

A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF COLOSSIANS 1:28
AND
A PROCESS FOR DISCIPLESHIP IN PAUL’S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, North Carolina

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by

David Wolfe Hecht
December 2018

ProQuest Number: 13419368

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 13419368

Published by ProQuest LLC (2018). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

©
2018
David Wolfe Hecht

This Dissertation was prepared and presented to the Faculty as a part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina. All rights and privileges normally reserved by the author as copyright holder are waived for the Seminary. The Seminary Library may catalog, display, and use this Dissertation in all normal ways such materials are used, for reference and for other purposes, including electronic and other means of preservation and circulation, including on-line computer access and other means by which library materials are or in the future may be made available to researchers and library users.

APPROVAL SHEET

A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF COLOSSIANS 1:28 AND A PROCESS FOR
DISCIPLESHIP IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

David Wolfe Hecht

Read and Approved by:

J. Gregory Lawson

J. Gregory Lawson, J. D., Ed. D., Ph. D. (Committee Chair)

James P. Porowski

James P. Porowski, Psy. D. (Faculty Reader)

Shawn L. Buice

Shawn L. Buice, Ph. D. (Third Reader)

Date: November 14, 2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the inspired words of King David, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth” (Ps. 8:1, NASB). It is with great humility, thankfulness, and joy that I acknowledge some of those who have been responsible for bringing me to this season in life and ministry.

Kenneth Coley, the Director of the Doctor of Education Studies program, always the steady helmsman, kept our sails properly trimmed toward the wind, and demonstrated inspiring leadership through every stage of our process. J. Gregory Lawson, my advisor and Professor of Christian Education, who cast a vision for the EdD program years before the degree was offered, has been a great source of transforming leadership. Professors James Porowski and Shawn Buice offered wise counsel, instruction, resources, and encouragement through the course of our studies, and I am grateful for their review of my dissertation. I am very thankful for Brittany Alley and her editing and formatting expertise on my dissertation and Mark Thompson for proctoring our comprehensive exams.

I have not enough words in my vocabulary to express my love and gratitude to my wife, Maxie, for her love, support, and faith, as together we walk the path of life in Christ. To my parents, Joseph and Ethel Hecht, and my sisters, Susan and Marsha, I am thankful for the loving family and supportive home in which we were raised. I am eternally grateful for Israel Cohen, who taught a course on “Messiah and the Feasts of Israel,” and in the process, led me to Yeshua.

Jim Sibley has been a scholar, mentor, guide, encourager, and friend, through whom I have learned so much about Scripture, Israel, the history of missions, and a

biblical, theological, and practical process for fulfilling the Great Commission among Jewish and Gentile people. I am grateful to John Sailhamer for teaching us how to study Scripture from a text-centered, canonical, and compositional hermeneutic, and to view the Bible as a book with a unified message that exalts the Messiah from בְּרֵאשִׁית to בְּאַחֲרֵית.

Seth Postell and I met in seminary, studied under John Sailhamer and became lifelong friends. I am grateful for his love, friendship, encouragement, sense of humor, and the impact he has had on my understanding of Scripture. Dewey and Jo Fleming have prayed with us and ministered to us in all seasons of life, particularly through the process of entering and completing the EdD program, and they are always an inspiration and encouragement.

Two local churches have had a profound impact on my life: Saint Andrew Baptist Church of Panama City, Florida and First Baptist Church of Hollywood, Florida. Randall Perry, Walker Maginnis, Calvin Koesy, Delbert Summey, Art Zediker, Derrick Bennett, and Michael Black in Panama City have all been teachers, mentors, friends, prayer partners, and encouragers who have been instrumental in our walk with Christ. Zuli Morton, Barbara Marchando, Joe and Jean Ducanis, Henry and Joan Butler, Judy Saladino and others in Hollywood have all shaped my life and ministry in so many ways.

I want to thank Thomas Kinchen, Jerry Windsor, Robin Jumper, Rick Freeman, Mark Rathel, Judson Vaughn, and Craig Conner for the way each man, in his own way, has influenced my life and ministry for Christ.

To those and so many others who have shaped my life and brought me to this season, “Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; And confirm for us the work of our hands; Yes, confirm the work of our hands” (Ps. 90:17, NASB).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	IV
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	XI
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	XII
ABSTRACT	XV
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
Introduction.....	1
A Need for Deeper Understanding	2
The Research Goals	7
The Delimitations of the Study	7
The Research Questions	10
A Qualitative Research Model.....	11
Characteristics of a Text	13
The Research Assumptions.....	20
The Bible as a Book.....	23
The New Testament Epistle.....	30
Characteristics of a New Testament Epistle	36
The Structure of a New Testament Epistle	40
The Life and Ministry of the Apostle Paul	41
An Introduction to Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians	45
Philosophy.....	47

Legalism.....	47
Syncretism.....	48
A Structural Outline of the Epistle to the Colossians	48
An Inner-textual Analysis of the Text of Colossians.....	50
Inner-textual Links that Frame and Cohere the Text of Colossians	52
Conclusion	78
CHAPTER TWO: WHY DO WE PROCLAIM CHRIST IN COLOSSIANS 1:28?	79
Introduction.....	79
Inner-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:24–2:5.....	81
In-textual Features in Colossians 1:28.....	81
Inclusio.....	82
Asyndeton	83
Inflection.....	85
Word Order	86
Number and Declension.....	87
Clauses and Phrases	92
Inner-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28.....	95
The Person and Work of Jesus Christ in Colossians	96
Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to God the Father	97
Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to the Creation	124
Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to the New Creation.....	134
Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to Redemption.....	136
Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to the Church	149
Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to the Kingdom	158

Conclusion	169
CHAPTER THREE: HOW DO WE PROCLAIM CHRIST IN COLOSSIANS 1:28?..	172
Introduction.....	172
In-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28	174
In-Textual Analysis – “Him We Proclaim” in Colossians 1:28	175
In-Textual Analysis – “Admonishing and Teaching” in Colossians 1:28	178
In-Textual Analysis – “Every Man” in Colossians 1:28.....	181
In-Textual Analysis – “In All Wisdom” in Colossians 1:28.....	181
Summary of the In-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28	182
Inner-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28.....	183
Inner-textual Analysis – “We Proclaim Him” in Colossians 1:28.....	184
Inter-Textual Analysis – “We Proclaim Him” in Colossians 1:28	189
Summary of Inner-Textual and Inter-Textual Analysis of “We Proclaim Him” in Colossians 1:28	206
Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis “Admonishing and Teaching” in Colossians 1:28	207
The Colossian’s Spiritual Maturity and Fruitfulness	208
Walk in a Manner Worthy of the Lord	209
The Message of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul.....	210
The Threat of False Teachers, False Doctrine, and False Practice	212
The Themes of Rescue and Captivity	213
Textual Analysis of “In All Wisdom”– Colossians 1:28.....	229
Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis of “Every Man”– Colossians 1:28.....	231
Every man: Jew and Gentile	232

Inner-Textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28 and Colossians 3:16	239
Summary of Textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28 and Colossians 3:16	248
Conclusion	249
CHAPTER FOUR: WHAT IS THE GOAL OF PROCLAIMING CHRIST IN	
COLOSSIANS 1:28?	251
Introduction.....	251
In-Textual Analysis	252
“Present Every Man Complete in Christ” in Colossians 1:28	252
Summary of In-textual Analysis of “Present Every Man Complete in Christ” in Colossians 1:28	255
Inner-Textual and Inter-Textual Analysis of “Present Every Man Complete in Christ” in Colossians 1:28	256
The Letter to the Colossians – “Present” (παρίστημι)	257
The New Testament – “Present” (παρίστημι).....	258
The Septuagint (LXX) – “Present” (παρίστημι)	261
Summary of Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis of “Present” – (παρίστημι)	265
Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis “Complete in Christ” (τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ) in Colossians 1:28	265
The Letter to the Colossians – “Complete” (τέλειος)	266
The New Testament – “Complete” (τέλειος).....	268
The Septuagint (LXX) – “Complete” (τέλειος)	269
Summary of Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis of “Complete” – (τέλειος).	273
Summary of Inner-Textual and Inter-Textual Analysis “Present Every Man Complete in Christ” in Colossians 1:28	278

Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis “Walk in Him” (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε)...	280
Imperative Verbs in Colossians – “In Him Walk” (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε).....	308
Conclusion	311
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	313
Introduction.....	313
Review of Colossians 1:28	314
Research Assumptions	315
Inter-textual Links to Jesus Christ and God’s Biblical Covenants in Colossians.....	318
Differentiated Instruction and “Every Man” in Colossians 1:28.....	323
Differentiated Instruction.....	324
Conclusion	331
BIBLIOGRAPHY	332

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Structural Outline of Colossians	49
2. Inner-textual Relationships that Frame and Cohere the Text of Colossians	52
3. Plural and Singular Verbs in Colossians	54
4. Inner-textual Relationships in Colossians 1:24–2:5	81
5. Singular and Plural Pronouns and Verbs in Colossians 1:23–2:5	87
6. The Compositional Themes of “Rescue” and “Captive” in Colossians	215
7. The Phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ) in Colossians	275
8. Inter-textual Relationships between Genesis, Deuteronomy and Colossians 3	296
9. Imperative Verbs in Colossians	309
10. Inter-textual Relationships between Jesus Christ and God’s Covenants in Colossians	319
11. Outline of <i>Real-Life Discipleship</i> Process	329

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABC	Ariel's Bible Commentary
BDAG	Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed.
BDB	Brown, Driver, Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament
BibSac	Bibliotheca Sacra
BKC	The Bible Knowledge Commentary
BTCB	Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible
BTDB	Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
CJB	Complete Jewish Bible
DLTLT	Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory
ESV	English Standard Version Bible
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
HNTC	Holman New Testament Commentary
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
HIBD	Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary
ISV	International Standard Version Bible
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature

JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
KJV	King James Version Bible
LN	Louw and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, 2 vols.
LXX	The Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NABRE	New American Bible Revised Edition
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NAC	The New American Commentary Series
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NKJV	New King James Version Bible
ODLT	Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms
TLOT	Jenni and Westermann. Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament. 3 vols.
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZQRL	Zondervan Quick Reference Library

To my beautiful wife, Maxie; a woman of virtuous character, the love of my life, and the one whom God has chosen to share abundant life. Thank you, Sweetheart!
אָגִי לְיוֹדֵי יְהוָה (Song 6:3a)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to discover what the apostle Paul means when he writes, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28, NASB). This verse is often taught, quoted, and referenced in Christian education and discipleship literature. The process, scope, form, and goal of the message prescribed in Colossians 1:28, however, has not developed to a level that reflects the verses textual relationship with the compositional structure of Colossians, or the canon of Scripture. At this level of textual analysis, one of the most important, foundational, and transforming verses of Scripture in all the Bible serves as a locus for developing a biblical, theological, and practical process for discipleship that leads to spiritual transformation and fulfillment of the Great Commission to both Jewish and Gentile people from every nation.

Chapter one lays a foundation for the study of Colossians 1:28. First, the topic is introduced and the need for a deeper understanding of the verse will be established. Second, the research goals and delimitations of the study are set forth. Third, the research questions and qualitative research model are identified. Fourth, characteristics of a text and textuality are defined, the research assumptions are set forth, and the compositional features of discourse analysis are applied to the text of the Bible, and to the New Testament epistle. Fifth, an introduction to the life and ministry of Paul, and to the letter to the Colossians is given. Sixth, a structural outline for Colossians, and an inner-textual analysis of the text is performed.

Chapter one demonstrates the canon of Scripture, the New Testament epistle, and the letter to the Colossians reflect characteristics of textuality, compositional structure, and biblical theology that present a unified message and salvific power.

Chapter two will answer the question, “Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?” Following an introduction to Colossians 1:28, the chapter will present an inner-textual analysis of the verse’s immediate literary context in Colossians 1:24–2:5. Second, an in-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 will be performed with attention given to inclusio, asyndeton, inflection, word order, number and declension, and clauses and phrases. Third, an analysis of Colossians 1:28 and the verses inner-textual relationship with Colossians will be presented with attention given to six unique characteristics and relationships that Jesus Christ possesses that inspire his proclamation.

Chapter two will show, in order to combat false teachers that threaten to move the church away from the truth of the gospel, Paul reveals six unique relationships that Jesus Christ has with God the Father, creation, the new creation, redemption, the church, and the kingdom, that motivate his emphatic exhortation, and answer the question: “Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?”

Chapter three answers the question, “How do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?” To discover the authorial intent and meaning of Colossians 1:28, an examination of the words, phrases, clauses, sentences, quotes, allusions, echoes, and themes will be performed, as well as, an analysis of the text’s literary and compositional features on an in-textual level within the verse, on an inner-textual level within the letter to the Colossians, and on an inter-textual level with the Hebrew and Greek canon of Scripture. Attention will be given to the *process*, the *scope*, and the *form* for proclamation,

admonishing, and teaching. In the process of analysis, the literary and compositional themes of “rescue” and “captive” will be introduced.

Textual relationships will demonstrate that proclamation of the person and work of the triune God began at Creation, and continued after the Fall to include covenant promises to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Israel. God’s covenant promises are designed to restore his blessings to mankind and creation lost in Eden, and they are designed to be fulfilled in the person and work of the promised Messiah.

The textual analysis will show a consistent message, theology and practice between that which is prescribed in Colossians 1:28, and the message, theology, and practice of the triune God, the Hebrew prophets, and the apostles revealed in Scripture. The textual relationships portray the Colossians in a new theological position: (1) they are participants in a “New Covenant Exodus;” (2) they have experienced a “New Covenant Day of Atonement;” and (3) they have an inheritance in the “Messianic Kingdom of God.”

Chapter four answers the question, “What is the goal of proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28?” To answer the final research question, an in-textual, inner-textual, and inter-textual analysis will be performed on the last clause in Colossians 1:28: “so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28e). Attention will be given to the words “present” (παρίστημι), “complete” (τέλειος), and the phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ).

The clause indicates both Paul’s intention for writing and his full confidence in the fulfillment of the goal—*Christlikeness*. The ministry prescribed in Colossians 1:28e is the last act in the discipleship process. The prescription through which the goal of Christlikeness is attained is described as a “walk” (περιπατέω). Paul proclaimed,

admonished, and taught the Colossians how to *walk* “in Christ” through a series of imperative verbs that instructed them how to fulfill his enthusiastic exhortation.

Inter-textual relationships portray the Colossians in a long line of saints such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus Christ himself, who were faithful to God and ministered the word of truth. The textual relationships describe the Colossians as a new creation humanity in the role of a “New Covenant Priesthood” of all believers.

Chapter five offers concluding observations from the study and suggests recommendations for further research. The concluding observations will focus on a review of Colossians 1:28. The review shows the relationships between the text of Colossians and the person and work of Jesus Christ that fulfill God’s covenant promises to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Israel and are applied in the lives of the Colossians.

The recommendations for further research focus on: (1) *Differentiated Instruction* and the learning philosophies relationship to the term “every man” in Colossians 1:28; and (2) an outline to fulfill the proclamation, admonishing, and teaching ministries prescribed in Colossians 1:28 from Jim Putman’s *Real-Life Discipleship*.

The purpose of the discourse analysis is to demonstrate that Colossians 1:28 is a locus and foundation on which to build a biblical, theological, and practical process for discipleship that fulfills the Great Commission for both Jewish and Gentile people from every nation.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Colossians, Colossians 1:28, Christian Education, Jesus Christ, Messiah, Paul, Evangelism, Discipleship, Spiritual Maturity, Proclaim, Admonishing, Teaching, Wisdom, Present, Complete, Every man, In Christ, Covenants, Church.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Navigators is an international, interdenominational Christian ministry and para-church group established in 1933 and headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Their mission is to train Christians to evangelize the lost, disciple believers, and train followers of Jesus Christ to continue the discipleship process in the lives of others.¹ In 2014, The Navigators and NavPress commissioned The Barna Group to embark on a comprehensive, multi-phase research study to answer the following questions: (1) What is the current state of discipleship in the United States? (2) How is discipleship defined? (3) What are the hallmarks of transformative discipleship, and how do we measure their outcomes? (4) What resources and models are necessary for effective discipleship in the 21st century? (5) How do The Navigators' discipleship methods and resources align with the needs of the Church? The results of their research are published in a document entitled *The State of Discipleship*.²

When educators, pastors, church leaders, and Christians were asked if they could change one thing about the way in which their churches made disciples, the majority said they would like to see “a more clearly articulated plan, or approach, to discipleship.”³ According to Barna's *The State of Discipleship* report, leaders said, “having a clearly articulated plan [for discipleship] is a key factor in a thriving discipleship program” and

¹ “About the Navigators,” accessed February 22, 2017, www.navigators.org/about-us.

² *The State of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015), 7.

³ *Ibid.*, 65–67.

this is an area where many church leaders see room for improvement.⁴ In Colossians 1:28, the apostle Paul presents a biblical process for discipleship that exalts the preeminence of Jesus Christ for the purpose of developing spiritual maturity in every believer. The purpose of this qualitative study is to discover what Paul means when he writes, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28).⁵

A Need for Deeper Understanding

This verse is often taught, quoted, and referenced in Christian education and discipleship literature.⁶ There are also excellent authors of important books and curricula

⁴ *The State of Discipleship*, 66.

⁵ All English Bible verses are quoted from *The New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995, unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), 241, 278; Daryl Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 141; Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: It's History and Philosophy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983), 70, 264, 357; Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 30; Dan Lambert, *Teaching that Makes a Difference: How to Teach with Holistic Impact* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 23; D. Bruce Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning: A History of Christian Thought on Education* (Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design Publications, 2007), 20–22; Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 194; A. Boyd Luter, “Discipleship and the Church,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, no. 137 (July–September, 1980): 267–273; Will McRaney, Jr. *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 62; Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 101–103; Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2008), 58; William R. Yount, ed. *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2008). 36, 107, 172, 378, 379; William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 265–272; Roy B. Zuck, *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching* (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, 1963), 105, 116.

that do not include Colossians 1:28 in their education and discipleship material.⁷ Whether the verse and its transforming principles are included in Christian education and discipleship literature or not, the process, scope, form, and goal of the message prescribed in Colossians 1:28 have not developed on a level that reflects the verses inner-textual relationship with the compositional structure of Paul's letter, and therefore unleashing the fullness of its authoritative truth and transforming power.

The verse is most frequently taught, quoted, and referenced in the context of spiritual transformation, developing Christlikeness, spiritual maturity, Christian curriculum, and discipleship. Brad Waggoner admits that "learning biblical truth is the core of transformation" and the apostle Paul urged disciples to learn and to renew their minds (Col. 1:28).⁸ Bill Hull writes about Colossians 1:28 in the context of God's vision for Christlikeness.

⁷ Daniel L. Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014); Michael J. Anthony and Warren S. Benson, *Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the 21st Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003); Steve Atkerson, *Ekklesia: To the Roots of Biblical Church Life* (Atlanta, GA: New Testament Restoration Foundation, 2003); Kevin DeYoung, and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2011); C.B. Eavey, *Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers*, 7th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1940); C.B. Eavey, *History of Christian Education* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1964); John L. Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Perspectives* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002); Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Pattern of God's Truth: The Integration of Faith and Learning* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2014); Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus' Final Words Our First Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2015); Gerald L. Gutek, *Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Education: A Biographical Introduction*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Peterson Education, 2011); Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983); George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006); Rick and Shera Melick, *Teaching that Transforms: Facilitating Life Change Through Adult Bible Teaching* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010); Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples* (Carol Stream, IL: NavPress, 2010); James E. Reed and Ronnie Prevost, *A History of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1993); Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1998); Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992); D. Campbell Wyckoff, *The Gospel and Christian Education: A Theory of Christian Education for Our Times* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, nd);

As a disciple, we need a vision to inspire us. Vision provides hope, and hope fuels our efforts as we walk into the future. Just as a great athlete fulfills a childhood dream to win an Olympic medal or play in a professional league, disciples should dream to be like Christ. The apostle Paul had this goal for himself and for all those he loved and trained (Col. 1:28).⁹

William Yount sees the same goal in Colossians 1:28 when he writes, “To lead others to be like Christ. What a calling! Christian teachers are far more than transmitters of lessons from quarterly to class. Our calling is to help learners grow toward Christlikeness.”¹⁰

Dave Early and Rod Dempsey, in their book, *Disciple Making Is*, also places Colossians 1:28 in the realm of spiritual maturity.

God has something in mind for the individual believer to do in His kingdom. Our job as leaders of His body is to help them grow in maturity and discover His plan for their lives. We help the person grow in the same way that we help our children grow...with individual attention. Colossians 1:28 illustrates this well...The focus of this verse is on the repeated phrase “every man.” Our goal as Christian leaders is to help *every* individual stand before the King of kings and hear from Him: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”¹¹

Octavio Esqueda, professor of Christian Higher Education at Talbot School of Theology, writes, “The goal of Christian education is to present everyone perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28).¹² Kenneth Gangel and Warren Benson apply Colossians 1:28 and the goal of Christian maturity to the domain of Sunday School education and Christian schools.

⁸ Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008), 58.

⁹ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 30.

¹⁰ Daryl Eldridge, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church: Integrating Biblical Truth with Contemporary Application* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 141.

¹¹ Dave Early and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013), 278.

¹² William R. Yount, ed., *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 36.

The Sunday school was moving toward the biblical goal of bringing people to maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28), which eventually led to their engaging in a ministry of spiritual reproduction and multiplication of themselves. The Sunday school was coming of age...Some Christian schools would include evangelism as part of their overall objective, whereas others would focus on the development of the student who already professes a relationship with Christ. This second overall biblical objective is nowhere spelled out more clearly than in Colossians 1:28–29.¹³

Dan Lambert references Colossians 1:28 in the role of teachers and the importance of their knowledge of Scripture in the teaching–learning process.

This is one of the most often mentioned attributes of teachers in the Bible, but one of the most overlooked in the church. If churches were to expect a high degree of Bible knowledge from their teachers, then I fear most would have far too few teachers to meet their needs...This crisis of biblically illiterate teachers raising up new generations of even more biblically illiterate believers will bring demise to the church infinitely faster and more completely than will any outside, secular force.¹⁴

In addition to spiritual transformation, developing Christlikeness, spiritual maturity, and the goal of Christian education, Margaret Lawson, speaks of Colossians 1:28 in the context of Christian education curriculum.

The Father has a plan for each one of our learners, and He allows us to participate in it. It is a great responsibility to choose the best resources to develop and equip believers of all ages. In the words of the apostle Paul, our goal is to “proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28). The right curriculum materials will assist us in accomplishing this goal.¹⁵

Greg Ogden says that Colossians 1:28 echoes Jesus’ command to go and “make disciples” (μαθητεύσατε) and this verse is Paul’s own personal mission statement.

¹³ Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983), 264, 357.

¹⁴ Dan Lambert, *Teaching that Makes a Difference: How to Teach for Holistic Impact* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 23

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 378.

For Paul the primary goal of the Christian life is to reach the state of maturity in Christ. The apostle Paul personalized Jesus' clarion call in writing his own mission statement. If you listen carefully to Colossians 1:28–29, you will hear the echo of Jesus' command to "go and make disciples." Paul articulates the call upon his life: "It is he [Jesus] whom we proclaim, warning every one and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me." One purpose demands all of Paul's effort and energy—to bring everyone to maturity in Christ.¹⁶

William Yount captures the nature and essence of both the divine and human author's intent for Colossians 1:28 when he applies the verse to the Christ-centered "dynamic synergism" that takes place in the teacher-learning process as illustrated in his classic *Christian Teachers' Triad*.

The goal of Christian teaching is Christlikeness in our learners – regardless of the subject matter. The teacher helps by balancing thinking, feeling, and doing components in the classroom, and leading learners to depend on the Lord day by day. We, of course, cannot produce Christlikeness. Only the Lord can teach us how to live as He does. But we are instruments in the Master's hand. We can cooperate with Him in the process and succeed. Or we can do things our own way and fail. In the end, those who honor Jesus as Teacher and Lord, who teach as He teaches them, who love as He loves them, will be the teachers who influence others toward Christlikeness. May God richly bless you as you spend your life pursuing this wondrous task.¹⁷

Each one of these authors does a wonderful job in describing the principles and application set forth in Colossians 1:28. Whether it is focusing on spiritual transformation, God's vision for Christlikeness and spiritual maturity, Christian curriculum, discipleship as part of the church's education process, or whether the verse is

¹⁶ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 101–102.

¹⁷ William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 272.

applied in the area of Christian education for the school, each author contributes greatly to the truth and application of the verse.

However, the biblical process and transforming truths set forth in Colossians 1:28 that apply to Christian education, discipleship, and spiritual transformation have not been developed on the level of textual and compositional analysis. These are the two specific areas of research that are addressed in this study and the academic areas in which a contribution is made.

The Research Goals

The research goals for this study are two-fold: 1) *To contribute to the academic community a biblical exegesis for a foundational text in Christian education, discipleship, and spiritual transformation using discourse analysis;* 2) *To contribute to the academic community a biblical theology of Christian education and discipleship that leads to spiritual transformation and maturity in Christ.* It is the intent of this study to further the knowledge and understanding of Colossians 1:28, and to demonstrate that one of the most powerful verses in Scripture serves as a locus for developing a biblical, theological, and practical process for Christian education and discipleship that leads to spiritual transformation, conformity to Christ, and fulfillment of the Great Commission for both Jewish and Gentile people from all nations.

The Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of this qualitative study relate specifically to the text of Colossians 1:28 and the verse's inner-textual relationship with the text of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Unless otherwise noted, the English, Hebrew, and Greek texts are taken from the following sources: The English translation of the text is taken from the *New*

American Standard Bible.¹⁸ The Hebrew translation of the text is taken from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.¹⁹ The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible is taken from the *Septuaginta*.²⁰ The Greek translation of the New Testament text is taken from *The Greek New Testament*.²¹ The qualitative research study is confined to the interpretive features of grammar, syntax, semantics, literary analysis, textual criticism, and biblical theology that originate from a text-centered, canonical, and compositional approach to Colossians and to the biblical text.²²

The term “text-centered” means the focus of the study is on the biblical text itself. An analysis the words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and the letter itself will be performed at various levels of composition within Colossians 1:28, and with the verse’s inner-textual relationship with the text of Colossians, on both a micro and macro-structural level to discover the authorial intent and meaning of the text. The term “canonical” means the focus of the study is on the present, final form of the Colossian text, and the Old and New Testament canon of Scripture, not on the events or experiences behind the text. The historical and critical issues pertaining to Pauline authorship, the place of Paul’s imprisonment, ancient Colossae, the church at Colossae, the Lychnus Valley, the Colossian heresies, the place and date of authorship, the letter’s relationship

¹⁸ *The New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁹ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Gesamtherstellun Biblia-Druck, 1997).

²⁰ *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Privilegierte Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1979).

²¹ *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: United Bible Societies, 1998).

²² Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995); Shimon Bar-Efrat, “Some Observations on the Analysis and Structure in Biblical Narrative. *Vetus Testamentum*, 30 (1980).

to the epistle to the Ephesians and other Pauline literature, the Jewish, Gentile, and Christian communities in Colossae, the letter from Laodicea (Col. 4:16), and the origin of the messianic hymn in Colossians 1:15–20, are addressed in other studies and are beyond the scope of this discourse analysis.²³ The locus of meaning and the focus of the study are on the text of Scripture itself in its final, canonical form.²⁴ The term “compositional” means the words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that form Paul’s letter to the Colossians are intentionally composed by the author to form a pattern and structure that conveys a cohesive, coherent, and unified message.²⁵

²³ For historical and critical studies on Pauline authorship, the place of Paul’s imprisonment, ancient Colossae and the church at Colossae, the Lychus Valley, the Colossian heresies, the place and date of authorship, the Jewish, Gentile, and Christian communities in Colossae, and the letter from Laodicea (Col. 4:16), and the origin of the messianic hymn in Colossians 1:15–20, please see: Max Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*. gen. ed., Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999); Markus Barth, and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians*, vol. 34B, Astrid B. Beck, translator (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994; Frederick Byvie Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984); John Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to The Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. by John Pringle (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007); D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992); James D.G. Dunn, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990); William W. Klein, David E. Garland, Todd D. Still, and Arthur A. Rupprecht, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 12, rev. ed., Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland, gen. eds., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006); J.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993); Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, trans. by William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris, ed. by Helmut Koester (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971); Richard L. Melick, Jr., *The New American Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, vol. 32 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishing Group, 1991); Douglas J. Moo, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008); H.C.G. Moule, *Colossians Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon* (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, nd); A.T. Robertson, *Paul and the Intellectuals: The Epistle to the Colossians*, rev. and ed. by W.C. Strickland (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1959) Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); R. McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2005); N.T. Wright, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986).

²⁴ John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 97–98.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 98–99.

The Research Questions

Having introduced the topic, established a need for the research, and set the delimitations for the study, it is time to establish the research questions for the study. In his letter to the church at Colossae, the apostle Paul presents a biblical, theological, and practical process for discipleship and spiritual transformation in Colossians 1:28. The purpose of this qualitative study is to discover what Paul means when he writes, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28). The intent of the research is to discover the process, scope, form, and goal of Paul’s message prescribed in Colossians 1:28 and its inner-textual relationship with the letter to the Colossians. In order to accomplish the purpose and intent of the study, the following research questions are posed:

- Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?
- How do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?
- What is the goal of proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28?

First, what are the particular attributes and the specific characteristics of the person and work of Jesus Christ revealed in Colossians 1:28 and in Paul’s letter that warrant Christ’s proclamation? Does Paul give his readers any basis or cause to proclaim Jesus Christ? Second, how does Paul instruct the Colossians to proclaim Jesus Christ? Does Paul give the church any instructions on how to accomplish the task at hand, or does he simply give them a prescription for ministry? Third, what does Paul mean when he says, “present every man complete in Christ?” What role do the Colossian’s have in in this process? Does Paul give any instructions in his letter on how to fulfill this mission?

A Qualitative Research Model

The goal of Bible interpretation is to arrive at the authorial intent of the text. What is the author saying? What does the author mean?²⁶ A text-centered, canonical, and compositional approach views the text of Scripture as the revelation of God, the locus of meaning, and the focus of theology. The research model for this qualitative study of Colossians 1:28 and its inner-textual relationship with Paul’s letter to the Colossians is “Discourse Analysis.”²⁷ Discourse analysis is a form of text linguistics.²⁸ David Alan Black explains the terms “text” and “discourse.”

The term “text” comes from the Latin verb *textere* (“to weave”), suggesting a sequence of utterances “interwoven” both syntactically and semantically. Similarly, the term “discourse” implies a series of utterances that function interactively to achieve the overall message of the text. In short then, both “discourse” and “text” may be said to refer to a sequential collection of sentences or utterances that relate in a hierarchy of dominances to form a unity by reason of their “interwovenness.” Examples include a poem, a newspaper editorial, a public lecture, and a New Testament writing.²⁹

Discourse analysis can be defined as “a process of investigation by which one examines the form and function of all the parts and levels of written discourse, with the aim of

²⁶ John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 68.

²⁷ For an extensive and categorized bibliography on discourse analysis, see Walter R. Bodine, ed., *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), 213–253.

²⁸ Swiss linguist and semiotician, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), who taught at the University of Geneva, is considered by many to be the founder of modern linguistic theory. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Charles Bally, and Albert Sechehaye, eds., in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger (Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1986).

²⁹ David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 171.

better understanding, both, the parts, and the whole of that discourse.”³⁰ Discourse analysis examines the author’s use of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and larger blocks of text on the basis of grammar, syntax, and semantics, as well as, analyzing the text’s literary and compositional features on both a micro and macro-structural level that give cohesion, consistency, unity, and meaning to a text. Black says, “discourse analysis involves a *wholistic* study of the text.”³¹

Chief among the concerns of discourse analysis is to show the internal coherence or unity of a particular text. Discourse analysis involves a *wholistic* study of the text. It is not simply “verse by verse analysis” (the method usually taught in seminaries and employed in most commentaries), but rather an analysis of how verses fit into the structural unity of the entire text. It is critical to realize that discourse analysis is not merely an investigation into the flow of thought of a text, but is at heart an investigation into how the text produces flow of thought. Hence “text” and “discourse” are synonymous terms.³²

The words “text” and “discourse” are used interchangeably in our study.³³ Jeffery Reed says that discourse analysis is the study and interpretation of written communication and can be categorized under the discipline of hermeneutics.³⁴

³⁰ George H. Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” In *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, edited by David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 255.

³¹ David Alan Black, ed., with Katharine Barnwell, and Stephen Levinsohn, *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 12.

³² *Ibid.*, 12.

³³ Walter R. Bodine, ed., *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), 2.

³⁴ Jeffrey T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 39/2 (1996): 223–240.

Characteristics of a Text

A text or discourse can be defined as “a communicative occurrence which meets seven standards of textuality: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality.”³⁵ Beaugrande and Dressler say, “If any of these standards are not satisfied, the text will not be communicative.”³⁶

Cohesion – Cohesion identifies the ways in which the actual words of a text are mutually connected within a sequence. The words, phrases, clauses, and sentences depend upon each other and they are ordered according to grammatical forms and dependencies. This level of textuality is referred to as the surface text.³⁷

Coherence – Coherence is concerned with the ways in which the cognitive content embodied in the text is conveyed clearly with unity and consistency in relationship with other content embodied in the text. Coherence is the set of concepts and relations that *underlies* the surface text. Is the text clear? Does the discourse make sense? Is the text reasoned and rational?³⁸

Intentionality – Intentionality is the author’s attitude toward the text in which the choice and meaning of the words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are deliberately composed to constitute a cohesive, coherent, message that fulfills the author’s intentions, goals, and purposes. The author has an intended purpose. The author has an intended audience. The author deliberately writes in such a way to purposefully convey a message in a cohesive, coherent, and meaningful way to his or her readers.³⁹

Acceptability – Acceptability is concerned with the reader’s attitude toward the text. The reader accepts the meaning of the words, phrases, clauses, and sentences as a cohesive and coherent text that has relevance, knowledge, meaning, and is useful to the reader.⁴⁰

³⁵ Robert de Beaugrande, and Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (New York, NY: Longman, Inc., 1981), vi–3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4–7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

Informativity – Informativity is interested in whether or not the meaning embodied in the text is expected or unexpected, or known or unknown. Every text is somewhat informative. Texts with low levels of informativity that are written with meaning that is both expected and known can cause boredom and possible rejection of the text. Texts with high levels of informativity that are written with meaning that is unexpected and unknown can be interesting and demanding.⁴¹

Situationality – Situationality is the collection of factors that make a text relevant to a particular reader and to a particular situation. The degree of situationality is directly related to the degree of influence the text has on the reader and the situation.⁴²

Intertextuality – Intertextuality is concerned with the factors that make the knowledge and understanding of one text dependent on the knowledge and understanding of one or more previously encountered texts. Intertextuality is the relationship between and among texts.⁴³

To establish cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality within a text, authors use the following literary modes of reference to develop meaning and unity in written composition: quotation, allusion,⁴⁴ and theme. The literary modes of reference for the qualitative study of Colossians 1:28 are defined.

Quotation – An intentional, explicit, verbatim or near verbatim citation of a former text of six or more words in length. A *formal* quotation is a quotation accompanied by an introductory marker, or quotation formula; an informal quotation lacks such a marker.⁴⁵

Allusion – A reference to literature or history. With an allusion, an author consciously refers to a written text from the past or to a historical event. This means that we should not use the terms *allusion* or *alludes to* so

⁴¹ Beaugrande and Dressler, 8–9.

⁴² Ibid., 9–10.

⁴³ Ibid., 10–12.

⁴⁴ Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 11–40.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 17.

loosely as to cover all instances when an author refers to something. Sometimes an author actually quotes from an earlier text, but usually the link is obvious without quoting. When in Psalm 114 the poet speaks of how “Israel went out from Egypt” and the “sea looked and fled” (vv. 1, 3), he alludes to the exodus and to the passage through the Red Sea on dry land.⁴⁶

Echo – A rhetorical form in which something that has been introduced into a work is echoed later in the work, either once or multiple times. Echo can be viewed as a specific form of the more general principle of repetition. An example of the technique of echo within a poem occurs in Psalm 84, where the psalmist introduces the domestic motif of the temple being a “home” in verse 3, then incorporates later references to “those who dwell in [God’s] house” (v. 4) and to being “a doorkeeper in the house of my God” (v. 10). In Psalm 1, the image of the assembly in verse 1 is echoed in verse 5, with references to a judgment hall and “congregation.” An example of echo within a story occurs in the book of Ruth. In the nighttime encounter on the threshing floor, Ruth requested that Boaz “spread [his] wings over” her (3:9). This echoes an earlier comment that Boaz made, describing Ruth as having taken refuge “under [God’s] wings” (2:12).⁴⁷

Theme – The theme of a literary work is a central idea that it presents, either directly or implicitly. In its broad sense, the term refers to an abstract concept that recurs in many works of literature. The narrower meaning of theme is a view or a value conveyed by a particular literary work, either by assertion or by implication. The theme differs from the subject of the work, a neutral summary of the characters and events, and instead expresses a stance toward the subject as a moral or philosophical, [or theological], principle inherent in the literary work. Recognizing a theme can help readers to compare and contrast works that treat the same central concept and to articulate the values and attitudes that underlie a given literary work.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Leland Ryken, *A Complete Handbook of Literary Forms in the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 23–24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴⁸ Sharon Hamilton, *Essential Literary Terms* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2007), 154–155.

Richard Hays has proposed the following seven criteria for testing claims about the presence and meaning of scriptural echoes in Pauline literature.⁴⁹

Availability – Was the proposed source of the echo available to the author and/or the original readers? In the case of Paul’s use of Scripture, his practice of citation shows that he was acquainted with virtually the whole body of texts that were later acknowledged as canonical within Judaism, and that he expected his readers to share his acknowledgment of these texts as Scripture.⁵⁰

Volume – The volume of an echo is determined primarily by the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns, but other factors may also be relevant: how distinctive or prominent is the precursor text within Scripture, and how much rhetorical stress does the echo receive in Paul’s discourse? For example, 2 Cor. 4:6 should be understood as an allusion to Gen. 1:3–5, even though it echoes explicitly only the two words light and darkness. Here the source is the distinctive and memorable Genesis creation account, and Paul has placed the echo at the rhetorical climax of a unit in his letter.⁵¹

Recurrence – How often does Paul elsewhere cite or allude to the same scriptural passage? This applies not only to specific words that are cited more than once, such as Hab. 2:4, but also to larger portions of Scripture to which Paul repeatedly refers, such as Deuteronomy 30–32 or Isaiah 50–54. Where such evidence exists that Paul considered a passage of particular importance, proposed echoes from the same context should be given additional credence.⁵²

Thematic Coherence – How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument that Paul is developing? Is its meaning effect consonant with other quotations in the same letter or elsewhere in the Pauline corpus? Do the images and ideas of the proposed precursor text illuminate Paul’s argument? This test begins to move beyond simple identification of echoes to the problem of how to interpret them.⁵³

⁴⁹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29–32.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 30.

Historical Plausibility – Could Paul have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could his readers have understood it? (We should always bear in mind, of course, that Paul might have written things that were not readily intelligible to his actual readers.) This test, historical in character, necessarily requires hypothetical constructs of what might have been intended and grasped by particular first-century figures. The value of the test is to make us wary of readings that turn Paul into (say) a Lutheran or a deconstructionist. One implication of this criterion is to give serious preference to interpretive proposals that allow Paul to remain a Jew. However odd or controversial a reader of Scripture he may have been, he was a Jewish reader determined to show that his readings could hold a respectable place within the discourse of Israel's faith.⁵⁴

History of Interpretation – Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes? The readings of our predecessors can both check and stimulate our perception of scriptural echoes in Paul. While this test is a possible restraint against arbitrariness, it is also one of the least reliable guides for interpretation, because Gentile Christian readers at a very early date lost Paul's sense of urgency about relating the gospel to God's dealings with Israel and, slightly later, began reading Paul's letters within the interpretive matrix of the New Testament canon. A radically divergent social and religious context engendered a major hermeneutical revision by locating Paul's letters within a different intertextual space: the space defined preeminently by the four canonical Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. That is why I argue frequently in this book [Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul] that the Christian tradition has distorted Paul's voice or missed its undertones. A historically sensitive exegesis can recover echoes previously dampened or drowned out. An investigation of the history of interpretation can extend the range of possible readings of Paul's use of Scripture, but it also can lead us to a narrowing of the hermeneutical potential of Paul's intertextual collocations. Thus, this criterion should rarely be used as a negative test to exclude proposed echoes that commend themselves on other grounds.⁵⁵

Satisfaction – With or without clear confirmation from the other criteria listed here, does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? Does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation? This criterion is difficult to articulate precisely without falling into the affective fallacy, but it is finally the most important test: it is in fact another way of asking whether

⁵⁴ Hays, 30–31.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 31.

the proposed reading offers a good account of the experience of a contemporary community of competent readers.⁵⁶

In addition to the literary characteristics and modes of reference for a text or discourse identified by Beaugrande, Dressler, Beetham, and Hays, John Sailhamer says, the compositional strategy of a biblical text can also be traced at various levels to include its in-textual, inner-textual, inter-textual and con-textual relationship.⁵⁷

In-textuality – In-textuality is the inner coherence of the smallest units of text expressed compositionally through grammar, syntax, and semantics. An analysis of the compositional strategy of a biblical book begins with the in-textuality of each individual passage.⁵⁸

Inner-textuality – Inner-textuality binds texts together with other texts to form narratives that allow biblical authors to thematize and unify their message within a complete book or letter. In addition to grammar, syntax, and semantics, the intentional use of similar words, phrases, clauses, echoes, and allusions throughout a book or letter are used to develop compositional structure, literary themes, and biblical theology to a book or letter.⁵⁹

Inter-textuality – Inter-textuality is the study of textual relationships between and among texts. Inter-textuality is a compositional device used to intentionally link words, phrases, clauses, sentence, echoes, and allusions in one book or letter with those in another book or letter to develop literary themes which present a unified message and biblical theology.⁶⁰

Con-textuality – Con-textuality is concerned with the effect on meaning of the relative position of a biblical book within a prescribed order of reading. Con-textuality analyzes the semantic effect of a book's relative position within the biblical canon.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Hays, 31–32.

⁵⁷ Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 207–215.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 207–208.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 209–212.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 212–213.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 213–215.

Sailhamer comments on the importance of textuality and the relationship between biblical texts for understanding the Bible and its message.

Many written texts, especially biblical ones, were written with the full awareness of other texts in mind. Their authors assumed the readers would be thoroughly knowledgeable of those other texts. The New Testament books, for example, assume a comprehensive understanding of the OT. Many OT texts also assume their readers are aware and knowledgeable of other OT texts.⁶²

Each of these textual relationships deepens the cohesive, coherent, and semantic nature of the text or discourse. Sailhamer writes, “The compositional strategy of a biblical book begins with the in-textuality of each biblical passage. The inner cohesion of the smallest passage is as important as the structural unity of the entire book.”⁶³

The goal of this discourse analysis is to examine the various levels of textuality within Colossians 1:28 on a micro and macro-structural level to discover the authorial intent and meaning of the text. The process for the discourse analysis is given below:

1. Present an Introduction to the Epistle to the Colossians.
2. Present an Inner-textual Analysis of the Text of Colossians.
3. Present an In-textual Analysis of the Text of Colossians 1:28.
4. Present an Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis of the Text of Colossians 1:28.

The steps for a discourse analysis of Colossians 1:28 give a biblical, theological, and practical understanding of the verse that exalts the preeminence of Jesus Christ and demonstrates a process for proclamation that leads to spiritual transformation, maturity in

⁶² Sailhamer, 212–213.

⁶³ Ibid., 207.

Christ, and the fulfillment of the Great Commission for both Jewish and Gentile people from all nations.

The Research Assumptions

The research assumptions for the discourse analysis are listed below:

- The Bible is the Word of God – 2 Timothy 3:16.

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.⁶⁴

- The Word of God is life-giving and transforming – 1 Peter 1:23–2:3.
- God is One and exists in three Persons as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – Genesis 1:1–2; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; Revelation 22:16–21.

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature. essence, or being.⁶⁵

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all

⁶⁴ *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, 1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.⁶⁶

- God the Son is Savior, Lord, and God the Father's Agent of Creation and the New Creation – Genesis 1:1; John 1:3, 10, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:20–24; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2.

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.⁶⁷

- God the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from God the Father and God the Son – John 15:26.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.⁶⁸

- Through the transgression of Adam, there resulted in condemnation to all men. Through one act of righteousness, the sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, there resulted in justification of life made available to all men – Romans 5:18.

