, I think Paul means not that Jesus was actually born

first of creation, but that he is the ruler of all creation. Firstborn being just a way of saying the ruler.

Well. Possibly, but that's not what Paul said. I mean, perhaps firstborn of all creation could mean ruler of all creation, but I understand it a little differently based on what Paul himself said three verses later.

I figured that Paul might interpret himself better than the modern translators can reinterpret him in verse 18. He says, and he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. That in all things, he may have preeminence.

Now, sure, the firstborn has preeminence, but when he used the word firstborn from the dead, he's actually chronologically. Jesus is the first person who was born out of the state of death into the new order, the new creation. His resurrection inaugurated the new creation.

Now, Paul tells us in Romans 8 that the rest of creation is groaning and travailing right now, waiting for their chance to be delivered from. The bondage of corruption that came upon them in the fall, the world is going to be delivered from that, too. There is a new order, a new creation.

Which the whole of creation will experience when Jesus returns, but Jesus already experienced as the firstborn of all creation. All creation is going to experience that renovation and he was first to do so. He's the firstborn of the new creation.

We could say he's the firstborn from the dead. In other words, he's not the first created thing. He's the creator of all things, and Paul even says so in the passage when it says, by him, all things were created.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have to stick into their Bible something that it doesn't have. They stick in the word other things. By Jesus, all other things were created.

Paul said, by him, all things were created. Why do they say all other things? Because they are implying that all things other than Jesus were created by Jesus. But he was created by God earlier than that.

Their view is that God created Jesus and then Jesus created everything else. So when Paul says all things were created by him, well, he can't be one of the created things if that's true. Unless they stick in the word all other things were created by him.

That allows for him to be a created thing who then created the other things. That's not what Paul said. You see, Jesus is the firstborn of the new creation, the firstborn from the dead.

In rising, he was the first to be glorified. Our bodies will be glorified, too. He'll change our

vile bodies into the image of his glorious body, Paul said in Philippians 3. And we're all going to be like him.

And the creation itself is to be renovated and be set free from the bondage of the fall. We see that in Revelation 22, 3, when it's describing the new heaven and the new earth. It says there is no more curse, meaning the curse that came on the earth in the Garden of Eden.

It's not there anymore. The bondage of decay is gone. The whole of creation is resurrected, as it were.

And Jesus, the first to be resurrected, is the firstborn from the dead of all creation. The firstborn into the new order of all creation, which will also be. Paul's not talking about the origins of Jesus, he's talking about the destiny of the creation, the new creation.

And Jesus is the first to arrive there and come into that. So, you know, you don't need to change Paul's words to the firstborn over all creation. That is perhaps true if we take firstborn means the ruler.

Well, Jesus certainly is the ruler over creation. I got no problem with that doctrine. It's just not what Paul said.

And I think what Paul said makes perfectly good sense in itself. It does not give ammunition to the Jehovah's Witnesses, though modern translators seem to be very mindful of the fact that the traditional and more accurate rendering for some time was misunderstood in such a way as to seem to give help to the Jehovah's Witnesses. I'd like to point out also we read Colossians 1:23, but there's a point I did not draw from that verse.

He says, if you read the verse before you were alienated, your enemies and mine by wicked works, you've been reconciled in the body, his flesh, blah, blah. And then verse 23, if indeed you continue in the faith, that sounds conditional. That's conditional security.

I don't believe in unconditional eternal security, but I believe in conditional eternal security. I am eternally secure in Christ on the condition that I eternally believe and I fully intend to do so. And no one can make me not do so.

That's entirely my my choice to do. Nobody can tell me what I can or cannot believe. And I choose to believe in Christ.

As long as I choose to believe in Christ and trust him, I'm secure. But believing is the condition. There are some people who understand eternal security in such a way as it's unconditional.



They once saved, always saved. You get saved when you're a kid. You can backslide, live for the devil, die and be saved because you were saved when you're little.

No, it's only if you continue. Now, what's interesting is the book of Hebrews, which probably was not written by Paul, mentions this numerous times and other places. But Paul mentions it here.

As far as I know, this might be the only place Paul talks about this need to continue. He makes it very clear. If you continue in the faith, grounded, steadfast are not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which was hurt.

So Paul makes it very clear there is a condition for continuing in Christ and that is continuing in faith. A hard verse in chapter one that many people have struggled with is in verse 24. Paul says, I now rejoice.

Chapter one, 24. I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the church. Now, Paul seems to say there's something lacking in the sufferings of Christ, but he's filling it up.