⁶⁶ *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

- God has ordained a supernatural process of spiritual transformation for the justification, sanctification, and glorification of mankind through faith in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ – Romans 8:28–30.
- God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth – 1 Timothy 2:4.
- God is the Savior of all men, especially of believers – 1 Timothy 4:10.
- The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men – Titus 2:11.
- God does not want anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance – 2 Peter 3:9.
- Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ and the author of Colossians – Colossians 1:1–2; 4:18.
- Members of the church, the Body of Christ, are called individually and corporately to enter into God’s Work to fulfill the Great Commission by evangelizing, baptizing and teaching Jewish and Gentile people from all nations – Matthew 10:5–6; 15:24; 28:18–20; Acts 1:1–28:31; Romans 1:16; Galatians 2:7–9.
- God has called and gifted members of the church to teach with the goal of spiritual transformation – Romans 12:2, 7.

Colossians 1:28 is an important and foundational verse in Christian education, discipleship, and spiritual transformation. Research done by The Navigators and The Barna Group has documented the need and desire for a biblical process for evangelism and discipleship in the 21st century church. Colossians 1:28 is often taught, quoted, and referenced in Christian education and in discipleship literature. In addition, many experienced Christian educators, theologians, and pastors have chosen not to include Colossians 1:28 in their material. Whether the verse and its principles are included in Christian education and discipleship literature, or not, the process, scope, form, and goal of the message prescribed in Colossians 1:28 reflects the verses inner-textual relationship

with the compositional structure of Paul’s letter, and unleashes the fullness of its authoritative truth and transforming power in the lives of those who believe by faith. Thus far, the topic of the qualitative research has been introduced, the delimitations of the research have been set forth, the research questions have been identified, the qualitative research model has been presented, and the research assumptions for the study have been set in place. Now, the attention will turn to an overview of the Bible, elements of a New Testament epistle, a survey of the life and ministry of Paul, a summary and structural outline of the letter to the Colossians, and an analysis of the inner-textual links that frame the text and give the Scripture intentionality, cohesion, unity, and meaning.

The Bible as a Book

The most common English word used to refer to Scripture is the word “Bible” (βίβλος) or “book.” A book can be defined as “a coherent literary document with a broad scope and a particular purpose.”⁶⁹ The Bible is one unique book composed of many books. It is a collection of written texts that were composed over many centuries, by many different authors, from various backgrounds and cultures, and is composed with many different literary genres.

With the development of spoken language and the alphabet, a word that originates from the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph (א) and Bet (ב), texts throughout history were written on stone, clay, parchment, vellum, papyrus, precious metals, and paper.⁷⁰ Written texts were first stitched together and bound on papyrus, then on leather

⁶⁹ John H. Sailhamer, *How We Got the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 32.

⁷⁰ Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1999), 79–98.

scrolls, and beginning in the first-century A.D., bound together in codices.⁷¹ Early in the Bible and throughout Scripture, mankind was instructed to write down and record the revelation of God.

The first mention of a “book” (סֵפֶר – βιβλος) in Scripture is revealed in Genesis 5:1 in which Moses writes, “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” The Lord instructed Moses to, “Write this in a book [the blotting out of the memory of Amalek] as a memorial and recite it to Joshua” (Ex. 17:14). When Moses was finished writing, the “Book of the Law” was placed beside the Ark of the Covenant.

It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you (Dt. 31:24–26).

The Lord also instructed Isaiah to write down His words on a tablet and record them on a scroll (Isa. 30:8). The God of Israel asked Jeremiah to write all the words which He had spoken him “in a book” (Jer. 30:2). When Habakkuk cried out to the Lord, God answered him and said, “Record the vision and inscribe *it* on tablets, *so* that the one who reads it may run” (Hab. 2:2).⁷²

Two of the most vivid accounts of the divine-human process of writing Scripture are given in the Book of Jeremiah and the Gospel of Luke. In Jeremiah chapter 36, the

⁷¹ Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*, 2nd ed., trans. by Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 7–8.

⁷² For a text-centered, canonical, and compositional approach to the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament that presents the theological and literary features of the text, see: John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992); John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995); Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011); Seth D. Postell, Eitan Bar, and Erez Soref, *Reading Moses, Seeing Jesus: How the Torah Fulfills its Goal in Yeshua*, exp. 2nd ed. (Wooster, OH: Weaver Books, 2017).

“word of the Lord” came to the prophet. God told Jeremiah to take a scroll and write all the words which He had spoken to him concerning Israel, Judah, and the nations. The prophet then read the words to Baruch, who in turn, wrote them down on another scroll (Jer. 36:1–32). The second example in Luke’s gospel, the reader is told that many accounts of Jesus had been written by both “eyewitnesses and servants of the word” (Lk. 1:1–2). Luke had studied them carefully and now wanted to write his own account, so that Theophilus would know, “the exact truth,” about the things he had been taught (Lk. 1:3–4). Throughout Scripture, God reveals himself to man, man records God’s word in written form, which later would become the *canon* of Scripture, the Bible. Describing this divinely inspired and ordained process, Peter writes:

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:20–21).

Not only did God reveal himself to man, and man record God’s revelation in written form, but there are also many different types of literary genre recorded in the Bible. Genre refers to a particular literary type or form that is distinguished by its content and specific compositional form.⁷³ David Aune defines “literary genre” as “a group of texts that exhibit a coherent and recurring configuration of literary features involving form (including structure and style), content, and function.”⁷⁴ Among the literary genres in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament are narrative, genealogy, law, history, poetry,

⁷³ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., and Moises Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 335.

⁷⁴ David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, Wayne A. Meeks, ed. (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1987), 13.

wisdom, prophesy, and apocalyptic literature.⁷⁵ The New Testament is composed of gospels, history, epistles (letters), prophecy, and apocalyptic literature.⁷⁶ Each genre shares common elements and features characteristic of written texts. At the same time, each genre is distinguished by its own structure, style, content, function, and compositional form. Although there is disagreement about the divisions and the order of books in the Hebrew Bible,⁷⁷ together, the Old and New Testaments, and sixty-six books of the Bible form the Protestant canon of Scripture.⁷⁸ John Sailhamer says, the Old Testament is “the basis for the New Testament” writings.⁷⁹

Christianity shares the Old Testament with Judaism because Jesus was a Jew and because he saw the whole of his life as a fulfillment of the ancient Jewish prophets’ hope in the coming Messiah. Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah long expected by the Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament is thus the basis of the New Testament. Without it the New Testament has little meaning. When John the Baptist, for example, saw Jesus, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Without the Old Testament notion of the sacrificial Passover lamb (Ex. 12:23) and the prophet Isaiah’s messianic Servant of

⁷⁵ Robert Alter, and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press, 1987); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed., (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990); Leland Ryken, and Tremper Longman, *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993); John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009) and *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995); Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*, 2nd ed., trans. by Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ The Hebraic division for the Old Testament, and the one in which Jesus, the apostles, and the early church used in the first and second-centuries, is referred to as the *TaNāK (Tanakh)*. *TaNāK (Tanakh)* is an acronym for the tripartite composition of the Hebraic order of the Old Testament: *The Torah (תּוֹרָה)*, *The Nevi’im (נְבִיאִים)*, and *The Kethuvim (כְּתוּבִים)* or *The Law, the Prophets, and The Writings* (Mt. 5:17–18; Lk. 24:44). The standard Christian order of the Old Testament is divided into five sections: *The Law, The History Books, The Books of Poetry and Wisdom, The Major Prophets, and The Minor Prophets*.

⁷⁸ The first recorded time the Hebrew Bible was referred to as the “Old Testament” was by Melito of Sardis in the late second century recorded in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.26.14; available online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.ix.xxvi.html>; accessed on January 27, 2018.

⁷⁹ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 21.

the Lord who was to give his life as a ransom for sin (Isa. 53:6), John's words cannot be understood.⁸⁰

The Bible presents a cohesive, coherent, unified message, and realistic view of life in metanarrative form from Genesis to Revelation.

The books of the New Testament were written by the disciples of Jesus. The primary focus of instruction in the New Testament is that Jesus Christ is the promised Son of David and the Son of Abraham (Mt. 1:1), who came to fulfill the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (Mt. 5:17–17; Lk. 24:44) and the promise of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31; Lk. 22:20), through His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return (Mt. 20:17–19; Acts 1:11). The messages of forgiveness, redemption, eternal life, and the Kingdom of God are intentionally, relationally, and strategically shared to both Jewish and Gentile people from all nations and applied by faith (Mt. 10:5–6; 28:18–20; Rom. 1:16–17; Gal. 2:7–9; Acts 1:1–28:31). There is a unity of the biblical text that is intentionally written into the literary structure of Scripture that is often lost on casual readers of the Bible.

At the beginning of his public ministry in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that he came to “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets (Mt. 5:17). In his last resurrection appearance in the gospel of Luke, Jesus told the disciples, “All things written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Lk. 22:44). When Philip was introduced to Jesus, he found Nathanael and said, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (Jn. 1:45). Jesus spoke of His personal witness written into the fabric of the Hebrew Scriptures when He confronted the Jewish religious leaders and

⁸⁰ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 21.

said, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words” (Jn. 5:46–47).

Throughout Paul’s defense of the gospel in the book of Acts, he repeatedly quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures to present the plan of salvation for both Jewish and Gentile people in Christ.

So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:22–23).

The careful and sensitive reader of the Bible will see the unity of Scripture intentionally written into the literary and compositional structure of the Bible that presents the plan and purpose of God in Jesus Christ for both Jewish and Gentile people.

The Gospels can be referred to as “theological biographies”⁸¹ or “expanded biographical sermons” that tell the story of Jesus’ life and teaching, and also contain elements found in early Christian sermons.⁸² The four Gospels each cite “specific messianic prophecies” that show how Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return fulfill Old Testament promises.⁸³ The Gospel writer’s wrote “to express their theological understanding of the person and work of [Jesus] Christ and to record instructions relevant for the Christian communities to whom they wrote.”⁸⁴ Sailhamer

⁸¹ Craig L. Blomberg, “The Diversity of Literary Genres in the New Testament.” In *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, David Alan Black, and David S. Dockery, eds. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers), 276.

⁸² Walter A. Elwell, and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 72.

⁸³ John H. Sailhamer, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 22.

⁸⁴ Blomberg, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 273.

exposes the literary and textual links between the last book of the Hebrew Bible and the first book of the Greek New Testament.

Chronologically, the Gospels were written after the [New Testament] letters. They [the Gospels] were not directed to individual churches but rather addressed the needs of the church as a whole. As written works they consciously pick up the thread of narrative left off by the last of the Old Testament books (i.e., 1 and 2 Chronicles). The book of Matthew intentionally begins with a genealogical link between Jesus and the genealogies of Chronicles. The author also takes up the theme of Immanuel, “God with us,” the final word of promise in the Old Testament (2 Chron. 36:23).⁸⁵

First and Second Chronicles are the last books in the Hebrew order of the Old Testament. The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles are genealogies of the line of David (1:1–3:24), the House of Israel (4:1–7:40), the family of Judah (4:1–23), the family of Simeon (4:24–43), the families of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (5:1–16), the family of Levi (6:1–81), the remaining families of Israel (7:1–44), and the House of Saul (8:1–9:44). These genealogies are textual links with Jesus’ genealogy in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 1:1–16). In addition, the last words in the Hebrew Bible in 2 Chronicles 36:23, “God be with him” (אֱלֹהֵינוּ עִמּוֹ וְיִצְלֵחַ – ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῦ μετ’), are a textual and thematic link with Jesus, who is named *Immanuel* which is translated “God with us” (μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός) in Matthew 1:23.

The second volume in Luke’s two-part work, the book of Acts, is a literary and textual link between the Gospels and the New Testament Epistles and can be described as a “theological history.”⁸⁶ The book presents the ascension of Jesus Christ, the birth of the Church at the Feast of Pentecost, the planting of churches, and the spread of the Gospel to

⁸⁵ Sailhamer, *How We Got the Bible*, 51.

⁸⁶ Blomberg, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 277.

both Jewish and Gentile people from Jerusalem to Rome. The Letters or Epistles are genuine historical letters in which “the authors, under divine inspiration, gave direct instruction to a specific church or group of churches.”⁸⁷ The letters were intended to “establish guidelines and basic norms for all churches” and are concerned about “doctrine and the problem of false teachers.”⁸⁸ The New Testament concludes with the book of Revelation which shares features with three distinct genres – prophecy, apocalyptic, and epistle,⁸⁹ and focuses on “the return of Christ to establish His kingdom on earth.”⁹⁰

The New Testament Epistle

Paul’s correspondence to the Colossians is categorized as a New Testament letter or epistle (ἐπιστολή). The word ἐπιστολή is used twenty-three times in the Greek New Testament. Although the word is used in the Septuagint (LXX),⁹¹ the epistle is not known as an independent book type or literary genre in the Old Testament.⁹² Sailhamer says, the composition of a New Testament letter is self-evident, and they give “interesting insight” into the earliest Christian literature.

The writer puts his thoughts down on paper, follows a certain formal pattern, signs it, and sends it off to its destination by means of a personal carrier (see especially the book of Philemon). New Testament letters could also be more complex. The books of Luke and Acts, for example, are

⁸⁷ Kaiser, and Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 174.

⁸⁸ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 22.

⁸⁹ Blomberg, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 285.

⁹⁰ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 22.

⁹¹ 2 Chronicles 30:1, 6; Ezra 4:6, 8, 11; 5:6; Nehemiah 2:7, 8, 9; 6:5, 17, 19; Esther 3:13, 14; 8:12; 9:26, 29; 10:3; Isaiah 18:2; 39:1; Jeremiah 36:1; Daniel 4:37.

⁹² Sailhamer, *How We Got the Bible*, 51.

written as letters, both addressed to Theophilus (probably a Roman official).⁹³

The New Testament letters present an interesting insight into the earliest Christian literature. They reveal the inner workings of a small and personal body of believers who had real needs that had to be addressed. These letters offered help to the young churches in the form of exhortation and teaching. Such exhortations and teachings provide a helpful background for understanding the purpose of the Gospels.⁹⁴

Twenty-one of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament canon are referred to as letters.⁹⁵ Letters also appear in Acts and Revelation. The letter was “the most popular literary form in early Christianity.”⁹⁶ David Aune numbers the New Testament letters at twenty-two and places them into six categories.

There are twenty-two “letters” in the New Testament. Twenty are independent writings; two are embedded in the text of Acts. They include (1) written communications between individuals (1–2 Timothy, Titus, 2–3 John); (2) written communications between individuals and specific groups (most of Paul’s letters); (3) circular letters sent to several communities (Galatians, Ephesians, James, 1–2 Peter, Jude); (4) the letter form used as a framing device for another genre (Revelation); (5) an anonymous homily with an epistolary conclusion but without an epistolary prescription (Hebrews); and (6) “embedded” letters (Acts 15:25–26; 23:26–30). The seven embedded “letters” in Rev. 2–3 are not really letters but prophetic proclamations patterned after ancient royal and imperial edicts. First John has been called a letter, but lacks the salutation and conclusion typical of ancient letters.⁹⁷

The study of New Testament Epistles has taken many forms. German Protestant theologian and professor of New Testament, Adolf Gustav Deissmann (1866–1937),

⁹³ Sailhamer, *How We Got the Bible*, 51.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁵ Leland Ryken, and Tremper Longman, eds., *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 445.

⁹⁶ Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 159.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

dominated epistolary scholarship for most of the last century with his study of Egyptian papyri, and his subdivision of the genre into “real” and “nonreal” letters⁹⁸ or “letters” and “epistles.”⁹⁹ He defined real letters (letters) as those that were “private, nonliterary, informal, and artless, that addressed specific circumstances.”¹⁰⁰ Nonreal letters (epistles) were “public, deliberately literary, and designed to address a general audience without regard to occasion.”¹⁰¹ Deissmann considered Paul’s epistles as *real* letters.¹⁰² Aune says, among the New Testament writings of Paul, Deissmann made a distinction between the apostle’s literary form.

Because he saw similarities between the recovered papyrus Greek common letters and the authentic letters of Paul, he distinguished *true letters* (which are natural, spontaneous, and private) from *literary letters* or *epistles* (mechanical, artistic, and public). Deissmann considered all of the authentic letters of Paul, together with 2–3 John, as *true letters*, but the Pastorals and most of the Catholic letters (Hebrews, James, 1–2 Peter, Jude) as epistles.¹⁰³

Thomas Schreiner says, Deissmann underestimated both the literary and authoritative qualities of Paul’s epistles.

Nonetheless, most scholars no longer see Deissmann’s sharp cleavage between letters and epistles as credible. First, even though Paul’s letters responded to specific situations in the churches, they show every indication of being carefully constructed. The distinction between Paul’s letters and most letters from the papyri collections is evident at this very point, for Paul’s letters have a literary quality lacking in the papyri...The

⁹⁸ Blomberg, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 280.

⁹⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Interpreting the Pauline Epistles.” In *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, David Alan Black, and David S. Dockery, eds. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2001), 414–415.

¹⁰⁰ Blomberg, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 280.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁰³ Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 160.

second feature of the Pauline letters, which was overlooked by Deissmann, is their authoritative character.

The letters were not merely private missives. Paul wrote them as an apostle of Jesus Christ, and he expected them to be read in the churches and obeyed (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:14). The authority of the Pauline letters is communicated by the admonition to public reading. In the synagogue the OT Scriptures were read aloud, and Paul expects *his letters* to be read and his admonitions to be heeded. It is instructive as well that the Colossians are enjoined to pass his letter on to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16).

Even though Colossians is addressed to specific circumstances in that church, Paul believes it will be useful to the Laodiceans as well, demonstrating that his instructions had a significance that transcended local circumstances.¹⁰⁴

A second form of genre criticism divides letters into two functional categories of sub-genre called the parenetic letter and the letter of recommendation.¹⁰⁵ Parenetic letters are designed primarily to “persuade or dissuade an audience concerning a specific action or attitude.”¹⁰⁶ Letters of recommendation are written to “introduce the bearer of the letter to its recipient” and then request a certain favor.¹⁰⁷

A third form of genre criticism employed to interpret New Testament epistles is rhetorical analysis.¹⁰⁸ Three major categories of rhetorical analysis are judicial, deliberative, and epideictic.¹⁰⁹ Judicial rhetoric seeks to “convince an audience of the rightness or wrongness of a past action.”¹¹⁰ Deliberative rhetoric tries to “persuade or

¹⁰⁴ Schreiner, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 415.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 281.

dissuade an assembly concerning the expediency of a future action.”¹¹¹ Epideictic rhetoric uses “praise and blame in order to urge a group of people to affirm a point of view or set of values in the present.”¹¹² A rhetorical speech contains the following features:

- Exordium – states the cause and gains the hearers’ attention and sympathy.
- Narratio – relates the background facts of the case.
- Propositio – states what is agreed upon and what is contested.
- Probatio – contains proofs, based on the credibility of the speaker, appeals to the hearers’ feelings, and/or logical argument.
- Refutatio – refutes opponents’ arguments.
- Peroratio – summarizes argument and seeks to arouse hearers’ emotions.¹¹³

Hans Dieter Betz’s commentary on Galatians introduced rhetorical analysis into the Pauline corpus.¹¹⁴ Schreiner says, although rhetorical analysis reminds readers that epistles are “carefully structured and crafted,” scholars must “seriously question whether he [Paul] actually structured entire letters in accordance with the rhetorical handbooks.”¹¹⁵

The rules of rhetoric in these handbooks were designed for *speeches*, not for written discourse. Rhetorical handbooks rarely refer to *letters*, and they do not contain prescriptions in terms of the type of argument employed

¹¹¹ Schreiner, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 281.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 281.

¹¹³ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 24.

¹¹⁴ Schreiner, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 422.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 423.

(judicial, deliberative, or epideictic), nor do they recommend the following of a certain outline (*exordium, narratio, probatio, peroration*).¹¹⁶

In addition to Deissmann's research, distinctions between parenetic letters and letters of recommendation, and rhetorical analysis, two other forms of research shed light on the qualities of New Testament letters: formal literary analysis and form criticism analysis.¹¹⁷ Formal literary analysis examines the opening and closing formulas of letters, as well as, the central sections of the letter to discover authorial intent and meaning. The opening of Pauline letters are composed of the prescript (superscription or sender, adscription or addressee, and salutation) and the thanksgiving.¹¹⁸ The closing formula for Paul's epistles consists of a "grace" or "charis benediction" which includes: (1) a peace wish; (2) a request for prayer; (3) a secondary greeting; (4) a holy kiss; and (5) an autographed greeting.¹¹⁹ The central section or body of the letter gives the purpose for which the letter is written.¹²⁰

Form critical analysis examines the major categories of liturgical and parenetic forms to discovery a letters meaning.¹²¹ Liturgical forms are highlighted by the use of amen, benedictions, blessings, doxologies, hymns, confessions and acclamations, and on rare occasions, liturgical sequences, as in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.¹²² Three paraenetic forms found in New Testament letters through

¹¹⁶ Schreiner, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 423.

¹¹⁷ Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 183.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 192–194.

form critical analysis are vice and virtue lists, codes of household ethics, and two-way tradition.¹²³ A two-way tradition presents two courses of action in which a person can take as found in the two gates in Matthew 7:13–14.

Characteristics of a New Testament Epistle

The study of the New Testament has revealed common literary characteristics among all epistles. New Testament letters are: 1) occasional or situational in nature; 2) authoritative; 3) carefully written and delivered; 4) theological; and 5) intended for the Christian community.¹²⁴

New Testament letters are occasional or situational. They were written to particular people (1 Tim. 1:1–2), to particular groups of people (1 Pet. 1:1), to particular churches (1 Cor. 1:2), or to particular groups of churches (Gal. 1:2), in order to address “specific situations or problems related to the author or (usually) to the readers.”¹²⁵ To emphasize the importance of a text-centered, canonical, and compositional approach to interpreting the Bible and the New Testament epistles, Schreiner says, “The letter itself provides enough information so that we can understand it’s message.”¹²⁶

First, we can understand the basic message or every Pauline letter without a comprehensive understanding of the situation... The second point is related to the first. If we believe in divine providence, we are confident

¹²³ Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 194.

¹²⁴ David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1987), 158–225; David Alan Black, and David S. Dockery, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 412–432; J. Scott Duvall, and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 251–268; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., and Moises Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 173–188.

¹²⁵ Duval, and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 253.

¹²⁶ Schreiner, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 417.

that God has given us enough information within the confines of the individual letters to understand them. No extrabiblical information provides the key by which they will be unlocked for future generations... Third, we should not conclude from this that study of the situation informing the letters is unnecessary, for our understanding of the letters can be sharpened, confirmed, or even called into question through such research... Fourth, the principal means by which we discern the circumstances addressed in the Pauline letters is from the letters themselves. We must beware of imposing an outside situation upon the letters.¹²⁷

Through the employment of a text-centered, canonical, and compositional approach to the epistles, with their inner-textual and inter-textual features, an analysis of the book of Acts delivers meaningful biblical, theological, and practical background for the New Testament epistles.

Not only are New Testament letters written to address particular audiences and specific situations, they are also written with apostolic authority. The first verses of many of the New Testament letters identify the author as an apostle of Jesus Christ.¹²⁸

Paul, Peter, and John write as more than just friends and acquaintances offering personal advice. They write as apostles (i.e., as witnesses to the resurrected Christ). Their letters of instruction, warning, and encouragement carry authority because they write as Christ's authentic representatives. Even those authors who are not apostles in the strict sense are closely connected to an apostle and are seen as God-appointed leaders of the congregations to whom they write. As a result, their letters carry authority.¹²⁹

In addition to their occasional and authoritative nature, New Testament letters were also carefully written and delivered.

¹²⁷ Schreiner, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 417–418.

¹²⁸ Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians, 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1.

¹²⁹ Duval, and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 253.

When the apostle Paul wanted to describe the unique origin of Scripture and the Bible's relevance in the believer's life, he coined the term "God-breathed" (θεόπνευστος) in 2 Timothy 3:16. "Though the term had not been used before, it was clear to Greek readers what the term meant: Scripture has a life-giving quality that comes only from God."¹³⁰ The act of writing a letter was often assigned to a scribe or secretary called an amanuensis (Rom. 16:22).¹³¹ In addition to the revelation of God and scribes, co-senders also played a role in New Testament letters. Paul mentions Timothy, Silas, Sosthenes, and his "brothers and sisters" who "cosponsor" some of his letters.¹³² Paul also trusted friends to deliver some of his letters (Eph. 6:21–22).

We should probably envision Paul and his cosenders discussing, drafting, editing, and rewriting a letter until they were ready to produce a finished copy to send. These cosenders were not just mentioned as a formality. Along with Paul, they were significantly involved in ministry among the people to whom the letters were addressed. After a finished copy of the letter had been prepared, it was delivered. There was a postal system in the first century, but it was available only for official government use (military reports, diplomatic letters, and the like).¹³³

Paul's letters have "played a decisive role in the formation of Christian [biblical] theology over the centuries."¹³⁴ For this reason and particularly in view of their scriptural content, letters are theological in nature. They present the nature of God (1 Pet. 1:16), the nature of man (Eph. 2:1–3), the way of salvation, sanctification, and glorification (Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 2:4–10), and the eternal state (2 Pet. 3:13).

¹³⁰ Sailhamer, *How We Got the Bible*, 48.

¹³¹ Duval, and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 255.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 255.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹³⁴ Schreiner, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 412.

When scholars approach the Bible theologically, a very common topic of discussion is whether they can identify a unifying element in a writer's thought. Accordingly, much ink has been spilled on such subjects as "the center of Pauline theology." Whether or not we can come up with such a center, that is, with a doctrinal nucleus that accounts for everything else Paul teaches, is a question that need not trouble us. It is clear, however, that Paul did pay attention to foundational concepts, and if we wish to interpret his writings responsibly, we need to consider how those basic ideas relate to specific passages.¹³⁵

A final characteristic of New Testament epistles is their intended audience. New Testament letters were intended for Christian communities. "New Testament letters were meant to be read aloud again and again to specific congregations."¹³⁶ Both observant Jewish people and God-fearing Gentiles and proselytes were in the habit of hearing the word of God read aloud in the synagogue during worship services. New Testament letters were also designed to be shared and read among other churches (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; 2 Thess. 2:15).¹³⁷

New Testament letters share common characteristics that demonstrate their important role in the biblical canon and in the church. They are occasional in nature, they are authoritative, they are carefully written and delivered, they are theological, and they are intended for the Christian community. New Testament epistles also reveal a distinct literary structure.

¹³⁵ Kaiser, Jr., and Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 185.

¹³⁶ Duvall, and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 256.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

The Structure of a New Testament Epistle

New Testament letters compose 35 percent of the New Testament text.¹³⁸ Most New Testament letters follow a standard form or structure consisting of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.¹³⁹ The introduction typically consists of the name of the writer, the name of the recipients, a greeting, and an introductory prayer.¹⁴⁰ The body of the epistle is the longest section of the letter. It consists of the author's purpose for writing, the situation addressed in the letter, a theological section, and a practical section.¹⁴¹ The theological and practical sections contain instruction, persuasion, rebuke, and exhortation.¹⁴² The conclusion of a letter can contain many different elements depending on the circumstances of both the author and the people to whom the letter is addressed. One common literary feature in most letters, however, is a "grace benediction."¹⁴³ The letters of Paul follow a similar literary structure.¹⁴⁴ Who was the apostle Paul? What was his motivation for writing? Why do Paul's writings compose a majority of the New Testament letters? The answers to those questions and more are found in the life and ministry of the apostle Paul.

¹³⁸ Carson, Moo, and Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 231.

¹³⁹ Duvall, and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 257.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁴¹ Kaiser, Jr., and Silva, *Introduction to Hermeneutics*, 184–185.

¹⁴² Duval, and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 258

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁴⁴ Schreiner, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 423–425.

The Life and Ministry of the Apostle Paul

All of the Epistles date from the first-century.¹⁴⁵ The apostle Paul identifies himself as the author of the first thirteen of the twenty-two epistles in the New Testament including the letter to the Colossians.¹⁴⁶ Although the exact date of Paul's birth and death are not given in Scripture, the New Testament reveals much information about the former Pharisee and early persecutor of the church, who later, became the great apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul (Παῦλος) was known initially in Scripture by his Hebrew name, Saul (Σαύλου), until Acts 13:9. He was a Jewish man. Throughout the book of Acts and in his epistles, Paul referred to himself as a Jew, a Hebrew, an Israelite, a descendent of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, and a son of a Pharisee.¹⁴⁷ He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, a region in southeast Asia Minor (Acts 9:11). As a young man, Paul studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel in the strictest form of Pharisaic Judaism; he was zealous for God, for his religious studies, and at one time, considered himself "blameless" (ἄμεμπτος) according to the righteousness which is in the Law of Moses.¹⁴⁸ By trade, Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). His fanatical opposition to Jesus Christ and early Jewish followers of "the Way," led Paul to violently persecute Jesus Christ and the church (Acts 9:2).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Ewell, and Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 274.

¹⁴⁶ Romans (Rom. 1:1), 1 and 2 Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1), Galatians (Gal. 1:1), Ephesians (1:1), Philippians (Phil. 1:1), Colossians (Col. 1:1; 4:18), 1 and 2 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), 1 and 2 Timothy (1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1), Titus (Tit. 1:1), and Philemon (1:1).

¹⁴⁷ Acts 21:39; 23:6; Rom. 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5.

¹⁴⁸ Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:6.

¹⁴⁹ Acts 7:58–8:3; 9:1–5; 22:19–20; 26:9–11.

While on the road to Damascus, Syria with letters from the high priest in Jerusalem to bring back Jewish followers of “the Way” for trial and execution, Paul experienced a “heavenly vision” (τῆ οὐρανίῳ ὀπτασίᾳ) and “personal revelation” (ἀποκαλύψεως) of the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 26:19; Gal. 1:12).

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank (Acts 9:3–9).

Paul was told by Ananias, a disciple of Jesus, that he was a “chosen vessel” (σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς) of the Lord and that he would take the gospel of Jesus Christ to “the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel,” and that he would suffer greatly for the cause of Christ (Acts 9:15–16). Once in Damascus, he regained his sight, took food and rest, and he was “filled with the Holy Spirit” and “baptized” (Acts 9:17–18). Paul immediately began to “proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying ‘He is the Son of God’” (Acts 9:20). Paul realized later that God had been preparing him, even in his mother’s womb, for his future ministry as an apostle (Gal. 1:15–16).

Upon conversion, Paul spent three years in Arabia and Damascus, returned to Jerusalem to meet with Peter, and then spent fourteen years in ministry (Gal. 1:11–2:1). Paul came back to Jerusalem, where he was privately examined by the church leaders, and was given “the right hand of fellowship” so that he and Barnabas would take the gospel to the Gentiles, while Peter, James, and John, would take the gospel to the Jewish people (Gal. 2:7–9).

The Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Paul for their ministry in Antioch (Acts 13:2). A group of prophets and teachers who were ministering and fasting in Antioch laid hands on Paul and Barnabas, prayed with them, and sent them on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–14:28). Paul would go on two additional missionary journeys (Acts 15:36–18:22; 18:23–21:16). While in Ephesus, Paul purposed in his spirit to go to Rome and share the gospel (Acts 19:21). Upon returning to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey, Paul was seized and arrested at the temple for allegedly teaching against the Law and the Jewish people, and bringing Gentiles into the temple (Acts 21:27–28). Prior to being scourged and beaten, Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship, to the messianic hope, and to the resurrection of the dead (Acts 22:26–29; 23:6). Paul understood that faith in Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead were the message and hope of the Hebrew Scriptures (Acts 24:14–15). On the night following his trial, before the Jewish council in Jerusalem, the Lord confirmed the apostle’s call to Rome: “But on the night *immediately* following, the Lord stood at his side and said, ‘Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also’” (Acts 23:11).

Paul was taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea where he stood trial before two consecutive Roman governors, Felix and Festus, and also King Agrippa. He was in prison for two years in Caesarea.¹⁵⁰ Paul, again, shared his testimony before the authorities, pointing to the Messianic hope and the centrality of Jesus’ resurrection in the Hebrew Scriptures.

So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22–23).

¹⁵⁰ Acts 23:24; 24:27; 25:22–23.

Jesus was the One promised in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings of the Hebrew Scriptures. He suffered, died, and rose again as a light to both His own Jewish people and to the Gentiles. Paul, again, appealed to Caesar and to his Roman citizenship, and boarded a ship in Caesarea bound for Rome (Acts 26:32–27:1). Following a shipwreck, Paul landed in Malta, and then Rome, where he met with “the leading men of the Jews,” and the Gentiles (Acts 28:1–17).

When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. And when they did not agree with one another, they *began* leaving after Paul had spoken one *parting* word, The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, “GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, ‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.’” Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen (Acts 28:23–28).

Luke concludes the book of Acts with Paul in Rome sharing the gospel with both Jewish and Gentile people, a theme that is consistent throughout the book and the Scriptures.

Walter Kaiser says, Paul’s impact is not only found in building and establishing the body of Christ, but also in the letters he wrote.

God called the man who set out to “destroy the church” (Acts 8:3) to be the one he would divinely use to build and establish that body of Christ from one end of the Mediterranean to the other. Not only did Paul build that church, but in the providence of God he was also called to write a dozen or so letters to those missionary churches. Early on, these letters

were placed alongside the “other Scriptures,” that is, the Old Testament (2 Pet. 3:16), even during the days of the formation of the New Testament.¹⁵¹

Paul and his writings continue to minister to both believers and unbelievers today through his thirteen letters that are part of the New Testament and biblical canon. Paul’s epistles make up almost one-fourth of the New Testament. When added to the sixteen chapters devoted to Paul and others in the book of Acts (13–28), almost one-third of the New Testament is applied to the apostle Paul.¹⁵²

An Introduction to Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians

The apostle Paul identifies himself as the author of Colossians (1:1). He addresses the recipients of the letter, referring to them as “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colossae” (1:1–2).¹⁵³ Later in the epistle, Paul identifies the Colossian audience as Gentile Christians (1:27; 4:12). Paul is thought to have written this epistle from prison (4:3, 10). He is writing to a church that has received the gospel from Epaphras (1:6–8). Once, having heard the gospel and understood the grace of God, the Colossians responded through faith in Jesus Christ, and love for the saints, because of the hope of heaven they heard in the gospel (1:4–5). The gospel was constantly bearing fruit and increasing in their lives, just as it was doing all over the world (1:6). Therefore, Paul prayed that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, so they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, and please Him in all things (1:9–12).

¹⁵¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 265.

¹⁵² D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 215.

¹⁵³ The introduction to the letter includes “Timothy” as the coauthor. The use of first-person singular pronouns beginning in Col. 1:23, however, point to Paul as the single-author of the epistle; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philimon* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 75–76.

Following the opening greeting, salutation, and prayer, is a messianic hymn about Jesus Christ. John Sailhamer says, this presentation of Jesus Christ is some of the most penetrating Christology in all of Scripture (1:15–20).

In this letter Paul reveals some of his deepest thoughts about Christ, showing a rich background of reading and reflection on the OT. Jesus is the Son of God (Ps 2), by whom God made all things (Ge 1:1). He is the very image of the invisible God (Ge 1:26). Scholars today are virtually unanimous in holding that Paul quotes an early Christian hymn already in use in the early church. This tribute to the supremacy of Christ finds its origin in the Creation account in the book of Genesis, and it shows a great deal of thoughtful reflection on the theme of Jesus in the OT. In the early church there was much discussion, particularly with Jewish Christians, about the first word in the Hebrew Bible—“in the beginning.” Jews had long seen in this word a reference to “Israel,” God’s firstborn. Paul’s hymn suggests that early Christians followed this line of thinking, only making the obvious shift from “Israel” to “Jesus” as the reference of the first word. Such “homiletical” interpretations of the OT are not uncommon in the NT and Judaism. They are not meant to prove a point but to illustrate and elaborate a theme.¹⁵⁴

More discussion on the text of Colossians 1:15–20 is given in the analysis of the inner-textual relationship between the hymn and Colossians 1:28.

Paul’s concern for the Colossians and his reason for writing are stated in the letter. He was emphatic they should “continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel (1:23). The threats upon the Colossian church were centered on false teachers that were leading people astray through human philosophy, deception, tradition, legalism, angel worship, self-made religion, and asceticism (2:8, 16–23). The only guard against false teachers, their false doctrine, and their false practice was a complete knowledge and understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in his relationship to God the Father, creation, the new creation, redemption, the church, and the kingdom. The true knowledge and

¹⁵⁴ John H. Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 552.

understanding of the preeminence and sufficiency of Jesus Christ would only come through the ministry of proclamation, admonishment, and teaching in all wisdom, with the goal of spiritual maturity (1:28).

The message of Colossians is the eternal importance of a true knowledge of God and his perfect will (1:9–14), the preeminence of Jesus Christ in creation, redemption, and the new creation (1:15–22), and a born-again lifestyle that is intentionally and wisely lived out in every relationship of life (3:17). In the literary context and compositional structure of Colossians, this three-part message comes face-to-face with false teachers that are threatening to draw believers away with their syncretistic form of philosophy, legalism and paganism.¹⁵⁵

Philosophy

I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument (Col. 2:4).

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ (Col. 2:8).

Legalism

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of

¹⁵⁵ For presentations on the different views on the “Colossian Heresy,” see, Barth, and Blanke, *Colossians*, 21–41; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 17–26; O’Brien, *Colossians–Philemon*, xxx– xxxviii.

them, having triumphed over them through Him. Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ (Col. 2:9–17).

Syncretism

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind” (Col. 2:18).

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence (Col. 2:20–23).

Paul’s letter to the Colossians and the truth and transforming power he presents in Christ has important application in the 21st century. Contemporary society is replete with competing, converging, and conflating worldviews. Atheism, Naturalism, Humanism, Agnosticism, Pantheism, Mysticism, Cultism, Spiritism, and New Age are some of the prominent worldviews in addition to the many false religions that inhabit the marketplace of ideas today. Their leaders and their followers are, not only, passively and aggressively suppressing the truth of God, but also teaching untruths about the reality of God, and his plan and purposes through Jesus Christ in the new creation. The preeminence of Jesus Christ in creation, redemption, the new creation, and in the proclamation and teaching ministries of the church, are more important today than ever before.

A Structural Outline of the Epistle to the Colossians

Paul’s letter to the Colossians is similar to other New Testament epistles and to other letters of Paul in structure. There is an introduction composed of the apostle’s name

and the name of his co-sender, the name of the recipients of the letter, a greeting, a prayer, and a theological description of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The body of the epistle is composed of both a theological section and a practical section. The conclusion of the letter identifies fellow ministry partners who will soon visit the Colossian church, other ministry partners who send greetings to the Colossians, a request for the church to send greetings to other saints, some final instructions, and a final greeting. An outline of the letter is given below.

1. The Introduction of the Letter to the Colossians (1:1–23)
 - a. The Writer and Co-sender (1:1)
 - b. The Recipients (1:2a)
 - c. The Greeting (1:2b)
 - d. Paul and Timothy’s Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3–8)
 - e. Paul and Timothy’s Prayer for the Colossians (1:9–14)
 - f. The Preeminence of Jesus Christ in the Creation, Redemption, and the New Creation (1:15–22)
 - g. Paul and Timothy’s Concern for the Colossians (1:23)
2. The Body of the Letter to the Colossians (1:24–4:6)
 - a. The Theological Section (1:24–3:4)
 - i. The Ministry of Paul (1:24–27)
 - ii. The Ministry of the Church (1:28)
 - iii. The Ministry of Paul (1:29–2:5)
 - iv. Paul’s Defense of the Gospel (2:6–3:4)
 1. Against a Theological Threat (2:8–15)
 2. Against a Practical Threat (2:16–23)

- b. The Practical Section (3:1–4:6)
 - i. The New Self (3:1–17)
 - ii. The New Family Relationships (3:18–21)
 - iii. The New Working Relationships (3:22–4:1)
 - iv. The New Ministry Relationships (4:2–6)
 - 1. In Prayer (4:2–4)
 - 2. In Conduct (4:5)
 - 3. In Speech (4:6)
- 3. The Conclusion of the Letter to the Colossians (4:7–18)
 - a. Fellow Ministers to Visit the Colossian Church (4:7–9)
 - b. Fellow Ministers send Greetings to the Colossian Church (4:10–14)
 - c. Request for the Colossian Church to send Greetings (4:15)
 - d. Final Instructions to the Colossian Church (4:16–17)
 - e. Final Greeting from Paul (4:18)

An Inner-textual Analysis of the Text of Colossians

A text-centered, canonical, and compositional approach to the Bible views the text of Scripture as the revelation of God, the locus of meaning, and the focus of theology. The research model for this qualitative study of Colossians 1:28 and its inner-textual relationship with Paul’s letter to the Colossians is “discourse analysis.” Discourse analysis examines the author’s use of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and larger blocks of text based on grammar, syntax, and semantics, as well as, analyzing the text’s literary and compositional features on both a micro-structural and macro-structural level, that give cohesion, consistency, unity, and meaning to a text.

A discourse analysis of any given text usually starts with trying to divide it into major and minor sections and the sections into paragraphs. Then it is possible to tackle the meaning of sentences and words. In studying discourse, the interpreter looks closely at the structural features that bind the text together and that give it cohesion. These features include:

- (a) Terminal features that mark the beginning and end of the discourse.
- (b) Features that mark major internal transitions.
- (c) Features that mark spatial, temporal, and logical relations.
- (d) Features that identify participants.
- (e) Features that foreground or background successive participants and events.¹⁵⁶

Text-linguistic theory is “based the assumption that written texts begin [and end] with the author’s conception of the theme which he wants to communicate. This theme is then expressed and developed by the author’s language choices – individual words, grammar, and style” which give meaning and structure to the letter.¹⁵⁷

The introduction and conclusion of a biblical text contain important literary and compositional features of the discourse. The apostle Paul opens and closes his epistle to the Colossians with similar words, phrases, clauses, and themes that frame the text and introduce the inner-textual unity, cohesion, coherence, and meaning of the text. This technique is an intentional literary strategy called an *inclusio* or enveloping structure.¹⁵⁸

[An *envelope structure* is] the use of identical or similar material at the beginning and ending [of a text]. The principle involved in envelope structure is that of enclosing the middle of the text with a surrounding framework. Based on this principle of enclosure, the opening and closing need not be verbal repetition but can consist of the same action.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, exp. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 189.

¹⁵⁷ George Howard Guthrie. ‘The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis.’ Ph.D diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991, 73–74.

¹⁵⁸ Robert Alter, and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 674–675.

¹⁵⁹ Leland Ryken, *A Complete Handbook of Literary Forms in the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 76–77.

A chart identifying fourteen inner-textual links that frame the letter to the Colossians is presented below.

Inner-textual Links that Frame and Cohere the Text of Colossians

Colossians 1:1–23

“Paul” – Παῦλος (1:1)
 “Apostle of Jesus Christ”
 Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (1:1)
 “Fellow bond-slave” – συνδούλου (1:7)
 “Servant of Christ” – διάκονος τοῦ
 Χριστου (1:7)
 “Christ Jesus” – Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (1:4)
 “The will of God” – θελήματος θεοῦ
 (1:1)
 “His will” – τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ (1:9)
 “Brethren” – ἀδελφός (1:1, 2)
 “Grace to you” – χάρις ὑμῖν (1:2)
 “Praying” – προσευχόμενοι (1:3, 9)
 “The Word” – τῷ λόγῳ (1:5)
 “Ephrasas” – Ἐπαφρᾶ (1:7)
 “That you may be filled” (ἵνα
 πληρωθῆτε – 1:9)
 “Wisdom” – σοφία (1:9)

Colossians 4:2–18

“I, Paul” – Παύλου (4:18)
 “Fellow bond-slave in the Lord”
 σύνδουλος ἐν κυρίῳ (4:7)
 “Servant” – διάκονος (4:7)
 “Bond-slave of Jesus Christ”
 δοῦλος Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] (4:12)
 “the Christ” – τοῦ Χριστου (4:3)
 “The will of God” – θελήματι τοῦ θεου
 (4:12)
 “Brethren” – ἀδελφός (4:7, 9, 15)
 “Grace be with you” – ἡ χάρις μεθ’
 ὑμῶν (4:18)
 “Praying” – προσευχόμενοι (4:3)
 “The Word” – τοῦ λόγου (4:3)
 “Ephrasas” – Ἐπαφρᾶς (4:12)
 “That you may fulfill (ἵνα αὐτήν πληροῖς
 – 4:17)
 “Wisdom” – σοφία (4:5)

“Walk” – περιπατήσαι (1:10)

“Walk” – περιπατεῖτε (4:5)

“the Kingdom” – τὴν βασιλείαν (1:13)

“the Kingdom” – τὴν βασιλείαν (4:11)

“the Church” – τῆς ἐκκλησίας (1:18)

“Church” ἐκκλησίαν (4:15) ἐκκλησία (4:16)

Paul – Colossians 1:1; 4:18

The first inner-textual link that envelopes the letter to the Colossians is the name of the author—Paul.