He's he's supplementing it by his suffering. Well, how could it be that anything's lacking in the sufferings of Christ when Jesus died, said it is finished? What more would be needed? And yet, Paul, he sees his suffering as filling up a deficit, filling up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ. What's he thinking? What Paul's thinking, of course, is what he mentions, the body of Christ.

Right. He says, I do it for the sake of his body, which is the church. The body of Christ is Christ.

Jesus is the head. We are the organs of his body. What happens to us happens to him.

When we suffer, he suffers. He said, as much as you did to at least these my brethren, you did it to me. It even says that about God and Israel in the Old Testament in all their afflictions, he was afflicted.

God was afflicted by his children's been afflicted. Christ is afflicted by his body being afflicted. Now, Paul apparently believes there's more of that to be done.

It's the suffering that comes with the spreading of the gospel. I think we could put it this way. Christ's sufferings are complete with reference to suffering for propitiation.

But when it comes to suffering for propagation. His body still suffers all over the world. Christ still suffers.

There's a certain some amount of suffering and hardship and costs that will be paid by the body of Christ and therefore by Christ himself. Because his body in here is the same. Before it's all done.

Paul sees. His point, his point in time to the end of time and all the sufferings that Christ's body, Christ in his body will be suffering for the propagation of the gospel. And there's plenty of it left.

And he says, I'm glad to take my share. If there's a certain some finite amount of suffering that's got to happen, I'll take as much on me as I can. That'll save other people from having taken some of it.

You know, I mean, frankly, everyone's going to suffer, but he's essentially saying, I just see me doing my part here. The suffering being imprisoned, being tortured, being chased around. Well, it's just Jesus is continuing to suffer at the hands of his enemies, not for propitiation of sins.

That suffering was adequate and complete. But for the propagation of the kingdom of God, Christ still suffers in his people. And I'm Paul said, I'm glad to take my share.

It's a rather optimistic way of looking at your suffering. It's a privilege to take off of Christ's shoulders or some of that suffering or off other members of the body of Christ's shoulders that I'll fill up my share and more if necessary. Now, he did say that the mystery he speaks of the mystery here in Chapter one, as he does in Ephesians.

But Ephesians, he says, the mysteries of Jews and Gentiles, we one body in Christ here in Ephesians or Colossians one. And verse twenty seven, he speaks of the mystery and he identifies it this way. He says it is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So Paul in Ephesians said the mystery is basically us in Christ, Jews and Gentiles, one body in Christ. Here he says it's Christ in you. And so we often think of this in terms of Jesus living in me individually, though the word in in the Greek, in many such cases.

Refers to among. Even when Jesus said the kingdom of God is within you, almost all translators agree today, that means among you in your midst, in you means in in you corporately in this group here. That you being Colossians, being Gentiles and Christ being among you as well as among the Jews, his people, he's now with you.

You were not his people, that you Gentiles have Christ among you as well as the Jews who are in Christ have him. That's the mystery that you Gentiles are included with the Jews as being in Christ. Christ has visited and done the same things for you as he does for the Jews.

That is a possible meaning. Now, of course, Jesus does dwell in us and therefore Paul could be referring to that. He's just then got a different definition for the mystery than he had in Ephesians.

But I mean, the Bible does say in Romans chapter eight that if Christ is in you. Then the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit's life because of righteousness, Christ is in us

in his spirit, his spirit is in us. But when Paul says the mystery is Christ in you or among you and it could read either way.

Some some Bibles I've had actually have a marginal that says or among. He could mean Christ among the Gentiles and not merely among the Jews is the mystery of Jews and Gentiles being included together. He makes it efficient so it could go either way on that.

But I think it might be the way that we don't initially think of that point. I would say that in chapter two, verses 12 and 13, there's an important point that is debated in the in the realm of Calvinism versus Arminianism. Calvinists believe that if you're not reborn or regenerated.

You are dead in sense to the point where you cannot believe. And therefore, God has to regenerate you and bring you to life so that you can believe. Arminianism says faith precedes regeneration.

You believe first, then you regenerate. Calvinism says regeneration precedes faith. You have to be born again first by a direct unilateral work, then you can believe.

That's a very important difference. It's a key difference. It's like the dividing line.

Can a person who's not regenerated believe? If so, then what stops them from doing so? Maybe maybe even if they're not elect, maybe they'll get saved. And how can that happen? Well, they can't because God will regenerate the elect only and only then they can believe. That's Calvinism.

I don't believe that. But that's what Calvinism says. Paul didn't believe it either, because in Chapter two, verses 12 and 13.