“Paul” – Παῦλος (1:1)

“I, Paul” – Παύλου (4:18)

Paul begins his letter to the Colossian church in common first-century epistolary form by identifying himself, his calling as an apostle, his fellow co-worker, the recipients of the letter, and with a greeting (1:1–2). Paul identifies two authors for the letter by inserting the coordinating conjunction “καὶ” that connects two subjects, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ...” and “Timothy our [the] brother” (ὁ ἀδελφός). The letter to the Colossians and First and Second Thessalonians are the only three letters in which Paul addresses the recipients with the plural form, “We give thanks.”¹⁶⁰

Plural verbs are used in the letter to refer specifically to Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras in 1:3 through 1:9 and then pick up again in 4:3. Plural verbs are also employed in the body of the letter that refer to fellow believers and to the church (1:12–2:14). From 1:9, only singular verbs and pronouns are used when referring to the author, making it

¹⁶⁰ Colossians 1:3 – “Εὐχαριστοῦμεν” (referring to Paul and Timothy); First Thessalonians 1:2 – “Εὐχαριστοῦμεν” (referring to Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy); Second Thessalonians – “Εὐχαριστεῖν” (referring to Paul, Sylvanus, and Timothy).

clear, although Paul mentions Timothy in the introduction to the letter, Paul is the primary author (1:23–4:18).¹⁶¹

Plural Verbs

Referring to Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras – Colossians 1:3–1:9

“We give thanks to God” (1:3)

“We heard of your faith” (1:4)

“He also informed us of your love in the Spirit” (1:8)

“Since the day we heard *of it*” (1:9)

Referring to Fellow Believers in Christ – Colossians 1:12–2:14

“Who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (1:12)

“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (1:13)

“In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (1:14)

“We proclaim Him” (1:28)

“So that we may present every man complete in Christ” (1:28)

“Having forgiven us all our transgressions” (2:13)

“Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us,
which was hostile to us;” (2:14)

Referring to Paul and his Co-workers – Colossians 4:3

“Praying at the same time for us as well” (4:3)

“So that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ” (4:3)

¹⁶¹ Richard R. Melick, Jr. *The New American Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, vol. 32. David S. Dockery, gen. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishing Group, 1991), 187.

Singular Verbs

Referring to Paul – Colossians 1:23–4:18

“I, Paul, was made a minister” (1:23)

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake” (1:24)

“And in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church” (1:24)

“Of *this church* I was made a minister” (1:25)

“So that I might fully carry out the *preaching of* the word of God” (1:25)

“For this purpose I also labor” (1:29)

“For I want you to know” (2:1)

“I have on your behalf” (2:1)

“I say this” (2:4)

“For even though I am absent in body” (2:5)

“Nevertheless I am with you in spirit” (2:5)

“For which I have also been imprisoned” (4:3)

“That I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak” (2:4)

“*For* I have sent him to you” (4:8)

“For I testify for him” (4:13)

“I, Paul” (4:18)

Paul concludes his letter with his own signature (Παύλου), a call for his audience to remember his imprisonment, and a short benediction (4:18).

Internally, the phrase, “I, Paul,” is also used as a compositional marker to frame the introduction of the letter (1:1; 1:23).

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1)	“I, Paul, was made a minister” (1:23)
Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ	ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος

The new section is introduced with the temporal use of the adverb “Nūn” (now) referring either to “Paul’s present imprisonment and suffering” or to the “present era and his role” as a minister of the Gospel.¹⁶² The introduction and the body of the letter are joined by the clause, “I was made a minister.”¹⁶³

“I, Paul, was made a minister” (1:23)	“I was made a minister” (1:25)
ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος	διάκονοῦ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος

In both the introduction to the letter and in the conclusion, Paul identifies himself as the author and sets boundaries around the text (1:1; 4:18). Internally, Paul inserts his name to frame the introduction to the letter (1:1; 1:23). Paul puts his name in the epistle to frame the text, to add authenticity and apostolic authority to the letter, and to give it internal coherence.

Apostle / Fellow Bond-servant / Servant / Bond-slave – Colossians 1:1, 7; 4:7, 12

The second set of inner-textual links that Paul employs to frame his letter are phrases that identify a personal relationship, calling, and commitment to the person and work of Jesus Christ and to the church.

Paul identifies himself as an “apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1) and Epaphras as a “fellow bond-servant” and “faithful servant of Christ” in the introduction to his epistle (1:1, 7). In the conclusion to his letter, Paul identifies Tychicus as a “faithful servant and

¹⁶² Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 58.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 58.

fellow bond-servant in the Lord” (4:7) and Epaphras as a “bondslave of Jesus Christ” (4:12).

“Apostle of Jesus Christ”

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (1:1)

“Fellow bond-servant” – συνδούλου (1:7)

“Fellow bond-servant in the Lord” – σύνδουλος ἐν κυρίῳ (4:7)

“Servant of Christ” – διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:7)

“Servant” – διάκονος (4:7)

“Bond-slave of Jesus Christ”
δοῦλος Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ]
(4:12)

Although biblically, theologically, and practically distinct, *apostle*, *bond-servant*, and *servant* are related in that they each identify a person with a personal relationship, calling, and commitment to the person and work of Jesus Christ and to the church.

The word *apostle* (ἀπόστολος) means one who is commissioned by God and “sent” as a messenger to carry out the Lord’s instructions.¹⁶⁴ The terms, *fellow bond-servant* (συνδούλου), *servant* (διάκονος), and *bond-slave* (δοῦλος), identify a person who shares a personal commitment to serve under the control of another person’s authority, especially in a personal relationship with God.¹⁶⁵ Epaphras and Tychicus are not apostles, but Paul establishes a personal relationship between himself and his two ministry partners when he refers to them as *fellow bond-servants* (1:7; 4:7). In other letters, Paul also refers to himself as a “bond-slave” to Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. BDAG, s.v. “ἀπόστολος.”

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, s.v. “δοῦλος.”

¹⁶⁶ Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1.

Epaphras initially took the gospel to the Colossians, worked closely with Paul, and is thought to have founded the Colossian church.¹⁶⁷ He was also influential in the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13). Tychicus was a native of Asia Minor, one of Paul's fellow workers, and traveled with him on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4). Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to report on his circumstances (Eph. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:12). Paul again sent Tychicus, along with Artemas, possibly to Crete, to encourage Titus (Tit. 3:12). Tychicus and Onesimus were sent by Paul to Colossae to bring the church information and to encourage the saints (Col. 4:7–9).

Paul identifies himself, Epaphras, and Tychicus, as fellow-laborers; men who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who are called into His service, and who are committed to serve together in Christ's church. By identifying himself as an apostle and referring to Epaphras and Tychicus as *fellow bond-slaves* and *servants* of Christ, Paul not only frames his letter, but he commends his co-laborers with words of affection and in service to God.

The Will of God – Colossians 1:1, 9; 4:12

The third inner-textual link that frames the epistle to the Colossians is the phrase “will of God.”

“The will of God” – θελήματος θεοῦ (1:1)

“His will” – τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ (1:9)

“The will of God” – θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ (4:12)

¹⁶⁷ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians and Philemon*, 198–199.

God's *will* is his desire to fulfill his plan and purpose in creation, redemption, and the new creation as revealed in Scripture.¹⁶⁸ God's plan and purpose are fulfilled through a series of covenant relationships with Adam (Gen. 1–3), Noah (Gen. 6–9), Abraham (Gen. 12–22), Moses (Ex. 19–Lev. 27), David (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17), and Israel (Dt. 30; Jer. 31; Ezek. 36; Luke 22; Heb. 8:8–13; 10:16–17).¹⁶⁹ A covenant is “a formal agreement between two or more persons, usually involving requirements, promises, and stipulations that had to be kept if the covenant were to remain firm.”¹⁷⁰ God's biblical covenants are fulfilled in the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus Christ.¹⁷¹ They mediated through the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:25; 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) and applied to an individual's life by God the Holy Spirit through confession of sin, repentance of sin, and belief by faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:1–10).

Paul identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ “by [through] the will of God” (διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ – 1:1). Paul belongs to Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ).¹⁷² It is “through” (διὰ) the “will of God” that Paul received a personal “revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:12),¹⁷³ a complete life transformation, and a calling as an apostle. Paul's

¹⁶⁸ Gen. 1–3; Ps. 40:7–8; Isa. 55:10–11; Matt. 6:10; Lk. 22:42; Rev. 21–22.

¹⁶⁹ John H. Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 35–41.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁷¹ Gen. 1:1–2; Mt. 5:17–18; Lk. 24:44; Col. 1:16–18.

¹⁷² Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ is in the “genitive case” which represents the *possessor*; David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, exp. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 2. The genitive of possession frequently describes “a noun from the viewpoint of ownership or possession; David Alan Black, *It's Still Greek to Me: An Easy to Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 48.

¹⁷³ Gal. 1:12 – (δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

conversion experience and calling are recorded in Acts 9:1–22, Acts 22:1–21, Acts 26:1–23, and Galatians 1:11–24. In each of these descriptions, Paul receives a visual and audible revelation of Jesus Christ and a calling as an apostle. In Acts 26:19, Paul describes this revelation as “the heavenly vision” (τῆ οὐρανίῳ ὄπτασίᾳ).

Now, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras earnestly desire the saints in Colossae will “be filled with the knowledge of His [God’s] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,” so they too, will “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (1:9–10a). The characteristics of a walk worthy of the Lord in Paul’s letter are: (1) pleasing God in everything (1:10b); (2) bearing fruit in every good work (1:10c); (3) increasing in the knowledge of God (1:10d); and (4) to be strengthened with all power. The desired result is the Colossians would be steadfast, patient, joyful, and thankful (1:11–12a).

Colossians 1:9 begins a new section in the introduction to Paul’s letter. The section is marked by the phrase “Διὰ τοῦτο” (for this reason). The phrase serves two purposes. First, the phrase refers the audience back to Paul’s *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (1:3–8); and second, the phrase serves to move the text forward and introduce Paul’s *Prayer for the Colossians* (1:9–14).¹⁷⁴

The *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (1:3–8) and the *Prayer for the Colossians* (1:9–14) are framed by the verb “εὐχαριστέω” (“give thanks” – 1:3, 12) and united through the connector “Διὰ τοῦτο” (for this reason – 1:9). There is more to say about this important discourse in the prayer section below.

¹⁷⁴ The connective “Διὰ τοῦτο” indicates that “what follows is closely related to what precedes it. It constrains what follows to be viewed as a response to some situation in the preceding text;” Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2010), 48–49. “The translation ‘also’ (καὶ – [1:9]) reflects the adjunctive use of this conjunction, marking a transition from Epaphras (vv.7–8) back to Paul and Timothy [vv. 3–6];” David W. Pao, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Colossians & Philemon*, Clinton E. Arnold, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 68.

For the purposes of the inner-textual bracket, “the will of God,” Paul and Timothy are continually giving thanks to God and praying always for the Colossians (1:3), since they heard of their faith in Christ Jesus (1:4), their love for all of the saints (1:4), because of the hope that is laid up for them in heaven (1:5).

The Colossians heard of the hope laid up for them in heaven “in the word of the truth of the gospel”¹⁷⁵ (ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – 1:5). The life-generating and spiritually transforming power of the word of truth, the gospel, continued to increase and bear fruit in the Colossian’s lives as they heard and understood the grace of God in truth (1:6).

The *Prayer for the Colossians* begins in 1:9d and is introduced with the subordinating conjunction “ἵνα” (that) which denotes intent, purpose and content.¹⁷⁶ The passive subjunctive verb, “filled” (“πληρωθῆτε”), expresses Paul’s hope and desire for the Colossians to “be filled” by God with the knowledge of His will.¹⁷⁷ The prayer request is made to God and God is the agent performing the filling.¹⁷⁸ The phrase, “the knowledge of His will” (“τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ”), is emphasized by two definite articles that indicate identity and particularity, and the intensive personal pronoun “αὐτοῦ.” The word “ἐπίγνωσιν” (“knowledge”) stresses a true personal knowledge of

¹⁷⁵ Literal translation of Colossians 1:5b.

¹⁷⁶ There are two prayers expressed in Paul’s introduction to Colossians as identified in the Outline to Colossians: Paul and Timothy’s *Prayer of Thanksgiving* in Colossians 1:3–8 and Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras’ *Prayer for the Colossians* in Colossians 1:9–14.

¹⁷⁷ David Alan Black, *It’s Still Greek to Me*, 94–95, 98, 143–144.

¹⁷⁸ Murray J. Harris, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Colossians and Philemon* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2013), 26.

God and of His will.¹⁷⁹ Older interpreters distinguish between “γνώσις” and “ἐπίγνωσιν,” and understand “ἐπίγνωσιν” to denote a “deep and accurate comprehension,” and “thorough knowledge.”¹⁸⁰ The prayer for the Colossians is, “they may gain the full knowledge of God’s will through the insight that his Spirit imparts, in order to please God in everything, and thus live in a way that befits his children.”¹⁸¹ To frame the text and elevate the importance of “God’s will,” a prayer for the knowledge of God’s will is repeated at the end of Paul’s letter by Epaphras (4:12).

The content of Epaphras’ prayer at the conclusion of the letter in 4:12 is introduced with the purpose conjunction, “ἵνα” (that), and the perfect passive verb, “be filled” or “be fully assured” (“πεπληρωμένοι”). Epaphras’ prayer is for the Colossians is to “stand perfect” or “stand complete” (“στῆτε τέλει”) and “be fully assured in all the will of God” (“ἐν παντὶ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ”). Paul and Epaphras are praying that the Colossians would not only be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, but they would also have a perfect and complete understanding of the will of God.¹⁸²

At the beginning of the letter and at the ending of the letter, the same earnest hope and desire is for the Colossians to be “filled with the knowledge of God’s will” (1:9) and to “stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God” (4:12). “God’s will,” not only serves as a bracket, framing the letter, but the theme also serves as an important element in the thesis for Paul’s letter.

¹⁷⁹ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 201.

¹⁸⁰ Curtis Vaughan, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, vol. 11, Frank E. Gaebelein, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1978), 177.

¹⁸¹ F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, Joel B. Green, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 45–46.

¹⁸² Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Colossians*, 330.

Christ Jesus / Christ – Colossians 1:4; 4:3

The fourth inner-textual link that frames the text of Colossians and gives it meaning is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

“Christ Jesus” – Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (1:4) “Christ” – τοῦ Χριστοῦ (4:3)

The person and work of Jesus Christ are prominent in the first four verses of Colossians. Colossians 1:4 speaks of the Colossian’s “faith in Christ Jesus” (τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) which is the basis for Paul and Timothy’s thanksgiving prayer (1:3). The clause, “faith in Christ Jesus,” means the Colossians have believed and trusted in the person and work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, salvation from eternal judgement, reconciliation with God, immersion into the body of Christ, entrance into the Kingdom of God, and abundant eternal life.

The Colossians heard and understood the grace of God in truth (1:6). Paul prayed they would increase in their knowledge of God (1:10). Much can be known about Jesus Christ in a personal, mental, spiritual, and salvific way (1:9, 10; 2:2, 3; 3:10). Yet, the person and work of Jesus Christ are still a “mystery” (1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3).

The “mystery” of Christ has been hidden from generations passed and has now been revealed to the church (1:26). Paul identifies the “mystery” of Jesus Christ as the indwelling presence of Christ in the Gentiles (1:27), the “mystery” of “the hope of glory” (1:27), and the “mystery” of the very person and work of Jesus Christ, Himself (2:2). The mystery of Christ will not be fully known until Christians are revealed with Christ in glory (3:4). For these reasons, Paul asks for prayer at the end of the letter. He asks the Colossians to pray that God will open a door for the Word of God, so he can speak forth the “mystery of Christ” and make it “clear” how he should speak (4:3–4).

The person and work of Jesus Christ also unite the text of Colossians, giving the Scripture meaning and depth, and preeminence to Christ. Building on the foundation of Christ's deity (1:19; 2:9), Jesus is presented as the "image of the invisible God" (1:15a). He reigns as Lord over creation (1:15b–17; 2:15; 2:10b; 3:1), the church (1:18a), the new creation (1:18b–d), the family (3:18–21), the workplace (3:22–4:2), and over all believers (2:6–7; 3:5–17). The person and work of Jesus Christ are a preeminent theme throughout the letter, that not only frame the text, but give it intentionality, coherence, depth, and meaning.

Brethren – Colossians 1:1, 2; 4:7, 9, 15

The fifth inner-textual link that frames the epistle to the Colossians is the noun "brethren."

"Brethren" – ἀδελφός (1:1, 2) "Brethren" – ἀδελφός (4:7, 9, 15)

The New Testament "reflects a strong family bond among believers."¹⁸³ Jesus referred to His brother, sister, and mother as those who do "the will of My [His] Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 12:50), and His mother and brothers as those "who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk. 8:21). The term "brethren" reflects the spiritual and familial relationship between brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul opens his letter by referring to Timothy as "our [the] brother" (ὁ ἀδελφός – 1:1), and he addresses the saints in Colossae as "faithful brethren" (πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς – 1:2).

At the conclusion of his epistle, Paul calls Tychicus, "*our* [the] beloved brother" (ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφός – 4:7) and Onesimus, a "beloved brother" (ἀγαπητῶ ἀδελφῶ – 4:9).

¹⁸³ *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., s.v. "Names of Christians – brothers," by H. Douglas Buckwalter.

Finally, he makes reference to the saints in Laodicea and refers to them as “brethren” (ἀδελφοὺς – 4:15). In each case, Paul is expressing a close, intimate, familial relationship and term of endearment to describe fellow believers that frames the text and gives it an enveloping structure.

Grace – Colossians 1:2; 4:18

The sixth inner-textual link that brackets the text of Colossians is God’s “grace.”

“Grace to you” – χάρις ὑμῖν (1:2) “Grace be with you” – ἡ χάρις μεθ’ ὑμῶν (4:18)

The specific greeting, “grace and peace,” is a common epistolary introduction for Paul.¹⁸⁴

In Scripture, the grace of God is his unmerited, unwarranted, and unconditioned good will and favor toward mankind which is “decisively expressed in the saving work of [Jesus] Christ.”¹⁸⁵ God’s *grace* is a central theological concept and attribute of God.

But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:21–24).

Curtis Vaughan says, the greeting “takes the form of a prayer for [God’s] ‘grace and peace’ to be given to the readers.”¹⁸⁶

For Paul, “grace” and “peace” are not merely subjective experiences of kindness and tranquility; rather, they point to the powerful salvific work of God through Christ, (e.g., Rom 3:24; 5:17) and the reconciliation that is already promised for the eschatological era (e.g., Rom 5:1; Eph. 2:14–18;

¹⁸⁴ Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1:3.

¹⁸⁵ Bruce, *Colossians*, 39.

¹⁸⁶ Vaughan, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 173.

cf. Isa. 52:7; 57:2). Here, Paul again reminds his audience of the foundational significance of the gospel.¹⁸⁷

Paul ended his letter the same way he began Colossians with a prayer for God’s grace to be with them (ἡ χάρις μεθ’ ὑμῶν – 4:18). Like the opening of all of Paul’s letters, the closing of all of Paul’s epistles end with a prayer for God’s grace.¹⁸⁸

God’s “grace” is also used as an internal link that develops meaning in the Scripture and binds the text. The Colossians “understood the grace of God in truth” (ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ – 1:6) through “the word of truth, the gospel” (τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – 1:5). Therefore, Paul says, the Colossian’s “word” or “speech” (ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν – 4:6) should “always be ‘in’ grace” (πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι – 4:6). The Colossians received God’s grace in the person and work of Jesus Christ through the word of God by faith. They were instructed to be wise and speak to “outsiders” (ἐξῶ), so they too, could hear and understand the “the grace of God in truth” (1:6; 4:5–6).¹⁸⁹

Paul began his letter by asking for God’s unmerited love to be upon the Colossians. He concludes his letter with the same prayer, in the form of a benediction, thus, framing the epistle with the theme of God’s undeserved favor in Christ. Internally, he instructs the Colossians to speak the same words of God’s *grace* into the lives of unbelievers.

¹⁸⁷ Pao, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary*, 50.

¹⁸⁸ Romans 16:24; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 1:25.

¹⁸⁹ Although the word “grace” is not used, Paul instructs the Colossians to speak to one another (fellow Christians) graciously, as well: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16).

Praying – Colossians 1:3, 9; 4:3

The seventh inner-textual link that envelopes Paul’s letter to the Colossians is the spiritual discipline of “prayer.”

“Prayer” – προσευχόμενοι (1:3, 9) “Prayer” – προσευχή / προσευχόμενοι (4:2, 3)

Colossians 1:3 begins a prayer section that includes Paul and Timothy’s *Prayer of Thanksgiving* (vv. 3–8) and their *Prayer for the Colossians* (vv. VVYHEQ9–14). The prayers are framed by the verb “give thanks” (εὐχαριστέω – 1:3, 12).¹⁹⁰ There are five inner-textual links that unite Colossians 1:3–12 and give it intentionality, coherence, and meaning.¹⁹¹

Inner-textual Links in Colossians 1:3–12

“We give thanks to God” (1:3)	“Giving thanks to the Father (1:12)
“Since the day you heard” (1:6)	“Since the day we heard” (1:9)
“Praying always for you” (1:3)	“Not ceased to pray for you” (1:9)
“Understood” (1:6)	“Knowledge” (1:9–10)
“Bearing fruit and increasing” (1:6)	“Bearing fruit...and increasing” (1:10)

The main verb in 1:3 is “Εὐχαριστοῦμεν” (we give thanks).¹⁹² The words, “give thanks” and “praying,” emphasize two different aspects of prayer and together emphasize the importance of the spiritual discipline of prayer.¹⁹³

The more general term “praying” speaks to the activity itself, while “giving thanks” is a specific form of prayer. In like manner, the word “asking” (αἰτούμενοι – 1:9), another synonym for prayer, emphasizes the

¹⁹⁰ Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 81.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 92.

¹⁹² Melick, *The New American Commentary*, 192.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 194.

specific request made. Thus, the words collectively stress prayer in its various aspects.¹⁹⁴

Two subordinate clauses modify Paul's thanksgiving: (1) "praying for you" (1:3); and (2) "since we have heard of your faith in Jesus Christ" (1:4–8).¹⁹⁵

The reason for Paul and Timothy's thanksgiving and prayer is because they heard (ἀκούσαντες – 1:4) of the Colossian's "faith in Jesus Christ" ("τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ" – 1:4), their "love" for all of the saints ("τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους" – 1:4), because of their "hope" laid up in heaven ("διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς" – 1:5). The continual nature of Paul and Timothy's prayers for the Colossians is expressed in the phrases, "praying always for you" ("πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι" – 1:3) and "we have not ceased to prayer for you" ("οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι" – 1:9).

As mentioned in *The Will of God* portion, a new section begins in 1:9. Paul uses two verbs to describe his prayer: "pray" ("προσευχόμενοι" – 1:9) and "ask" ("αἰτούμενοι" – 1:9).¹⁹⁶ Paul prays that the Colossians will be "filled with the knowledge of His [God's] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" so that: (1) they will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord; (2) to please Him [the Lord] in all respects; (3) to bear fruit in every good work; (4) to increase in the knowledge of God; (5) to be strengthened with all power, according to His [God's] glorious might; for the purpose of attaining all steadfastness, patience, and joyful thanksgiving (1:9–12).

¹⁹⁴ Melick, *The New American Commentary*, 194.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 192–193.

¹⁹⁶ Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 93.

At the conclusion of the letter, Paul instructs the Colossians to “devote” themselves “to prayer” (Τῇ προσευχῇ προσκατερεῖτε – 4:2) with an attitude of “thanksgiving” (ἐν εὐχαριστία – 4:2), followed by a request for them to continuously pray for him and his fellow co-workers (προσευχόμενοι – 4:3). The importance of prayer, ongoing prayers of intercession and prayers of thanksgiving, are elevated with mention of Epaphras; he is “always laboring earnestly” for the Colossians in his prayers so they will “stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God” (4:12).

Prayer is a ministry of the triune God. God the Holy Spirit intercedes for Christians according to the will of God (Rom. 8:27). God the Son is seated at the right hand of God the Father interceding for Christians (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). Paul describes the intentional, specific, and continuous nature of his prayers and the prayers of his fellow ministers on behalf of the Colossians. He instructs the Colossians to devote themselves to an ongoing, disciplined, lifestyle of intercessory and thanksgiving prayer, so they too can join the ministry of God, further His plan and purpose, and experience the fullness of communion with Christ and His church. Prayer is used as a frame to intertextually unite the letter to the Colossians, and as a literary device to develop intentionality, coherence, and meaning to the Scripture.

The Word – Colossians 1:5; 4:3

The eighth inner-textual link that brackets the letter to the Colossians is the phrase “the Word.”

“The Word” – τῷ λόγῳ (1:5)

“The Word” – τοῦ λόγου (4:3)

“The Word,” in the context of both 1:5 and 4:3 is referring specifically to the word of God. In the introduction to the epistle, the Colossian’s “faith” in Christ Jesus and their

“love” for all of the saints, are rooted in the “hope” laid up for them in heaven, which they heard “in the word of truth, the gospel” (ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – 1:5).

The word of God was constantly “bearing fruit” (καρποφορούμενον – 1:6) and “increasing” (αὐξανόμενον – 1:6) in their lives, just as it was “in all the world” (ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ – 1:6). The divinely ordained process of spiritual transformation and fruit-bearing occurred when the Colossians “heard” (ἠκούσατε – 1:6) and “understood” (ἐπέγνωτε – 1:6) the “grace of God in truth” (τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ – 1:6).

- “heard in the word of truth, the gospel” (1:5)
- “constantly bearing fruit and increasing” (1:6)
- “heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth (1:6)

The primacy and transforming power of the word of God are also highlighted at the conclusion of the letter when Paul himself requests prayer. He specifically asks for God to open a door for “the word” (τοῦ λόγου – 4:3), so that he can “speak forth the mystery of Christ” and “make it clear” how he should speak (4:4).

The word of God is associated with “faith” (1:4), “love” (1:4), “hope” (1:5), “truth” (1:5), “the will of God” (1:5, 6), “the gospel” (1:5, 6), “bearing fruit” (1:6), “the grace of God” (1:6), and “the mystery of Christ” (4:3). The word was first taught to the Colossians by Epaphras (1:7).

Internally, Paul points out that he was “made a minister according to the stewardship from God,” so that he would make “the word of God” fully known (πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ – 1:25). He encourages the Colossians to allow “the word of Christ” (Ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ) to richly dwell within them, and then teach and sing “the word” to one another with thanksgiving (3:16). The word of God is placed side-by-

side the word (λόγον – 2:23) and dogma of man (δογματίζεσθε – 2:20) which have an “appearance of wisdom” but are of “no value” (2:23).

The word of God was the medium through which the Colossians came to saving faith in Jesus Christ; it was the seed that was constantly bearing fruit and increasing in their lives; it was the life-giving agent through whom God revealed the mystery of Christ; and it was the foundation of Paul’s ministry, and the ministry of the church. The apostle used “the word” as a bracket to mark the parameters of the text, to coherently unite the Scripture, and to intentionally develop life-transforming meaning and depth to his letter.

Epaphras – Colossians 1:7; 4:12

The ninth inner-textual link that binds the text of Colossians together is the name of Paul’s co-laborer in the gospel ministry – Epaphras.

“Epaphras” – Ἐπαφρᾶ (1:7)

“Epaphras” – Ἐπαφρᾶς (4:12)

Epaphras has already been identified at both the beginning of Paul’s letter and at the ending of his epistle in the context of a “fellow bond-slave” (1:7), a “servant of Christ” (1:7), and a “bond-slave of Jesus Christ” (4:12). His name, his person, and his ministry form an important inner-textual link that frame the text of Colossians.

Filled / Fulfill – Colossians 1:9; 4:17

The tenth inner-textual link that frames the text of Colossians is the word “filled” or “fulfill” from the verb “πληρώω.”

“That you may be filled”
(ἵνα πληρωθῆτε – 1:9)

“That you may fulfill it”
(ἵνα αὐτὴν πληροῖς – 4:17)

The word “πληρώω” means, “to fill, to fulfill; to complete a period of time; or to bring to completion.”¹⁹⁷ In Paul’s prayer to the Colossians, he prays for the saints to “be filled (πληρωθῆτε) with the knowledge of His [God’s] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9). At the end of his letter, Paul makes four requests (4:15–18). His third request is for the Colossians to tell Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry” which he had “received from the Lord,” that he may “fulfill it” (πληροῖς – 4:17).¹⁹⁸ Paul understands personally the reality of God’s calling and the importance of fulfilling His ministry. Paul is committed and passionate about fulfilling (πληρῶσαι) his calling to preach, teach, and minister the Word of God (1:25), and he wants to share the same knowledge, passion and commitment with others. The word and the principle are used to describe God’s desire for Christians to fulfill His will, calling, and ministry in their lives (1:9; 25; 4:17).

The word is also used in its noun form, “πλήρωμα,” to describe the full deity of Christ (1:19; 2:9), and the ongoing state of completeness the Colossian Christians enjoy in Christ (2:10).¹⁹⁹ The false teachers were seeking to take the Colossians “captive” (συλαγωγέω) through philosophy, deception, and tradition (1:8). God had already

¹⁹⁷ BDAG, s.v. “πληρώω.”

¹⁹⁸ Archippus is “a Christian that Paul greeted in Colossians 4: 17 and Philemon 2, entreating him to fulfill the ministry God gave him. Some have suggested he was the son of Philemon and Appia, but this can be neither proved nor disproved. The nature of his ministry has also been widely discussed without firm conclusions. Paul’s use of “fellow soldier” (Phm. 1:2) to describe him seems to indicate a strong participation in church leadership. Evidently, he preached in the church at Colossae;” Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), s.v. “Archippus”.

¹⁹⁹ (Colossians 2:10) *πεπληρωμένοι* is a perfect, passive, participle that indicates a state of fullness accomplished in the past, sustained, and still apparent at that time. In receiving Jesus Christ and believing in Him (2:5–7), the Colossians have all that is necessary for fullness of life and “unrestricted access to the divine power which will shape them, too, into the divine image (3:10).” cf., James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 153.

“rescued” or “delivered” (ἐρρύσατο) them from the “domain of darkness” and “transferred” (μετέστησεν) them to “the kingdom of His beloved Son,” Jesus Christ. In Him, there was “redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” To defeat the false teachers and their false instruction, Paul affirmed that Jesus Christ is fully and completely God (1:19; 2:9),²⁰⁰ which in turn, confirmed the ongoing state of completeness, or fullness of life, the Colossians enjoyed in Christ by faith (2:10). Just as Jesus is fully God, so are believers fully complete in Him.²⁰¹ “The understanding of salvation may grow, and the appropriation of the blessings of salvation may increase; but in Christ, they [the Colossians] had all there was, the ‘fullness’ of salvation.”²⁰²

The biblical, theological, and practical realities of the verb and noun form of the word “πληρώω” are used to both frame the text of Colossians and to unite it internally; giving the Scripture intentionality, coherence, meaning, and depth. Paul prays the Colossians will be “filled with the knowledge” of God’s will so they will fulfill their calling, walk worthy, and please God (1:9), just as he himself desired in his own life (1:1:24), and as he also instructed Archippus’ (4:17). This is made possible because of the deity of Christ (1:19; 2:9), the ongoing state of completeness, and the fullness of abundant life enjoyed by the Colossians in Christ (2:10).

²⁰⁰ (Colossians 1:19): “Everything that God is Jesus is. As the following section reveals, however, God is more than Jesus. God includes the Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus is only one aspect of God, but he is every bit God. Paul could easily state that God and Jesus are in some sense different. While at the same time stating that they share the same essence.”

(Colossians 2:9): “The term “the fullness of the deity” is chosen rather than a simpler statement, such as “he was totally God,” which is open to more misunderstanding than the expression chosen. Jesus is, of course, completely God, but so are the Father and the Spirit. Therefore, there is more to God than Jesus is, in that God emerges in three modes at the same time. On the other hand, Jesus has the essence of deity and contains in himself everything that any of the other “persons” of the Godhead have.” cf., Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 244, 255.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 256.

²⁰² Ibid., 256.

Wisdom – Colossians 1:9; 4:5

The eleventh inner-textual link that brackets the text of Colossians and gives the letter intentionality, coherence and meaning is “wisdom.”

“Wisdom” – σοφία (1:9) “Wisdom” – σοφία (4:5)

In Colossians 1:9, Paul wrote, “For this reason, since the day we heard *of it* [faith in Christ – 1:4], we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual ‘wisdom’ and understanding” for the purpose of walking in a “manner worthy of the Lord.” At the end of the letter, Paul wrote, “Conduct yourselves with ‘wisdom’ toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity” (4:5). In both cases, Paul elevated the importance of wisdom for the purposes of pleasing God (1:10–12a) and conducting oneself in such a way that provided every opportunity to make Christ and the gospel known (4:5).

The word “wisdom” first appears in Exodus 28:3. Aaron and his sons were consecrated and set apart by God, from the root “kadosh” (קֹדֶשׁ) meaning “holy,” and “endowed with the Spirit of wisdom,” to serve as priests to God and to the nation of Israel (Ex. 28:1–3). Aaron and his sons were described as “skillful” (Ex. 28:3) which literally meant “wise of heart.”²⁰³ Proverbs 9:10 presents the relationship between God, wisdom, knowledge and understanding: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” From a biblical perspective, wisdom is spiritual and comes from God (Prov. 2:6).

Paul writes, in Christ, “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). Man-made religion, legalism, paganism, and aestheticism all have the “appearance

²⁰³ חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Ex. 28:3).

of wisdom,” but are of “no value” (2:23). Paul describes Christians as new covenant saints designed to proclaim, admonish, and teach the preeminence of Jesus Christ in “all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφία – 1:28; 3:16), and to “walk in wisdom” (Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε – 4:5) for the purposes of reaching people for Christ and developing spiritual maturity (4:6). Wisdom and spiritual understanding are characteristics of God’s people. The importance of biblical wisdom is established, elevated and magnified in Colossians through framing and weaving the principle into the fabric of the text giving it intentionality, cohesion, and meaning.

Walk – Colossians 1:10; 4:5

The twelfth inner-textual link that frames the text of Colossians is the term “walk” (περιπατέω – 1:10; 4:5). In the New Testament letters the word is used in a figurative sense and refers to “the whole manner of life and conduct” of a person.²⁰⁴ In 1:10, Paul prays the Colossians will “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects.” In 4:5, he instructs the Colossians to “walk” in wisdom (Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε).

“walk” – περιπατήσαι (1:10)

“walk” – περιπατεῖτε (4:5)

In both cases, the word is used to reflect the manner of conduct and way of life prescribed for the Colossians.

The term is employed two additional times internally within the letter to describe the lifestyle of the Colossians as members of the body of Christ (2:6) and to describe their lifestyle as unbelievers before coming to faith in Christ (3:7). The biblical, theological,

²⁰⁴ NIV Compact Dictionary of the Bible, s.v. “walk.”

practical, and compositional theme introduced by the word “walk” is used to both frame the text of Colossians and to give it internal structure.

The Kingdom – Colossians 1:13; 4:11

The thirteenth inner-textual relationship that brackets the text of Colossians is the word “kingdom.”

“the Kingdom” – τὴν βασιλείαν (1:13) “the Kingdom” – τὴν βασιλείαν (4:11)

The word and concept of “kingdom” are used in two different literary contexts in Colossians. The first time the term is used is in relationship to God the Father and God the Son, and the new realm in which believers live in 1:13: “the kingdom of His beloved Son.” The second time the term is used is in relationship to God the Father, his rule and realm, and his purposes fulfilled through the gospel ministry in 4:11: “fellow workers for the kingdom of God.” There is no tension between the two terms and their relationship is illustrated by Paul’s description in Ephesians 5:5: “For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. The word, “kingdom,” serves as another inner-textual relationship that frames the text of Colossians.

The Church – Colossians 1:18; 4:16

The fourteenth inner-textual link that frames the letter to the Colossians is the word “church.”

“Church” – τῆς ἐκκλησίας (1:18) “Church” – ἐκκλησία (4:16)

The word translated “church” is the Greek word “ἐκκλησία.”²⁰⁵ The “church” is the name given to the spiritual body of regenerate believers united in Christ.²⁰⁶ In Colossians, the word “church” is textually linked to “the body” of Christ (1:18, 24), the church that met at Nympha’s house (4:15),²⁰⁷ and “the church of the Laodiceans” (4:16), yet the churches nature, characteristics, and mission are developed throughout the letter.

Jesus Christ is “Head” of the universal church that was promised by Jesus in Matthew 16:18 and birthed at the Feast of Pentecost in Acts 2 (1:18). The “church of the Laodiceans” is a local, municipal church, under Christ’s Headship, meeting in an affluent, metropolitan city ten miles west of Colossae (4:16).²⁰⁸ The church that met at Nympha’s house is also a local church under the Headship of Jesus Christ and meets in a private home.

²⁰⁵ “Though some persons have tried to see in the term ἐκκλησία a more or less literal meaning of ‘called-out ones,’ this type of etymologizing is not warranted either by the meaning of ἐκκλησία in NT times or even by its earlier usage. The term ἐκκλησία was in common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to an assembly of persons constituted by well-defined membership. In general, for Greek usage it was normally a socio-political entity based upon citizenship in a city-state (Acts 19:33, 39). For the NT, however, it is important to understand the meaning of ἐκκλησία as ‘an assembly of God’s people;’” in Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), s.v. “ἐκκλησία.”

²⁰⁶ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 82.

²⁰⁷ “Νύμφαν καὶ τὴν κατ’ οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν (Nympha and the church in her house) {C} – The proper name Νύμφαν can be accented Νύμφαν, from the feminine nominative Νύμφα (Nympha), or Νύμφαν, from the masculine nominative Νύμφας (Nymphas). The earliest manuscripts had no accents, so the masculine and feminine forms of the name were not distinguished here. Because copyists were uncertain whether the name was masculine or feminine, some copyists wrote the possessive pronoun αὐτῆς (of her) and others wrote αὐτοῦ (of him). The external evidence for the reading Νύμφαν καὶ τὴν κατ’ οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν makes this reading the most likely.

The reading with the pronoun αὐτῶν (of them/their) arose when copyists included ἀδελφούς (brothers) in the reference. In some languages, the masculine and feminine third person singular pronouns have the same form, so a literal translation may not make clear whether Nympha (or, Nymphas) is a man or a woman.

Furthermore, in many parts of the world, readers will not know whether Nympha (or, Nymphas) was a man’s name or a woman’s name. In such languages it may be best to say something like “our sister Nympha and the church ...;” in Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: German Bible Society, 2006), 422.

²⁰⁸ Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, gen. eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publisher, 2003), s.v. “Laodicea.”

Paul's letter is addressed to the municipal church in Colossae (1:2). He was made a "minister" of the church "according to the stewardship of God" for the benefit of the Colossians and for all believers (1:24–25). Throughout the letter, Paul gives instruction on the biblical, theological, and practical nature, characteristics, and mission of the church that serve as brackets around the text, and develop internal structure, thus bringing intentionality, coherence, and meaning to the epistle.

Conclusion

Chapter one has accomplished several things toward developing a text-centered, canonical, and compositional approach to Colossians 1:28. First, the topic was introduced and the need for a deeper understanding of the verse was established. Second, the delimitations of the research were set forth and the research questions were identified. Third, the qualitative research model was presented and the research assumptions for the study were established. Fourth, an overview of the Bible was presented and an introduction to the New Testament epistle was given. Fifth, an overview of the life and ministry of the apostle Paul was laid out and an outline of the letter to the Colossians was given. Sixth, an analysis of the inner-textual links found in the introduction and the conclusion of the letter that bracket the text and provide a framework for the internal structure of the letter were established. Chapter 2 will answer the first research question: "Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?"

CHAPTER TWO

WHY DO WE PROCLAIM CHRIST IN COLOSSIANS 1:28?

Introduction

The boundaries that form the framework for Colossians, support the internal structure of the text, and present the intent of the letter were established in chapter one. Chapter two will present an analysis of the literary context of Colossians 1:28 and the meaning of the verse by, first, examining the text's placement in the letter, and second, by analyzing the opening clause in the verse to answer the question, "Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?"

Colossians 1:28 is woven into the body of the letter to the Colossians (1:24–4:6), in the theological section of the epistle (1:24–3:4), between Paul's description of his apostolic ministry to the church (1:24–2:5), and his defense of the gospel (2:6–3:4). Colossians 1:28 is a portion of a long sentence in the Greek text that begins in 1:24 and ends in 1:29. David Pao says, this section of the letter forms an integral part of Paul's argument.

First, in light of Paul's emphasis on God's plan, the progression from God the Father (1:3–14) to Christ the Son (1:15–23) that leads to the present section on Paul the servant of Christ (1:24–2:5) becomes understandable. In the next section, the focus is then shifted to the recipients of the gospel that the apostles are preaching (2:6–4:1). Second, in emphasizing his unique role in God's plan, Paul also reminds his audience to submit to the gospel for which he has labored (1:29; 2:1). This then prepares for the strong critique of the false teachers in the next section. Third, in emphasizing his own "suffering" and "struggles" (1:24, 29; 2:1), Paul may also be preparing the Colossians to participate in this struggle as they seek to be faithful to the gospel (2:16; 4:2). Finally, some have also detected a subtle reaction against the false teachers in this section. Instead of speculations and misleading visionary reports, Paul reminds the audience that they should rely on the secure "knowledge" that is anchored in Christ himself (2:2). At the end of this section, the reference to Paul's absence also reminds his audience that this letter represents his presence and

authority (2:5). Though absent in flesh, Paul as the mediator of the gospel message continues as he urges the Colossians to stand firm in their “faith in Christ” (2:5). This urge becomes powerful precisely because his absence testifies to his own faithfulness to the gospel as he repeatedly reminds his audiences that he is faithful to this gospel for which he is “in chains” (4:3, 18).¹

There are three inner-textual links that form the message of 1:24–2:5, develop intentionality, coherence, and meaning to the section, and give emphasis to the importance of Colossians 1:28. First, the words “rejoice” (χαίρω) and “flesh” (σάρξ) in 1:24 and in 2:5 form an inclusio that frame the section.² Second, the references to God’s “mystery” in 1:26 (τὸ μυστήριον), 1:27 (τοῦ μυστηρίου), and 2:2 (τοῦ μυστηρίου); and “wisdom” (σοφία) in 1:28 and 2:3, add a second layer of inclusion to the text. Third, the references to the person and work of Jesus Christ elevate his preeminence and give coherence to the section.

Jesus Christ is the one in whom are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:2). The knowledge of God’s mystery, Jesus Christ, is revealed through the word of God (1:25–26). Paul is a minister of the word of God to the church (1:25; 2:2). In Colossians 1:28, Paul instructed the church be active in the same ministry; to proclaim the preeminence of Jesus Christ to all people, with all wisdom, for the purposes of spiritual maturity.

¹ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 119.

² The Greek root “σάρξ” is translated “body” in Colossians 2:5, *NASB*.

Inner-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:24–2:5

“Rejoice” – χαίρω (1:24)

“Rejoicing” – χαίρω (2:5)

“Flesh” – σάρξ (1:24)

“Body” – σάρξ (lit: “flesh” – 2:5)

“His body” – τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ (1:24)

“in Christ’s afflictions” – τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:24)

“Christ in you, the hope of glory” – ὁ ἐστὶν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης (1:27)

“Him we proclaim” – ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν (1:28)

“complete in Christ” – τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ (1:28)

“His power” – τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ (1:29)

“Christ” – Χριστοῦ (2:2)

“your faith in Christ” – τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν (2:5)

“Mystery” – μυστήριον (1:26, 27)

“Mystery” – μυστήριον (2:2)

“in all wisdom” – ἐν πάσῃ σοφία (1:28)

“the wisdom” – τῆς σοφίας (2:3)

The inner-textual links in Colossians 1:24–2:5 frame the text, give the Scripture intentionality, coherence, and meaning, and elevate the importance of the message in Colossians 1:28.