Paul said, We were buried with him in baptism in which that is in baptism. You were also raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead. Now, first of all, is through faith we were raised with him.

This is talking about regeneration, I believe. And if we were raised with Christ through faith, that means we had faith first. You can't be raised through faith unless you have the faith through which you're raised.

Faith came first, regeneration next. But then verse 13 is even clearer, I thought. And you being dead in your trespasses and uncircumcision of your flesh, which the Calvinists say, if you're dead in sins, you can't repent.

You can't believe Paul didn't think so. You were dead, but he has made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses. Now, having done that means that was before he raised you from the dead.

He brought your life, having previously forgiven you of your trespasses, which happens

when when you believe, when you're justified by faith, when you're justified by faith, he forgives your sins and he brings you to life. Having done that first. If you read the the tenses there, Paul is saying, God regenerate, you brought you from death to life, having already before that forgiven your sins, which happens when you believe in Christ and are justified.

So Paul sees justification by faith as preceding regeneration, which, of course, is sensible. I mean, the whole Bible teaches that there's not one thing in the Bible that even hints that regeneration happens before faith. But everywhere you're born again through faith or you have life through faith.

This is what the Bible says, repeated, especially in John's writings. But Paul has the same doctrine here and says here in chapter two, verses 16, 17. We've mentioned this a couple of times.

We're not supposed to let people judge you for observing Jewish holidays. Festivals would be the three annual festivals, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Then there's new moons.

Those are monthly. The first day of every month in the Jewish calendar was a new moon. They're supposed to treat it the same way as a Sabbath.

They did no work on it. They had a solemn assembly on the first day of the month. That's the new moon.

Then the Sabbath is the weekly Sabbath. So he's got the annual festivals, the monthly new moons and the weekly Sabbath. Don't let anyone judge you about what you do.

Those things are not you're not required. But he says about them, those things were shadows. But the substances of Christ actually in the Greek is the body is of Christ.

The body that is casting the shadow, the solid object that casts a shadow is Christ himself. The shadow is simply a silhouette. It's simply a silhouette or shadows, the absence of light before the light of Christ came.

Some vague images or understanding of some of these things were cast like shadows, which are now removed when the substance is revealed. When the light shines right on the substance, you can see him instead. Now, the point here is, of course, these are ritual laws.

The ritual laws of Judaism are said to be shadows and not only the ones Paul mentions, because he also mentions what you eat or drink in that same verse dietary laws. And we could include other things like laws of clean and unclean. Well, certainly clean lepers being unclean women on their menstrual period being unclean, you know, those kinds of clean and touching a dead body or unclean.

Those are ritual laws. Those are not moral laws. They were simply shadows.

Now, moral moral laws don't kill, don't commit adultery, don't steal that kind of stuff. Those don't those aren't shadows. Those are those are the character of God himself.

But the rituals are shadows. They're not anything of value. Don't let him judge you about whether you do them or not, because you're not required to.

So Paul's saying in Chapter three, verse 15, Paul talks about letting the peace of God. Rule in your heart now. The word rule there in the Greek is a word that's only found in this passage, and commentators agree and lexicon say it means to be an umpire or one who makes the call, calls the place.

The umpire is the one who says if he's safe or out in a contentious decision. The umpire makes the call. And he says, let the peace of God play the umpire in your heart.

This has to do with, I think, guidance. If there's more than one thing you're considering and you're not sure which one's right, let the peace of God decide that for you. What do you feel peace about? Well, don't you feel peace? This is what some older Christian preachers called minding the checks, the check in your spirit.

You know, if you if you're considering doing something and you've got to check means you don't quite feel totally at peace about there's something in you saying maybe that shouldn't happen. That's like. If you say, I think I'm supposed to do this, but I feel a check in my spirit, I think, OK, that's maybe the Holy Spirit not giving me peace about it.

The peace of I have some choices here. There's no peace in that one. There's peace in that one.

So that's I'm going to let the peace make the call. Let the peace make the decision. That's what Paul's saying.

It says in Isaiah, I think it's I'm not sure. I think it's fifty five twelve. But he says, you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace.

We're led in the new covenant, we're led forth, we're led by the peace of God. And so that's what Paul, I believe, is telling us here in verse 16, he says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly speaking to yourselves in Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and so forth. And he said the same thing about this being filled with the spirit in Ephesians five.

He said he filled with the spirit, speaking to yourselves, Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. It would appear that Paul considers being filled with the spirit and letting the word of God dwell in you richly are apparently maybe synonyms or different ways of looking at the two sides of a coin. But basically, as Christ's word dwells in you richly.

And I don't think that means just you memorize verses of the Bible because his readers

didn't have Bibles. They they didn't have Bibles to memorize. They didn't have any scripture.

But the word of Christ would be his. His communication through his spirit, see Christ communicated to those who didn't have Bibles and to those of us who do also through his spirit. And so I think what Christ communicates, you dwell on that, let that live in you, keep it in there, meditate on it.

And and then that's sort of what causes you to stay filled with the spirit, too, it seems to me. And it's interesting that Paul would give those instructions about both of those things. I mean, very almost verbatim instructions, but substituting be filled with the spirit from Ephesians 5:18 with the word of Christ dwelling in you richly in Colossians 3:17 or in 3:16.

Now, he says in verse 17, whatever you do in word, you do all in the name of Jesus. And we know we're supposed to pray in the name of Jesus. And I guess if we have to cast demons out, we would be smart enough to know we should do that in the name of Jesus.

But whatever you do in word, it is supposed to all be done in the name of Jesus. Everything. It's not just when you're praying or just when you're casting out a demon.

It's when you're doing anything. And because what that means is to act in the name of Jesus means you act as his agent. You see your whole life and everything you do and say.

You're standing in this in Jesus shoes there. You're his authorized agent. You're doing it in his place or in his name, like like somebody with power of attorney.

Now, so whatever you do, do what Jesus would do. Do what he is authorizing you to do. That's what it means to do it in the name of Jesus.

So when it comes to praying in the name of Jesus, it means pray such things as he would authorize those things that he would pray himself. And do the things that he would do. That's what doing it all in the name of Jesus means.

And Chapter three, verse 17. I'm going to skip over the household code in Chapter three and verse and Chapter four, verse one. When he's talking to except this in Chapter three, verse twenty three.

He tells servants to serve their masters heartily as unto the Lord and therefore not as man pleasers with I servants. Don't don't just don't just work when the boss is looking. Because Jesus is the boss and he's always looking.

That's what he's saying. He says, you serve the Lord when you serve your employer, you're serving the Lord. I we once had some work done for us by a contractor who didn't

do a very diligent job.

I don't know. He might have a good job. It is very slow.

Very didn't get it done in time. Didn't care to get it done. Time worked real slow.

And I talked to him. I said, well, that's why I'm self-employed, because I I don't like to answer to anyone. That's why I'm self-employed.

I thought, but you're not self-employed. You're a Christian. You're you're employed by Jesus.

You know, if a boss wouldn't let you do that sloppy work with Jesus, would you do the kind of work for Jesus that you wouldn't let a boss see you doing when you're working as a Christian? And you are you are employed by Jesus. And you don't just do what the boss expects you to do when he's looking. You've got a boss that's always looking.

And that's what Paul says. You do whatever you do. He's talking to servants.

Do it hardly as unto the Lord. Do it from your heart as a joyful service. And that means any kind of job.

I mean, the slaves in those days did have some mucky kind of jobs that are not very enviable. And maybe some of us have jobs that aren't that pleasant, too. But whatever it is, if that's where God has signed us, we're serving him there.

And we should do it hardly as if he's the employer. I'm going to I'm going to miss most of the rest of this. A lot of this.

I had a lot more points, but I don't know that we have. Well, we don't have much time. But I also I'm not sure what I want to omit.

He does say in Chapter four, verses five, verse five, basically kind of a well-known verse, but not exactly. 100 percent clear what what the terminology means. He says, walk in wisdom toward those who are outside.

That's not difficult. He says, redeeming the time. Now, elsewhere, Paul says, I think it's efficient to redeem the time for the days are evil.

What's it mean to redeem the time? The word redeem is to buy something back. Like you put something up for Harkin, now you've got the money to get it. You go and redeem it.

Get it back. How do you redeem time? You can't get the time back. Many translators have paraphrased this, like make the most of your time, like don't waste time.

And maybe I guess that's the closest thing you can do to buying time back. You can't buy

time back. You can avoid wasting more of it.

But I'm not sure that's what Paul meant. Redeeming the times, the days are evil. I think the word times in this case may simply be the age, the age in which we live needs to be redeemed.

The days of this age are evil days. We need to redeem it. We need to bring change to it.

We need to buy it back for God through our efforts, through our evangelism, through our deeds and so forth. It's our times that are the problem. It's our times that are being lost.