In-textual Features in Colossians 1:28

The apostle employs three intentional linguistic devices in order frame Colossians 1:28, to set the verse apart within the section, to passionately exhort the Colossians, and to emphasize the importance of the verse within the literary context of the discourse. The literary devices are inclusio, asyndeton, and inflection.

Inclusio

Just as the epistle itself (1:1–23; 4:2–18), and the section in which Colossians 1:28 is composed (1:24–2:5), are framed and inner-textually bound to give the discourse intentionality, coherence, and meaning; the text of Colossians 1:28 is also framed and inner-textually bound to form an *inclusio*. An *inclusio* is formed when identical or similar material are composed and written into the beginning and ending of a text.³ An *inclusio* is intentionally applied to frame the contents of a text and bind it together into one complete thought. Colossians 1:28 is framed at the beginning of the verse by the relative pronoun, “Him” (ὁν), referring to Christ, and at the ending of the verse with the phrase, “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ). The text, therefore, begins with Christ and ends with Christ, and thus, forms an *inclusio*.

The Text of Colossians 1:28

Him, we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete **in Christ** (Col. 1:28).

ὁν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ, ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ (Col. 1:28).

The relative pronoun, “Him” (ὁν), and the phrase, “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ), at the beginning and the ending of Colossians 1:28 envelope the text, unite the contents into one cohesive and coherent thought, and elevate the importance and meaning of the text.

³ Ryken, *A Complete Handbook of Literary Forms in the Bible*, 76–77.

Asyndeton

A second literary device employed by Paul to frame the text, set it apart within the compositional structure of the section, and to elevate the importance and meaning of the verse is *asyndeton*. This feature is evidenced in both the asyndetic nature of the relative pronoun “Him” (ὃν) in 1:28a, the participle “admonishing” (νουθετοῦντες) in 1:28b, and in the clause, “For this purpose also I labor” (εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ) in 1:29a.⁴

Asyndeta and *connectives* are two literary devices applied by authors to establish and develop relationships in biblical texts.⁵ Asyndeton means “not bound together.”⁶ This linguistic device refers to linking clauses or clause components together without the use of a conjunction.⁷ The term “connective” is used “in place of the more specific [word] ‘conjunction’ because languages commonly use forms other than conjunctions to perform the task of connecting clause elements.”⁸ In addition to conjunctions, words such as particles, relative pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and adverbs are also employed to express relationships among texts.

The Greeks, especially in the literary style, felt the propriety of indicating the inner relation of the various independent sentences that composed a paragraph. This was not merely an artistic device, but a logical expression of coherence of thought. Particles like καί, δέ, ἀλλά, γάρ, οὖν, etc., were very common in this connection. Demonstrative pronouns, adverbs, and even relative pronouns were also used for this purpose.⁹

⁴ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 65.

⁵ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 17, 20–22.

⁶ Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 130.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹ A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934), 443.

Asyndeta and connectives indicate the textual relationships between words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs and promote meaning in the discourse.¹⁰ These two literary devices achieve their purposes by expressing clausal relationships that strengthen, development, associate, or infer meaning in written texts.¹¹

When asyndeta occur between words or phrases, “it suggests excitement or urgency.”¹² When the device appears between paragraphs, “it usually indicates the introduction of a new subject.”¹³ It is a “vivid stylistic feature that occurs often for emphasis, solemnity, or rhetorical value (staccato effect), or when there is an abrupt change in topic.¹⁴ Asyndeton is used for several reasons: (1) It is applied to commands and exhortations in rapid succession;¹⁵ (2) It is used at the beginning of a new thought or topic where the textual relationship between words, phrases, or clauses is already clear;¹⁶ (3) It is used in literary contexts with close connections that move the text from a generic idea to specific meaning;¹⁷ (4) It is used in commands and exhortations that are established in rapid succession;¹⁸ (5) It is used to link sentences together in a series;¹⁹ (6)

¹⁰ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18–19.

¹² Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 130.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 658.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 658.

¹⁶ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the New Testament*, 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 658.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 658.

It is used to link sentences that are unrelated to each other and introduce a topic shift.²⁰

Colossians 1:28a, 1:28b, and 1:29a are asyndetic and the device is used to command and exhort, to generate urgency and excitement, and to emphasize the importance of the text within the compositional structure of the section and the discourse as a whole.²¹

Inflection

A third literary device that frames Colossians 1:28, sets the verse apart within the compositional structure of the letter, and emphasizes the importance of the text's content and meaning, is the use of *inflection*. Inflection refers to “the changes words undergo in accordance with their grammatical function in a sentence.”²² Greek is a highly inflected language. Words that include verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, participles, and the article ‘the’ have different forms to indicate such matters as gender, number, and case.²³ Inflections contain vital grammatical information and they are the key to understanding Greek verbs and nouns.²⁴ Inflections ask and answer six questions: (1) “Who is doing the action?” (2) “How many are doing the action?” (3) “Is the subject doing the action or is it being done to the subject?” (4) “How does the speaker view the kind of action?” (5) “How does the speaker view the relation of the action to reality?” (6) “When does the action happen?”²⁵ These six areas are called “person, number, voice, aspect, mood, and

²⁰ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 658.

²¹ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 65.

²² Black, *Learn How to Read New Testament Greek*, 9.

²³ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁴ Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 92.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

time (tense).”²⁶ The inflection of a Greek noun is called “declension” and represents the “subject” (nominative case), the “possessor” (genitive case), the “indirect object” (dative case), or the “object” (accusative case). Every time a Greek verb or noun is encountered, these questions must be answered.²⁷ There are three important inflections intentionally written into Colossians 1:28 that draw attention to the content of the verse and emphasize the text’s importance – *word order*, *number*, and *declension*.

Word Order

Word order is flexible in Greek. Authors are able to give special emphasis to thought and meaning by placing particular words at the front of a sentence.²⁸ New Testament writers typically placed the subject of a sentence after the verb.²⁹ The normal word order in a Greek clause is verb, subject, and object.³⁰ Whenever there is a variation from this form, it often conveys emphasis.³¹ The word order for the opening clause in Colossians 1:28 is “object, subject, and verb, which adds special emphasis to the clause and to the sentence: “Him we proclaim” (ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν). Black says, frequently, “the subject comes before the verb,” as in the case of Colossians 1:28a, “when it introduces a new topic or is being contrasted to something else in the near context.”³²

²⁶ Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 92.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁸ Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 182.

³² Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 183.

Paul places a relative personal pronoun, referring to Christ (ὄν), at the front of Colossians 1:28a, emphasizing the preeminence of Jesus Christ as the object of proclamation. In addition to placing the relative pronoun at the front of the verse, Paul inserts the subject, “we” (ἡμεῖς), before the verb, “Him we proclaim” (ὄν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν). This intentional linguistic feature also adds to the emphatic nature of the first clause and to the sentence itself. Not only is the emphatic nature intentionally composed into the word order, but the inflection change is also demonstrated in the change of number and declension.

Number and Declension

Paul moves from singular pronouns and verbs in Colossians 1:24–25, to plural pronouns and verbs in Colossians 1:28, and back to singular pronouns and verbs in Colossians 1:29–2:5. In addition to the change in number, Paul shifts the object of the verbs from himself (1:24–25), to “the Gentiles” (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν – 1:27) and the Colossians (ἐν ὑμῖν – 1:27), to “every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον – 1:28), to the Laodiceans (ἐν Λαοδικεία – 2:1), to “all those” who have not personally seen him (ὅσοι – 2:1–2), and back to the Colossians (Τοῦτο λέγω – 2:4–5).

Singular Pronouns and Verbs in Colossians 1:23–25

- “I, Paul” (ἐγὼ Παῦλος – 1:23)
- “I rejoice” (χαίρω – 1:24)
- “I fill” (ἀνταναπληρῶ – 1:24)
- “In my flesh” (ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου – 1:24)
- “I was made” (ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ – 1:25)
- “Bestowed on me” (δοθεῖσάν μοι – 1:25)
- “I might fully carry out” (πληρῶσαι – 1:25)

Plural Pronouns and Verbs in Colossians 1:28

- “We proclaim” (ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν – 1:28)
 “We are admonishing” (νουθετοῦντες – 1:28)
 “We are teaching” (διδάσκοντες – 1:28)
 “We may present” (παραστήσωμεν – 1:28)

Singular Pronouns and Verbs in Colossians 1:29–2:5

- “I labor” (κοπιῶ – 1:29)
 “Works within me” (τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ – 1:29)
 “For I want you” (Θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι – 2:1)
 “Struggle I have (ἀγῶνα ἔχω – 2:1)
 “I say this” (Τοῦτο λέγω – 2:4)
 “For even though I am absent in the body” (εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῇ σαρκὶ ἄπειμι – 2:5)
 “I am with you in spirit” (τῷ πνεύματι σὺν ὑμῖν εἰμι – 2:5)

Object of the Verbs in Colossians 1:24–27

- “the Gentiles” (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν – 1:27)
 “Christ in you” (Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν – 1:27)

Object of the Verbs in Colossians 1:28

- “Every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον – 1:28)
 “Every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον – 1:28)
 “Every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον – 1:28)

Object of the Verbs in Colossians 2:1–2

- “at Laodicea” (Λαοδικεῖα – 2:1)
 “and for all those who have not personally seen my face” (ὅσοι οὐχ ἑώρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί – 2:1)

Object of the Verbs in Colossians 2:4–5

- “that no one will delude you” (ἵνα μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς παραλογίζηται – 2:4)
 “with you” (σὺν ὑμῖν – 2:5)
 “your good discipline” (ὑμῶν τὴν τάξιν – 2:5)
 “your faith in Christ” (χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν – 2:5)

Why does Paul suddenly shift the inflection from singular to plural, and the object of the verbs from individual groups of people to “every man,” a term that is repeated three times in Colossians 1:28? Who does “we” refer to in the literary context of the verse? Is Paul referring only to himself, Timothy, and Epaphras (1:1, 7)? Is he referring to himself, Timothy, Epaphras, and his fellow co-laborers in the ministry (4:7–17)? Is there perhaps a larger group of saints to whom Paul is referring?

Many believe the shift in number moves the ministry of the word of God from Paul himself back to the combined ministry of Paul, Timothy, Epaphras, and his fellow co-workers. This view is well expressed by Barth and Blanke.

In 1:28, the plural surfaces in a context in which the “I” predominates, “we proclaim him, ... that we ... every man ...” It is noticeable that here also, as in Rom 1:5, the plural form appears when we are dealing with the command to preach. It points to the fact that Paul perceives himself to be among the other co-workers in a universal commission to preach, which is expressed through the numeric change. At the same time, it seems probable that the plural form in 1:3 indicates Paul and his co-workers. Just as he works together with the others on the gospel, so he also will give thanks together with them for the fruit of their joint efforts.³³

³³ Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 167.

Harris writes, “The plural ‘ἡμεῖς,’ after the succession of singulars in vv. 24–25, refers generally to the apostles and evangelists or specifically to Paul and his coworkers such as Epaphras (1:7–8; 4:12–13).³⁴ Moule recognizes the emphatic nature of “we” (ἡμεῖς), but makes no mention of the shift in number.³⁵ Some believe the change in number refers to a “literary plural”³⁶ or an “editorial we”³⁷ whereby Paul is continuing to refer to himself alone in Colossians 1:28.

One difference between v. 28 and vv. 24–25 (and v. 29) should be noted, however: while the earlier text (and again v. 29) uses the first-person singular, we have here the first-person plural. Probably, as in vv. 3–9, Paul includes fellow workers such as Timothy (1:1) and Epaphras (1:7–8). But it is not impossible that the shift is stylistic only, the so-called “editorial we,” and that Paul thus continues to refer to himself alone.³⁸

³⁴ Harris, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 65. Others who hold to the view that “ἡμεῖς” refers to Paul, Timothy, Epaphras, and Paul’s coworkers in Colossians are: T.K. Abbott, *The International Critical Commentary: The Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Alfred Plummer, eds. (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 235; Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 86; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996); Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 169–170; Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Hermeneia, William R. Poehlmann, and Robert J. Karris, translators, Helmut Koester, ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 76; Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church’s Lord and Christian’s Liberty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2000), 66; Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 200; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 159; Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, vol. 44, WBC, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker, gen. eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 87; Curtis Vaughan, *Colossians*, vol. 11, EBC, Frank E. Gaebelien, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 193.

³⁵ Handley Carr Glyn Moule, *Lessons in Faith and Holiness from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon*, (New York, NY: Hodder and Stoughton, nd), 107–114.

³⁶ Barth, and Blanke, *Colossians*, 167.

³⁷ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, 159. Also see, John Calvin, *The Epistles to Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, CC, T.H.L. Parker, translator, David W. Torrance, and Thomas F. Torrance, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 322–323; Robert Jameson, Andrew Robert Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 445.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

Pao presents a textual and compositional approach to account for the sudden shift in pronouns, verbs, and objects in Colossians 1:28. He says the inflective shift calls attention to a move from the specific nature of the proclamation and the audience (Gentiles, Colossians, Laodiceans), to the universal nature of the proclamation and the audience (every man). The shift in the ministry is transferred from Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras to include *all* Christians. The recipient of the gospel message shifts from Gentiles, the Laodiceans, and the Colossians, to include “every man.” In Colossians 1:28, Paul points to the proclamation of the gospel to both Jewish and Gentile people as the recipients of God’s work through Christ.³⁹

Reading in light of first-person plural verbs in v. 3, many assume that Paul is primarily referring to his specific coworkers (see vv. 1, 7–8; cf. 4:12–13),⁴⁰ while others entertain the possibility of Paul’s use of the “editorial we” in this context.⁴¹ But both readings fail to explain the sudden appearance of this plural pronoun. It is more likely that Paul is intentionally including all who participate in the proclamation of the gospel message with this pronoun, and this group cannot be limited to those noted in this letter. The awkward repeated emphasis on “everyone” in the subordinate clauses that follow together with the not on “all wisdom” confirms that Paul is making a universal claim. This is also consistent with the reference to “the Gentiles” in v. 27, a group not limited to the Colossians. This universal claim reminds one of early Christian confessions where the universal and absolute claim of the gospel is made (Rom 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 4:13–14; 2 Tim 1:9–10; Titus 3:4–7; cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). In using this pronoun, Paul is situating himself within all those who confess Jesus to be the Christ.⁴²

³⁹ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 133. Although Wright does not demonstrate this view textually in his commentary, he says, “Him we proclaim: ‘these words serve, for Christian preachers and teachers, as a constant reminder of their central calling, not (first and foremost) to comment on current affairs or to alleviate human problems, good and necessary as those activities may be, but to announce that Jesus is Lord.’” See Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, vol. 12 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 97.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., O’Brien, *Colossians–Philemon*, 87; Aletti, *St. Paul Epître aux Colossiens*, 144; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 82.

⁴¹ Moo, *Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 159; cf. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 76.

⁴² Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 131–132.

The focus of the proclamation ministry shifts from the Gentiles, to the Colossians, to the Laodiceans, and then to all those that have not personally seen Paul's face, to include "everyman" in the gospel mission (1:27–2:1). With reference to "the Gentiles" in verse 27, and the emphasis on "every man" in verse 28, the scope of 1:28 goes beyond Paul and his co-laborers to include *all* Christians; and beyond only "the Gentiles" to include the Jewish people in gospel proclamation. Paul is making a universal claim which emphatically exhorts all Christians to participate in the proclamation of the gospel message to both Jewish and Gentile people.

New Testament writers use many linguistic devices to emphasize the importance of a text or discourse. Paul applies linguistic devices that highlight and emphasize the importance of Colossians 1:28 in his letter to the Colossians. He applies inclusio, asyndeton, and inflection in order to frame the text of Colossians 1:28, to set the verse apart within the section of the letter, to add urgency and excitement to the text, and to emphasize the importance of the verse within the literary context of Colossians.

Clauses and Phrases

In addition to the emphatic nature of Colossians 1:28, the verse is composed of a series of four clauses and one noun phrase. A *phrase* is "a group of words that do *not* include both a subject and a verb. A phrase cannot stand alone as a sentence, but is dependent upon the sentence to which it is attached."⁴³ A *clause* is "a group of words forming a sense unit and containing one finite verb."⁴⁴ Clauses are "units of thought

⁴³ Corey Keating. "More Grammatical Terms Related to Greek and English." Accessed March 3, 2018. www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/more_terms.htm.

⁴⁴ Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 9.

forming part of a compound or complex sentence.”⁴⁵ “Each clause normally contains a subject and predicate or a nonfinite verbal form (i.e., either an infinitive or participle).”⁴⁶

There are two types of clauses: independent clauses and dependent clauses.⁴⁷

The first clause, “Him we proclaim” (ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν – 1:28a), is an asyndetic clause that begins with a relative pronoun. The word order is *object* (“Him”– ὃν), *subject* (“we”– ἡμεῖς), and *verb* (“proclaim”– καταγγέλλομεν). The asyndetic nature of the clause, not only, emphasizes the verse, but it also identifies the clause as independent, meaning it can stand alone.⁴⁸ The relative pronoun, “Him” (ὃν), identifies the clause as relative, which points the discourse back to 1:27 and its antecedent, “Christ” (Χριστὸς).⁴⁹ Thus, Colossians 1:28a serves to establish a textual relationship between the *person* and *work* of Christ in 1:1–27, the emphatic proclamation of the person and work of Christ in 1:28, and to the discourse that follows.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 656.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 656.

⁴⁷ Daniel Wallace defines and *independent clause* as “a clause that is *not* subordinate to another clause.” An independent clause “normally has for its nucleus: subject-verb-(object). A coordinating conjunction makes two independent clauses coordinate (paratactic) to each other (thus forming a compound sentence).” Wallace defines a *dependent clause* as “a clause that stands in a substantival or subordinate (hypotactic) relationship to another clause, either an independent clause or another dependent clause.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 657.

David Alan Black says, “Word, phrase, and clause order in New Testament Greek is fairly well-defined, and variations from the norm are often used for purposes of conveying emphasis.” The order, “verb first, then the subject, is a common one in the New Testament and is probably due to the influence of the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament). Frequently, however, the subject comes before the verb, especially when it introduces a new topic or is being contrasted to something else in the near context.” Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 182–183.

⁴⁸ Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 186.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 155–156.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

The second and third clauses (1:28b–28c) are dependent, participial clauses that support the main clause and tell *how* to fulfill the content of 1:28a.⁵¹ The second clause, “admonishing every man” (νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον – 1:28b), like 1:28a, is also asyndetic. The third clause, “and teaching every man” (καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον – 1:28c), is textually related to the second clause by the coordinating conjunction, “and” (καὶ). The prepositional phrase, “in all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφία – 1:28d), elaborates on and describes further *how* the content of 1:28 is carried out.⁵² The fourth clause is a dependent subjunctive clause introduced by the conjunction “so that” (ἵνα), which indicates the purpose or intent of the main verb “proclaim,” and the expressed hope or desire of the action – “so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). The structure of Colossians 1:28 is given below.

Colossians 1:28

Him we proclaim,
 admonishing every man
 and teaching every man
 in all wisdom
 so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

ὄν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν
 νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον
 καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον
 ἐν πάσῃ σοφία,
 ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ·

Why is Paul emphatic about proclaiming Jesus Christ? What are the attributes and characteristics of the person and work of Jesus Christ that call for such a declaration?

What are the threats that endanger the Colossians and motivate Paul’s passionate

⁵¹ Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 187.

⁵² Black, *It’s Still Greek to Me*, 34.

exhortation and enthusiastic instruction? Does Paul give his audience any basis or cause to “proclaim” Jesus Christ? In the literary context of Colossians 1:28 and in the compositional structure of Colossians, “Why do we proclaim Christ?”

Inner-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28

Within the literary context and compositional structure of Colossians 1:28 and the epistle to the Colossians, the in-textual foundation, inspiration, and goal for Paul’s emphatic exhortation is for the spiritual development and maturity of “every man” and introduced by the purpose conjunction, “so that” (ἵνα) in 1:28e.

“so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (1:28e)

“ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ” (1:28e)

On an inner-textual level, however, why does Paul enjoin his audience, “Him we proclaim?” What are the attributes and characteristics of the person and work of Jesus Christ revealed in the letter to the Colossians that inspire such an emphatic exhortation? The answer is found in the inspired letter’s focus on the preeminence of Jesus Christ in the midst of false teachers who are threatening the Colossian’s doctrine and practice. The false teacher’s instruction is centered on human philosophy, false religion, and aesthetic practices. The false teachers and their dogma threaten the true knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, the practice of the spiritual wisdom in all of their relationships, the fulfillment of God’s perfect will for their lives, and the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The preeminence of Jesus Christ in proclamation is revealed in His person and work as the Son of God and third member of the Trinity. The person and work of Jesus Christ is applied to individuals by faith in His finished work and is lived out in every relationship of life through the family, the church, the workplace, the community, and the kingdom of God.

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ in Colossians

The doctrine of God the Son includes both a study of his person and his work.⁵³ The person of Jesus Christ is centered on his deity and on his humanity. The principle *work* of Jesus Christ is the atonement.⁵⁴ Through God the Son, God the Father has provided a way for mankind and all creation to return to a harmonious, communal relationship with God himself, with one another, and with all creation, by His Spirit.⁵⁵ God is reconciling sinners to himself through the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus Christ, and belief in his finished work by faith. The Bible teaches the fact and the necessity of both Jesus Christ's divine nature and his human nature, and the need for atonement.⁵⁶

For the promise of redemption to be fulfilled, the Redeemer of humanity had to be a human being, the offspring of a woman (Gen. 3:15). But for the death of the Redeemer to be effective, that is, of infinite value, he had to be God (see Heb. 9:11–12; 1 Jn. 5:20). Underlying this necessity is the biblical concept of sacrifice: Life must be exchanged for life. The wages of sin is death (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23), but “through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10) Jesus has become “the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 Jn. 2:2). Thus, Jesus Christ is described as having both a human nature and a divine nature. The eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, took upon himself a physical body and a human nature. This is the concept of the Incarnation (“becoming flesh”; cf. Jn. 1: 14).⁵⁷

⁵³ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 273.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁵⁵ *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Atonement.”

⁵⁶ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 58.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

It is precisely Paul’s inspired knowledge and understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ that motivates his enthusiastic exhortation and answers the question: “Why do ‘we’ proclaim Him?”

For Paul, it is the revelation and inspiration of the triune God that illumines his knowledge and understanding of the absolute preeminence and sole sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, as the second member of the triune God, possesses six unique relationships that are revealed in Colossians and thus motivate the Messiah’s proclamation: (1) God the Son has a unique relationship to God the Father; (2) God the Son has a unique relationship to creation; (3) God the Son has a unique relationship to the new creation; (4) God the Son has a unique relationship to redemption; (5) God the Son has a unique relationship to the church; (6) God the Son has a unique relationship to the Kingdom.

Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to God the Father

Jesus Christ is the Son of God – Colossians 1:3, 13

God the Son’s unique relationship to God the Father is revealed in Jesus’ *Sonship*—Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the second member of the Trinity. God is “the Father of our [the] Lord Jesus Christ” (πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – 1:3). Jesus Christ is God’s “beloved Son” (τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ – 1:13). The biblical themes of the *Fatherhood of God* and *Sonship/sonship* are revealed in Scripture. The Fatherhood of God is revealed in six relationships from Scripture: (1) God is the Father of Jesus Christ;⁵⁸ (2) God is the Father of creation;⁵⁹ (3) God is the Father of all

⁵⁸ Matthew 3:17; 11:27; John 1:14, 18; 3:16–17; 8:54; 14:12–13.

⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 8:6; James 1:17.

angels;⁶⁰ (4) God is the Father of all men;⁶¹ (5) God is the Father of Israel;⁶² and (6) God is the Father of believers in Jesus Christ.⁶³ Gentile unbelievers fall under the fourth category.⁶⁴ Jewish unbelievers fall under the fourth and fifth categories.⁶⁵ Gentile believers fall under the fourth and sixth categories.⁶⁶ Jewish believers fall under the fourth, fifth, and sixth categories.⁶⁷ In a unique way, however, Jesus Christ is *the* “Son of God” and that is a prime reason for the Messiah’s proclamation.

The biblical theme of Sonship/sonship is also revealed in Scripture. Man is referred to as “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1–4. In Exodus 4:22, God calls the nation of Israel, “My son.” Regenerate Jewish and Gentile believers are called “sons of God” through faith in Jesus Christ in Galatians 3:26. However, the Messianic title, “Son of God,” is reserved especially for God’s one and only unique Son, the second member of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ.⁶⁸

The title, “Son of God,” refers to Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God who is equal to God the Father.⁶⁹ The title also affirms Jesus’ deity in triune relationship with

⁶⁰ Genesis 6:1–4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7.

⁶¹ Acts 17:29; Ephesians 3:14–15; Hebrews 12:9.

⁶² Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 1:31; 32:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4; Hosea 11:1; Malachi 1:6.

⁶³ Matthew 5:45; 6:6–15; John 1:12; Romans 8:14–16; 1 John 3:1.

⁶⁴ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2016), 808.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 808.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 808.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 808.

⁶⁸ Matthew 3:17; 11:25–30; 17:5; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:35; John 1:34.

⁶⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 547. See Matthew 11:25–30; 17:5; John 1:14, 18, 34, 49; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Hebrews 1:1–3, 5, 8.

God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, and equal to the members of the Godhead in all their attributes.⁷⁰ The designation “Son of God” when applied to Jesus Christ is “a strong and clear claim to full deity.”⁷¹

In Jewish usage the term “Son of ...” did not generally imply any subordination, but rather equality and identity of nature. Thus, Bar Kokba, who led the Jewish revolt 135–132 B.C. in the reign of Hadrian, was called by a name which means “Son of the Star.” It was supposed that he took this name to identify himself as the very Star predicted in Numbers 24:17. The name “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36) doubtless means, “The Encourager.” “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3: 17) probably means “Thunderous Men.” “Son of man,” especially as applied to Christ in Daniel 7:13 and constantly in the New Testament essentially means “The Representative Man.” Thus, for Christ to say, “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36) was understood by His contemporaries as identifying Himself as God, equal with the Father, in an unqualified sense.⁷²

Paul, himself, had a special revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and is now sharing that special revelation with the Colossian saints. The apostle experienced a visual and audible revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:14–18).⁷³ Upon his conversion and calling, Paul spent several days in Damascus with the disciples, and “immediately” began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God” (ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ – Acts 9:19–20). Paul understood Jesus

⁷⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 547.

⁷¹ Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 285.

⁷² J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), 1:105. Quoted in Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 285.

⁷³ The initial account of Paul’s conversion experience is given in Acts 9:1–19. In Acts 22:14–18, Luke records Paul’s personal testimony and the recorded words of Ananias to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Paul describes his experience as that which he had both “seen and heard” (ὃν ἑώρακα καὶ ἤκουσα). In Galatians 1:13, Paul describes his salvation experience and calling into the gospel ministry as “through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ); In Galatians 1:15–16, Paul says, God, through his grace, was “pleased to reveal his Son in me” (ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί).

Christ as the one and only unique *Son of God*. He now reveals and illuminates this truth in his letter to the saints at Colossae.

Colossians 1:3

Paul identifies God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in 1:3: “We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).⁷⁴ In doing so, the apostle, not only establishes the Messiah’s Lordship over believers, but he also immediately establishes the Messiah’s unique relationship to God the Father. Moo says, Paul wants to anchor the person and work of Jesus Christ to God the Father.⁷⁵

Perhaps, in a letter that elevates Christ, Paul wants at the outset to anchor the person of Christ firmly to God the Father. As supreme as Christ is in the work of both creation and redemption, his identity and his work cannot be understood apart from his relationship to God his Father. Indeed, Paul will suggest in a variety of ways in this letter that Christ is himself in some sense God. As a kind of *inclusio* in this section, Paul sounds a similar note in vv. 12–14, attributing the work of rescue and redemption to the Father, who works in and through the Son.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ “θεῷ πατρὶ {C} The reading adopted for the text, although it is rather narrowly supported (B C* 1739 Augustine), appears to account best for the origin of the other readings. In order to avoid the very unusual collocation of words, some copyists inserted τῷ (D* G 2005 Chrysostom) and others inserted καὶ...). (See also the comments on ver. 12 and 3.17). In Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd edition, a companion volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament, 4th revised edition (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 2002), 552.

“θεῷ πατρὶ (to God the Father) {C} The reading in the text has rather narrow manuscript support, but it appears to account best for the origin of the other readings. In order to avoid the very unusual joining of these two nouns, some copyists inserted the definite article τῷ (the) before the noun πατρὶ and others inserted the conjunction καὶ (and) between these two nouns. (See also the comments on vv.12 and 3.17). For reasons of style or grammar in the receptor language, it may be necessary to add the definite article with the noun ‘Father.’ For example, ‘we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (NRSV).” In Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 2006), 410.

For an overview of the text and textual problems of Colossians, see Barth, and Blanke, *Colossians*, 48–56, and Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, 246–273.

⁷⁵ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 83. God is also named the Father of Jesus Christ in Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 1:3; 11:31; Ephesians 1:3, 17; 1 Peter 1:3.

⁷⁶ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 83.

Melick says, “In a sense the focus of the entire epistle rests in this phrase [God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ] since it contains precise details about the relationship between these two members of the Godhead.”⁷⁷ The construction “emphasizes the unique relationship between God and Christ and also demonstrates which concept of God Paul holds.”⁷⁸

Paul believed strongly in one God, the one known in connection with Christ. He also drew attention to the fact that the avenue to and from God is Christ since the Son is the way to the Father... The ultimate source of blessing and the church’s well-being was God who was revealed through Christ.⁷⁹

The identity of Jesus Christ is closely related with God, his Father.⁸⁰ “God can only be designated as ‘our Father’ (πατὴρ ἡμῶν – 1:2) because he is ‘the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.’”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 194.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁸⁰ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 51.

⁸¹ Barth, and Blanke, *Colossians*, 168.

The noun, “father” (πατήρ), appears five times in Colossians; one time in reference to earthly fathers (3:21), and four times in reference to God (1:2, 3, 12; 3:17).⁸² In 1:2, Paul establishes the Fatherhood of God among the Colossians and among all followers of Jesus Christ with the phrase, “from God our Father” (ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν), who is the source of grace and peace. In 1:12, Paul identifies [God] “the Father” (τῷ πατρὶ) as the object of believer’s thanksgiving. God the Father has qualified believers “to share in the inheritance of the saints,” and he has “rescued” believers “from the domain of darkness and transferred” them “to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (1:13). In 3:17, Paul instructs the Colossians to give “thanks” through Jesus Christ to “God the Father” (τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ).

Therefore, Colossians 1:1–3, 1:12 and Colossians 3:17 establish the unique familial relationship between God the Father and God the Son, and between God the Father, God the Son, and fellow believers who themselves are sons and daughters of God

⁸² There are a variety of variant readings for Colossians 2:2. Some variants name “God” (τοῦ θεοῦ) as the “Father” (πατρὸς) of Christ. Omanson says, for 2:2 “τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ” (of God, of Christ) {B}, “There is a bewildering variety of variant readings here. (See the listing and discussion in Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, pp. 236–38). But the reading in the text is plainly to be preferred. It has strong external testimony, and it alone provides an adequate explanation of the other readings as attempts by various copyists to improve the ambiguity of the words τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ.

For reasons of clarity in the receptor language, it may be necessary to add the words ‘that is,’ as some copyists did. Compare ‘the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself’ (NRSV, similarly REB) and ‘the mystery of God, namely, Christ’ (NIV). NJB follows the shorter reading: ‘knowledge of the mystery of God.’ Barth and Blanke (*Colossians*, p. 281) state that all the variants can be explained as paraphrases or modifications of the reading in the text. ‘The number of the variants is probably conditioned by the fact that two interpretations are possible from the original transmission, whose form or specifically whose expression is without parallel in Paul: (1) the mystery of the God of Christ ...; (2) the mystery of God, Christ ...’ In Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 2006), 413–414.

Metzger says, for 2:2 “τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ” {B}, “Among what at first sight seems to be a bewildering variety of variant readings, the one adopted for the text is plainly to be preferred (a) because of strong external testimony (P⁴⁶ B Hilary Pelagius Ps-Jerome) and (b) because it alone provides an adequate explanation of the other readings as various scribal attempts to ameliorate the syntactical ambiguity of τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ. In Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd edition, a companion volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament, 4th revised edition (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 2002), 555.

“in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ – v. 2).⁸³ The Colossian saints are referred to as “faithful brethren” (πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς – v. 2). God the Father is described as “our Father” (θεοῦ πατὴρ ἡμῶν – v.2). God the Father is then described as “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – v. 3).

Jesus Christ is the unique *Son of God*. The familial relationship “in Christ” among “faithful brethren” with God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Spirit is made possible through salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.⁸⁴ At salvation, believers are adopted by God into the Family of God. Adoption is an act of God that places the believer into a permanent and eternal relationship as a fellow member of God’s Family.⁸⁵ Paul uses the term adoption (υἰοθεσία) five times in Scripture. One time he uses the term to refer to the national adoption of Israel (Rom. 9:4; cf. Ex. 4:22). Four times he uses the term to refer to individual believers (Rom. 8:15, 23; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). Through faith in God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Spirit, both Jewish and Gentile people have the opportunity to be forgiven of their sins, born-again as a new creation, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, united with God in Christ, engrafted into Jesus the true vine, adopted into the Family of God, and a recipient with all of the privileges and responsibilities of a child of God. The apostles John and Paul describe this process in John 1:12–13 and Galatians 4:4–7.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (Jn. 1:12–13).

⁸³ Galatians 3:26: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

⁸⁴ Ephesians 2:8–9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it* is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

⁸⁵ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 352.

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God (Gal. 4:4–7).

Colossians 1:13

The second reference to God the Son and his unique relationship to God the Father is revealed in 1:13 with the phrase “the kingdom of His beloved Son” (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ).⁸⁶

The three definite articles identify a particular *Kingdom* (τὴν βασιλείαν), a particular *Son* (τοῦ υἱοῦ), and a particular *Love* (τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ). The genitive case denotes possession. The genitive of “the Son” refers to “the kingdom,” which in this context belongs to Jesus Christ. The importance of Paul’s reference to “the kingdom” is addressed later in the chapter. The genitive of “beloved” (τῆς ἀγάπης) modifies “the Son,”⁸⁷ and describes the love that God the Father has for God the Son.

Paul uses the Greek word “ἀγάπη” translated “love” or “beloved.” “Αγάπη” is a description of the type of love that God the Father has for God the Son. The Son is “characterized by the love that belongs to God.”⁸⁸ The noun is used four additional times in the letter to describe, both, the love the Colossians currently display, and the love they are instructed to display in their lives. Specifically, the “love” the Colossians have for “all of the saints” (1:4); the “love” the Colossians have “in the Spirit” (1:8); the

⁸⁶ Literally translated, “the kingdom of the Son of his love” or “the kingdom of the Son he loves.”

⁸⁷ Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 76.

⁸⁸ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 105.

encouragement believers receive from having been “knit together in love” (2:2); and the kind of “love” that displays itself through the “perfect bond of unity” (3:14).

“Αγάπη” is one of the communicable attributes of God.⁸⁹ God *is* love. “[Love] can only be defined by the nature of God. God does not merely love, he *is* love.”⁹⁰ God the Father loves God the Son. God’s love is directed toward his Son (τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ – 1:13).⁹¹ The love that God the Father has for God the Son is intended to reflect in the lives of the Colossians and is designed to knit them together in perfect unity and harmony (2:2; 3:14–16).

Jesus Christ is the Image of the Invisible Son of God – Colossians 1:15a

A second characteristic of Jesus Christ and his relationship to God the Father that motivates the proclamation of both his person and his work is: Jesus Christ “is the image of the invisible God” (ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου – 1:15a).⁹² As the “Son of

⁸⁹ “Love is from God” (1 John 4:7); “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). “An *attribute* of God is a perfect quality or characteristic that makes him who he is. His attributes characterize him alone. It is because these qualities truly describe him that he is God. An attribute is *incommunicable* when it is true in any sense only of God. There are no analogies to human qualities or character. God’s attributes describe his inner essence. Thus, when we say God is infinite and God is wise, we mean not just that God is infinite and also wise, but that God is infinitely wise. What is true about anyone attribute is true about all the rest.

God’s *incommunicable* attributes include his *Spirituality* (Jn. 3:6–8; 4:24), his *Unity* (Isa. 44:8), his *Eternality* (Ps. 102:25–27), his *Independence*, his *Infinity*, his *Immutability* (Ps. 102:27), and his *Simplicity*. ‘A *communicable* attribute is one in which its qualities and characteristics are true not only of God but in an analogous sense also of human beings. As divine attributes, they are true of God in a perfect and absolute sense.’ God’s *communicable* attributes include his *Will* (Eph. 1:11; Acts 2:23; Ps. 143:10), his *Power* (Ps. 115:3; Rev. 1:8), his *Justice*, his *Goodness* (Ps. 31:19; 73:1), his *Love* (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 5:25), his *Grace*, his *Mercy*, and his *Dominion* (1 Sam. 3:18; Acts 17:25).” Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 27–28.

⁹⁰ *Baker Theological Dictionary*, s.v. “Love,” by Glenn E. Schaffer.

⁹¹ The phrase “My beloved Son” (ἀγαπητός) is applied to God the Son by God the Father at his baptism (Mt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22) and at his transfiguration (Mt. 17:5; Mk. 9:7). Jesus’ transfiguration and the phrase “My beloved Son” are also referred to by the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:17.

⁹² The same phrase in Colossians 1:15a is used to describe Jesus Christ at the end of 2 Corinthians 4:3–4: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, ‘who is the image of God’” (ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ).

God,” Jesus is the eternal Son, the second member of the Trinity, who is equal in nature to God the Father, and therefore, the “image of God.”⁹³

Colossians 1:15–20 is one of the Christological highpoints in all of Scripture.⁹⁴ “Scholars today are virtually unanimous in holding that Paul quotes an early Christian hymn already in use in the early church.”⁹⁵ The verses also have important textual links with messianic sections in Colossians 2:2–3, 9–15, 19 and in Colossians 3:1–4 that form the basis for Paul’s teaching on the person and work of Jesus Christ in his letter. Although most agree the verses comprise an early messianic hymn, they do not all agree on the structure of the hymn.⁹⁶ Some scholars see the section as one unit, others see the hymn consisting of two stanzas, while still others see the hymn composed of three stanzas.

⁹³ Oscar Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., trans. by Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A.M. Hall (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1963), 293.

⁹⁴ “Many interpreters consider all or part of vv. 15–20 to be a hymn which the writer has incorporated into his letter. For this reason, NA26 prints vv. 15–18a in poetic format. NA27, as well as several modern translations (for example, NJB), prints all of vv. 15–20 in poetic format. (For discussions of the structure, literary problems, authorship, and background of this hymn, see Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, pp. 227–46; and MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, pp 65–70.)” in Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, 412.

“The literature on Colossians 1:15–20 is extensive. Perhaps the best English summaries of approaches to this section are R. Martin, *Colossians: Church’s Lord and the Christian’s Liberty* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), 40–55; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 32–42; and E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 41–46. Many other monographs and periodicals discuss the various aspects of this passage as well,” in Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 210.

⁹⁵ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 552. “The terminology ‘hymn’ does not demand that this was sung in the congregational worship. It could mean that it was a poetic, lyrical presentation of theology. The form it takes is didactical, intended to teach in an easily rememberable fashion,” in Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 210; “Part of the reason for calling the passage a hymn lies in the discovery of an unusual vocabulary and elevated style which betrays a rhythmic lilt when the lines are read aloud,” in Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church’s Lord and The Christian’s Liberty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1972), 39–40.

⁹⁶ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 211.

The first major recent analysis done by E. Norden, notes that the hymn consists of two stanzas of unequal length.⁹⁷ Norden's analysis provides not only the incentive to study the passage in a new light but also what remains the basic approach to the structure of the hymn. The two stanzas are vv. 15–18a and vv. 18b–20. The German scholar E. Kasemann agrees with the analysis of Norden, except he asserts that Paul added material distinctive to his theology to a preexisting hymn.⁹⁸ Particularly, he says, the two phrases “the church” and “through the blood of his cross” are Christian additions to a previously existing Gnostic hymn.⁹⁹ Kasemann, thus, sets a precedent for studying the hymn and extracting from it specifically Pauline or Christian elements. Others, such as Lohmeyer, agree with the two basic stanzas analysis but suggest that three lines were inserted.¹⁰⁰ Still others suggest a structure of three stanzas.¹⁰¹

Douglas Moo believes that a three-part structure offers the best analysis of Colossians 1:15–20. He says the section consists of two main stanzas (vv. 15–16, vv. 18b–20) which bracket a transitional stanza (vv. 17–18a) between the two.¹⁰² Eduard Lohse gives a description of a structural outline that is composed of two stanzas for Colossians 1:15–20.

⁹⁷ See E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos, Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956), 250–254.

⁹⁸ See E. Kasemann, “A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy,” *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964), 149–168.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 150–153. He argues that the rest of the hymn makes good sense apart from a Christian interpretation.

¹⁰⁰ See E. Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, und die Kolosser und an Philemon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1953), 40–68.

¹⁰¹ See Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church's Lord and The Christian's Liberty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1972), 44–49, in Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 211.

¹⁰² Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 114–116.

Christological statements about exaltation are introduced twice by the relative “ὅς ἐστιν” (1:15, 18b), and each in turn is followed by a causal clause beginning with “ὅτι” (1:16, 19).” Verses 17 and 18 respectively are joined to the preceding by a “καὶ αὐτός” (“and he...”), and verse 20 is attached by “καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ” (“and through him”). The hymn is concluded by the pleonastic phrase, “making peace by the blood of his cross, through him, whether on earth or in the heavens” (εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι’ αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς). The verses of the hymn contain an impressive number of terms which either do not appear at all elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, or are used otherwise with a different meaning.¹⁰³

Based on Lohse’s description, a structural outline for Colossians 1:15–20 is presented below.

Stanza One – Colossians 1:15–18a

ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,
 πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα
 ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,
 τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα,
εἴτε θρόνοι
εἴτε κυριότητες
εἴτε ἀρχαὶ
εἴτε ἐξουσίαι·
 τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται·
καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων
 καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν,
καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας·

¹⁰³ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 41–42.

Stanza Two – Colossians 1:18b–20

ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,
 ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι
καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν,
 εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι’ αὐτοῦ]¹⁰⁴
εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Stanza One – Colossians 1:15–18a

He is the image of the invisible God,
 the firstborn of all creation.
For by Him all things were created,
both in the heavens and on earth,
 visible and invisible,
 whether thrones
 or dominions
 or rulers
 or authorities
 all things have been created through Him and for Him.
And He is before all things,
 and in Him all things hold together,
And He is also head of the body, the church;

Stanza Two – Colossians 1:18b–20

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
 so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.
For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,
and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,
 having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him,
I say, whether things on earth
 or *whether* things in heaven.

¹⁰⁴ “[δι’ αὐτοῦ] ([through him]) {C} – The phrase δι’ αὐτοῦ in the last part of this verse has good manuscript support, although it is lacking in a variety of other good witnesses. It is probably original and was omitted either accidentally (because a copyist’s eye jumped from the preceding pronoun αὐτοῦ to the end of δι’ αὐτοῦ) or deliberately (because δι’ αὐτοῦ is not needed and is difficult to make sense of). But these words are so difficult that it is hard to think that the author wrote them. To indicate this uncertainty regarding these words, they have been put in brackets. A rather literal translation of this verse reads ‘and through him to reconcile all things to himself, making peace by the blood of his cross, through him (δι’ αὐτοῦ) whether those on earth or those in heaven.’ Among modern English translations, these words in brackets are often not translated” in Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, 412–413.

Although a two-stanza structure is supported by the Greek text, the view that the verses do not appear elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, or they are used elsewhere with a different meaning is *not* supported by either the Greek or the Hebrew text. Colossians 1:15–20 contain inter-textual links with the creation account in Genesis 1, the prophecy of Jesus Christ in Psalm 8 (Heb. 2:6–8), and Jesus as “the first-fruit” in 1 Corinthians 15.

According to Paul’s hymn, Jesus is the ‘image of the invisible God’ (cf. Ge 1:26), the ‘firstborn over all creation.’ The notion of Jesus as the ‘firstborn’ in Ge 1: 1 probably stems from the fact that the Hebrew word for ‘beginning’ can also be translated ‘firstborn,’ as it was frequently understood by Jews. Moreover, when Paul’s hymn says that ‘by him all things were created,’ it shows an awareness that the Hebrew preposition ‘in’ in Ge 1: 1 (‘in the beginning’) can also be rendered as ‘by’; hence, Ge 1:1 can be read as: ‘By the firstborn, God created the heavens and the earth.’ The reference to ‘things in heaven and on earth’ is clearly linked to Ge 1:1, ‘the heavens and the earth,’ and Paul’s all-inclusive terms ‘visible and invisible’ come from the fact that in Ge 1:2, the expressions ‘formless and void’ were interpreted as ‘visible and invisible’ by Jewish interpreters of the Greek OT.

The affirmation that “thrones or powers or rulers or authorities” were created by Christ stems from reading the account of Ge 1 in light of Ps 8:5–6, ‘You crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands.’ The statement that ‘he is before all things’ is derived from linking the traditional reading of Ge 1:1 as ‘in the beginning’ to the homiletical ‘by the firstborn’; thus, if the world was created by the firstborn in the beginning, then he was before all things. Paul then adds, ‘He is the head of the body, the church,’ alluding to the fact that the Hebrew word for ‘beginning’ can also be rendered ‘head’ and was, in fact, also translated that way by early Greek translators. Finally, the same Hebrew word also has the sense of ‘supremacy’; thus, Paul adds, ‘that in everything he might have the supremacy’ (1:18).

Here the hymn leaves off and the allusions to Ge 1:1 cease. The hymn thus gives us a fascinating glimpse into the early church’s understanding of Jesus and the OT.¹⁰⁵

In 1 Corinthians 15:20–23, Paul identifies Jesus Christ as the “first-fruit” (ἀπαρχή).¹⁰⁶

“ἀρχή” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “רֵאשִׁית” and translated “beginning”

¹⁰⁵ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 552–553.

(Gen. 1:1), “first-fruits” (Ex. 34:22), and “first” (Num. 24:20). Therefore, Colossians 1:15–20 can be described as a two-stanza Messianic hymn with inner-textual links with the person and work of Jesus Christ in the letter to the Colossians (2:2–3, 9–15, 19; 3:1–4), and inter-textual relationships with the person and work of Jesus Christ in Genesis 1, Psalm 8 (Heb. 2), and 1 Corinthians 15.¹⁰⁷ Composed within Colossians 1:15–20 are some of the most profound and sweeping statements about Jesus Christ in relationship to deity, to creation, to redemption, to the new creation, to the church, and to the kingdom. Jesus, as “the image of the invisible God,” relates to his deity.

Verse 15a opens with the relative clause, “ὅς ἐστίν,” translated “He is,” and refers to Jesus Christ, God’s “beloved Son” from verse 13. Jesus Christ is not only God’s “beloved Son,” He is now described as the “image of the invisible God.” God the Son’s relationship to God the Father is revealed in his “image” as that of the invisible God.

The verb “ἐστίν” is a “timeless” present.¹⁰⁸ It is also referred to as a gnomic present and is used to “make a statement of a general, timeless fact. The action or state

¹⁰⁶ Most popular English translations of the Greek New Testament translate “ἀπαρχή” in 1 Corinthians 15:20–23 as “first-fruits,” however the term is a singular feminine noun (KJV, NKJ, ESV, NASB, NIV).

¹⁰⁷ In addition, see Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008); W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948); Gary Anderson, “The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 1 (January, 1990), 21–29; C.F. Burney, “Christ as the ἀρχή of Creation (Prov. viii 22, Col. 1:15–18, Rev. 3:14),” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 27, no. 106 (January, 1926), 160–177.

¹⁰⁸ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 39.

continues without time limits.”¹⁰⁹ Jesus Christ “always has been, is, and always will be the image of God.”¹¹⁰

The word “εἰκὼν” translated “image” is found sixty-five times in the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament. It is recorded two times in Colossians (1:15; 3:10). The term is used to refer to mankind (Gen. 1:26–27), to graven images (Dt. 4:16), to images on coins (Mt. 22:20), to the “beast” who seeks to replace God (Rev. 13:14–15), to followers of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29), to God himself (Col. 3:10), and to Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15). Although “εἰκὼν” is anarthrous, it is translated as definite (the image) because a predicate noun after “εἶμι” at times lacks an article.¹¹¹ A Greek noun “may be definite without the article” and stresses the “qualitative aspect of the noun rather than on its identity or particularity.”¹¹²

God is Spirit. No one has ever seen God.¹¹³ Yet, Jesus Christ is the “image of God” (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ),¹¹⁴ “the radiance” (ἀπαύγασμα) of God’s “glory” (δόξα), and “the exact representation of His nature” (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ).¹¹⁵ *Image* refers to

¹⁰⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 523. In addition, see James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of the New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979), 79–80; Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 208–17; James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 3:63; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 8; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 866ff. The special use of the present tense is usually either assumed, without comment, or ignored by commentators.

¹¹⁰ Vaughn, *Colossians*, 181.

¹¹¹ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 39.

¹¹² Black, *It’s Still Greek to Me*, 76–77.

¹¹³ Exodus 33:17–23; John 1:18; 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16.

¹¹⁴ Colossians 1:15.

¹¹⁵ Hebrews 1:3.

Jesus' deity, his preexistence, and to his Sonship.¹¹⁶ God the Son is the exact likeness and perfect representation of God the Father.

“Image” [εἰκὼν] always supposes a *prototype* from which it is drawn: *the exact counterpart*, as the reflection of the sun in the water; the child as the living image of the parent. ‘Likeness’ [ὁμοίωμα] implies mere *resemblance*, not the exact *counterpart* and *derivation*; hence it [likeness] is nowhere applied to the Son, whilst “image” is (1 Cor. 11:7; Jn. 1:18; 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16; 6:16; Heb. 1:3). Before His incarnation He was the image of the invisible God, as the Word (Jn. 1:1–3) by whom God created the world, and by whom God appeared to the patriarchs, His *essential* character as *always* “the image of God—(1) before the incarnation, (2) in the days of His flesh, and (3) now in His glorified state—is the image of God.”¹¹⁷

Paul adds to his audience's understanding of Jesus as the “image of the invisible God” in 1:19 and 2:9.

Colossians 1:19

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (ESV)
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

Colossians 2:9

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (NASB)
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς,

Both verses begin with the phrase “For in Him” (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ), contain the phrase “all the fullness” (πλήρωμα), and employ the term “dwell” (κατοικέω). “ὅτι” is a *causal conjunction*. In both verses, Paul points to the full deity of Christ. The placement of “in Him” (ἐν αὐτῷ) at the beginning of both clauses emphasize the significance of the Christological principle.¹¹⁸ Colossians 1:15a, 19, and 2:9 reveal the deity of Christ and

¹¹⁶ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, vol. 35 in *The New American Commentary*, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 118.

¹¹⁷ Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 3, part 2, Acts – Roman (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 441.

¹¹⁸ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 161.

the incarnation in the context of the Son's person and work in creation, redemption, the new creation, the church, and in the defense of the gospel.¹¹⁹

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the second member of Trinity, and the incarnate Word – the very *essence* of God revealed in human flesh. This is the second characteristic of Jesus Christ and his relationship to God the Father that motivates the proclamation of both his person and his work.

Jesus Christ is God's Mystery – Colossians 1:25–27; 2:2–3; 4:3

A third characteristic of Jesus Christ in his relationship to God the Father that motivates the proclamation of both his person and his work is: Jesus Christ is “God's mystery” (τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ – 2:2).

The word “mystery” (μυστηρίου) appears thirty-six times in the Septuagint and the New Testament,¹²⁰ appearing four times in Colossians.¹²¹ The word is used in the Septuagint only in Daniel chapter two with reference to the prophet's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's first dream. The dream is a mystery whose interpretation was revealed to Daniel in a night vision of what will take place “in the latter days” (2:28).¹²² It is God who reveals “mysteries” (μυστήριον – 2:28) and he has made known to Daniel “what will take place” (2:29).

Nebuchadnezzar's dream is of a series of earthly kingdoms that will one day be destroyed. God will crush the earthly kingdoms and set up a kingdom that “will never be

¹¹⁹ Colossians 1:15b–18, 20; 2:6–8, 10–15.

¹²⁰ Daniel 2:18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47; Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Romans 11:25; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Timothy 3:9, 16; Revelation 1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7.

¹²¹ Colossians 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3.

¹²² Lit: “in the last days” (ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν).

destroyed” and will “endure forever” (2:44). God has made known this dream, its interpretation, and what will take place “in the future” (2:45). The “dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy” (2:45). In Daniel, the “mystery” is God’s plan to defeat all earthly kingdoms and to establish his own eternal Kingdom.

In the New Testament, in the synoptic Gospels, Jesus also refers to the “mystery” as that of “the Kingdom of God” promised in the Old Testament prophetic literature and presented in a series of parables.¹²³ Paul uses the term “mystery” to refer either to the entire gospel or to one element of the gospel program.¹²⁴ “Mystery” in Paul’s writings can refer to: (1) the “partial hardening” of the Jewish people to the gospel “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;”¹²⁵ (2) to the revelation of the gospel, Jesus Christ, and the inclusion of the Gentiles in the plan of God;¹²⁶ (3) to the gospel, Jesus Christ, and the Kingdom of God;¹²⁷ (4) to the resurrection from the dead;¹²⁸ (5) to the will of God;¹²⁹ (6) to Jesus Christ and the church;¹³⁰ (7) to lawlessness;¹³¹ (8) to faith;¹³² and (9) to godliness.¹³³ John, in Revelation, uses the term “mystery” to refer to “the seven stars;”¹³⁴

¹²³ Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10

¹²⁴ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 129.

¹²⁵ Romans 11:25.

¹²⁶ Romans 16:25–27; Ephesians 3:3–9.

¹²⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:1, 7; 4:1; Ephesians 6:19.

¹²⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:51.

¹²⁹ Ephesians 1:9.

¹³⁰ Ephesians 5:32.

¹³¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

¹³² 1 Timothy 3:9.

¹³³ 1 Timothy 3:16.

the person and work of God;¹³⁵ and the writing on the woman’s head.¹³⁶ The word, “mystery,” appears four times in Colossians. In all four examples, the word itself and the truth it embodies are textually linked to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:25–27

God’s mystery is inner-textually linked to “the word of God” (1:25), the inclusion of “the Gentiles” in the plan of God (1:26), and the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ in the Gentiles (1:27). “The mystery stands in apposition to ‘the word of God’ in the preceding clause, and as such it explains the content of this ‘word.’”¹³⁷ The mystery has been hidden from “*past* ages and generations but has now been manifested to His saints” (1:26). The terms “hidden” (ἀποκρύπτω) and “manifested” (φανερώω) are concepts inherent in the term “mystery.” “Mystery” in Scripture denotes in general “a divine truth unknowable” by man apart from “revelation.”¹³⁸ The mystery was “once hidden” but is now “disclosed in the gospel” and “embodied in the person of Christ.”¹³⁹ The aspect of the “mystery” revealed in Christ that presents Gentile inclusion in the plan of God is inter-textually linked to Paul’s writings in Romans 11:25 and Ephesians 3:1–7.

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom. 11:25);

¹³⁴ Revelation 1:20.

¹³⁵ Revelation 10:7.

¹³⁶ Revelation 17:5, 7.

¹³⁷ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 128.

¹³⁸ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 62.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. (Eph. 3:1–7).

Having identified the recipients of the “mystery,” Paul now identifies the content of God’s mystery as the indwelling presence of Christ in Gentile believers—”Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης – 1:27). As with “the word of God” (1:25) and the “mystery” (1:26), “Christ in you” and “the hope of glory” also stand in apposition to one another.¹⁴⁰ It is the very indwelling presence of Jesus Christ in the person of Gentile believers that guarantees their hope of future glory.

Biblical “hope” is “the anticipation of a favorable outcome under God’s guidance.”¹⁴¹ It means “to expect something beneficial in the future;”¹⁴² particularly with “reference to the fulfillment of God’s promises.”¹⁴³ The hope “laid up” for the Colossians “in heaven” is the basis for their faith in Christ and their love for the saints (1:4–5). Hope awaits future consummation (1:5). This hope was revealed to the Colossians in “the word of truth, the gospel” (1:5). For this reason, Paul encourages the Colossians not to be “moved away from the hope of the gospel” (1:23). In Colossians 1:27, “hope” is linked to the person and work of Christ and to future glory. To the “glory of this mystery” is

¹⁴⁰ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 131.

¹⁴¹ Bert Dominy, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “hope.”

¹⁴² William B. Nelson, Jr., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “hope.”

¹⁴³ Dominy, *Holman*, s.v. “hope.”

assigned great wealth and riches (1:27). In the future, when Christ is revealed, then the Colossians will also be revealed with Christ in glory (3:4). The consummation of the believer's future hope of glory is secure because of the indwelling presence of Christ and believer's union with Christ.

Colossians 2:2–3

God's "mystery" is inner-textually linked to the person and work of Jesus Christ himself—"God's mystery, *that is, Christ Himself*" (2:2).¹⁴⁴ Paul's desire for all believers in 2:2 is twofold: (1) For their hearts to be encouraged having been knit together in love; (2) For them to attain to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding that leads to a true knowledge of "God's mystery, Christ" (τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ). For in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3). There is great spiritual wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding and a true knowledge of God's mystery—Christ. "In Him" (ἐν ᾧ) are hidden "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:2–3).

The apostle's prayerful desire and the relationship between true knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and understanding have already been expressed in Paul's letter (1:9). The Christian is also "being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the

¹⁴⁴ τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ (of God, of Christ) {B} "There is a bewildering variety of variant readings here. (See the listing and discussion in Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, pp. 236–38). But the reading in the text is plainly to be preferred. It has strong external testimony, and it alone provides an adequate explanation of the other readings as attempts by various copyists to improve the ambiguity of the words τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ. For reasons of clarity in the receptor language, it may be necessary to add the words "that is," as some copyists did.

Compare "the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself" (NRSV, similarly REB) and "the mystery of God, namely, Christ" (NIV). NJB follows the shorter reading: "knowledge of the mystery of God." Barth and Blanke (*Colossians*, p. 281) state that all the variants can be explained as paraphrases or modifications of the reading in the text. "The number of the variants is probably conditioned by the fact that two interpretations are possible from the original transmission, whose form or specifically whose expression is without parallel in Paul: (1) the mystery of the God of Christ ...; (2) the mystery of God, Christ ..." in Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, 413–414.

One who created him” (3:10). The Christocentric theme of Colossians continues to develop as Paul affirms the preeminence of Christ. Jesus Christ is the source and the embodiment of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Christians have access to the treasures of godly wisdom and knowledge because they are in union with Christ and Christ dwells in them. In addition to 1:15–20, Colossians 2:3 is a Christological high point in the letter. It expresses beautifully the Christological point that Paul is making in his letter: Christ is the one in whom is found *all* that one needs in order to understand spiritual reality and to lead a life pleasing to God.¹⁴⁵

Colossians 4:3

God’s mystery, “the mystery of Christ,” is now inner-textually linked to prayer, the Word of God, and to the content of the spoken message of the gospel. Paul prays regularly for the Colossians (1:3, 9). Now he exhorts his readers to pray for himself and for his fellow ministers (4:2). He encourages the Colossians to pray that God will open a door for them so “the word” can be spoken or proclaimed (τοῦ λόγου λαλῆσαι – 4:3).

As in 1:25–27 and 2:2, God’s *mystery* is textually linked to the “word of God” and the person and work of Jesus Christ. Two new elements are added to the ministry and knowledge of God’s mystery in 4:3, that of *prayer* and *proclamation*. Here the emphasis falls upon the dynamic, personal, revelatory character of the Word.¹⁴⁶ The “mystery of Christ” is the content of Paul’s preaching (1:25–26). Thus, “mystery” can be understood as a technical term for the biblical message of salvation that unites both Jewish and Gentile believers together in union with Jesus Christ. The apostolic preaching is uniquely

¹⁴⁵ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 169.

¹⁴⁶ O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 239.

described in 4:4 as “the proclamation of divine revelation” (φανερῶσω).¹⁴⁷ Nowhere else does Paul use the term “to make known” or “to reveal” to describe his preaching.¹⁴⁸

God’s “mystery,” as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ in Colossians, encompasses the content of Scripture (1:25–26), the inclusion of the Gentiles in the plan of God (1:26), the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ in the Gentile (1:27), the Messiah himself (2:2), and the revelatory content of preaching (4:3). So powerful, transforming, and complete is God’s mystery in Christ, that he requests is prayer, so a door will be opened for proclamation of the mystery of Christ (4:2–4).

Jesus Christ is Seated at the Right Hand of God – Colossians 3:1

A fourth characteristic of Jesus Christ in his relationship to God the Father that motivates the proclamation of both his person and his work is: Jesus Christ is “seated at the right hand of God” (ὁ Χριστός ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος).¹⁴⁹ The preeminence of Jesus Christ introduced in 1:15–20 is further developed in 3:1. In this verse, both Jesus’ resurrection (3:1a) and his ascension (3:1b) are both presupposed and assumed.¹⁵⁰ The phrase “right hand of God” (δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ) is used eight times in the

¹⁴⁷ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 165.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁴⁹ “Where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” can be taken in two ways, and each option depends on the relationship between the indicative verb “is” (ἐστὶν) and the participle “seated” (καθήμενος). Some take both together as a periphrastic construction, expressing one verbal idea: “where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (TNIV; cf. KJV, NAB, NLT, TEV). In light of the intervening prepositional phrase (“at the right hand of God”), which can modify either the auxiliary verb or the participle, (a prepositional phrase that modifies the auxiliary verb rules out the possibility of this being a periphrastic participle), it is more plausible that Paul is expressing two verbal ideas: “where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (NRSV, NIV; cf. ASV, NASB, NJB, NKJV, REB, NLT, NET, HCSB, ESV), in Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 211; cf. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 394–395; Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 120; Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, *Matthew–Revelation*, vol. 3, 451; Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, 209; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 133; Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 247; O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 158; Seitz, *Colossians*, 149.

New Testament and refers to the resurrected, exalted, and glorified Christ at the right hand of God the Father in heaven.¹⁵¹ When used in reference to the Messiah, the phrase “My right hand” is used eight times in Scripture, also referring to the exalted Christ.¹⁵² Scholars have long identified an inter-textual link between Colossians 3:1 and Psalm 110:1 (Ps. 109:1, LXX), the most frequently quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament.¹⁵³

Psalm 109:1, LXX

εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου
κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου
ἕως ἄν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου
ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου

Colossians 3:1

οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστίν
ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ
καθήμενος

Psalm 110:1

The Lord says to my Lord
“sit at My right hand
until I make Your enemies
a footstool for Your feet.”

Colossians 3:1

where Christ is seated,
at the right hand of God.

The two texts share three words in common. The identity of the person behind the possessive pronoun “My” (μου – Ps. 109:1, LXX) is God.¹⁵⁴ Paul replaces the pronoun with its clear referent, “God” (τοῦ θεοῦ) in Colossians 3:1.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 120.

¹⁵¹ Mark 16:19; 14:62 (“at the right hand of power”) Acts 2:33; 7:55, 56; Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 10:12; 1 Peter 3:22.

¹⁵² Psalm 16:8; 110:1; Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:25, 34; Hebrews 1:13.

¹⁵³ Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 394; Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* 132; Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 203–205; David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Atlanta, GA: The Society of Biblical Literature, 1989), 99–100; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 133; McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 292; Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 280–281; Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 247; O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 161–163; Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 211; Pokorny, *Colossians*, 159; Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 174; Seitz, *Colossians*, 149; Wall, *Colossians and Philemon*, 133; Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 136.

¹⁵⁴ Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, 219.

Psalm 110 is quoted or alluded to thirty-three times in Scripture making it the most frequently quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament.¹⁵⁶ Psalm 110 (Ps. 109, LXX) describes an eternal king (Ps. 110:1–3, 5–7) and an eternal priest on the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4) who will fulfill God’s promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 to raise up one of his descendants through whom God will build “a house” (2 Sam. 7:11), establish a throne (2 Sam. 7:13), and establish an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:13). In addition to being one of David’s sons (1 Chron. 17:11), this person will also be God’s Son (1 Chron. 17:13); and God will not take his covenant love (ἔλεος) away from him as he took it away from other Davidic kings before him (1 Chron. 17:13). Like Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18), the Son of God and the Son of David will also be a king-priest who will not only eternally *rule* but will also eternally *intercede* on behalf of his people.

In the context of Jesus’ teaching on the Scriptures, the power of God, and the resurrection, Jesus asked the Pharisees and scribes, “How *is it that* they say the Christ is David’s son?

Then He said to them, “How *is it that* they say the Christ is David’s son? For David himself says in the book of Psalms, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.’ Therefore, David calls Him ‘Lord,’ and how is He his son?” (Lk. 20:41–44)

Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 and showed that David himself called the Messiah his Lord (τῷ κυρίῳ μου – Lk. 20:42). The Christ could not, therefore, merely be *David’s* son, but, must be the Son of God, the Son of David, the eternal King, and the eternal Priest

¹⁵⁵ Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, 219.

¹⁵⁶ Matthew 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42–43; 22:69; Acts 2:33; 34–35; 5:31; 7:55–56; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 8, 11, 15–17; 7:21, 24–25, 28; 8:1; 10:12–13; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 3:21; in David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1989), 163–166.

spoken of by David in Psalm 110. David Hay summarizes the preeminence of Jesus Christ in Psalm 110 and in the verses New Testament references.

The meaning of each quotation or allusion emerges only through study of its literary context and the particular function or functions that it has there. Yet all these functions can be readily grouped into four major categories: expressions of the idea that Jesus or Christians sit at God's right hand, the use of the psalm to support particular Christological titles, its use to affirm the subjection of powers to Christ, and its employment regarding his heavenly intercession or priesthood. Further, all these functions may be collapsed into one: early Christians chiefly employed the psalm to articulate the supreme glory, the divine transcendence, of Jesus, through whom salvation was mediated. It was primarily used as a symbol not of his saving work but of his ultimate status.¹⁵⁷

Colossians 3:1–4 speaks of the believer's union with God the Son and God the Father. Christians “have been raised up with Christ” (συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ – 3:1a), “where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος – 3:1c). They have “died” (ἀπεθάνετε – 3:3) and their life “is hidden with Christ in God” (ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ – 3:3). When Jesus Christ is revealed, every believer will also “be revealed with Him in glory” (ὕμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ – 3:4b).

The image of the resurrected, exalted, and glorified Christ, “seated at the right hand of God” (3:1), speaks intentionally about Christ's deity, position, authority, royal descent, kingship, priesthood; and about his power to justify, sanctify, glorify, intercede, and reign over his people and his kingdom. The reality of the resurrected, exalted, and glorified Christ, “seated at the right hand of God,” is a fourth reason why Jesus Christ is proclaimed.

Jesus Christ has a unique relationship with God the Father that motivates the proclamation of both his person and his work in Colossians: (1) Jesus Christ is the Son of

¹⁵⁷ Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand*, 155.

God (1:3, 13); (2) Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God (1:15a); (3) Jesus Christ is God's Mystery (1:26–27; 2:2–3; 4:3); and (4) Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God (3:1). Together these characteristics describe the Son of God's deity, his unity with God the Father and God the Spirit, his humanity, his power to unite both Jewish and Gentile believers together as fellow heirs in the promises of God, and his power to justify, sanctify, glorify, intercede, and reign over his people in his kingdom forever.

Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to the Creation

A second unique relationship revealed in Colossians that motivates the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his person and work is his relationship to the creation. In Colossians 1:15–17, Paul makes five statements that describe Jesus Christ's unique relationship to creation.

- Jesus Christ is “the firstborn of all creation” (1:15b)
- In Jesus Christ “all things were created” (1:16a)
- “All things” have been “created through” Jesus Christ and “for” Jesus Christ (1:16f)
- Jesus Christ is “before all things” (1:17a)
- “In” Jesus Christ “all things hold together” (1:17b)

Jesus Christ is “The Firstborn of All Creation” – Colossians 1:15b

It has already been said that within Colossians 1:15–20 are some of the most profound and sweeping statements about Jesus Christ in all of Scripture. In 1:15–17, Paul makes five statements about Jesus Christ in relationship to creation, demonstrating “an elaborate exposition of the first word in Genesis (בְּרֵאשִׁית – *bereshit*) [“in the beginning”]

and interpreting (רֵשִׁית – *reshit*) [“beginning”] as referring to Christ.”¹⁵⁸ In the first statement, Paul says, Jesus Christ is “the firstborn of all creation” (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως).

“Firstborn” (πρωτότοκος) is used to refer to Jesus Christ in five verses in the New Testament.¹⁵⁹ The prefix “πρῶτος” (first) may be used in a temporal sense or in a hierarchical sense.¹⁶⁰ The temporal sense of the prefix can be translated “he was born before all creation” while the hierarchical sense can be translated “the begotten One is superior to all creation.”¹⁶¹ It is in the later sense the term is defined in Colossians 1:15b. The term “begotten” does not refer to the incarnation of Jesus in Bethlehem, but to the unique relationship that Jesus has with God as the eternal Son and heir of the heavenly Father.¹⁶² Jesus Christ is preeminent over all creation.

The preeminence of Christ is asserted with the use of two descriptive terms. The adjectives “πᾶς” and “πάντοτε” and their various forms are found thirty-nine times in Colossians.¹⁶³ The terms in their different forms can refer to “totality” with a focus on individual components (each, every, any) or any “entity out of a totality” (any and every, every).¹⁶⁴ It can also be used as a “marker of the highest degree” (all) or pertaining “to a

¹⁵⁸ C. F. Burney, “Christ as the ἀρχὴ of Creation,” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 27, no. 106 (January 1926): 160.

¹⁵⁹ Colossians 1:15, 18; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 1:15. πρωτότοκος is also used in Luke 2:7, but in a different setting.

¹⁶⁰ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translators Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1977), 22.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁶³ Colossians 1:3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11 (2x), 15, 16 (2x), 17 (2x), 18, 19, 20, 23, 28 (3x); 2:2, 3, 9, 10, 13, 19, 22; 3:8, 11 (2x), 14, 16, 17, 20, 22; 4:6, 7, 9, 12 (2x).

¹⁶⁴ Louw and Nida, s.v. “πάντοτε.”

high degree of completeness or wholeness (whole, all).¹⁶⁵ The adjectives are used twelve times to describe the totality, the degree, and the completeness of Jesus Christ's person and work.

- Jesus Christ is the firstborn of “all” (πάσης) creation (1:15b).
- In Jesus Christ “all” (πάντα) things were created (1:16a).
- “All” (πάντα) things have been created through Jesus Christ and for Him (1:16f).
- Jesus Christ is before “all” (πάντων) things (1:17a).
- In Jesus Christ “all” (πάντα) things hold together (1:17b).
- Jesus Christ will come to have first place in “everything” (πᾶσιν – 1:18)
- In Jesus Christ “all” (πᾶν) the fullness of God dwells in bodily form (1:19; 2:9).
- God has reconciled “all” (πάντα) things to himself through Jesus Christ (1:20).
- In Jesus Christ are hidden “all” (πάντες) the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3).
- Jesus Christ is the head over “all” (πάσης) rule and authority (2:10).
- In Jesus Christ “all” (πάντα) our transgressions are forgiven (2:13).
- The “entire” (πᾶν) church experiences nourishment and growth from Jesus Christ (2:19).
- Jesus Christ is “all” (πάντα) and in all (πᾶσιν) (3:11).

Colossians 1:15b is the first verse that applies the adjective to the person and work of Jesus Christ. C.F. Burney develops the inter-textual link between Colossians

¹⁶⁵ BDAG, s.v. “πᾶς.”

1:15–18, Genesis 1:1, the term applied to “wisdom” in Proverbs 8:22, and the “Master workman” (אָמֹן – amon) in Proverbs 8:30.¹⁶⁶

Genesis 1:1a

In the beginning God

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים

ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς

Proverbs 8:22a

The Lord begot me in the beginning

יְהוָה הִנֵּנִי רֵאשִׁית

κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν

Proverbs 8:30a

I was beside Him
as a master workman

וְאִנִּי אֶצֶד לְיָמֹן

ἤμην παρ’ αὐτῷ ἀρμόζουσα

Colossians 1:15b

The firstborn of all creation
πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως

Colossians 1:16a

In Him all things were created
ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα

Colossians 1:16f

All things have been created through Him
τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ...ἔκτισται

Colossians 1:18b

He is the beginning
ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχὴ

Many English versions of the Hebrew Bible translate the word (כָּנָה – kana) in Proverbs 8:22 as “possessed,”¹⁶⁷ or “created.”¹⁶⁸ A study of the word from the Hebrew Bible, however, shows the root meaning of (כָּנָה – kana) is that of “acquiring”¹⁶⁹ something not formerly possessed; that which may be attained through “purchasing,”

¹⁶⁶ Burney, “Christ as the ἀρχὴ of Creation,” 160–177.

¹⁶⁷ ESV; KJV; NKJV; NASB.

¹⁶⁸ CEB; NET; NRSV; RSV.

¹⁶⁹ CSB.

“buying” or “making;”¹⁷⁰ in the case of a child by “begetting;”¹⁷¹ or to be “brought forth.”¹⁷² In the case of wisdom, by “accumulating” it through mental application.¹⁷³ In addition to a textual study, Burney analyzes the meaning of the term (כָּנָה – kana) from cognate languages;¹⁷⁴ from the meaning attached to verbs descriptive of the production of “wisdom” in Proverbs 8:23–25;¹⁷⁵ from a rabbinic Jewish understanding of Proverbs 8:22;¹⁷⁶ from a Church father’s interpretation;¹⁷⁷ and from other language versions of the Hebrew text;¹⁷⁸ to demonstrate a more complete understanding of the verb. Burney paraphrases Paul’s words in Colossians 1:15–18 to illustrate how his argument developed.

Christ is *the First-begotten of all creation*, for it is written (Prov. 8:22 ff), ‘The Lord begat Me as *reshith* of His way, the antecedent of His works,

¹⁷⁰ CJB; HCSB; ISV.

¹⁷¹ NABRE.

¹⁷² NIV.

¹⁷³ Burney, “Christ as the ἀρχὴ of Creation,” 162.

¹⁷⁴ Aramaic and Syriac (to “gathered property, riches, or treasure”); Arabic (“to acquire”); Sabeian (“to dedicate, i.e. cause to acquire”); Ethiopic (to “acquire, purchase”); Babylonian (“the owning of wealth ‘acquired’ during a period of prosperity”), *Ibid.*, 163–164.

¹⁷⁵ Proverbs 8:23–25, *NASB*, “From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills I was brought forth;” *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁷⁶ The Wisdom of Ben-Sira: The Book of Ecclesiasticus 1:4, “created me at the beginning of His way;” Ecclesiasticus 1:9, “I was poured out;” Ecclesiasticus 24:8–9, “Wisdom speaks;” Philo *De Ebrietate* 8, translation of Proverbs 8:23a, LXX, “the very first of His works;” Proverbs 8:23, LXX, “I was set up” and translated by Burney as, “I was woven;” Ibn Ezra follows Rashi’s interpretation of the verb (כָּנָה – kana) in accordance with the use in Genesis 4:19, 22, “create;” Rabbi Levi ben-Gershom interprets (כָּנָה – kana) as “created me” and explains the passage as “Wisdom was created prior to the other works of God;” *Ibid.*, 169–170.

¹⁷⁷ Eusebius refers to Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion; Epiphanius, who mentions the rendering of Aquila; Basil; Gregory of Nyssa; and Jerome, who was the first of the fathers to apply original Hebrew; *Ibid.*, 170–173.

¹⁷⁸ The renderings of Proverbs 8:22 in principle ancient versions: LXX, Peshitta, Targums, and Vulgate, *Ibid.*, 168–169.

from of old. From eternity was I wrought ... when there were no deeps was I brought forth.' This passage has obvious connection with Gen. 1:1, where it is written '*Bereshit*' God created the heavens and the earth.' Now the force of the preposition *be* attached to *reshit* may be interpreted as 'In' ('In *reshit* God created'); hence IN HIM *were created all things in the heavens and upon the earth, seen and unseen, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers.*

But again, the preposition may bear the sense 'By' ('By the agency of *reshit*'); hence *all things were created THROUGH HIM*. Yet again it may be interpreted 'Into' ('Into *reshit*'); from which it follows that creation tends INTO HIM as its goal. Passing on to the substantive *reshit*, we note that it ordinarily bears the sense 'BEGINNING;' hence Christ is *BEFORE all things*. It may also have the meaning of 'SUM-TOTAL;' so that *all things ARE SUMMED UP IN HIM*. Yet another meaning is 'Head,' i.e. *He is the Head of the body, namely, the Church*. Lastly, it means 'FIRST-FRUITS;' *He is FIRST-FRUITS, first-begotten of the dead*. Hence it follows that *in all senses He is the Fulfiller of the meaning of reshith* (πρωτεύων – [first place in everything]).¹⁷⁹

Jesus Christ fulfills every meaning drawn out of the term "Reshit" – "...so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything" (ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων – Col. 1:18d).¹⁸⁰

Paul also develops the relationship between Christ and wisdom in Colossians and 1 Corinthians. In Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col.

¹⁷⁹ Burney, "Christ as the ἀρχὴ of Creation," 175.

¹⁸⁰ "We may notice that several of the Fathers adopt the interpretation of *bereshit* in Genesis 1:1 as referring to Christ. We find it in Origen, *Homily I on the Pentateuch*, the opening of which runs thus in the translation of Rufinus: 'In principio creavit Deus coelum et terram.' Quod est omnium principium nisi Dominus noster et Saluator omnium Christus Jesus, 'primogenitus omnis creaturae'? In hoc ergo principio, hoc est in Verbo suo, 'Deus coelum et terram fecit,' sicut et Evangelista Ioannes in initio Euangelii sui ait, dicens: 'In principio erat verbum.' Non ergo hic temporale aliquod principium dicit, sed 'in principio,' id est in Salvatore, factum esse dicit coelum et terram et omnia quae facta sunt.' St. Ambrose (*Hexameron* I iv 15) and St. Augustine (*De Genesi ad litteram* I 2) also has the same interpretation.

Another New Testament allusion to Prov. 8:22 in reference to Christ is found in Revelation 3:14 'ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ,' a title of the risen Christ which Dr. Swete and Dr. Charles have not a shadow of authority for limiting in meaning to '*the Source* of God's creation.' There is every reason to suppose that 'ἀρχὴ' is here used with all the fullness of meaning which St. Paul extracts from *reshit* – Beginning, Sum-total, Head, First-fruits. This at any rate fits in with the statement of Rev. 21:6, [I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end] 'ἐγὼ [εἰμι] τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὰ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος;' Ibid., 176–177.

2:3). Paul describes Jesus Christ as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). Jesus Christ became “wisdom from God” for believers (1 Cor. 1:30).

Paul demonstrates the importance of a careful analysis of the text and meditation on the Hebrew Scriptures to inter-textually link the creative power of God and his Messiah in Genesis 1:1, Proverbs 8:22, 30, and 1 Corinthians to reveal the creative power of God through Christ in Colossians 1:15–18.

In Christ “All Things were Created” – Colossians 1:16a

Christ’s preeminence over creation is indicated in 1:16 by several linguistic features: (1) the “strong”¹⁸¹ causal use of the conjunction “ὅτι;” (2) the phrases, “in Him (ἐν αὐτῷ), “through Him (δι’ αὐτοῦ), and “for Him (εἰς αὐτόν); (3) the aorist, passive, indicative “ἐκτίσθη” (“were created”); (4) the perfect, passive, indicative “ἔκτισται” (“have been created”); and (5) the phrase “all things” (τὰ πάντα).

The conjunction “ὅτι” links verses 15 and 16. Jesus Christ is “the firstborn of all creation” *for* or *because* (ὅτι) “in Him all things were created” (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα).¹⁸² The passive form of “κτίζω” (were created – ἐκτίσθη) signifies that God the Father is the Creator through God the Son.¹⁸³ The realm of God’s creation through Jesus Christ is illustrated with an elaborate merism that describes the sum total Christ’s ministry – “in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.”

¹⁸¹ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 40.

¹⁸² Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 90.

¹⁸³ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 49.

Colossians 1:16a contains the phrase “in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ). The phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ) is a favorite of Paul’s and appears thirty-three times in his letters.¹⁸⁴ The phrases “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ) or “in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ) appear twelve times in Colossians.¹⁸⁵ “In Christ” is the biblical, theological, practical, and spiritual location, sphere, and realm of all New Covenant believers for eternity.¹⁸⁶ In contrast to being “in Adam,”¹⁸⁷ to be “in Christ” means that believers are in secure and eternal fellowship and communion with Jesus Christ. God the Son is in God the Father; the believer is in God the Son; and God the Son is in the believer.¹⁸⁸

In Colossians 1:16, Jesus is described as the sphere of creation. Jesus Christ is the one “in whom” all things were created. The point Paul is making is that “all creative work took place ‘in terms of’ or ‘in reference to’ Christ.”¹⁸⁹ The aorist, passive, indicative, “ἐκτίσθη” (were created), refers to Jesus’ relationship to creation in the past.¹⁹⁰ The perfect, passive, indicative, “ἔκτισται” (“have been created”), emphasizes Jesus’ relationship to the current state of creation.¹⁹¹ This describes, not a “continuous act

¹⁸⁴ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, 77.

¹⁸⁵ “in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ): Colossians 1:2, 28; “in Jesus Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ): Colossians 1:4; “in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ): Colossians 1:16, 17, 19; 2:6, 7, 9, 10, 15; “in who” or “in which” (ἐν ᾧ) as referring to Jesus Christ: Colossians 2:11.

¹⁸⁶ Colossians 1:2.

¹⁸⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:22

¹⁸⁸ John 14:20.

¹⁸⁹ Moo, *The Letters to Colossians and to Philemon*, 121.

¹⁹⁰ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 40.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

of creation,” but describes Jesus’ relationship to the “permanent ‘createdness’ of creation.”¹⁹²

“All Things” Have Been “Created Through” Him and “For” Him – Colossians 1:16f

Jesus Christ is the effective, unique agent of creation in whom, through whom, and for whom God created all things.¹⁹³ The clause, “in him all things were created” (1:16a), is affirmed with the words, “all things have been created through him and for him” (τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται). In Christ, all things have been created, and remain in their created existence, through Jesus Christ.¹⁹⁴

Jesus Christ is not only the agent of creation, but he is also the goal of creation.¹⁹⁵ “Creation finds its goal in no one save Christ alone.”¹⁹⁶ All things, the whole creative order, have an “ongoing relationship” to Jesus Christ.¹⁹⁷ “Christ is the purpose for which everything exists” and “the purpose of everything is to honor Christ.”¹⁹⁸

Jesus Christ “Is Before All Things” – Colossians 1:17a

The reality of Christ’s preeminence is continued in 1:17–18a as the first stanza comes to a close and is introduced with the clause “and he is…” (καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν). The coordinating conjunction “καὶ” joins the two verses with the content of the hymn which

¹⁹² Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 41.

¹⁹³ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 217–218.

¹⁹⁴ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 41.

¹⁹⁵ Ephesians 1:9–10; 1 Corinthians 15:24–28.

¹⁹⁶ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 52.

¹⁹⁷ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 41.

¹⁹⁸ Bratcher and Nida, *A Translators Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*,

began in 1:15. The present, active, indicative form of “εἰμί” (ἐστίν) affirms the continuing status of Christ’s preeminence and supremacy.¹⁹⁹ Harris says the use of “αὐτός” is emphatic and should be translated “he himself.”²⁰⁰

“and he is before all things” (1:17a)
καὶ αὐτός ἐστίν πρὸ πάντων

“and he is the head of the body, the church” (1:18a)
καὶ αὐτός ἐστίν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας

Colossians 1:17a affirms Jesus Christ’s preexistence. “πρὸ” is the preposition found in “πρωτότοκος” (firstborn – 1:15) and “πρωτεύων” (first place – 1:18) and refers to both time, rank, and status.²⁰¹ Jesus Christ is “before all things.” The phrase “declares his temporal priority to the universe” and his “superiority over it” as the title “firstborn” (πρωτότοκος – 1:15b) states.²⁰²

“In” Jesus Christ “All Things Hold Together” – Colossians 1:17b

Paul again describes Jesus’ ongoing relationship to creation with the clause “in him all things hold together” (τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν). The verb, “συνέστηκεν” (“hold together”), means to “exist,” to “unite,” to “cohere,” or to “hold together.”²⁰³ The perfect, active, indicative form means, what God has created in, through and for Jesus Christ, is maintained “in permanent order, stability, and productivity in Christ. Jesus Christ is the source of the unity and the cohesiveness in all creation.”²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 93.

²⁰⁰ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 42; see also Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 321.

²⁰¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 379.

²⁰² Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 65.

²⁰³ BDAG, 3rd ed., s.v. “συνίστημι.”

²⁰⁴ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 43.

Jesus Christ has a unique relationship with creation that motivates the proclamation of both his person and his work in Paul's letter to the Colossians: (1) Jesus Christ is the firstborn of all creation (1:15b); (2) In Jesus Christ all things were created (1:16a); (3) All things have been created through Jesus Christ and for him (1:16f); (4) Jesus Christ is before all things; (1:17a); and (5) In Jesus Christ all things hold together (1:17b). Together these characteristics describe God the Son's relationship to creation and the creative order.

Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to the New Creation

A third unique relationship revealed in Colossians that motivates the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his person and work is his relationship to the new creation. In Colossians 1:18, Paul makes three statements that describe Jesus Christ's unique relationship to the new creation.

- Jesus Christ "is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (1:18b–c)
- Jesus Christ "will come to have first place in everything" (1:18d)

Colossians 1:18b begins the second stanza of the Paul's Messianic hymn. The word translated "beginning" comes from the Hebrew word "רֵאשִׁית" (reshit) and the Greek word "ἀρχή" (arche). Paul has already stated that Jesus Christ is the "firstborn of all creation" (1:5b), "in him all things were created" (1:16a), all things have been created "through him" and "for him" (1:16f), and in Christ "all things hold together" (1:17b). Paul leaves no doubt about Jesus Christ's relationship to creation. He is the "firstborn" (πρωτότοκος) of all creation. Paul now applies these terms to Jesus Christ and the new creation. Jesus Christ is not only the agent through whom God the Father created the heavens and the earth. Jesus Christ is also the *agent* through whom God brought forth a

new creation and a new humanity. Jesus Christ is the “beginning,” the “firstborn from the dead,” so that “he himself will come to have first place in everything” (1:18b–d).

The first and second stanza of Colossians 1:15–20 begin with the clause translated “he is” (ὅς ἐστίν) and include the adjective “firstborn” (πρωτότοκος).

Colossians 1:15

Colossians 1:18b–d

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation”
ὅς ἐστίν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως

“He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead”
ὅς ἐστίν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν

In Colossians 1:15, Paul establishes Jesus Christ’s preeminence over creation when he identifies Christ as the “firstborn of all creation” (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως). In Colossians 1:18, Paul establishes Jesus Christ’s preeminence over the new creation when he identifies Christ as the “beginning, the firstborn from the dead” (πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν). The terms “beginning” and “firstborn” are appositional. Thus, the adjective “firstborn” restates and interprets the idea of “beginning.”²⁰⁵ Jesus Christ is preeminent over the new creation.

Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead on the third day of Passover week,²⁰⁶ the Feast of First-fruits (תִּשְׁבָּעַת / ἀπαρχήν – Lev. 23:10), on the first day of the week.²⁰⁷ Jesus Christ is the “first-fruit” (ἀπαρχή – 1 Cor. 15:23). He is the “first-fruit” (ἀπαρχή – 1 Cor. 15:20) to rise or resurrect from the dead. The reality and truth of Jesus Christ’s resurrection, the “first-fruit,” guarantees a future resurrection for all believers (1 Cor.

²⁰⁵ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 222.

²⁰⁶ Leviticus 23:9–11; Matthew 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:17–19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:31–33; 24:6–7; 46; Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4.

²⁰⁷ Matthew 28:1–6; Luke 24:1–7 (v. 1, “the first day of the week;” v. 7, “the third day rise again”); John 20:19–20.

15:20–23). The righteous will be raised to eternal glory and bliss, while unbelievers will be raised to eternal judgment and damnation (Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:28–29). Jesus Christ is the “first-fruit” of the new creation and the “first-fruit” of a new humanity.²⁰⁸

Jesus Christ Will Come to Have First Place in Everything – Colossians 1:18d

The result of Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead or his preeminence over the new creation is introduced by the conjunction “ἵνα” denoting purpose, “so that he himself will come to have first place in everything” (ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων – 1:18d). God the Father’s purpose in God the Son’s preeminence over creation and the new creation is so that Jesus Christ “will come to have” (γένηται) preeminence “in everything” (ἐν πᾶσιν). He is preeminent over the domains of both creation and the new creation. This is the only occurrence of the word “πρωτεύων” translated “everything” in the New Testament. The purpose of Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead is so that he will be preeminent in everything.²⁰⁹

Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to Redemption

A fourth unique relationship revealed in Colossians that motivates the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his person and work is his relationship to *redemption*. It is through Jesus Christ that believers experience “redemption” (1:14). Paul describes redemption as “the forgiveness of sins” (1:14b), “reconciliation” (1:22), “made complete” (2:10), “a canceling out the certificate of debt” (2:14), and eternal life (3:3–4).