Not my spare time and your spare time. The times, the age that we're in, the days are evil, Paul said in Ephesians. And so redeeming the time may be more about.

Saving and recovering the age from the evil state it's in. I wouldn't be surprised. I mean, that certainly sounds like it.

I know from my childhood, knowing the King James Version where it said redeem the time, I noticed that the newer translations all said make the most of your time. But that doesn't seem like the same thing as redeem. What did I mean? Why didn't Paul say that? Why did you say redeem? And I've always kind of been suspicious of the new translations on some of these things.

And I suspect he means that we're supposed to regain and recover for God, buy back for God through our labors and our efforts. The times that have gotten so corrupted, recover them through evangelism, through discipleship, through righteous influence. I think maybe I mean, it's me against all the new translators, so I may be wrong, but that's kind of what I think.

I'm never shy about being different. And then verse six, and maybe this is the last one I'll comment on because we're just running out of time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Now, how to answer each one is a concern also that Peter brings up in first Peter three, 15. Where he says, sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence. Not how to answer people.

Paul says you need to know how to answer people. And probably these are people who challenge you or challenge your faith. Make sure your speeches of grace.

But he said, seasoned with salt. It's kind of interesting because in a similar passage in Ephesians four, Paul said, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. But only what is good to minister grace to the hearers.

What is good for edification that it might minister grace to the hearers. So our speech is



to minister grace to people. Our speech should be with grace.

That means it should be gracious. Should be. It should be kind.

It should be loving. It should be, you know, not abrasive and so forth. But he says, seasoned with salt.

And I'm not sure. I mean, he's obviously using that figuratively. What's it mean for your speech? We season assault.

I think maybe it means that it shouldn't be insipid. It shouldn't be without. Potency, Jesus said, if salt loses its savor, it's no good for anything but trampling on a foot.

Salt has a an accurate or some kind of a feature to it that we appreciate in seasoning boring foods. In Job, Job said, I don't know the verse, but Job said, can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Then he says, is there any taste in the white of an egg? I don't like eating whites of eggs without salt. I like hard boiled eggs, but that makes a world of difference whether they have salt on them or not.

You know, is there any taste in the white of an egg? Job asked rhetorically. The answer is no. Can what is unsavory be taken without salt? Not easily.

Well, what if you are speaking to somebody and what you have to say is unsavory to them? Then you need to spice it up in a way. Now, it might be that having only grace is a little too insipid. Like the stereotypical church lady.

Oh, isn't that precious kind of talk? I mean, just real sweet, real soft spoken, very harmless. But, you know, there should be in some cases when we've spoken to people, even though we've been gracious, we've been gentle, we've been kind. There should be something there that spices it up in such a way as to make it noticeable, make it something that's not just bland.

And I, you know, I suppose that means an element of humor, an element of sarcasm. Paul used sarcasm a number of times. Something that just makes it not bland, boring.

I mean, we can be Christians, can be very boring people, but we should be. There should be some measure of charm in the way we answer people, too. And so, I mean, that's something to contemplate.

Paul does not explain what he means. Seasons on how is how his speech seasons with salt. He doesn't mention that in Ephesians, the salt part.

But I suspect it means that. Sometimes your speech, even though it's gracious, will have a edge to it, a sting to it, something that penetrates that might be what he has in mind. But but he doesn't say what he has in mind.

So I'm just conjecturing what I was doing here is picking up verses that are difficult, maybe familiar. If you're raised in the church, you've heard that verse all your life. But when you think, OK, what's that actually mean? Oh, well, that's a good that's a really good question.

What does that mean? It's not at all obvious. But those are the kinds of things that we meditate on. You see, if you didn't have anything that was not obvious, you'd have no reason to meditate on it.

It's these things are a little obscure, a little vague that get us to think about them. And they should, because we're supposed to meditate on the word day and night. So this kind of things, some of these things that Paul says, his choice of words, the concept that's behind it is not that familiar to us.

And so that gives us an occasion to to dwell on it more. Apparently, remember, his readers knew less than we do. They hadn't read Ephesians.

They hadn't read the Gospels. They hadn't read the Book of Acts. They hadn't read Romans.

That wasn't even written yet. Well, Romans was written, but it hadn't been sent to them. But some of the books were not written yet.

And so, I mean, these people just had to say, that's a strange expression. I have to think about that and see what God may reveal from that. Remember, he began praying that God had given the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of God.

So we we can't just we can't just parse everything out through exegetical means. OK, we got it. We understand everything.

God has to open our understanding. We understand the scriptures just like he did with the disciples.