²⁰⁸ John 11:25–26.

²⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 22:13.

Redemption, the Forgiveness of Sins – Colossians 1:14

Colossians 1:12–14 is a transitional section that concludes Paul’s prayer in 1:9–14,²¹⁰ shifts the salvific work from God the Father to the redemptive work of God the Son, and introduces the messianic hymn in 1:15–20.²¹¹ God the Father has “qualified us [believers] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light” (1:12), he has “rescued us [believers] from the domain of darkness” (1:13a), and he has “transferred us [believers] into the kingdom of his beloved Son” (1:13b). The clause, “in whom we have redemption” (1:14a), marks a transition from God’s redemptive acts, to the ongoing and permanent work of Jesus Christ (1:14b–20).²¹²

The antecedent of the relative pronoun “whom” (ὃν – 1:14a) is the “Son” (1:13b). For those in union with Jesus Christ, (ἐν ᾧ – in him), there is “redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν). The redemption and forgiveness of sins are from God the Father through God the Son.

The two expressions, “redemption” and “the forgiveness of sins,” are in apposition and are complementary.²¹³ The definitive and particular nature of redemption and the forgiveness of sins are emphasized by three definite articles.²¹⁴ The latter phrase

²¹⁰ O’Brien, *Colossians – Philemon*, 25.

²¹¹ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 80.

²¹² “After the three aorist [verbs] in vv. 12–13 [relating to God the Father], the present ἔχομεν stresses the ongoing and permanent result of the Father’s three-fold action” [through God the Son]; Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 33.

²¹³ O’Brien, *Colossians – Philemon*, 28; Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 208; Colossians 1:14 – “ἀπολύτρωσιν (redemption) {A}. The Textus Receptus, following several secondary witnesses, inserts the words διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ (through his blood) from Eph 1.7. If the phrase had been present originally, there would have been no reason for copyists to omit it.” In Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, 412.

²¹⁴ τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν.

further describes “redemption” as “the forgiveness of sins.”²¹⁵ The word “ἀπολύτρωσις” (redemption) comes from the preposition “ἀπό” (from) and the root “λύτρον” (ransom).²¹⁶ In the context of Colossians 1:13–14, the word means to “release from bondage to sin,”²¹⁷ and “stresses the result of the action of liberation”²¹⁸ through the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.²¹⁹ The word “ἄφεσις” (forgiveness) means “to remove guilt,” “to pardon,” or “to forgive.”²²⁰

Sin is the Greek word “ἁμαρτία.” Sin is “an intrusion into God’s good creation and is “an act of disobedience to the revealed will of God.”²²¹ It is any failure to conform to the law of God in attitude, thought, word, deed, and moral nature.²²² This includes both sins of *commission* and sins of *omission*. Sins of commission are sins that a person actively commits. Sins of omission are sins that result from a person not doing what God’s word instructs. The two concepts are stated by Paul in Romans 7:14–20. In Jesus Christ, those in union with him, have “redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (1:14). A second component of God’s redemptive work in Christ applied to the Colossians was their reconciliation to God.

²¹⁵ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 81.

²¹⁶ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed, vol. 1 (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), s.v. “λύτρον.”

²¹⁷ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 33.

²¹⁸ Bratcher and Nida, *A Translators Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 20.

²¹⁹ BDAG, 3rd ed., s.v. “ἀπολύτρωσις.”

²²⁰ Louw and Nida, s.v. “ἄφεσις.”

²²¹ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 50.

²²² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1254.

Reconciled to God – Colossians 1:22

Colossians 1:22 begins with the emphatic temporal marker, “but now” (νυνὶ δὲ). It is used to contrast the Colossian’s former relationship with God apart from Christ with their current relationship with God in Christ. The Colossians “were formerly” (ὕμᾱς ποτε – 1:21) alienated from God, hostile toward God in their minds, and engaged in evil behavior. Christ has now “reconciled” them “in His fleshly body through death” so that he can present them “before Him [God the Father] holy and blameless and beyond reproach.”²²³

The word translated “reconciled” (ἀποκατήλλαξεν – 1:22) is from the root “καταλλαγή” and means “to reestablish proper, friendly, interpersonal relations after they have been disrupted or broken.”²²⁴ In Genesis 1–3, man was created in God’s image, according to his likeness, to reflect God’s image, to represent his likeness, to shepherd his

²²³ Colossians 1:22 – “ἀποκατήλλαξεν (he has reconciled) {C} – The internal and external evidence are in conflict here. On the one hand, the reading of the text has good manuscript support and it provides acceptable sense. On the other hand, if ἀποκατήλλαξεν were the original reading, it is very difficult to explain why the reading with the passive verb (you [plural] have been reconciled) should have arisen since the passive creates grammatical difficulties (see the discussion in Barth and Blanke, Colossians, pp. 220–21). The active verb seems more suitable grammatically in the context and has better external testimony. If the reading in the text is followed, it is not clear who the subject of the verb is. The active verb might take up the subject of the preceding hymn, which is God. But this creates a theological difficulty since “his body of flesh” seems to refer to God. But compare “But now, by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends” (TEV and similarly REB, FC, TOB). It is also possible that the intended subject of ἀποκατήλλαξεν is Christ, who is praised in the preceding hymn (Barth and Blanke, p.221);” in Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, 413.

“The conflicting textual phenomena of this verse are difficult to resolve. On the one hand. The reading ἀποκατήλλαξεν is well supported and provides acceptable sense. On the other hand, however, if this were the original reading, it is exceedingly difficult to explain why the other readings should have arisen. Faced with this dilemma and considering a passive verb to be totally unsuitable in the context, a majority of the Committee preferred to follow the preponderance of external testimony and therefore adopted ἀποκατήλλαξεν;” in Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 554–555.

²²⁴ Louw and Nida, s.v. “καταλλαγή.”

good creation, and to live as a priest in harmony with God.²²⁵ Adam was “created in a covenant relationship with God.”²²⁶

The prophet Hosea specifically refers to God’s covenant with Adam in Hosea 6:7, where he mentions Israel’s breaking their covenant with God just as Adam had broken his covenant. This reference to the story of Adam and Eve is unusual since there is no explicit mention of such a covenant in Genesis. But we do have a narrative in Genesis that recounts all the formal features of a covenant relationship without using specific covenant terminology. In making his comparison between Israel’s sin and Adam’s, Hosea was relying on his own careful study of the Genesis narratives and his observation of their covenantal nature.²²⁷

Adam’s covenant was grounded in creation. He did not enter a covenant with God because he already enjoyed a covenant relationship by virtue of his own creation in God’s image.²²⁸ Adam was created within a covenant relationship with God by nature.²²⁹

Adam’s covenant relationship with God was broken when he disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Adam ate from the tree, God said “you will surely die” (Gen. 1:17). Adam and Eve disobeyed God when tempted by the serpent and ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:1–7). Once they disobeyed, Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, cut off from God’s presence, barred from access to the tree of life, put in enmity with God and with one

²²⁵ In Genesis 2:15 the word “put” is different from the word “placed” in Genesis 2:8. The word “put” is the Hebrew word *נָתַן* which is special word used to refer to “safety” (Gen. 19:16), “Sabbath rest” (Ex. 20:11), and “worship” (Dt. 26:4, 10); John Sailhamer, *Genesis*, vol. 1 in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, gen. eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 79–90.

²²⁶ John Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 36.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

another, and the curse of sin and death entered the world. Adam's sin, death, and enmity with God and with man was passed down to all mankind (Rom. 5:12).

In Genesis 3:15, God put enmity between the serpent ("you") and the woman, and between the serpent's "seed" ("your seed") and the woman's seed ("her seed"). In the second half of Genesis 3:15, the "seed" of the woman ("he") will crush the head of the serpent ("crush you on the head") and thus bring an end to the curse of sin and death on humanity.²³⁰ The serpent will crush the heel of the seed of the woman. The serpent is identified later in Scripture as the devil or Satan (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:9). The "seed" (זָרַע) of the woman is identified later in Scripture as the "seed" of Abraham who will bless all people (Gen. 12:3; Mt. 1:1), the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" who will reign as King (Gen. 49:8–12; Rev. 5:5), the "Son of David" who will rule eternally over an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12, 15; Mt. 1:1), the eternal King who will be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Mt. 2:6), and the "Son of God" whose kingdom and reign will have no end (Isa. 9:6; Lk. 1:32–33).

The enmity, alienation, and hostility that existed between God and man after the Fall has now been "reconciled," the relationship having been made peaceful again "through the blood of the cross" (Col. 1:20). Peace is from God the Father (Col. 1:2) through God the Son (Col. 1:20). Peace is a state of being, a state of life – peace with God and peace with one another in Christ.²³¹ It is the result of God's grace through Jesus Christ and applied in the individual believer's life by faith. Peace is the complete state of perfect harmony with God and man through Jesus Christ.

²³⁰ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 91.

Paul moves the focus of Christ's work from "all creation" (1:15, 23) and "all things" (1:16, 17, 20), to focus now on Christ's work in the lives of the Colossians (1:21, 22, 23).

- "You were formerly alienated" (1:21a)
- "Hostile in mind" (1:21b)
- "*Engaged* in evil deeds" (1:21c)
- "He has now reconciled you" (1:22)
- "In order to present you holy and blameless" (1:22)
- "If indeed you continue in the faith" (1:23)
- "The gospel that you heard" (1:23)

The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross, the giving of his fleshy body, and the shedding of his blood have made atonement for the Colossians sin and reconciled them to God the Father through God the Son.

Jesus Christ fulfills the Law of Atonement as both the unblemished sacrifice for man's sin and the High Priest through whom the sin offering is made (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:11–12). An important inter-textual theme is found in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 where the Servant of the Lord will bear the sins of his people through his own sacrificial death. As the incarnate Son of God (Col. 1:13), Jesus Christ offered his own body and blood as an eternal sacrifice on the cross (Col. 1:20) and is now exalted and seated at the right hand of God as a great eternal High Priest (Col. 3:1).

Made Complete – Colossians 2:10

In Colossians 2:10, Paul links the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ in the incarnation (2:9) and the life of the believer with the conjunction "and" (καὶ): "For in

Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ‘and’ in Him you have been made complete...(2:10a).” The participle translated, “complete” (πεπληρωμένοι), is the perfect, passive form of the word “πληρώω” meaning “to make something total or complete.”²³²

The person and work of Christ in the incarnation is biblically, theologically, and practically applied to the life of the Christian. In the theological section of the letter, Paul is defending the gospel against the threat of false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice (1:24–3:4).

“according to the tradition of men” (2:8c)
κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων

“according to Christ” (2:8e)
κατὰ Χριστόν

The Colossians have been “firmly rooted,” are now being “built up” in Christ, and “established” in their faith (2:7). For, in Christ (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ), “all the fullness [πλήρωμα] of Deity dwells in bodily form” (2:9) and “in Him,” believers “have been made complete” (πληρώω – 2:10). Christians, in Christ, have reached the *fullness* of salvation assurance and salvific benefits.

Canceling out the Certificate of Debt – Colossians 2:14

Paul continues to emphasize the redemptive work of God the Father through God the Son. Colossians 2:14 lies at the end of a section in which Paul is defending the gospel against theological threats (2:6–15). Having been firmly rooted, built up, and established in Christ, Paul now instructs the Colossians to “walk in Him” (2:6–7). He warns them against being taken captive through philosophy, the tradition of men, and the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ (2:8). For in Christ, “all the

²³² Louw and Nida, s.v. “πληρώω.”

fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (2:9), he is “the head over all rule and authority” (2:10b), and in Christ they have been “made complete” (2:10a). In fulfillment of the New Covenant the Colossians have experienced by faith the “circumcision of Christ” which is a circumcised heart, a born-again experience, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life (2:11–12). Expanding on the benefits of the New Covenant, Paul writes:

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Col 2:13–14 NAU).

Paul uses a special word to describe the canceling of a certificate of debt which was both against and hostile to mankind (2:14). The word “ἐξαλείψας” from the root “ἐξαλείφω” means “to wipe out, to erase” or “to remove so as to leave no trace.”²³³ The word is an inter-textual link to the blotting out of sin through the New Covenant in Isaiah 43:25 and Acts 3:19. There is much discussion about the nature of the clause, “the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us” (τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν).²³⁴ The literary context of the clause appears to be the Mosaic Law.²³⁵ The Mosaic Law, of which Jesus Christ is the fulfillment (Mt. 5:17), was designed to reveal the holiness and righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21), the sinfulness of man (Rom. 7:7), the wrath of God (Rom. 4:15), and intended to lead mankind to Christ so they would be justified to God by faith (Gal. 3:24).

²³³ BDAG, 3rd ed., s.v. “ἐξαλείφω.”

²³⁴ For a detailed discussion on the nature of this clause see, Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 327–332; Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 97; and Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 108–111.

²³⁵ “circumcision” (2:11); “our transgression” (2:13); (2:14); “decrees” or “ordinances” (2:14); “food” (2:16); “festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – things of which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come (2:16–17); the “law” is referred to as a “shadow” (σκιά) in Hebrews 10:1.

The word “χειρόγραφον” and translated “certificate of debt” is a “handwritten statement” or “record of financial accounts” and is unique in Scripture.²³⁶ The “certificate of debt” has been taken “out of the way” and “nailed” to the cross. The perfect tense of the term, “taken it out” (ἤρκεν), describes the “present freedom from indebtedness after the complete abrogation the bond.”²³⁷

The last phrase describes the crucifixion of mankind’s sin debt. Jesus Christ has “nailed it to the cross.” The completeness of God’s forgiveness in Christ for mankind is described on three levels: (1) “canceled out;” (2) “taken it out of the way;” and (3) “nailed it to the cross.” In this one verse, Paul magnifies the complete removal and destruction of that which was “against” (καθ’) and “hostile” (ὕπεναντίον) to mankind – the law of sin which brings death.

Eternal Life – Colossians 3:3–4

Eternal life is the final component embodied in Jesus Christ’s unique relationship to redemption. Paul’s reference to eternal life falls at the end of his defense of the gospel against practical threats (2:16–3:4) and is introduced with the conditional conjunction “Εἰ οὖν” (“If then” – 3:1). This is the third time that Paul uses the conjunction “Εἰ” to introduce a condition which he assumed to be true for argument’s sake.²³⁸

- if (“Εἰ”) indeed you continue in the faith (1:23)
- If (“Εἰ”) you have died with Christ (2:20)
- If (“Εἰ”) then you have been raised up with Christ (3:1)

²³⁶ Louw and Nida, s.v. “χειρόγραφον.”

²³⁷ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 97.

²³⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 690–694.

Paul assumes the Colossians have been metaphorically resurrected with Christ by the assumptive clause, “Therefore, if you have been raised up...” (3:1a). He, therefore, instructs them, to “keep seeking” (ζητεῖτε) and to “keep setting” (φρονεῖτε) their minds on the “things above” (3:1–2). There are two reasons given for commanding this ongoing lifestyle of “seeking” and “setting” their minds on the “things above:” (1) They “have died” and their “life is hidden with Christ in God” (3:3); and (2) “When Christ,” who is their life, “is revealed,” they will also “be revealed with him in glory” (3:4). In both verses the phrases, “your life” (ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν) and “our life” (ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν), are used to refer to eternal life. Eternal life is the result of redemption and the union between God the Father, God the Son, and the Colossians believer (1:13–14; 3:4).

The theme of the Colossian’s union with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection first introduced in 2:11–13, and 2:20, is now continued in 3:1–4.

Union with Jesus Christ’s Death (Colossians 2:11–13, 20; 3:3)

- In Him you were also circumcised (2:11a)
- The removal of the body of the flesh (2:11b)
- Having been buried with Him in baptism (2:12a)
- When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh (2:13a)
- If you have died with Christ (2:20)
- For you have died (3:3)

Union with Jesus Christ’s Resurrection (Colossians 2:11–13; 3:1–4)

- In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands...by the circumcision of Christ (2:11a)

- Raised up with Him through faith (2:12b)
- He made you alive together with Him (2:13b)
- You have been raised with Christ (3:1)
- Your life is hidden with Christ in God (3:3)
- When Christ, who is our life is revealed (3:4a)
- You also will be revealed with Him in glory (3:4b)

Paul uses the terms “life” (ζωή), to “live” (ζάω), and “to make alive” (ζωοποιέω) to describe both the present state of eternal life and eternal life in the age to come.²³⁹

Eternal life is personal knowledge (γινώσκω) of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent (Jn. 17:3). Paul’s desire for the Colossians is to increase in the “knowledge of God” (1:10), and to “put on the new self” who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created” them (3:10). The reality of eternal life relates to the quality of life in union with Christ in his presence now, and the quality and fullness of life in union with Christ in his presence in the age to come. In 3:3–4, Paul makes this distinction between eternal life in the present age and in the future age.

- “Your life is hidden with Christ in God” (3:3)
- “Christ, who is our life” (3:4)
- “You also will be revealed with Him in glory” (3:4)

The clause, “your life is hidden with God in Christ,” speaks of eternal life in the present age. The word translated, “is hidden” (κρύπτω), is a perfect passive indicative verb and “stresses the ongoing and permanent effects” of eternal life in Christ. The new,

²³⁹ Some examples are “Life” (ζωή), Romans 6:4; 22; 8:2, 6, 10; 2 Corinthians 4:10, 11; To “live” (ζάω), Romans 1:17; 6:11, 13; 8:13; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Galatians 2:19, 20; and “To make alive” (ζωοποιέω), Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; 2 Corinthians 2:6; O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 165.

eternal life source that sustains the Colossians is Christ himself. The Colossians are dead to themselves, dead to their sin, and dead to the elementary things of the world. They are now alive in Christ because their life is hidden with the resurrected and exalted Christ in God. The fullness of abundant eternal life, however, has not been fully revealed.

Colossians 1:4 speaks of the future revelation and manifest glory of abundant eternal life awaiting the believer at Christ's appearing.²⁴⁰ The Colossians life is not only "hidden with Christ in God," but Christ is described as "our [their] life" (ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν). Jesus Christ is not only the source of the believer's life, but he *is* the believer's life and the believer's *hope*. There is a future aspect of eternal life that Paul speaks of in which the Colossians will be revealed with Christ in glory. The word "φανερόω" translated "revealed" is a reference "to the return of Christ and interprets one of several Greek terms used in the NT for this event."²⁴¹ Paul describes this same event in Philippians 3:20–21.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

The glory of God is the manifestation of his presence. There is joyful expectation in the return of Jesus Christ and the anticipation of the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem.

²⁴⁰ "ὑμῶν (your) [B] – The manuscript support for the second person plural pronoun ὑμῶν includes P46 and good representatives of both the Alexandrian and the Western text-types. It is possible, but not likely, that the first-person plural pronoun ὑμῶν (our) was original and that copyists changed it to ὑμῶν in order to agree with the second person pronouns before and after. Following the variant, REB (and similarly RSV) reads, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed." If the reading ὑμῶν is followed, it will be necessary in some languages to decide whether this pronoun includes the readers also. Some interpreters think that the first-person pronoun emphasizes "that the concern is with participation of non-Jews ("vou") in the heritage of Jews ("our")" (Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, p. 398)"; in Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, 417.

²⁴¹ Vaughan, *Colossians*, 210.

Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to the Church

A fifth unique relationship revealed in Colossians that motivates the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his person and work is his relationship to the body of Christ, the Church. Colossians 1:18a and 2:19 speak of Christ as “the head of the body, the church,” and “the head” through whom the church “grows.”

Jesus Christ is “Head of the Body, the Church” – Colossians 1:18a

The Greek word, “ἐκκλησία” (*ekklesia*), is translated “assembly,” “congregation,” or “church.” It appears ca. eighty-eight times in the LXX,²⁴² 114 times in the New Testament, and four times in Colossians.²⁴³ The term can refer to the assembly of Israel (Dt. 31:30), to an assembly of Gentiles (Acts 19:28, 32, 41), to a legal assembly (Acts 19:39), to a local assembly of Christians (Acts 8:1), to a group of local Christian assemblies in a region (Acts 16:5), or to the universal Christian assembly (Mt. 16:18). The term, “ἐκκλησία” (*ekklesia*), is accurately defined according to the essential nature and characteristics of the assembly it describes.

Church (ἐκκλησία)

There are several unique characteristics that distinguish the nature of “the Church” (τῆς ἐκκλησίας) from the assembly of Israel, from an assembly of Gentiles, and from a legal assembly. First, “the Church” is emphatically described in the gospel of Matthew as a unique future work built by Jesus Christ himself and established on the confession of Jesus as “the Christ” (ὁ χριστὸς – Mt. 16:16), the “Son of the living God” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος – Mt. 16:16). Jesus himself said, “upon this rock [this

²⁴² A translation of the Hebrew word “לְקָהָל” O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 57.

²⁴³ Colossians 1:18, 24; 4:15, 16.

confession] I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ πύλαι ᾗδου οὐ κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς – Mt. 16:18).

Jesus is emphatic and specific about the nature of his future assembly. Matthew inserts the demonstrative pronoun “ταύτῃ” (this) and the definite article “τῇ” (the) to emphasize the identity and particularity of the confession on which this assembly will be built (upon this rock – Mt. 16:18b). The verb “οἰκοδομήσω” (I will build) is future active indicative and speaks of the time in which this assembly would be built (Mt. 16:18b). Matthew then inserts both a definite article “τὴν” (the) and the genitive form of the possessive personal pronoun “μου” (my) to express the identity, the particularity and the possessive nature of this future assembly.

The church that Jesus speaks of is a unique future assembly, that will be established on the confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, built by Jesus himself, and Satan and the powers of evil will not destroy it. The use of the word “ἐκκλησία” in Matthew 16:18 is not to be confused with any other assembly or congregation in Scripture.

A second unique characteristic that distinguishes “the Church” from other assemblies and congregations in Scripture is that it is based on Spirit baptism.²⁴⁴ Jesus said in Acts 1:5, “for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” The future event that Jesus spoke of was the Feast of Pentecost, the day on which “the Church” was born. Spirit baptism was given in Acts 2:1–4 in fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28–32 (Acts 2:16–21). Those who were in Jerusalem at Pentecost for the birth of “the Church” were predominantly Jewish, but also

²⁴⁴ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 651.

Gentile converts to Judaism (Acts 2:5, 10, 22). The Gentiles would receive the same Spirit baptism, as did the Jewish people, in Acts 11:15–18. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that entrance into the church is by Spirit baptism: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

A third set of unique characteristics that distinguish “the Church” from other assemblies and congregations in Scripture are the events in the life of Jesus Christ on which the church is founded: his death, his burial, his resurrection and his ascension.²⁴⁵ The atonement for mankind’s sin was provided for at Christ’s sacrificial death (Lk. 24:42–47). At Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, he became the first to put on a new, eternal, human nature, and the first to take on an eternal resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:20, 44–49).²⁴⁶ Jesus’ resurrection serves as a prototype and guarantees a future resurrection to eternal life for believers (1 Cor. 15:20–23). At Jesus’ ascension he was received back to heaven where he is now seated at the right hand of God, serving as Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23), a Priest for his people (Heb. 7:25; 8:1–2), and preparing a place for them in eternity (Jn. 14:1–3). In the future he will raise the dead, reward all people, and rule the nations as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords (Jn. 6:39–40).²⁴⁷ It is only through the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ that the atonement is made, the Holy Spirit is given, and the unique assembly referred to as “the Church” is born.

A fourth unique characteristic that distinguishes “the Church” from other assemblies and congregations is its composition. In Colossians 1:18, the Church is

²⁴⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 652.

²⁴⁶ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 59.

²⁴⁷ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 313–316.

described at the body of Messiah: “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.” The composition of the body of Christ is given in Ephesians 2:11–18:

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands—*remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

The composition of the Church, the body of Christ, is a combination of Jewish and Gentile believers united together by faith in Jesus Christ. Fruchtenbaum points out, there is no Gentile church or Jewish church. In addition to Israel, the Jewish people, and the Gentiles, there is a new entity – one new man, the body of Christ, the church.

Until Messiah died, there were only two entities: Israel (Jews) and the Gentiles. But now there is a third entity, one new man, which is defined as one body, which is the Church. The Church is not Jewish or Gentile, but Jew-Gentile, comprised of believers from Israel and believers from the Gentiles [the Nations], united into a new entity: the Church. Yet both retain their ethnic identity. This is true unity without uniformity. Thus, the Gentiles are *fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel* (Eph. 3:6). The Gentiles are fellow-partakers, but not takers-over. A major purpose of the Church Age is a calling out from among the Gentiles by the gospel, according to Acts 15:14: *Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.*²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 142.

The calling out of the Gentiles will continue until “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in,” that is, “the full number of Gentiles that God has ordained for the Church has been reached.”²⁴⁹

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.’ ‘THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS’ (Rom. 11:25–27).

Gentile believers are partakers with Jewish believers in the “rich root of the olive tree,” the spiritual blessings of the covenants with Abraham, Moses, David, and Israel through the New Covenant (Rom. 11:17–24), for Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, “for salvation is from the Jews” (Jn. 4:22). The Church is the body of Christ composed of Jewish (natural branches) and Gentile (wild olive branches) members united by faith in Jesus Christ.²⁵⁰

A fifth characteristic that distinguishes “the Church” from other assemblies and congregations in Scripture is the “mystery” character of the church.²⁵¹ The term, “mystery,” has already been defined in relationship to God the Father and God the Son. In relationship to the church, *mystery* is defined as a New Testament truth not revealed in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:1–5, 8–9). Paul describes Jewish and Gentile believers united as “one new man” in Christ through the church as a *mystery* (Eph. 2:14–18; 3:1–12). The indwelling presence of Christ in every member is called a *mystery* unique to the church (Col. 1:24–27). The resurrection of the dead in Christ, the rapture of the church, and the

²⁴⁹ Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, 142.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁵¹ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 652–653

spiritual transformation that takes place are also called “mysteries” that are unique to the church (1 Cor. 15:50–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). These five *mystery* characteristics are unique to “the Church” and distinguish her from other assemblies and congregations in Scripture.

A sixth unique characteristic that distinguishes “the Church” from other assemblies and congregations in Scripture is the use of metaphors to describe what the church is like.²⁵² The church is viewed as a family (1 Tim. 5:1–2) with God as the heavenly Father (Eph. 3:14), believers as sons and daughters of God (2 Cor. 6:18), and fellow believers as brothers and sisters in Christ (Mt. 12:49–50; 1 Jn. 3:14–18). The church is also described as a “household” (1 Tim. 3:15), “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), the Bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:28–32), and the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–27). The metaphors used to describe what “the Church” is like distinguish her from other assemblies and congregations in Scripture.

When used in the New Testament to refer to a group of believers, the term *church* is the name applied to the regenerate spiritual body of members united in Christ.²⁵³ The church has invisible, visible, local and universal elements.²⁵⁴

Since the church is united by a spiritual bond, it is of course invisible, but it is real nonetheless. Yet since it unites believers who are part of this physical world, its presence is everywhere visible in the world – in the social relationships of believers, in the organization of their assemblies, and in the acts of worship performed by those assemblies.

The church is also universal. The spiritual bond established by the Holy Spirit is not limited by time or space. From the founding of the church by Christ until today, all believers of every age have been members of the

²⁵² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 858–859.

²⁵³ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 82.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

church. Moreover, Christ told his disciples, “Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Mt. 18:20).²⁵⁵

In addition to the invisible, visible, and universal characteristics of the regenerate church, the New Testament also focuses on the characteristics of the local church. The universal church serves as a term for the body of Christ whether on earth or in heaven (Heb. 12:22–24). The *local* church can include a church that meets in a city (Phm. 1:2), to several churches that meet in a city (1 Cor. 1:2), or to several churches that meet in various areas (Acts 9:31).

Body (σῶμα)

In Colossians, the “church” is referred to as “the body” (τοῦ σώματος – Col. 1:18); “his body” (τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ – Col. 1:24); “the church that is in her [Nympha’s] house” (τὴν κατ’ οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν – Col. 4:15); and “the church of the Laodiceans (τῆ Λαοδικέων ἐκκλησία – Col 4:16). It is the metaphor of *the body* that Paul uses to illustrate Christ’s unique relationship to the church as “the head” (ἡ κεφαλή). The metaphor of the church as a “body” is used by Paul to describe different aspects of the church’s life.²⁵⁶

It may stress the interdependency of the various parts of the body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12–26), the dynamic aspect of the body as it strives for maturity (Eph 4:15–16), the redemptive role of the head for the body (Eph 5:23), or the hierarchy of the parts of the body, the head being superior to the rest (Col. 1:18). These diverse applications of the illustration point out the adaptability of the concept. Perhaps the emphases overlap on occasion since the metaphor is pregnant with possibilities. The common element in all is that of organic interrelationship. Each aspect of the body really is a part of the others.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 82.

²⁵⁶ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 220.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 220–221.

Paul is the “originator of this way of expressing the church’s vital union with Christ, the head” and makes “his own distinct contribution to NT Christology and ecclesiology.”²⁵⁸ “The body,” defined by Paul as “the church” (Col. 1:18a), is “his [Christ’s] body” (Col. 1:24). “He” (αὐτός), referring to Christ, is emphatic.²⁵⁹ Christ himself is “the head” of “the body, the church.” Three definite articles are used with each noun to emphasize the particularity and identity of Christ as “the head” of “the body, the church.”

Head (κεφαλή)

Paul uses the word “head” eighteen times in his letters.²⁶⁰ It can refer to the part of the body that “contains the brain” (1 Cor. 11:4) or to a person of “high status” or “superior rank” (1 Cor. 11:3).²⁶¹ Jesus Christ, who is described as the “firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15b); the one who is “before all things” (1:17a); the one in whom “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17b); and the one who is “the head over all rule and authority” (2:10); is now described as the one who is preeminent over the church as her sovereign leader that unites, guides, governs, and has authority over His body.

The description of Christ as “the head of the body, the church” (ἡ κεφαλή τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας Col. 1:18a) illustrates, not only his sovereign authority over the church, but also the unity and diversity of the head and the body. Christ is preeminent over the church, yet he is connected to the church as “the head” of “the church” (Col.

²⁵⁸ O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 50.

²⁵⁹ Vaughan, *Colossians*, 183.

²⁶⁰ McKnight, *Colossians*, 155.

²⁶¹ BDAG, 3rd ed., s.v. “κεφαλή.”

1:18a) which is “his body” (Col. 1:24). The body is incomplete without “the head,” but finds its authority, power, leadership, unity, and mission in Christ. At the same time, “the Head” must have “his body” (Col. 1:24). Although “Christ can and did exist without the church, the imagery chosen lends itself to expressing the concept that the head is incomplete without the body. Similarly, the body is incomplete without the head.”²⁶² The unique relationship between Jesus Christ and the church is also expressed in Colossians 2:19 as the one through whom the church grows.

“The Head” through Whom the Church “Grows” – Colossians 2:19

Colossians 2:19 falls within the body of Paul’s letter (1:24–4:6), in the theological section (1:24–3:4), during Paul’s defense of the gospel (2:6–3:4), against theological (2:8–15) and practical threats (2:16–3:4). Paul warns the Colossians against being “taken captive” by these false teachers and their false instruction (2:8); against being judged according to religious laws (2:16); and being defrauded of their prize (2:18); which is Christ himself, in whom they have been made complete (2:10). Employing, again, the metaphor of the body and head relationship, Paul demonstrates the unique relationship between Jesus Christ and the church. Whereas in 1:18a and 2:10, Paul’s focus is on Christ’s preeminence, sovereignty, and authority over the church; in 2:19, his focus turns to Christ as the source of nourishment and growth for the church.

The emphasis in 2:19 is on the interconnectedness and the interdependence of the members of the body to the head, to each other, and to God. Believers are to hold fast “to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God” (2:19). Jesus Christ is the source of

²⁶² Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 221.

nourishment for the entire body; the body is united and supplied with nourishment by each member; thus, the entire body grows both spiritually and numerically with a growth which is from God.

The supply and bonding are provided to all and through all by the head. All are equally dependent on each other for that support; by implication, if any joints or ligaments fail, other members of the body will suffer. And the growth is corporate: there is no thought of some members growing independently or out of step with the rest. The sense of mutual interdependence remains strong.²⁶³

The treasured union between Christ and the church forms the basis for all of God's spiritual and numeric growth in the body of Christ. Growth is assured when each member holds fast to Christ and unites the body by supplying her with the nourishment that Christ provides.

Jesus Christ has a Unique Relationship to the Kingdom

A sixth unique relationship revealed in Colossians that motivates the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his person and work is his relationship to the *kingdom*. The word, "kingdom" (βασιλεία), is used 321 times in Scripture, fourteen times in the letters of Paul, and two times in Colossians. The first time it is used in Colossians, Paul refers to Christ's Kingdom, "the kingdom of His beloved Son" (1:13). The second time he uses the word, he refers to "the kingdom of God" (4:11).

In the Bible, God "is acknowledged as 'the King' (Isa. 6:5), and His rule is called His 'kingdom' (Ps. 145:11–13).²⁶⁴ The basis of God's rule and kingship are "grounded both in creation and redemption."²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 186.

²⁶⁴ Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*, 31.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

As *Creator* of the world, God “established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all” (Ps. 103:19). The world itself is God’s kingdom (Ps. 104:1–4). Thus, frequently throughout the Old Testament, God is envisioned as the Sovereign “Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted” (Isa. 6:1). The throne is located in the heavenly temple, from which “the whole earth is [filled with] his glory” (Isa. 6:3). That heavenly temple provides the pattern for the earthly tabernacle (Ex. 26:30) and temple.²⁶⁶

God is also known as King through his great act as *Redeemer*. When he redeemed Israel in the Exodus, “the shout of the King [was] among them” (Num. 23:21). The defeat of the Egyptians and Israel’s salvation demonstrated to all the nations that “the LORD will reign for ever and ever” (Ex. 15:18). When God brought Israel into the Promised Land and “planted” them in Jerusalem (Ex. 15:17), he established his sanctuary as his dwelling place, from which he reigned (Ex. 15:17–18). Thus, as Redeemer King, the throne of God was located in Jerusalem, the City of Zion, “the holy place where the Most High dwells” (Ps. 46:49), his “resting place for ever and ever” (Ps. 132:13–14). God’s rule in Jerusalem, however, does not exclude his universal reign over all the nations. As the psalmist said, “God is the King of all the earth... God reigns over the nations” (Ps. 47:7–8).²⁶⁷

In addition to God as King and Redeemer through his role in creation and redemption, there immerses in Scripture another person who is promised to rule over Israel and the Nations. That person is identified in Scripture as the Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ), the Christ (Χριστός), or the “Anointed One.” Although not identified until later in Scripture as the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:1), the themes of a Messianic King and Kingdom begin early in the Bible.

In Genesis 3:15, the messianic figure is introduced as the male seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15a). In the process, he himself, will be wounded (Gen. 3:15b). The messianic redeemer will come from the lineage of Abraham through whom all the peoples of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3). In Genesis 49:8–12, the Messianic King is prophesied to come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10). The

²⁶⁶ Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*, 31.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

Gentile prophet Balaam prophesied of a Messianic King from Israel who will defeat their enemies and establish his kingdom over all the nations of the world (Num. 24:8–9, 15–25). The Messianic theme continues into the Prophets and the Writings of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The coming of the Lord’s Messianic King, who will fulfill his Kingdom through judgement and salvation, is prayed for by Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 (v.10). David is promised that the Messianic King and his eternal Kingdom will come through his lineage (2 Sam. 7:12–14, 16). In Isaiah 9:6–7, the Messianic King is identified as a son born of Israel, who is named “Mighty God,” and is given the eternal throne of David. The most vivid and complete vision of God, His Messiah, and His kingdom in the Hebrew Scriptures is in the book of Daniel (Dan. 7:9–14).

The Messianic King and Kingdom themes are identified and developed by the New Testament writers. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all identify Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, and the one of whom the Hebrew Scriptures spoke (Mt. 1–2; Mk. 1:1; Lk. 1–2; Jn. 1). The Gospels point to both the faithful remnant of Israel who were waiting for the promised Messianic King (Lk. 2:25–38), and the Gentiles who came to acknowledge Christ’s birth and to worship the Messiah (Mt. 2:1–12). Jesus began his ministry in fulfillment of Scripture proclaiming the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14–15), and the kingdom was a primary theme in Jesus’

sermons (Mt. 12:28; Lk. 4:43; 8:1). The week of Passover, Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as the King of Israel (Mt. 21:1–9; Lk. 19:37–38; Jn. 12:12–15).²⁶⁸

The kingdom promised to Israel was rejected by its leadership, taken away from them, and given to the remnant of Israel, (a nation – ἔθνεϊ), the disciples, who prove to be faithful and bear fruit by spreading the kingdom and gospel message to both Jewish and Gentile people from all nations (Mt. 21:43).²⁶⁹

Through his national election of Israel, God brought through the Jewish people the adoption as sons, the manifest presence of God, the Mosaic law, the temple worship, the covenant promises, and the very person of the Messiah (Rom. 9:1–5). Through the partial hardening of the Jewish people and their rejection of the gospel, salvation and riches have come to the Gentiles, and reconciliation and riches to the world (Rom. 11:11–15). While there always was and always will be a remnant of Jewish people who accept

²⁶⁸ The relationship between the Messianic Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, the nation of Israel, and the Church is beyond the scope of this work. For further study, cf. Chad O. Brand, Tom Pratt, Jr., Robert L. Reymond, Robert L. Saucy, Robert L. Thomas, *Perspectives on Israel and the Church: 4 Views*, Chad O. Brand, ed., (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2015); Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origin and Effects of Replacement Theology* (Rome, Italy: Instituto Biblico Evangelio Italiano, 2000); Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2016); Dan Gruber, *The Church and the Jews: A Biblical Relationship* (Hanover, NH: Elijah Publishing, 1997); David Larson, *Jews, Gentiles, and the Church: A New Perspective on History and Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publisher, 1995); Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study on the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2001); John Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998); Mark Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: A 20th Century Theology* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997); Renald E. Showers, *There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1990); David L. Turner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament – Matthew*, Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 512–520; David L. Turner, “Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (January–March 2002): 46–61; Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010); Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2017).

²⁶⁹ David L. Turner. “Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (January–March 2002), 46–61. Cf., Sibley, James Ray. 2012. “The Blindness of Israel and the Mission of the Church.” Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

the gospel (Rom. 11:1–5), Israel’s national acceptance of the Messiah in the eschaton will be “life from the dead” (ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν – Rom. 11:15). Specifically, the restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and eternal blessings to the entire world (Rom. 11:15).²⁷⁰

In the book of Acts, the Kingdom of God was the topic of Jesus’ instruction to his disciples during the forty days after his resurrection (Acts 1:3). The Messianic Kingdom was a topic of interest and inquiry for the disciples (Acts 1:6). The Kingdom of God was also a primary theme in the sermons of Philip (Acts 8:12) and of Paul (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23). The word “kingdom” appears eighteen times in the epistles referring to divine rule; eight of which are used in the expression “Kingdom of God.” The *Kingdom* is also a primary theme in the book of Revelation.²⁷¹ In Colossians, Paul speaks of both the “Kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:13) and the “Kingdom of God” (Col. 4:11).

The Kingdom of His Beloved Son – Colossians 1:13

Just as Jesus’ relationship to redemption in 1:14 is an inter-textual link to the Passover narrative and the Day of Atonement, the words, allusions, and echoes introduced in Colossians 1:13 also harken back to the Exodus narrative, with the addition of a new theme—the eternal kingdom promised to David in 2 Samuel 7. The biblical, theological, and practical themes found in the Exodus and in the Davidic

²⁷⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 89, 868.

²⁷¹ The word “kingdom” (βασιλεία) is used seven-times; the word “throne” (θρόνος) is used forty-one-times; the word “crown,” in both its Greek forms (στέφανος and διάδημα), is used eleven-times; the word “reign”(βασιλεύω) is used seven-times; the word “rule” (πομαίνω) is found four-times; the words “judge” and “judgement” (κρίσις and κρίμα) appears seven-times; and the word “wrath” (ὀργή) is found fifteen-times; in Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2001), 442–443.

covenant are now inter-textually applied to both Jewish and Gentile believers in the church.²⁷²

Exodus (LXX)

“I will deliver you” (ῥύομαι)” (Ex. 6:6)

“Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Ex. 6:29)

“from the hand” (Ex. 3:8)

“from slavery” (Ex. 6:6)

“darkness (σκότος) in all the land” (Ex. 10:22)

“blood” of the lamb (τὸ αἷμα – Ex. 12:7, 13, 22, 23)

Colossians

“He has delivered us” (ῥύομαι)
(1:13, RSV)

“from the domain” (1:13)

“domain of darkness” (σκότος – 1:13)

“blood of His cross” (τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ
σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ – 1:20)

2 Samuel (LXX)

“his kingdom” (τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ – 2 Sam. 7:12)

“the kingdom of His beloved Son”

(τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ – Col. 1:13)

“he will be a son to Me (αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν – 2 Sam. 7:14)

“His beloved Son”

(τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ – Col. 1:13)

Colossians

Just as the sons of Israel and a mixed multitude were delivered by the blood of an unblemished lamb out of the bondage of slavery and death under Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, a kingdom plagued with darkness and death (Ex. 12:37–38); so too, the Colossians, and all believers have been delivered from the domain of darkness by Jesus

²⁷² Speaking of both Jewish and Gentile believers that have been rescued, transferred, and redeemed, Paul includes himself with the clause “He has rescued us” (ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς).

Christ, and by the blood of his cross. Concerning the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7, Sailhamer says, the promise plays a central role in Scripture.

The Davidic covenant has a central place in Scripture. It is the foundation for most of the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament; it is the historical means by which God fulfilled his promises to Abraham; and it is the basis on which the New Testament's view of the future kingdom of God is built...The Old Testament closes on the note that no Davidic king had ever come who could claim to be the fulfillment of God's promise to David. That promise remained open until the coming of Jesus Christ. The angel Gabriel told Mary when he announced the birth of Jesus, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32-33). Jesus was the promised son of David. He came to announce the kingdom of God, and he is coming again to establish it here on earth.²⁷³

Although the Davidic covenant has not been fully realized, the spiritual realm in which believers live in communion with the triune God and with fellow Christians, now exists.

Jesus Christ is the "firstborn of creation" (1:15) and the "firstborn from the dead" (1:18). Christians are a "new creation" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), adopted into God's family by faith (Rom. 8:15), engrafted into his covenant promises (Rom. 11:17), abiding in Christ, the true vine (Jn. 15:1-11), and bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and the fruit of good works in their lives (Eph. 2:10). Just as Paul said that Christians have been "buried" with Christ and "raised up with him through faith" (2:12), were once "dead" and now made "alive" (Col. 2:13), and "have been made complete" in him (Col. 2:10), so too have Christians been "transferred" to the kingdom of God's beloved Son, and serve with great expectation until the coming of the Lord to consummate his kingdom in his millennial and eternal reign (1 Cor. 15:23-25; Rev. 20:1-15; 21:1-22:21).

²⁷³ Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*, 40.

The Kingdom of God – Colossians 4:11

The phrase, “Kingdom of God” (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ), is used sixty-six times in the New Testament, eight times in the epistles, and once in Colossians. The term is associated with Paul twelve times in Scripture.²⁷⁴ Sailhamer says, there are two basic views about the Kingdom of God in Christian theology.²⁷⁵

Christian theology has developed the biblical notion of the kingdom of God in two directions. Some understand it in physical, realistic terms. The kingdom of God is a sphere, a realm, over which God rules. In Old Testament times, the kingdom was located in Jerusalem and lasted throughout the Davidic monarchy. Since the New Testament, some identify the kingdom with the church, whose spreading influence is thus the spread of the kingdom. For others, notably those who do not identify the church with the Old Testament kingdom, the realm of the kingdom is taken to be the future reign of Christ in Jerusalem during the Millennium. Others, however, have understood the concept of the kingdom of God as a spiritual-ethical ideal. The kingdom of God is not so much a place as it is a reign or relationship. It is God’s rule in the hearts of believers. When Christians gather together to do the work of God, they advance God’s kingdom and spread its influence in the hearts and lives of others. These two views of the kingdom of God have played a crucial role in defining the nature of Christianity throughout the centuries.²⁷⁶

Jesus explained the Kingdom of God in seven parables recorded in the gospel of Matthew chapter thirteen: (1) the sower and the seed (13:1–23); (2) the weeds (13:24–30, 36–43); (3) the mustard seed (13:31–32); (4) the yeast (13:33–35); (5) the hidden treasure (13:44); (6) the pearl (13:45); and (7) the net (13:50). Each parable illustrates common and unique elements to the Kingdom of God.

The central point of the first parable is the reception of the kingdom message (13:23). Jesus tells the people (ὄχλοι πολλοί – 13:2) to “hear” the parable of the sower.

²⁷⁴ Acts 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31; Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20; 6:9, 10; 15:50; Galatians 5:21; Colossians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:5.

²⁷⁵ Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*, 34.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

The word “hear” is the aorist active imperative form of the verb “ἀκούω” from the Hebrew word “שמע” which means to listen intently for the purposes of understanding, obeying, and bearing fruit. The verb is used twelve times in Matthew chapter thirteen.²⁷⁷ The seed in this parable is “the word of the kingdom” (13:19) and the soil is the heart of those who hear the message and respond (13:23).

The second parable identifies Jesus, “the Son of Man,” as the one who sows “the good seed” (13:37); the field is “the world” in which the good seed is sown (13:38); the good seed are the “sons of the kingdom” (13:38); and the tares are “the sons of the evil one” who are sown by “the devil (13:38–39). Jesus is planting his good seed in the world and the devil is planting his evil seed to bear fruit for their respective kingdoms *today*. The two types of seed grow and bear fruit together until the harvest at “the end of the age” when the wheat and tares will be separated and judged (13:41–43). The realms of both the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil are visible and experienced through the relationship that a person has with their king, their kingdom citizens, their kingdom message, as reflected by their kingdom fruit.

Jesus quotes Daniel 12:3 in Matthew 13:43 to make application to the future aspect of God’s Kingdom: “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him listen.” Matthew begins Jesus’ quote with the adverb “τότε” (then) which is a “temporal development marker” used to “explicitly signal that what follows is a new, distinct development in the story.”²⁷⁸ Jesus is pointing to a time in the future, at the “end of the age,” as prophesied in Daniel, when the righteous “will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” The good seed are “sons of

²⁷⁷ Matthew 13:9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 43.

²⁷⁸ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 31.

the kingdom,” who have not yet experienced the fullness of their Father’s kingdom. The good seed are those who have entered the realm of God’s kingdom as sons and daughters by faith in Jesus Christ, and are now sharing the message of the kingdom in the world. The final consummation and fullness of God’s Kingdom, however, lies in the future.

The lesson of the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven illustrate the “small, almost imperceptible” form in which the Kingdom of God would begin, grow, and bear fruit.²⁷⁹ The Kingdom of God begins as a small mustard seed or a measure of leaven and grows to universal proportions (13:31–33).

The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl speak of the value of the Kingdom of God. Both the man who finds the hidden treasure and the merchant who finds an expensive pearl sell all they have to purchase the pearl and the field in which the treasure is found (13:44–46). The sacrifice of material wealth far out-weighs the cost of discipleship and investment in all aspects of the Kingdom of God.

Chapter thirteen closes with a return to the present and future characteristics of the Kingdom of God. This time, the illustration is of a fishing net that is cast into the sea and is now catching fish of every kind (13:47). When the net is full, the fishermen will then draw the net and separate the good fish from the bad fish (13:48). The parable speaks only of the future separation and judgment “at the end of the age” when the wicked will be taken from the righteous, thrown into the furnace, where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (13:49–50).

Jesus closes this parable section with a question and a statement. He asks the disciples (οἱ μαθηταὶ – 13:36), “have you understood all these things” (Συνήκατε ταῦτα πάντα – 13:51)? The parables were designed to separate the nation of Israel, who would

²⁷⁹ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 444.

reject the message, from the faithful remnant of Israel who would receive the message, in fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9–10 (13:14–15). The nation as a whole, “will keep on hearing, but ‘will not understand (μὴ συνῆτε – 13:14; Isa. 6:9)’” the message. Jesus now asks the disciples if they have understanding and insight to comprehend and apply the message of Kingdom of God. If so, they are now the “sons of the kingdom,” who sow the message of the kingdom, in expectation and joyful anticipation of the future consummation of the kingdom at the end of the age (13:39, 40, 49).

Jesus’ statement reveals the truth about the old and new nature of the kingdom message. Jesus came to establish the kingdom promised in the Hebrew prophetic literature – a literal, visible, universal rule of the Messiah over all nations, in the new creation, in the eternal kingdom.²⁸⁰ Rather than coming all at once, as the Hebrew Scriptures appear to anticipate, the kingdom program begins small, and is delayed until the arrival of the second coming of the King and the consummation of the kingdom.²⁸¹ Thus, Jesus said to the disciples, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old” (Mt. 13:52). Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets (Mt. 5:17). There are elements of the Kingdom of God that are revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures; there are some elements of the Kingdom of God that are new and revealed in Jesus’ instruction given in the New Testament Scriptures.²⁸² The Old Testament is not old, and the New Testament is not new. They are both part of the canon of Scripture that reveal the plan and purpose of the triune God in the new creation and the Kingdom of God.

²⁸⁰ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 444.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 444.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 444.

Jesus Christ came the first time as the Lamb of God and the Suffering Servant to die for the sins of his people. After his burial, resurrection, and appearances over a forty-day period, in which he spoke about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), having accomplished the atonement, he returned to His former glory at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Jn. 17:5). Jesus is seated there now, waiting until God the Father makes his enemies a footstool for his feet (Ps. 110:1).²⁸³ When the gospel goes out to all nations (Mt. 24:14) and the Jewish people call upon their Messiah (Mt. 23:39; Ps. 118:26), at a time known only to God the Father, Jesus will return to establish his Millennial Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:25). Once the millennial reign of Jesus Christ is fulfilled, he will hand over his Kingdom to His Father and the Kingdom of God will come in all its glory forever (1 Cor. 15:24).

In Colossians 4:11, Paul names three Jewish men (ἐκ περιτομῆς) who proved to be a great source of comfort and encouragement to him in the kingdom ministry. He calls Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus “fellow workers for the kingdom of God.” The four of them, together with other Gentile and Jewish brothers (Col. 4:7–17), are sons of the kingdom, committed to sharing the message of the kingdom, while awaiting the arrival of the King, and consummation of His kingdom.

Conclusion

Chapter two answered the question, “Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?” The goal was to examine the various levels of textuality within the verse and its textual relationship with the letter on both a macro-structural and micro-structural level to discover why Paul was emphatic about proclaiming Jesus Christ.

²⁸³ Psalm 110:1 is quoted or alluded to in Matthew 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Eph. 1:20, 22; Colossians 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13.

The chapter began with an introduction to Colossians 1:28. The introduction was followed by an inner-textual analysis of the verse's immediate literary context, and an analysis of the literary characteristics in Colossians 1:28. The chapter concluded with an analysis of six unique relationships that Jesus Christ has with God the Father, creation, the new creation, redemption, the church, and the kingdom that inspire and motivate Paul's exhortation. Applying features of discourse analysis, the text revealed the motivation behind Paul's emphatic exhortation was the preeminence of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Colossians were taught the gospel of Jesus Christ by Epaphras. They heard, understood, and received the word of truth and the grace of God. Paul was thankful for their faith in Jesus Christ, their love for the saints, and their hope in the return of Christ. He prayed they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will, so they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power, and giving thanks to the Lord.

His concern was they would not be moved away from their faith and hope in the gospel which was firmly established and steadfast. The threat the Colossians faced were false teachers who were teaching false doctrines that included philosophy, tradition, legalism, paganism, aestheticism, angel worship, and fleshly pride. Paul wanted to make sure the Colossians were not taken captive by the false doctrines, rather than according to Christ.

The reason Paul exhorts the church to proclaim Christ is because of his preeminence. Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God in whom all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ, there is redemption, the forgiveness of sins. A Christian's sin debt is completely

wiped away. They have been buried with Christ, raised with Christ, and will be revealed with Christ in glory at his return. In Christ, therefore, the Colossians, and all Christians, are made complete.

The reason for proclaiming Christ is clear—Jesus Christ is preeminent. How does Paul instruct the church to fulfill his emphatic and enthusiastic command? Chapter three will answer the question, “How do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?”

CHAPTER THREE
HOW DO WE PROCLAIM CHRIST IN COLOSSIANS 1:28?

Introduction

Paul's concern for the Colossians was for them to persist in their faith in Jesus Christ and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel which they heard, received, and that was bearing fruit in their lives (1:5–6, 23). The Colossians were formerly alienated from God, hostile in mind, and engaged in evil activities (1:21; 3:7). Christ now had reconciled them to God and one day would present them holy, blameless and beyond reproach (1:22).

Paul was not suggesting the Colossians would lose their salvation. He affirmed the reality of their past unregenerate life, their present reconciliation, their future glory, and their steadfast faith in his prayer of thanksgiving (1:3–8), the sufficiency of the redemptive work of God the Father through God the Son (1:13–20; 2:10–15), and the emphatic, temporal introduction to their new life in Christ (1:22).¹ Elsewhere in Scripture

¹ “But now” (νῦν δὲ – 1:22).

and in Paul's writings, the security of the believer and the perseverance of the saints are affirmed.²

Paul's concern for the Colossians was for them to persevere in their faith, amidst the threat of false teaching, rather than according to Christ, in whom the Colossians had been made complete (2:8–10). The redemption the Colossians received through faith in Jesus Christ came through the word of truth, the gospel, which they heard and understood through the ministry of Epaphras (1:6–7). The Colossians faith in Jesus Christ, their love for all the saints, and their hope in heaven, were rooted in the word of God (1:5).

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul revealed six unique relationships that Jesus Christ has with God the Father, creation, the new creation, redemption, the church, and the kingdom that inspired his emphatic call to proclaim Christ. How were the Colossians

² John 6:38–40; 10:27–29; Romans 8:1, 30; Ephesians 1:13–14; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:5. “While Scripture repeatedly emphasizes that those who are truly born again will persevere to the end and will certainly have eternal life in heaven with God, there are other passages that speak of the necessity of continuing in faith throughout life. They make us realize that what Peter said in 1 Peter 1:5 is true, namely, that God does not guard us *apart from* our faith, but only by working *through* our faith so that he enables us to continue to believe in him. In this way, those who continue to trust in Christ gain assurance that God is working in them and guarding them.

One example of this kind of passage is John 8:31–32: “Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, *If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*’ Jesus is here giving a warning that one evidence of genuine faith is continuing in his word, that is, continuing to believe what he says and living a life of obedience to his commands.

Similarly, Jesus says, *‘He who endures to the end will be saved’* (Matt. 10:22), as a means of warning people not to fall away in times of persecution. Paul says to the Colossian Christians that Christ has reconciled them to God, “in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, *provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard’* (Col. 1:22–23).

It is only natural that Paul and the other New Testament writers would speak this way, for they are addressing groups of people who profess to be Christians, without being able to know the actual state of every person's heart. There may have been people at Colossae who had joined in the fellowship of the church, and perhaps even professed that they had faith in Christ and had been baptized into membership of the church, but who never had true saving faith. How is Paul to distinguish such people from true believers? How can he avoid giving them false assurance, assurance that they will be saved eternally when in fact they will not, unless they come to true repentance and faith? Paul knows that those whose faith is not real will eventually fall away from participation in the fellowship of the church.

Therefore, he tells his readers that they will ultimately be saved, *‘provided that you continue in the faith’* (Col. 1:23). Those who continue show thereby that they are genuine believers. But those who do not continue in the faith show that there was no genuine faith in their hearts in the first place.” Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 792–793.

to fulfill Paul's emphatic instruction? Did he give the church any directions in Colossians 1:28 or the letter in which to follow? Were there any absolute truths or timeless principles that could be applied to the Colossians to confront human philosophy and false religion? Was there any instruction that would deepen their knowledge of Jesus Christ and ensure that the message of gospel went forth?

In Colossians 1:28, Paul answers the question, "How do we proclaim Christ?" by describing a *process* for proclamation. Paul's description for a process includes both the *scope* for proclamation and *form* for proclamation that he applies to the church, to the family, to the workplace, and to the lost.

To discover the authorial intent and meaning of Colossians 1:28, chapter three will analyze words, phrases, clauses, sentences, quotes, allusions, and echoes according to grammar, syntax, and semantics, as well as, analyze the text's literary and compositional features on an in-textual, inner-textual, and inter-textual level to answer the question: "How do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?"

In-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28

Sailhamer defines "in-textuality" as "the inner coherence of the smallest units of text expressed compositionally through grammar, syntax, and semantics. An analysis of the compositional strategy of a biblical book begins with the in-textuality of each individual passage."³ The in-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 in chapter two revealed three important linguistic devices that elevate the importance of the verse within its immediate literary context (1:24–2:5)—*inclusio*, *asyndeton*, and *inflection*.

³ Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 207–209.

Colossians 1:28 forms an asyndetic inclusio that exhorts, creates urgency, emphasizes the importance of the text, and binds the verse together into a meaningful unit. Internally, the verse is knit together with an asyndetic clauses (1:28a, 28b), the conjunction “καὶ” (and), and the repetitive phrase “πάντα ἄνθρωπον” (every man). The verse is inner-textually related to the letter by the relative pronoun “ὃν” (Him), the phrase “ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ), the word “πᾶς” (all), and the word “σοφία” (wisdom).

“Him we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

“ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ, ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ” (Col. 1:28).

In this verse, Paul employs a controlling verb and two participles to establish and describe a process for proclamation. To further describe the process, he repeats a certain phrase to explain the scope for proclamation. Then, Paul applies a primary theme to his instruction to describe the form for proclamation. Paul used compositional features of textuality to answer the question: “How Do We Proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?”

The Process in Colossians 1:28: “Proclaim” – “Admonishing” – “Teaching.”

The Scope in Colossians 1:28: “Every man.”

The Form in Colossians 1:28: “In all wisdom.”

In-Textual Analysis – “Him We Proclaim” in Colossians 1:28

Jesus Christ is the object of proclamation and the goal for proclamation. The verse begins with the clause, “ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν” (Him we proclaim), and is introduced with the relative pronoun, “ὃν” (Him), that refers the audience back to “Christ” in 1:27. The verse ends with the phrase, “ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ). The person and work of Jesus Christ are the object of and the goal for Christian proclamation.

The verb “καταγγέλλω” translated “proclaim” is a compound word composed of the verb “αγγέλλω,” meaning “to tell” or “to inform,”⁴ and the prefix “κατα,” meaning “against, down,” or “according to.”⁵ “καταγγέλλω” is a present, active, indicative, finite verb meaning “to declare,” or “to announce,” and focuses on the broad scope or the reach to which the announcement of Christ extends.⁶ “αγγέλλω” and “καταγγέλλω” are used nineteen times in the New Testament exclusively in the book of Acts, Paul’s letters, and in the gospel of John.⁷ The word became “almost a technical term for missionary preaching since it was normally used of the gospel itself or some element in it.”⁸

Paul chose the declarative indicative mood to state a fact about proclamation and the ministry of the church.⁹ The sense of the word is to make known the person and work of Jesus Christ in public “with broad dissemination.”¹⁰ Paul could have used other words to describe this ministry.¹¹ Yet, he chose this word, with its broad appeal, to stress the

⁴ Louw and Nida, “αγγέλλω.”

⁵ “Sometimes the meaning of a compound verb can be determined from the meanings of its component parts. An example is ἐκβάλλω, which means ‘I throw out’ (from ἐκ, ‘out,’ and βάλλω, ‘I throw’). At other times, the meaning of the verb is modified by the preposition in a way that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to explain its meaning (e.g. ἀναγινώσκω means ‘I read,’ not ‘I know up’).” Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 56–57.

⁶ Louw and Nida, s.v. “καταγγέλλω.”

⁷ John 20:18; Acts 3:24; 4:2; 13:5, 38; 15:36; 16:17, 21; 17:3, 13, 23; 26:23; Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:1; 9:14; 11:26; Philippians 1:17, 18; Colossians 1:28.

⁸ O’Brien, *Colossians–Philemon*, 87.

⁹ “There are three main uses of the indicative [mood]. The declarative indicative states a simple statement of fact in past, present, or future: διὰ τοῦτο παρεκλήθημεν, ‘for this reason we were called’ (1 Thess. 3:7). The imperatival indicative expresses a command: ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου, ‘you shall love your neighbor’ (James 2:8). The same command can be given in English as ‘Love your neighbor.’ The interrogative indicative is used in a simple question that expects an answer: πιστεύεις τοῦτο, ‘do you believe this?’ (John 11 :26).” Black, *It’s Still Greek to Me*, 98.

¹⁰ BDAG, s.v. “καταγγέλλω.”

¹¹ Louw and Nida; BDAG, s.v. “διαγγέλλω,” (to provide specific information abroad, far and wide); “δηγέομαι,” (to tell, relate, describe in detail); “ἐρεύγομαι,” (to utter, to proclaim); “ἐξηγέω,” (to sound forth, to ring out); κηρύσσω, (to herald, to proclaim); “πληρώω,” (to proclaim fully).

preeminence of Jesus Christ, mankind's universal need for salvation, and the broad application for the gospel message. This understanding for the use of the word “καταγγέλλω” and the broad approach to the gospel is affirmed by the phrase “πάντα ἄνθρωπον” (every man), which refers to the audience to whom Christ is proclaimed. The present, active, indicative form of the verb “καταγγέλλομεν” denotes continuous, habitual action.¹² Paul made it clear from the very beginning that proclaiming the person and work of Jesus Christ on a broad scale was an integral part of the Christian's life and the ministry of the church.

It was demonstrated in chapter two, the plural pronoun “ἡμεῖς” (we) applies, not only to Paul, Timothy, Epaphras, and his fellow ministers, but the pronoun applies to *all* Christians. The proclamation of Jesus Christ was not only for a select few. Union with Christ inspired and motivated the proclamation of Christ. It was intended to be an ongoing, continuous, habitual lifestyle characteristic of a Christian and of Christian ministry.

The Colossians were first exposed to Jesus Christ and the message of the gospel through the ministry of Epaphras (1:5–7). The Colossians heard the word of truth (1:5), they understood the grace of God (1:6), and the transforming power of the word of God and the grace of God were constantly bearing fruit and increasing in their lives by faith (1:6). Now, Paul instructed the Colossians, and all Christians, to “proclaim” Jesus Christ on a broad scale, so others would hear and understand the message of the gospel, receive salvation through Christ, bear fruit in their own lives, and fulfill the Great Commission. The first principle in answering the question, “How do we proclaim Christ in Colossians

¹² O'Brien, *Colossians – Philemon*, 87.

1:28?” is: “We proclaim Christ by continuously announcing the good news of Jesus Christ on a broad scale.”

In-Textual Analysis – “Admonishing and Teaching” in Colossians 1:28

The continuous, broad scale proclamation of Jesus Christ by all Christians is described in greater detail by two participles joined by a conjunction and a repetitive phrase.

“Admonishing every man and teaching every man” – Colossians 1:28

νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον

The two dependent participles, “νουθετοῦντες” (admonishing) and “διδάσκοντες” (teaching), are present, active, indicative and describe *how* Jesus Christ is proclaimed by more explicitly defining the finite verb “καταγγέλλομεν” (proclaim).¹³ The asyndetic nature of the clause, “νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον” (admonishing every man), also serves to move the understanding of proclamation to a more specific definition.¹⁴ The clause, “διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον” (teaching every man), is included in the definition by use of the conjunction “καὶ” (and) which connects and relates the two descriptions. The church proclaims Christ by “admonishing every man and teaching every man.”¹⁵

¹³ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 77; O’Brien, *Colossians – Philemon*, 87; Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, 622–630.

¹⁴ Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the New Testament*, 20.

¹⁵ Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, 628.

Admonishing – Colossians 1:28

The word translated “admonishing” is from the Greek word “νουθετέω” and can have different meanings depending on the literary context. The word can mean, “to rebuke” someone for having done something wrong; “to advise” someone on a relationship or issue; “to warn” someone about a dangerous situation;¹⁶ “to counsel” by listening and giving guidance; or it can mean “to instruct.”¹⁷ In the literary context of Colossians 1:28 and the letter to the Colossians, the sense of the word “νουθετέω” appears to have a wider semantic range given the broad context of proclamation. Depending on the condition and situation of the audience at hand, “νουθετέω” can apply to rebuking, warning, advising, counseling, or instructing, depending on the need at the time. Paul penned his letter to warn the Colossians about the dangers of false, false doctrine, and false practice, and to instruct them in a deeper knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ.

In addition to a habitual lifestyle of ongoing proclamation of the gospel on a broad scale, the second principle for understanding, “How we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?,” is: “We proclaim Christ by admonishing believers and unbelievers according to their need to persevere in the faith. This would include counseling them, warning them about philosophies, religions, traditions, practices, or experiences that would threaten their faith, rebuking them when they are in danger, or anything that would hinder them from coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ Louw and Nida, s.v. “νουθετέω.”

¹⁷ BDAG, s.v. “νουθετέω.”

Teaching – Colossians 1:28

The second participle Paul used to describe how Jesus Christ was proclaimed was the word “διδάσκοντες,” from the root “διδάσκω,” and translated “teaching.” The word “διδάσκω” means to provide instruction in both a formal or informal setting.¹⁸ The content of Paul’s instruction in the context of Colossians 1:28 and the letter to the Colossians is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul’s ministry and his instruction to the Colossians were intentional, specific, and Christ-centered.

Together, the participles, “admonishing” and “teaching,” embody two foundational ministries on which to build a biblical, theological, and practical process for Christian ministry, discipleship, and education. A third principle for understanding, “How We Proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?” is: “We proclaim Christ by providing biblical instruction in both formal and informal settings in order to present and apply the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In-textually, Paul employs a declarative finite verb and two participles to establish and describe a process for proclaiming Jesus Christ. All three words are present, active, indicative and describe an ongoing lifestyle of proclamation, admonishment, and teaching to every person. Proclamation focuses on announcing the good news of the person and work of Jesus Christ on a broad scale. Admonishing means to counsel, warn, advise, rebuke, or instruct believers and unbelievers about the danger of false teachers, false teaching, and false practice that will draw them away from the faith, keep them from fulfilling God’s purposes in their life, or keep them from coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Teaching is the intentional and orderly presentation of truth in both formal and informal

¹⁸ Louw and Nida, s.v. “διδάσκω.”

settings for the purposes of spiritual transformation and Christian maturity. Together, all ministries answer the question, “How we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?”

In-Textual Analysis – “Every Man” in Colossians 1:28

What has Paul said about the *scope* of proclamation? To whom is the person and work of Jesus Christ proclaimed? Chapter two identified the importance and repetition of the adjectives “πᾶς” (all, every) and “πάντοτε” (always, all times) in the compositional structure of Colossians. Paul applied this theme in Colossians 1:28 to describe the scope of Christian proclamation. The word “πᾶς” occurs four times in this verse. The phrase, “every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον), describes the scope of proclamation, repeating the phrase three times; twice in the context of admonishing and teaching, and once in the context of Christian maturity. The gospel is proclaimed to “every man.” “The repetition of ‘every man’ is emphatic.¹⁹ There is no part of Christian teaching that is to be reserved for a spiritual elite.”²⁰ No person is outside the view or application of the gospel. The gospel is for “every man.” Paul used this term to further emphasize the universal scope and transforming power for gospel proclamation.

In-Textual Analysis – “In All Wisdom” in Colossians 1:28

The *form* in which the person and work of Jesus Christ is proclaimed is “in all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ). Those who proclaim the person and work of Jesus Christ are the agents through whom the gospel is announced. *Wisdom* is the form in which Christ is proclaimed through admonishing and teaching. As defined in chapter one, “wisdom” is

¹⁹ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 87.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

knowing God personally, experiencing the indwelling Holy Spirit, understanding biblical truth, and living it out practically in every relationship of life (Ex. 28:2–3; Prov. 2:2–10). The selection of this noun points the reader back to the personal pronoun, “Him” (ὁν), referring to Jesus Christ, and forward to the phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ). Jesus Christ is the object and goal of biblical proclamation, admonishment, and teaching. He is the embodiment of wisdom; the sum, substance, and form of the gospel message (2:3).²¹ When proclaiming Christ to every man, godly wisdom is needed to discern where people are in their life, and engage their heart and mind with the gospel through proclamation, admonishment, and teaching, for the purpose of shepherding them closer to Christ, and into a personal relationship with Him.

Summary of the In-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28

In Colossians 1:28, the apostle Paul presents the church with a process, scope, and form for proclaiming Jesus Christ. The verse is an asyndetic inclusio that exhorts, creates urgency, emphasizes the importance of the text, and binds the verse together into a meaningful unit. A controlling verb and two participles are used to establish and describe a process for proclaiming Jesus Christ. Internally, the verse is knit together with an asyndetic clause, the conjunction “καὶ” (and), and the repetitive phrase “πάντα ἄνθρωπον” (every man). Paul, then, applies a primary literary theme to his instruction to describe the form for proclamation.

The process for proclaiming Christ includes announcing the person and work of Jesus Christ on a broad scale, and advising, warning, counseling, rebuking, instructing, and teaching both believers and unbelievers through “admonishing” and “teaching.” The

²¹ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 86.

scope for proclamation is “every man.” No person or people group are outside the realm of biblical proclamation. The form for proclaiming Jesus Christ is “in all wisdom.” God-given wisdom is needed to engage people mentally and spiritually at their point of need and understanding, and to introduce them to the life transforming, redemptive power of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:28 possesses all the characteristics of a text. The verse demonstrates cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and textuality which give the verse meaning and depth. In addition to in-textuality, the verse also demonstrates characteristics of both inner-textuality and inter-textuality with the letter to the Colossians and with the canon of Scripture.

Inner-textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28

The inner-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 will examine the grammar, syntax, and semantics of the verse, in addition to, the intentional use of similar words, phrases, clauses, sentences, echoes, and allusions in the text of Colossians, that develop and support compositional structure, literary themes, and biblical theology in the letter.²²

Inner-textuality was defined in chapter one as a literary feature that “binds texts together with other texts to form narratives that allow biblical authors to thematize and unify their message within a complete book or letter.”²³

Colossians 1:28 possesses five inner-textual relationships that reveal a process for proclamation that: (1) announces the person and work of Jesus Christ and the message of the gospel on a broad scale; (2) admonishes the dangers of false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice; and (3) teaches the preeminence of Jesus Christ. The process for

²² Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 209–212.

²³ *Ibid.*, 209–212.

proclamation revealed in Colossians 1:28 is intended to lead to spiritual maturity in the church, in the family, in the workplace, and among the lost. The five inner-textual links are the terms, “proclaim,” “admonishing,” “teaching,” “every man,” and the phrase, “in all wisdom.” The word “present” will be addressed in chapter four.

Inner-textual Analysis – “We Proclaim Him” in Colossians 1:28

The verb, “proclaim” (καταγγέλλομεν), has been defined as the act of declaring or announcing the person and work of Jesus Christ with a special focus on the broad scope and reach of the announcement. The church is instructed to “proclaim” the person and work of Jesus Christ to “every man.” Although the word, “καταγγέλλομεν,” is found only once in the text of Colossians, a theme of proclamation and a theology of proclamation are revealed in the letter. A list of phrases and clauses in Colossians that establish and develop a theme and a theology for proclamation are listed below.

“you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel” (1:5)
προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

“the day you heard *of it* and understood the grace of God in truth” (1:6)
ἥς ἡμέρας ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ

“the hope of the gospel that you have heard” (1:23)
τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε

“the gospel...was preached to every creature” (1:23, KJV)
τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε τοῦ κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει

“fulfill the word of God” (1:25, KJV)
πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ,

“revealed to His saints” (1:26, ESV)
ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων

“God willed to make known” (1:27)
ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς γνωρίσαι

“Him we proclaim” (1:28)
ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν

“for this purpose, also, I labor” (1:29)
κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος

“we may speak forth the mystery of Christ” (4:3)
λαλήσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ

“that you may fulfill it” (4:17)
ἵνα αὐτὴν πληροῖς

The word of God is an inner-textual link that frames the text of Colossians and also gives it internal unity and thematic structure. It is presented as the transforming agent in the lives of Paul, his co-laborers, and in the lives of the Colossians. Each one of these phrases and clauses is in the context of the word of God proclaimed, preached, taught, ministered, and received by Paul, his co-laborers, the Colossians, and others.

Colossians 1:5–7

The word “proclaim” is inner-textually linked to the text of Colossians and presents a literary theme and a biblical theology for proclamation. First, the Colossians “heard” (ἠκούσατε) the word of God from Epaphras (1:5–7). Although Paul does not explicitly say that Epaphras *proclaimed* the word of God to the Colossians, the reader can infer the proclamation of Christ because the word of God was “present” (παρόντος) with them,²⁴ just as it was in all the world (1:6). The word that was “present” with the Colossians was “constantly bearing fruit and increasing” in their lives and ministry (1:6). The inference is the Colossians heard the word of God through the proclamation ministry of Epaphras.

²⁴ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 61.

Colossians 1:23

Second, the inference in 1:5–7 is confirmed in 1:23 when Paul said, the Colossians “heard” the same gospel that “was preached (κηρυχθέντος) to every creature which is under heaven” (1:23, KJV). The word “κηρύσσω” is translated “preach” or “proclaim”²⁵ and falls within the semantic range of “proclaim” (καταγγέλλω).²⁶ The gospel that was “preached” to every creature under heaven was the same gospel that was preached in Colossae.

Colossians 1:25–27

Third, Paul was a minister of the word of God for the sake of the Colossians (1:25). He called himself, “a minister according to the stewardship from God,” so that he would “fulfill the word of God” (πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ – 1:25). The clause, “fulfill the word of God,” referred to Paul’s ministry, particularly the ministry of proclaiming the mystery of Jesus Christ (1:25–27). The mystery of Christ was revealed through the proclamation of Christ, not just to the Gentiles, but to “every man” (1:28). The theme and theology of proclamation that was introduced in 1:6, 1:23, and 1:25 finds its climax in 1:28.

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

Paul said, “For this purpose, I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me” (1:29). As in 1:23, Paul affirmed his own personal commitment to fulfilling his ministry of proclaiming Jesus Christ in 1:29.

²⁵ BDAG, s.v. “κηρύσσω.”

²⁶ Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 132.

“I, Paul, was made a minister” (1:23)
 ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος

“I rejoice in my sufferings” (1:24)
 χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν

“I was made a minister” (1:25)
 ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος

“I might fulfill the word of God” (1:25)
 πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ

“We proclaim Him” (1:28)
 ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν

“For this purpose, also, I labor” (1:29)
 κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος

“How great a struggle I have” (2:1)
 ἠλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω

Colossians 1:29

The word translated “labor” (1:29) is the present, active, indicative form of the Greek word “κοπιᾶω” which means to work hard by continuously exerting oneself “physically, mentally, or spiritually.”²⁷ Paul used this word often to describe the toil and labor of ministry like that of a hard-working farmer (2 Tim. 2:6).²⁸ The word “striving” (ἀγωνιζόμενος) was used to describe the self-discipline of an athlete in training who then exerts himself during a race (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:7).

The labor, in the case of a Christian, however, is “according to His [God’s] power, which works mightily within” all who labor faithfully in the proclamation ministry (1:29). The principle of human effort and divine empowerment that is set forth in the lives of the Colossians (1:10–11) is also illustrated in Paul’s life (1:29).

²⁷ BDAG, s.v. “κοπιᾶω.”

²⁸ Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 4:12; 15:10; 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 4:10; 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:6.

“Strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might” (1:11)

“I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me” (1:29)

Paul expressed the effectual, working power of God through a series of synonyms for “power and might.”²⁹ The sense of the text is, where the Christian toils faithfully, God works powerfully.³⁰

Colossians 4:3–4

Fourth, at the end of the letter, Paul requested prayer. He asked that God would open “a door for the word,” so he and his fellow ministers could “speak forth” the mystery of Christ (4:3). The word “door” (θύρα) referred to the opportunity to proclaim Christ.³¹ The word translated “speak forth” (λαλῆσαι) is the infinitive form of the word “λαλέω” and indicates purpose.³² Paul wanted to “reveal” (φανερῶσω) the mystery of Christ by “speaking” (λαλῆσαι) clearly the word of Christ (4:4).

Colossians 4:17

Fifth, Paul wanted the Colossians to encourage Archippus to “take heed to the ministry” that he had received from the Lord and to “fulfill it” (πληροῖς). Archippus’ ministry, like that of Paul’s, the Colossian’s, and the ministry of every Christian, was centered on the proclamation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christ is the object, the substance, and the goal of Christian proclamation.

²⁹ Colossians 1:29 – “according to His power, which mightily works within me” (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει).

³⁰ O’Brien, *Colossians – Philemon*, 91.

³¹ Acts 14:27; 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12.

³² Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 151.

In addition to the use of the word “proclaim” and its semantic relationships in the letter to the Colossians, the term also has inter-textual relationships with other important sections of the Bible that establish and develop both a consistent literary theme and a biblical theology for proclamation.

Inter-Textual Analysis – “We Proclaim Him” in Colossians 1:28

Inter-textuality was defined in chapter one as “the study of textual relationships between and among texts. It is a compositional device used to intentionally link words, phrases, clauses, sentences, echoes, and allusions in one book or letter with those in another book or letter in order to develop literary themes which present a unified message and biblical theology.”³³ Paul presents a literary theme and biblical theology for proclamation that is consistent with the canon of Scripture. From the beginning, God wanted to make his name known and to reveal his will to mankind.

The word “proclaim” is used specifically in a missional sense to describe the proclamation of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises to Israel for the salvation of both Jewish and Gentile people in the book of Acts and in the Old Testament. Peter said, Jesus Christ was “announced” (κατήγγειλαν) by Moses in the Torah and by all the prophets from the time of Samuel (Acts 3:24).

The Book of Acts – καταγγέλλω

The Apostleship of Peter

In Peter’s second sermon at the temple in Solomon’s portico recorded in the book of Acts, he addressed the “men of Israel” and identified Jesus as the Messiah sent by the

³³ Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 212–213.

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to Israel in fulfillment of covenant promises (3:11–26). Peter, using the Hebrew Scriptures and the Septuagint (LXX),³⁴ said that Jesus was prophesied by Moses and “announced” (κατήγγειλαν) by all the prophets from Samuel onward (3:22–24). Jesus was identified as Abraham’s seed through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed (3:25). Peter called for the men of Israel to “repent and return” to God through Jesus Christ. Later, he would write to the remnant of Jewish believers living in the diaspora (ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς – 1 Pet. 1:1) and tell them that the prophets were writing specifically to them (1 Pet. 1:10–12).³⁵ Peter used a

³⁴ The Septuagint (LXX) – “The Septuagint is the most important Greek translation of the Old Testament, reflecting the meaning of the Hebrew Bible held by ancient Jews throughout the Greek-speaking world. The translation was already completed by the time of Jesus, and many New Testament writers relied heavily on it. The Septuagint appears to have used a version of the Hebrew Bible slightly different than our present Hebrew text. It is thus an important window to the past.

Moreover, the translators clearly read their Hebrew Bible as a prophecy. They believed that the Messiah would be born of a virgin, for they choose the specific Greek word *parthenos* (‘virgin’) to render the prophetic promise in Isaiah 7:14. They also believed that David’s psalms were written as prophecies of the coming Messiah, and they labeled them as written ‘for the end [days]’ (from the superscription to Psalms), that is the days of the coming Messiah. When Peter, in his sermon on Pentecost, quoted from Psalm 16 to prove that the Messiah would rise from the dead, he quoted from the Septuagint (Acts 2:25–26), reflecting a different tradition from the Hebrew text we now have. Peter’s point would have been harder to establish from that text.” John H. Sailhamer, *How We Got the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 61.

“This translation, which originated in Alexandria – the main city in Egypt – called the Septuagint, or the version of the Seventy (usually abbreviated as LXX). This was because of an ancient legend that a number of Jewish scholars were commissioned to translate the Scriptures and, after working independently; they found that their translations agreed exactly. The obvious purpose of the legend was to legitimize the translation as divinely inspired. In any case, the Septuagint was of enormous importance for the early church. It is the text of Scripture quoted by most New Testament authors, and it profoundly influenced the formation of early Christian vocabulary, including the very name of “Christ,” which was the Septuagint word for ‘Anointed One’ or ‘Messiah.’ When the early Christians began their missionary spread, they used the Septuagint as a ready-made means of communicating their message to the Gentiles. For this and other reasons, the Jewish community produced other versions that were not as readily suitable for Christian use, and in effect left the church in sole possession of the Septuagint.” Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol. 1 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1984), 12.

³⁵ The term “διασπορά” is a word used eleven times in the Bible and refers to Jewish people living outside the land of Israel (Dt. 28:25; 30:4; Neh. 1:9; Ps. 146:2; Isa. 49:6; Jer. 15:7; 41:17; Dan. 12:2; Jn. 7:35; Jam. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1). Peter is the apostle to the Jewish people (Gal. 2:7–9). For a discussion on the audience of First Peter, cf. Jim R. Sibley. “Are You Talkin’ to Me? 1 Peter 2:4–10 and a Theology of Israel,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 59 (Fall 2016), 59–75; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, James, Ariel’s Bible Commentary* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 317–328, 336–339; Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown, *I Peter*. Vol. 3, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 597; Robert Leighton, *A Practical Commentary upon the First Epistle General of Peter*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1864), 15–48.

form of the word, “αγγέλλω” (to announce), and conflated it with “εὐαγγελίζω” (preach good news), the ministry of gospel preaching.

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced [ἀνηγγέλη] to you through those who preached [εὐαγγελισαμένων] the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look (1 Pet. 1:10–12).

Not only was the ministry of proclamation (καταγγέλλω) revealed in Peter’s apostleship, but it was also revealed early in Paul’s ministry.

The Apostleship of Paul

On Paul’s first missionary journey in Salamis, he and Barnabas, with help from John, began to “proclaim” (κατήγγελλον) “the word of God” in the synagogues (Acts 13:5). In Pisidian Antioch, Paul and his ministry partners went to the synagogue and addressed both, “men of Israel,” and God-fearing Gentiles (13:16). Paul demonstrated through the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and Writings that Jesus was the fulfillment of the covenant promises made to Moses, David, and Abraham, and he “proclaimed” (καταγγέλλεται) Christ to both Jewish and Gentile people (13:38–39). Upon returning from their first missionary journey, after the Jerusalem council, Paul and Silas set out to visit to all the cities and churches where they had “proclaimed the word of the Lord” (κατηγγείλαμεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου – 15:36).

The pattern in Acts continued with Paul and his fellow ministers “proclaiming” (καταγγέλλω) Jesus Christ and preaching the gospel from the Hebrew Scriptures and the Septuagint to both Jewish and Gentile people from all walks of life in Philippi (16:17,

21), Thessalonica (17:3, 13), Athens (17:23), all the way to Rome (17:24–28:31). In Caesarea, Paul testified before Agrippa on his way to Rome.

So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead, He would be the first to ‘proclaim’ [καταγγέλλειν] light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:22–23).

Luke records the words of Paul who describes Jesus Christ as the “first” (πρῶτος) to “proclaim” (καταγγέλλειν) light to both *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles (τε λαῶ καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν – Acts 26:23).

The Ministry of Jesus

At the age of twelve, Jesus and his parents were in Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus was found in the temple “sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening and asking questions” (Lk. 2:46). The text says, “All who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers” (Lk. 2:47). Jesus was not only *listening* to the teachers, but from a very young age, He was also *proclaiming* biblical truth to the Jewish leaders.

Jesus began his formal ministry teaching in the synagogues on the Sabbath, as was, “His custom” (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτοῦ – Lk. 4:16). In the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus was handed the scroll of Isaiah and quoted 61:1 and said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk. 4:21). The verse that Jesus quoted in Isaiah was a prophetic verse about the Messiah proclaiming good news.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED (Lk. 4:18/Isa. 61:1).

Leaving Nazareth, Jesus settled in Capernaum to proclaim the good news in the Galilee to both Jewish and Gentile people in fulfillment of prophecy (Mt. 4:14–17).

This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: ‘THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES—THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED.’ From that time Jesus began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mt. 4:14–17/Isa. 9:1–2).

Jesus called his twelve Jewish disciples and said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt. 4:19). When he sent them out, he instructed them, “Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 10:5–6). Jesus told a Canaanite woman in the region of Tyre and Sidon that he was sent, “Only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 15:24). His last words in Matthew, before he ascended to heaven, Jesus told his disciples to take the gospel to Jewish and Gentile people of all nations (Mt. 28:18–20).

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’ (Mt. 28:18–20).

The disciples were not quick to pick up on Jesus’ pattern of gospel proclamation to both Jewish and Gentile people from all nations. It was not until Peter had a vision from the Lord while praying on a rooftop in Joppa and was sent to Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile, did he understand that the gospel was not only to Jewish people, but also for the Gentiles (Acts 10:1–48).³⁶

Opening his mouth, Peter said: ‘I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the

³⁶ Sibley, “The Blindness of Israel and the Mission of the Church,” 237–260.

sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) – (Acts 10:34–36).

Paul and the apostles were following in the footsteps of Jesus, proclaiming Christ as the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises to Abraham, Moses, David, and the New Covenant to both Jewish and Gentile people from Jerusalem to Rome. They were continuing the pattern of established by Jesus, proclaiming salvation through God’s Messiah, announced in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings.

In addition to the inter-textual relationships in Colossians with the New Testament, there are also important inter-textual relationships between the letter and the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament that demonstrate a consistent literary theme and biblical theology of proclamation.

The Septuagint (LXX) – ἀναγγέλλω / διαγγέλλω

Jacob – Genesis 49:1 (ἀναγγέλλω)

As was defined, the verb “καταγγέλλω” is from the simplex verb “αγγέλλω,” meaning “to tell” or “to inform.”³⁷ The words, “ἀναγγέλλω” and “διαγγέλλω,” in the LXX are from the same root, “αγγέλλω,” and mean “to proclaim” or “to inform.”³⁸

In a text-centered, canonical, and compositional approach to Scripture, the poems in the Pentateuch play an important role in the structure and meaning of the Pentateuch and in the rest of the Bible.³⁹ Genesis 49:1–27 is one of four poetic texts that are placed at strategic sections in the Pentateuch in which Jacob, Balaam, and Moses “proclaim”

³⁷ Louw and Nida, s.v. “αγγέλλω.”

³⁸ Ibid., s.v. “ἀναγγέλλω” and “διαγγέλλω.”

³⁹ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 1–79; Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 253–289.

(ἀναγγέλλω) what will happen “in the end of days” through the Messiah.⁴⁰ In Genesis 49:1, Jacob announces his prophetic intent. In Genesis 49:8–12, he speaks to Judah about what will take place in the future.

Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, ‘Assemble yourselves that I may tell you [ἀναγγείλω] what will befall you in the days to come’ (Gen 49:1).

Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples. He ties *his* foal to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine, And his teeth white from milk (Gen. 49:8–12).

The imagery prophesied to Judah is of a victorious warrior, a lion, who will be worshiped, and who will reign as king over Israel and the nations. Jacob proclaimed (ἀναγγείλω) the person and work of the Messiah to Israel.

Moses – Exodus 4:28 (ἀναγγέλλω)

In the Exodus narrative, God remembered his covenant with Abraham (Ex. 2:24–25) and called Moses to deliver the Israelites out of bondage to slavery in Egypt (Ex. 3:1–4:17). During his call, God revealed his presence as the great “I AM,” and gave Moses three “signs” to authenticate the Lord’s presence and his calling of Moses (Ex. 3:14; 4:9). Upon returning to Egypt, Moses “proclaimed” (ἀνήγγειλεν) the great act of redemption to Aaron (Ex. 4:28). Moses and Aaron assembled the elders of Israel and Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had given to Moses (Ex. 4:30). Moses performed the signs that God had given him in the sight of the people. Upon hearing the word of the Lord and seeing the signs, the Israelites believed, bowed low, and worshiped God (Ex. 4:30–31).

⁴⁰ Genesis 49:1–27; Exodus 15:1–17; Numbers 23:7–10, 18–24; 24:3–9, 15–24; and Deuteronomy 32–33. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 36.

Moses and Aaron “proclaimed” (ἀνήγγειλεν) the word of the Lord to Israel and the nation believed (Ex. 4:31).

The Lord – Exodus 9:16 (διαγγέλλω)

God also revealed himself as a proclaimer of his own power and name in Exodus 9:16. The plagues were given to Moses and the Israelites so the Egyptians would know that God is “the Lord” and the deliverer of Israel (Ex. 7:5). In Exodus 9:14, the reason for the plagues was given additional meaning. God wanted the Egyptians to know that there was “no one” like him “in all the earth” (Ex. 9:14). The Lord was not out to destroy the Egyptians, but to reveal himself to the world. God said, he allowed the Egyptians to remain alive to show them his “power” and to “proclaim” [διαγγέλλω] his “name” throughout “all the earth” (Ex. 9:16). God himself is a proclaimer of his power and his name to the widest and broadest audience – “all the earth!”

Paul applies Exodus 9:16 in his theological exposition of Israel in Romans 9:17 to explain the election of Israel, the hardening of Pharaoh, and the relationship between Jewish and Gentile people in God’s program of salvation (Rom. 9–11). God told Moses beforehand that Pharaoh would not listen to him and would not let Israel depart Egypt (Ex. 3:19). Pharaoh would only relent and let Israel go under compulsion and the “powerful hand” of God (Ex. 3:19). God said, again, under the “powerful hand” and “strong arm,” will Pharaoh let Israel go (Ex. 6:1). It was only after God told Moses that Pharaoh would not let Israel go, that God said, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 7:3). This is the literary and theological context for Paul’s word in Romans 9:14–18 in which he quotes Exodus 9:16.

What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, ‘I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.’ So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.’ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires (Rom 9:14–18).

Paul affirms God’s desire for his power and for his name to be “proclaimed” (διαγγεῖλαι) throughout all the earth (Rom. 9:17). He inter-textually applies Exodus 6:19 in Romans 9:17 to explain God’s election of Israel, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, and the relationship between Jewish and Gentile people in God’s plan for the salvation – so God’s name will be proclaimed throughout all the earth (Ex. 9:14–16; Rom. 9:24).

The Appointed Times of the Lord – Exodus 13:9 (ἀναγγέλλω)

After the Israelites and a mixed multitude were redeemed from Egypt (Ex. 12:38–39), God instructed Moses to celebrate the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread at its “appointed time” in order to “proclaim” (ἀναγγέλλω) to their sons what the Lord had done for them in Egypt (Ex. 13:8–10). The Passover is observed annually as *personal* redemption from the land of Egypt by the blood of the lamb: “You shall tell [ἀναγγέλλω] your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt’” (Ex. 13:8). The terms *Passover*, *Unleavened Bread*, and *appointed time* in Exodus 12–13 are inter-textual links to Leviticus 23:1–44 and “the appointed times of the Lord.”

The Passover Narrative

Exodus 12–13

“the Lord’s Passover” (Ex. 12:48)
τὸ πάσχα κυρίου

The Appointed Times of the Lord

Leviticus 23

“the Lord’s Passover” (Lev. 23:5)
πάσχα τῷ κυρίῳ

“unleavened bread” (Ex. 13:7) ἄζυμα	“unleavened bread” (Lev. 23:6) ἄζύμων
“appointed time” (Ex. 13:10)	“appointed times of the Lord” (Lev. 23:2, 44) לְמוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה

The “appointed times of the Lord” were proclaimed (καλέω) as “holy convocations” in Exodus 23:14–19, Leviticus 23:1–44, and Deuteronomy 16:1–17 and still hold important redemptive and prophetic significance for Israel, the nations, and the church today.⁴¹ The “appointed times of the Lord” in Leviticus 23 are: the Sabbath (Lev. 23:3), Passover (Lev. 23:5), Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6–8), First-fruits (Lev. 23:9–14), Pentecost (Lev. 23:15–21), Trumpets (Lev. 23:23–25), the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26–32), and the Feast of Booths (Lev. 23:33–44).

The phrase “appointed times” is the Hebrew word “moed” (מוֹעֵד) and refers to “seasons” of the year given by God at creation (Gen. 1:14), the “tent of meeting” where Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites met with God (Ex. 33:7–10), and the “appointed times of the Lord” (Lev. 23:2, 4, 37, 44). The holy convocations were annual gatherings in which God called his people together to worship and they are related to the creative and recreative order. At these appointed times, Israelites brought the first-fruits of their harvest to the Lord at the tent of meeting or to the temple as an act of thanksgiving and

⁴¹ For further study on the “appointed times of the Lord,” cf. Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 2008); Mitch and Zhava Glaser, *The Fall Feasts of Israel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987); Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord: God’s Prophetic Calendar from Calvary to the Kingdom* (Orlando: Zion’s Hope, Inc., 1997); Sam Nadler, *Messiah in the Feasts of Israel* (Charlotte, NC: Word of Messiah Ministries, 2007); Chuck Missler, *The Feasts of Israel* (Coeur d’Alein, ID: Koinonia House, Inc., 2016).

worship.⁴² In addition to the first-fruit offerings brought to the temple, many great acts of God took place during the appointed times.⁴³

The holidays hold important theological significance for Jesus Christ in his first coming. Jesus was sacrificed on Passover, buried on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, resurrected from the dead on the Feast of First-fruits (Easter), and the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost.⁴⁴ The “appointed times” of the Lord were and still are, to this day, times to proclaim the covenant blessings of God through his Messiah.

The Passover and The Lord’s Supper

The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper instituted at Passover the night of the Lord’s death “signifies and commemorates the spiritual bond that relates all Christians to Christ’s death.”⁴⁵ Just as in the Passover Seder, “eating the Passover lamb was a way to express participation in God’s salvation in the Exodus (Ex. 12:9), so eating the Lord’s Supper expresses participation in the Lord’s death” and the Christians “need for his free gift of salvation.”⁴⁶ The Lord’s Supper also has a “proclamation” component.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way *He took* the cup also

⁴² Barley (Passover), Wheat (Pentecost), and Grapes, Olives, Pomegranates, and Citrus (Booths) in Exodus 23:14–19; 34:22; Lev. 23:10, 39; Num. 28:26.

⁴³ Passover: redemption from Egypt (Ex. 1–19), renewal of the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 34), dedication of the tabernacle and the priests (Num. 7–9), the conquest of Jericho (Jos. 5–6), upon finding the book of the law and Josiah’s reform (2 Kgs. 23; 2 Chron. 34–35), Hezekiah’s reform (2 Chron. 29–31), the completion and rededication of the temple (Ezr. 6); the Feast of Booths: Sabbatical year (Dt. 31), dedication of the temple (2 Chron. 7–8), the restoration of the altar in the temple (Ezr. 3), the return of the exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem (Neh. 8).

⁴⁴ Matthew 26–28; Mark 14–16; Luke 22–24; John 13–21; Acts 2.

⁴⁵ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 85.

⁴⁶ Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 85.

after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim [καταγγέλλετε] the Lord’s death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:23–26).

The matzo eaten at Passover and the Lord’s Supper is unleavened bread. Leaven is a metaphor for sin in the New Testament.⁴⁷ In the Lord’s Supper, matzo represents the sinless body of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 26:26). The holes and stripes on the matzo are a picture of the piercing and scourging that Jesus suffered as he paid the penalty for mankind’s sin (Isa. 53:5). There are four cups of wine at Passover that represent the four “I will” statements in Exodus 6:6–7a.

“I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Ex. 6:6b–c)

“I will deliver you from their bondage” (Ex. 6:6d)

“I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements” (Ex. 6:6e)

“I will take you for My people” (Ex. 6:7a)

The third cup of wine *after* dinner is the “cup of redemption” that Jesus said represented his blood at Passover and signifies the third “I will” statement (Ex. 6:6e). In Luke 22:20, Jesus said, “This cup which is poured out for ‘you’ is the new covenant in My blood.”

The New Covenant

The term “New Covenant” (καινή διαθήκη) is a phrase that is used eight times in Scripture, but alluded to, echoed, and referred to throughout the Bible. It refers specifically to the “New Covenant” promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31:31–34 (v. 31).

Behold, days are coming, ‘declares the LORD,’ when I will make a new covenant [διαθήκην καινήν] with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, ‘declares the LORD.’ But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of

⁴⁷ Matthew 16:6–12; Luke 12:1; 1 Corinthians 5:6–8.

Israel after those days, ‘declares the LORD,’ I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, ‘declares the LORD,’ for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:31–34).

The disciples were the faithful remnant of Israel through whom the New Covenant was inaugurated. They were also the nucleus of the church that would be birthed fifty days later at the Feast of Pentecost through whom the blessing of salvation would be proclaimed to both Jewish and Gentile people of all nations (Mt. 10:5–6; 28:18–20; Gal. 2:7–9; Acts 1–28).

The ministry of proclamation through Jesus Christ and the plan of God is also expressed in Psalm 2 which is a messianic psalm with inter-textual links to the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7 and to the Incarnation.

Psalm 2:7 (διαγγέλλω)

Psalm 2 has four speakers: (1) the psalter in 2:1–2, 4–5, 10–12; (2) the nations, kings, and rulers in 2:3; (3) God himself in 2:6; 8–9; and (4) the Messiah in 2:7. What is the nature of their speech? First, the psalter says, the nations are in an “uproar” (2:1a); the peoples are “devising a vain thing” (2:1b); the kings of the earth “take their stand” (2:2a); and the rulers “take counsel together” (2:2b); against “the Lord” (2:2c) and against his Messiah (χριστοῦ – 2:2d). The group speaks and says they want to free themselves completely from any relationship with God and “His Anointed” (2:3).

Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us’ (Ps. 2:1–3)!

The term “anointed” is the Hebrew word “mashiach” (מָשִׁיחַ), translated “Messiah,” or in Greek, the word “Christos” (Χριστός), translated “Christ.” Louis Goldberg defines the different uses for the term.⁴⁸

The Hebrew term for “anoint,” *masah*, has secular connotations, such as rubbing a shield with oil (Isa. 21:5), smearing paint on a house (Jer. 22:14), or anointing the body with oil (Amos 6:6). The theological meaning of *masah* is fourfold. First, an individual or object set apart for divine use is said to be “anointed.” Solomon was anointed ruler over Israel (1 Chron. 29:22); this anointing made him both responsible for and accountable to the people. Anointed kings sometimes failed in their tasks and were reminded of their accountability (1 Sam. 15:17; 2 Sam. 12:7). Second, when people were anointed, God empowered them to accomplish his tasks (1 Sam. 10:6; 16:13). Third, no one was allowed to harm God’s anointed (1 Sam. 24:10; 26:9). Finally, the term *masiah* derived from *masah*, refers to Israel’s Messiah who was to come from the house of David (Pss. 84:9; 89:38, 51). In the New Testament, Christ is portrayed as the Messiah. Jesus is the promised deliverer (John 1:41; 4:25), anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power (Acts 10:38).⁴⁹

In Psalm 2:4–6, God is sitting or dwelling (κατοικῶν) in the heavens. In return, he “laughs” and “scoffs” at them (2:4); he will then “speak” to them in his anger and “terrify” them in his fury (2:5). What does God say to them? He tells them that he has installed “My King” on Zion, his holy mountain (2:6). Zion is Jerusalem, the city of David (2 Sam. 5:7). The holy mountain is the temple mount (2 Chron. 33:14–15).

He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, ‘But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain’ (Ps. 2:4–6).

The Messiah now speaks and says: “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’” (2:7). The Messiah says that he will surely “proclaim” (διαγγέλλων) the “decree of the Lord! What is the decree? The

⁴⁸ Louis Goldberg. *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), s.v. “anoint.”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, s.v. “anoint.”

decree of the Lord is his own Kingship, his Sonship and his Incarnation in 2:6 and 2:7c–d.

“I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain” (2:6b–c)
 ἐγὼ δὲ κατεστάθην βασιλεὺς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ Σιών ὄρος τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ

“You are My Son, today I have begotten You” (2:7c–d)
 υἱός μου εἶ σύ ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε

The “decree of the Lord” is God’s word. God’s word in this context refers to his “King” (βασιλεὺς), to his “Son” (υἱός), and to his “begotten” (γεγέννηκά), meaning his Son’s Incarnation; that which God has appointed (κατεστάθην – 2:6).

God promised *kingship* through the descendants of Abraham (Gen. 17:6); he promised a *king* through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10); and promised a *Son* and a *King* through the lineage of David (2 Sam. 7:12–13; 1 Chron. 16:11–14, v. 13). Matthew’s gospel identifies Jesus as “the Messiah,” “the Son of David” and “the Son of Abraham” (Mt. 1:1). The Messiah, the Son of David, was prophesied to be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14–15), to the nation of Israel (Isa. 9:6a–b), to be God – “Mighty God” (Isa. 9:6e), and to rule with justice and righteousness on David’s throne and kingdom forever (Isa. 9:7).

The word translated “begotten” (γεννάω) means, “to beget, to give birth, to be born of, to cause to happen,” or “to be born-again.”⁵⁰ Jesus Christ is the second member of the triune God and he is eternal (Gen. 1:1–2). God the Father is speaking to God the Son in Psalm 2:7d–e and 2:8. The word “γεννάω” was used to announce Jesus’ birth to Joseph (Mt. 1:20). The term was also used to describe the announcement of Jesus’ birth and the Incarnation to Mary (Lk. 1:30–35). Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Son of David promised in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,

⁵⁰ Louw and Nida, s.v. “γεννάω.”

and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born (γεννάω) will be called holy—the Son of God’ (Lk. 1:30–35, ESV).

In the case of Jesus Christ and the Incarnation, the word “γεννάω” means that Jesus, as the second member of the triune God, is holy, unique, set aside, dedicated, and equipped for God’s particular, divine purpose as the Son of God.⁵¹

The victory and reign of God’s anointed King are secure. The “nations” are the Messiah’s inheritance and the “ends of the earth” are his possession (Ps. 2:8). He will break down and destroy physical and spiritual strongholds and bring judgement on the unrighteous (Ps. 2:9).

Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware (Ps. 2:8–9).

In Psalm 2:10–12, the psalter calls upon the kings and judges of the earth to show discernment and take warning; to worship and serve the Lord with fear and reverence, and to rejoice with trembling (vv. 10–11). The last verse begins with an imperative

⁵¹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary Series*, David S. Dockery, gen. ed. (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 85.

command, “Kiss the Son!” or “Do homage to the Son,” so the nations, kings, and rulers of the world will not be the object of the Messiah’s anger and perish, for judgment surely is coming (v.12a–c).⁵²

Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him (Ps. 2:10–12).

The phrase “How blessed” refers to “all” who take refuge in the Messiah and is an inner-textual link to the “blessed” man in Psalm 1:1a: “How blessed is the man.” The path of God’s blessing is found in delighting in the law of the Lord, meditating on the word day and night, embracing the Messiah, and taking “refuge in him” (Ps. 2:12g). The word of God is designed to lead man to God, to his Son Jesus Christ, and to the blessed life.⁵³

Psalm 2:7 is the message that Paul preached to Jewish and Gentile people at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13–43). All

⁵² “The commanded requirement is ‘Do homage to the Son’ (lit., “kiss the Son”). Some suggest “kiss” be understood as a more affectionate synonym for the verb ‘worship’ in the previous verse to which it clearly stands in parallel (another reason that the Son in this psalm can refer only to the divine messianic King). However, the use of the verb ‘to kiss’ as a euphemism for ‘to worship’ is also attested and would affirm the understanding of ‘Do homage to the Son’ (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:18; Jb. 31:27; Hos. 13:2).

Some scholars contest this understanding, pointing out that the word translated ‘(the) son’ (bar) is Aramaic, whereas the proper Hebrew word for ‘son’ is ‘ben.’ Since this psalm (like all the rest) is in Hebrew, it is sometimes argued that ‘bar’ here should be understood as the Hebrew adverb ‘purely,’ giving the sense ‘kiss purely.’ However, two flaws oppose this view: (1) The Hebrew of David’s day had many Aramaic loan words (Abraham himself was an Aramean: Dt. 26:5), one of which was indeed ‘bar,’ ‘son,’ as employed thrice by Solomon in Pr. 31:2, (2) every one of the remaining 31 OT occurrences of the Hebrew verb ‘to kiss’ has an explicit direct or indirect object, which would be unaccountably missing from the present verse if ‘bar’ is taken as the Hebrew adverbial expression ‘purely.’ It is taken as better to see the phrase not as ‘kiss purely’ but as ‘kiss the Son,’ that is, ‘Do homage to the Son.’” Michael Rydelnik, and Michael Vanlandingham, gen. eds., *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 743.

⁵³ “There are three psalms that focus directly on the Scriptures as the means of living a righteous life before God: Psalms 1; 19; and 119. Each of them is followed within the book by a unit that focuses on the coming Messiah: Psalms 2; 20; 120–134 (the Psalms of Ascents). It is as if the composer of the book of Psalms were telling the readers that if they search the Scriptures, they will find the Christ. The OT Scriptures point beyond themselves to the coming Messiah. Reinforcing this strategy is the further fact that Psalm 119 ends with the curious image of a “lost sheep” who has strayed from the flock (v.176). This provides an important link with the messianic Psalms of Ascents, which begins precisely on the note of wandering, lost, in a strange land” (cf. Ps. 120). Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 342–343.

through his sermon, he quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures and proves that Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. In Acts 13:32–33, he quotes Psalm 2:7, and applies to it the promise of Jesus' incarnation.

And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU' (Act 13:32–33/Ps. 2:7).

After reading the Law and the Prophets in the synagogue (v. 15), Paul began his sermon with God's election of Israel, the redemption from Egypt, and the wilderness wanderings (vv. 16–18). He then proceeded through the conquest (v. 19), to the times of the judges, prophets, and kings (vv. 20–21), the covenant with David, and the arrival of Jesus (vv. 22–23), the ministry of John the Baptist (vv. 24–25), the testimony of Scripture (vv. 26–29), and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (vv. 23, 27–43).

Through his sermon, Paul called upon the LXX to proclaim Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to bless all people through Jesus Christ.

Summary of Inner-Textual and Inter-Textual Analysis of "We Proclaim Him" in Colossians 1:28

God wants to make his name and his salvation known to all mankind through his Son Jesus Christ. There is a consistent literary theme and biblical theology that weaves its message through the various layers of Scripture. Proclamation begins with the triune God and is built into the creative and recreative order through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God the Father is the proclaimer of his name and his salvation. God the Son is the proclaimer of his name and his salvation. Peter, Paul, Jacob, Moses, and all the prophets from Samuel onward were proclaimers of God's name and his salvation through Jesus Christ.

The proclamation of God's name and salvation were announced prophetically in the Old Testament Scriptures. They are pictured in the redemption of Israel and the mixed multitude from Egypt by the blood of the lamb. They are proclaimed annually during the appointed times of the Lord and regularly through the observance of the Lord's Supper. They are promised in each of the covenants that God made with Israel to bring forth blessing to the world through the Messiah. They are proclaimed everywhere God's people preach, teach, or minister the word of God. The proclamation of God's name, his salvation, and the Messiah by his people is a consistent literary theme, biblical theology, and ongoing practice in the canon of Scripture.

Paul was emphatically and enthusiastically exhorting the Colossians to join in the work of God to proclaim the person and work of Jesus Christ on a broad scale to Jewish and Gentile people from the Law, the Prophets, the Writings, and from the New Testament Scriptures. The proclamation ministry continues with announcing the person and work of Jesus Christ through admonishing and teaching.

Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis “Admonishing and Teaching” in Colossians 1:28

A second set of inner-textual and inter-textual links with Colossians 1:28 and the letter are the participles “admonishing” (νουθετοῦντες) and “teaching” (διδάσκοντες). As was discussed, the word translated, “admonishing,” can mean, to rebuke, to warn, to advise, to counsel or to instruct.⁵⁴ The word, “teaching,” means to provide instruction in both a formal or informal setting.⁵⁵ Both ministries play foundational roles in the literary structure and message of Colossians. Teaching and admonishing from the word of God

⁵⁴ BDAG; Louw and Nida, s.v. “νουθετέω.”

⁵⁵ Louw and Nida, s.v. “διδάσκω.”

are the means by which Paul seeks to mature and grow the church and to protect them from false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice that threaten the body. An inner-textual and inter-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 reveal two biblical and compositional themes around which Paul structures his teaching and admonishing ministry; the themes of *rescue* and *captivity*. The themes of “rescue” and “captivity” serve to answer the question: “How Do We Proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?”

The Colossian’s Spiritual Maturity and Fruitfulness

Paul began his letter with a prayer of thanksgiving (1:3–8) and a prayer for the Colossians (1:9–14). His prayer for the Colossians was inspired by the report of their faith, love, and hope that was constantly bearing fruit in their lives (1:3–6). Paul affirms the Colossians spiritual maturity and growth in eight statements that emphasize their steadfast faith and abundant fruit 1:4–6, 23; 2:7.

“your faith in Jesus Christ” (1:4a)
τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

“the love which you have for all the saints” (1:4b)
τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους

“the hope laid up for you in heaven” (1:5a)
τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς

“constantly bearing fruit and increasing” (1:6c)
καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον

“the faith firmly established and steadfast” (1:23a–c)
τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἐδραῖοι

“having been firmly rooted” (2:7a)
ἐρριζωμένοι

“being built up in Him” (2:7b)
ἐποικοδομούμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ

“established in your faith” (2:7c)
βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει

The stability of their faith and their continued growth in Christ were a direct result of the word of God which they heard, understood, learned, and were instructed by Epaphras and his ministry (1:5–8, 23, 2:7).

“you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel” (1:5b)
προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

“the day you heard *of it* and understood the grace of God in truth” (1:6d)
ἡμέρας ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ

“just as you learned *it* from Epaphras” (1:7a)
καθὼς ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρα

“the hope of the gospel that you have heard” (1:23e)
τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε

“just as you were instructed” (2:7d)
καθὼς ἐδιδάχθητε

Walk in a Manner Worthy of the Lord

The stability and maturity of the Colossians faith and their fruitfulness were a direct result of the instruction they received in the word of God. As a result, Paul wanted them to gain a greater knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so they would “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects” (1:9–10a). The word of God and biblical instruction are the means by which God builds the church. Paul lists four clauses that describe characteristics reflective of a “walk” worthy of the Lord (1:10–12).

“bearing fruit in every good work (1:10)
ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες

“increasing in the knowledge of God (1:10)
αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ

“strengthened with all power” (1:11)
ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι

“joyously giving thanks to the Father” (1:13e–12)
 Μετὰ χαρᾶς εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ

Walking “worthy of the Lord” was made possible only because of the salvific work of God the Father who “qualified” (τῷ ἱκανώσαντι) them “to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (1:12). As with the great redemptive acts in the past, God is shown acting powerfully on behalf of his people in the letter to the Colossians.

The word translated, “qualified” (ικανώω), is used only one other time in the New Testament, in 2 Corinthians 3:6, in which Paul said, God qualified (ικάνωσεν) him to be a servant and minister of the New Covenant. God the Father, himself, has provided all that sinners need to become children of God, adopted into the family of God, and to receive their inheritance in the kingdom of God.

The Message of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul

The phrase, “to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light,” is full of prophetic, Messianic Kingdom, and New Covenant imagery. It also has inter-textual relationships with Paul’s salvation experience and call to apostleship in the book of Acts. Paul shared with the Colossians the same message he received from the Lord himself. When Paul testified before King Agrippa in Acts 26, he shared the testimony of his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. Jesus personally called Paul as an apostle and used many of the same words, phrases, clauses, allusions, and echoes that Paul employs in Colossians 1:12–14.

And I said, “Who are You, Lord?” And the Lord said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose, I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may

receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me” (Act 26:15–18 NAU).

Paul, an obedient and faithful apostle of the Lord, was now sharing the very same message he had received, with the Colossians.

Acts 26:15–18

“I am Jesus” (Acts 26:15)
ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς

“to appoint you a minister and a witness” (Acts 26:16)
προχειρίσασθαί σε ὑπηρετήν καὶ μάρτυρα

“rescuing you” (Acts 26:17)
ἐξαιρούμενός

“from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles” (Acts 26:17)
τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν

“to whom I am sending you” (Acts 26:17)
εἰς οὓς ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω σε

“darkness to light” (Acts 26:18)
σκοτούς εἰς φῶς

“the domain of Satan” (Acts 26:18)
τοῦ σατανᾶ τῆς ἐξουσίας

“God” (Acts 26:18)
τὸν θεόν

“forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18)
ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν

“an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18)
κλῆρον ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις ἡγιασμένοις πίστει

Colossians 1:12–13

“an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Col. 1:1)
ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ

“rescued us” (Col. 1:13)
ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς

“the light”...”the darkness” (Col. 1:12–13)
τῷ φωτί...τοῦ σκοτούς

“the domain of darkness”
τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκοτούς

“the Father” (Col. 1:12)
τῷ πατρι

“redemption, the forgiveness of sins”
(Col. 1:14) τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν

“share in the inheritance of the saints”
(Col. 1:12) τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων

The message that Jesus revealed to Paul was full of messianic fulfillment and consistent with covenant promises made to Abraham, Moses, David, and to Israel in the New Covenant to bless all nations: (1) the revelation of God; (2) the call of God; (3) the mission of God to send man with the message of redemption; (4) the spiritual battle

between God and Satan; (5) the domains of darkness and light; (6) redemption and rescue; (7) forgiveness of sins; (8) inheritance with the saints; and (9) the gift of faith. Each one of these biblical themes come together and are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Paul was writing a letter proclaiming Christ, and teaching them about the person, work, and application of Christ in their lives.

The Threat of False Teachers, False Doctrine, and False Practice

In addition to Paul's instruction, the letter also reveals dangerous threats to the Colossians and their spiritual growth, which motivated his writing. The threat of false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice are in their midst. There are seven statements in Colossians that establish the threats that motivate Paul's writing.

“if you continue in the faith” (1:23a)

εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει

“not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (1:23c)

μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

“that no one will delude you with persuasive argument” (2:4b)

ἵνα μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς παραλογίζεται ἐν πιθανολογία

“see to it that no one takes you captive” (2:8a)

Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν

“no one is to act as your judge” (2:16a)

Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω

“Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize” (2:18a)

μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύετω θέλων

“why...do you submit yourself to decrees” (2:20d)

τί...δογματίζεσθε

Throughout his letter, Paul was instructing the Colossians on biblical doctrine and practical application to increase their understanding of Christ and to bear fruit. At the

same time, he also admonished the church to warn them about the dangers of false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice.

The Themes of Rescue and Captivity

How did Paul teach and admonish the saints? What was his message? An analysis of the letter reveals that Paul *taught* the Colossians that, like him, they too, had been “rescued” from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God’s beloved Son (1:13). The dangerous threats, however, forced him also, to *warn* the Colossians not to be taken “captive” by philosophy, tradition, legalism, and syncretism (2:8). The themes of “rescue” and “captivity” are literary themes on which the proclamation ministry through teaching and admonishing are built.

“For He rescued us” (1:13a)
ὅς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς

“See to it that no one takes you captive” (2:8a)
Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν

The statements that reveal, both, teaching on one hand, and admonishment on the other, are set forth in the compositional structure of the letter and form the foundation for understanding Colossians 1:28. Upon introducing both themes, Paul follows each one with a theological section focusing on the person and work of Jesus Christ, and a practical section focusing on personal application. An outline for the thematic structure is shown below.

- “He Rescued Us” (1:13a)
 - The Person and Work of Jesus Christ (1:13–20)
 - Personal Application (1:21–23)
- “See to it No One Takes You Captive” (2:8a)
 - The Person and Work of Jesus Christ (2:9–15)
 - Personal Application (2:16–4:6)

The message that Paul taught was one of messianic fulfillment and blessing. The message that Paul admonished was one of warning and danger. In addition to presenting Jesus as the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant, Paul draws on words, phrases, clauses, allusions, echoes, and themes from the Exodus narrative and the Day of Atonement to portray Jesus as the fulfillment of a New Covenant Exodus for both Jewish and Gentile people.

The Deity and Humanity of Christ

The deity and humanity of Christ in 1:19 and 2:9 form the biblical and theological heart of Paul’s instruction. Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God, the second member of the Trinity, and fully God and fully Man. His preeminent role in creation, redemption, the new creation, the church, the kingdom, and his sole sufficiency for the Christian’s abundant life are eternally secure because of the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:19 is inner-textually united with the deity and humanity of Christ in 2:9 by the phrases, “in Him” (ἐν αὐτῷ), “all the fullness” (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα), and the word “inhabit” or “dwell” (κατοικέω). Both sections are composed of biblical instruction for the Colossians centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ in his deity and humanity. The inner-textual relationships between the themes of “rescue” and “captivity” and person and work of Jesus Christ are listed below.

Colossians 1:13–23

“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness” (1:13a)
 ὃς ἐῥρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκοτους

“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (1:14)
 ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν

“**For in Him**” “**all the fullness**” “**dwells**” (1:19)
 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πάν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

“alienated, hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds” (1:21)
 ὑμᾶς ποτε ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους καὶ ἐχθροὺς
 τῇ διανοίᾳ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς

“But now” (1:22, NIV)
 νυνὶ δὲ

“faith firmly established” (1:23a)
 πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι

Colossians 1:13–23

“He has now reconciled you” (1:22a)
 νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν

“present you before Him” (1:22c)
 παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς . . . κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ

Colossians 2:8–15; 3:4,8

“See to it that no one takes you captive” (2:8a)
 Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν

“forgiven us all our transgressions” (2:13d)
 χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα

“**For in Him**” “**all the fullness**” “**dwells**” (2:9)
 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πάν τὸ πλήρωμα

“dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh” (2:13)
 ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας [ἐν] τοῖς παραπτώμασι
 “in them you also once walked when you were living in them” (3:7a)
 ἐν οἷς καὶ ὑμεῖς περιεπατήσατέ ποτε, ὅτε
 ἐζήτε ἐν τούτοις

“But now...” (3:8a)
 νυνὶ δὲ

“established in the faith” (2:7c)
 βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει

Colossians 2:8–15; 3:4,8

“in Him you have been made complete”
 ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι (2:10a)

“in Him you were also circumcised” (2:11a)
 Ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετμήθητε

“buried with Him in baptism” (2:12a)
 συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν

“you have died with Christ” (2:20a)

“raised up with Him through faith” (2:12b)
 ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε διὰ τῆς πίστεως

“alive together with Him” (2:13b)
 συνεζωοποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ

“Christ, who is our life” (3:4a)
 ὁ Χριστὸς . . . ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν

“revealed with Him in glory” (3:4c)
 σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ

The biblical, theological, and practical foundation for Paul’s instruction and warning are the person and work of Jesus Christ. The deity and humanity of Jesus Christ revealed in 1:19 and 2:9 are the reasons for his redemptive, recreative, and eternal life-giving power. Both verses are introduced by the causal subordinate conjunction “ὅτι” and translated “for, because, or since.”⁵⁶

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (1:19, ESV)
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (2:9)
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς

Everything that Paul has said about the person and work of Jesus Christ and the practical application in the lives of the Colossians are a reality and are true because “all the fullness” of God “dwells in bodily form” through the incarnate Son of God.

Colossians 1:13–14 – “He Rescued Us”

The words “redemption” and “forgiveness” are important inter-textual links with the redemption narrative in Exodus 1–19 and the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16–17.

The Exodus Narrative

The word translated “redemption” in Colossians 1:14 is from the root “λυτρόω.” It refers to “the means by which deliverance is made possible” or “ransom.”⁵⁷ The word is an inter-textual link with Exodus 6:6 and an echo to the Passover narrative.

Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem (λυτρόσομαι) you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments (Ex. 6:6).

⁵⁶ BDAG, “ὅτι.”

⁵⁷ Louw and Nida, s.v. “λυτρόω.”

God “heard” the cries of the Israelites in bondage to slavery in Egypt and “remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Ex. 2:24; 6:5). God “saw the sons of Israel,” took notice of them, and sent a redeemer, Moses, to lead them out of Egypt (Ex. 2:24; 3:10). The means by which the Israelites were delivered from Egypt and ransomed from the bondage of slavery was the blood of an unblemished lamb that was placed on the lintel and doorposts of the Israelite homes (Ex. 12:1–11).

The Passover

The blood was a sign. When God saw the blood on the doorposts, He passed over the homes, and none of the ten plagues that fell on the Egyptians, harmed the Israelites (Ex. 12:13). The purpose for the plagues was to demonstrate God’s preeminence and His superior power over the physical and spiritual realms of Egypt, the nations, and all creation; whether they were political, military, scientific, or religious powers. The purpose of redeeming Israel was not to destroy the Egyptians, but to demonstrate God’s covenant loyalty to his people Israel and to bring blessing to the nations (Gen. 4:22–23; 12:1–3). The last plague, the death of the firstborn, introduced into the Passover narrative, in a clear and precise way, “the notion of redemption from sin and death.”⁵⁸

The idea of salvation from slavery and deliverance from Egypt is manifest throughout the early chapters of Exodus. The idea of redemption and salvation from death, however, is the particular contribution of the last plague, especially as it is worked into the narrative by the author. Hence the commemoration of the Passover was to be more than a remembrance of God’s deliverance of Israel from slavery and oppression. It was also a commemoration of salvation from the “angel of death” sent against anyone who did not enter into the Passover.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 74.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

In addition to lamb and bitter herbs, the Israelites were instructed to clean out all the leaven in their homes and eat only unleavened bread for seven days (Ex. 12:19–20). Unleavened bread, “the bread of affliction” (Dt. 16:3), reminded the Israelites of their quick departure and the danger of corruptive influences (Ex. 12:14–20). It became a metaphor for sin in the New Testament (Mt. 16:5–12). The celebration of Passover was to be an annual observance throughout all generations (Ex. 12:14).

Paul understood this redemptive theme when he wrote to the Corinthians and identified Jesus as the Passover Lamb.

Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7).

In the same way, John the Baptist identified Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). What is often missed in the Passover narrative is that a “mixed multitude” of non-Hebrews came out of Egypt along with the Israelites (Ex. 12:38). The redemption of Israel from the bondage of slavery and the death of the firstborn in Egypt by the blood of an unblemished lamb were foreshadows of a much greater future redemption through Jesus Christ.

In describing Jesus Christ as the one through whom “we have” (ἔχομεν), both Jews and Gentiles, “redemption, the forgiveness of sins,” Paul is harkening back to the Exodus and Passover narrative and applying the body and blood of the unblemished lamb to Jesus Christ (Col. 1:14). He would specifically focus on Gentile (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) inclusion in the plan of God through Christ in Colossians 1:27. As the Lord God demonstrated his preeminence and superior power over all creation in the Exodus, so Paul presented Jesus Christ’s preeminence and superior power over all creation in the New Covenant Exodus (Col. 1:13–20; 2:10b, 15).

The Day of Atonement

The phrase, “the forgiveness of sins,” is an inter-textual link, allusion, and echo to the Day of Atonement in the Pentateuch. The word “forgiveness” (ἄφεσις) in Colossians 1:14 is the same word translated “scapegoat” (ἄφεσις) in the LXX in Leviticus 16:26 and the Day of Atonement narrative. The word “ἄφεσις” is a translation of the Hebrew word “אָזָזִל” (azazel).

According to the Mosaic Covenant, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would take two goats and present them before the Lord at the doorway of the tent of meeting (Lev. 16:7). Lots were cast; one goat for the Lord, the other goat for the “scapegoat.” The goat on which the lot fell for the Lord was sacrificed for a sin offering (Lev. 16:9). The goat on which the lot fell for the scapegoat was presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it (Lev. 16:10). The sins of the Israelites were placed upon the head of the goat through the high priest, and the goat was sent away into the wilderness as a “scapegoat” (Lev. 16:10). The sins of the people were atoned for through the shedding of the blood of the sacrificial goat and removed from the nation forever by the “scapegoat” who was never to return. The Law of Atonement required substitutionary sacrifice.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to made atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement (Lev. 17:11).

The writer of Hebrews developed all of the elements of the atonement theme and applied them to the person and work of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant (Heb. 8:1–10:26).

And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22).

Paul used the phrase “the forgiveness of sins” to draw the reader back to the atonement narrative in the book of Leviticus, apply the person and work of Jesus Christ to the scapegoat, and the atonement for sins under the New Covenant.

Summary of “He Rescued Us”

Paul’s message to the Colossians is the same message he received from the Lord on the road to Damascus. He had been rescued from the domain of Satan, transferred into the Kingdom of Christ, received redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and a share in the Kingdom of God. Paul presented Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the covenant promises in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings to both Jewish and Gentile people through the ministry of biblical instruction.

This was made possible because God the Father had “rescued” them from “the domain of darkness,” and transferred them to “the kingdom of His beloved Son” (1:13). For, it was in the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Colossians had “redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 2:8 – “See to It That No One Takes You Captive”

Paul begins to transition into a theological and practical defense of the person and work of Jesus Christ in 2:4 with the demonstrative purpose clause “Τοῦτο λέγω, ἵνα” (I say this so that – 2:8). He wanted the Colossians to know the ongoing struggle he had on their behalf, for the Laodiceans, and for all those that had not personally seen him (2:1). It was important for all those to whom Paul was ministering, to be encouraged, united in love, and to experience all the spiritual wealth that came from understanding God’s mystery, Jesus Christ. These wishes are consistent in nature with his prayer request in 1:9–12.

Colossians 1:9–10

“filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9e)
 πληρωθήτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ
 ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ

“increasing in the knowledge of God” (1:10c)
 αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ

Colossians 2:2–3

“the full assurance of understanding”
 τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως (2:2)

“a true knowledge of God’s mystery,
Christ (2:2d–e)
 ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ,
Χριστοῦ

“in whom are hidden all the treasures
 of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3)
 ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς
σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι

False Teachers, False Doctrine, and False Practice

Paul continues to affirm the preeminence of Jesus Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). From the preeminence and uniqueness of Christ, Paul transitions to those who seek to “delude” the Colossians with persuasive arguments (2:4). This is the first time Paul warns the Colossians of false teaching. The admonishing is designed to warn the Colossians and to equip them to defend themselves against the false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice in their midst. Paul wants to see their discipline and the stability of their faith in Christ (2:5). The phrase, “faith in Christ,” takes the reader back to 1:4 and 1:23, elaborates on the quality of the Colossian’s faith, and connects the theme of faith with the following discourse.

“your faith in Christ Jesus” (1:4a)
 τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

“the faith firmly established and steadfast” (1:23a–c)
 ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖοι

“not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard” (1:23d)
 μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὃ ἠκούσατε

“your good discipline” (2:5c)
 βλέπων ὑμῶν τὴν τάξιν

“the stability of your faith in Christ” (2:5d)
τὸ στερέωμα τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν

“having been firmly rooted” (2:7a)
ἐρριζωμένοι

“being built up in Him” (2:7b)
ἐποικοδομούμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ

“established in your faith” (2:7c)
βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει

The inferential conjunction, “οὖν” (therefore) in Colossians 2:6, links this passage with what has been said in 1:1–2–5 with what follows in the discourse ahead. The verse also contains the first of twenty, possible thirty, imperative verbs in the letter;⁶⁰ the word “περιπατεῖτε,” meaning “to walk.”⁶¹ The literary theme of *walking* will be addressed in chapter four. The Colossians, having received Christ Jesus the Lord, were now commanded to “walk in Him.” This command is also one of Paul’s prayer requests in 1:9–12.

“so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (1:10a)
περιπατήσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου

“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”
(2:6b)
Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε

Colossians 2:8–15

Colossians 2:8–15 is one sentence in the Greek text composed of biblical, theological, and practical admonishment and instruction about the person and work of

⁶⁰ Nathan E. Han, *A Parsing Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 369–372.

⁶¹ BDAG: s.v. “περιπατέω.”

Jesus Christ. The sentence is internally united by a series of connecting conjunctions,⁶² variations of the phrase “in Him” (ἐν αὐτῷ),⁶³ and introduced with the causal conjunction “for” (ὅτι – 2:9). Paul began with an imperative of prohibition⁶⁴ to warn the church against being taken “captive” (συλαγωγῶν) through philosophy (τῆς φιλοσοφίας) and empty deception (κενῆς ἀπάτης), according to the tradition of men” (κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων), and “according to the elementary principles of the world” (κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ), rather than according to Christ” (οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν – 2:8).

Captive

The word “captive” is an allusion and echo back to 1:13–14, the word “rescued,” and the themes of kingdom, redemption, and atonement. The word occurs only once in the New Testament. It means to gain “complete control” of someone by conquering them in war and carrying them off as booty.⁶⁵ The imagery in Colossians 2:8 is that of being “carried away from the truth into the slavery of error” by false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice.⁶⁶ The Colossians were formerly held captive in the domain of darkness, alienated from God, hostile toward him, and involved in evil activities (1:13, 21). They were now “rescued” from the domain of darkness, “transferred” to the kingdom of God’s Son, in whom they have “redemption” and the “forgiveness of sins” (1:13–14). Paul warned them not to be taken “captive” as a prisoner of war by false

⁶² “καὶ” (2:8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

⁶³ “ἐν αὐτῷ” (2:7, 9, 10, 15); “ἐν ᾧ” (2:11, 12); “σὺν αὐτῷ” (2:13).

⁶⁴ Colossians 2:8: “Βλέπετε” translated “see to it.”

⁶⁵ Louw and Nida, s.v. “συλαγωγῶν.”

⁶⁶ BDAG, “συλαγωγῶν.”

teachers, false doctrine, and false practice because they had been “rescued” by God the Father through God the Son (1:13; 2:8).

The threats listed in 2:8 are linked to others later in the discourse. They were described in chapter one as philosophical, legal, and syncretic in nature.

“philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world” (2:8)

“food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day” (2:16)

“self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind” (2:18)

“Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (2:21)

“the commandments and teachings of men” (2:22)

The phrase, “the elementary principles of the world” (2:8) was used by Paul in 2:20, and in his letter to the Galatians, to refer to the Mosaic law.⁶⁷ When applied properly by faith (Ex. 19:9; Num. 14:11), the Mosaic law was a “shadow of what is to come” (σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων – 2:17),⁶⁸ and designed to be “our tutor to lead us to Christ,” so that we may be ‘justified by faith’ (Gal. 3:24).⁶⁹ Some of those who were threatening the Colossians were not using the Law properly.

⁶⁷ Colossians 2:20: “τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου;” Galatians 4:3: “τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου.”

⁶⁸ Hebrews 8:4–5: “Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, ‘SEE,’ He says, ‘THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.’”

Heb 10:1: “For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.”

For a text-centered, compositional study on the purpose and function of the Mosaic law and the role of the Mosaic law in the New Covenant, see, Seth D. Postell, Eitan Bar, and Erez Soref, *Reading Moses, Seeing Jesus: How the Torah Fulfills its Goal in Yeshua*, expanded 2nd ed. (Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2017), 84–98, 104–117.

⁶⁹ Galatians 3:24: “Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.”

The word “captive,” however, does not only echo back to 1:13–14 and the person and work of Christ in 1:15–23, but, like the word “rescued,” the word “captive” is also used as a theme to introduce the person and work of Jesus Christ in 2:9–15. After warning the Colossians about the dangers of false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice, Paul, again, through admonishment and instruction, taught the Colossians biblically, theologically, and practically about the preeminence of Jesus Christ.

Paul’s admonishment began by restating in precise, absolute terms, the reasons *why* Jesus Christ is preeminent in proclamation, admonishment, and teaching: “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (2:9). As a result, “in Him,” the Colossians had “been made complete” (πεπληρωμένοι); they were lacking nothing in this world or in the world to come (2:10). The deity and humanity of Christ in 2:9 is intertextually united with the deity and humanity of Christ in 1:19 by the subordinating causal conjunction “for,” the phrases “in Him” and “all the fullness,” and the word “inhabit” or “dwell.”

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (1:19, ESV)
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (2:9)
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς

As a result of the person and work of Jesus Christ in his deity and humanity, the Colossians had been “made complete” (2:10). Just as Jesus is fully God (πλήρωμα – 2:9), believers are fully complete in him (πεπληρωμένοι – 2:10).⁷⁰ Just as God demonstrated his preeminence and authority over the false gods of the Egyptians, so has God demonstrated his power of all rule and authority in Christ. The kingdom and domain in

⁷⁰ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 256.

which the Colossians now lived was ruled by the King who is head over “all rule and authority” (2:10b).

“thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities
all things have been created through Him and for Him” (1:16)
θρόνοι...κυριότητες...ἀρχαὶ...ἐξουσίαι
τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται

“the head over all rule and authority” (2:10f–i)
ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας

“He had disarmed the rulers and authorities” (2:15a)
ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας

“having triumphed over them through Him” (2:15c)
θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ

For the Colossians and all Christians, knowing Christ Jesus is sufficient for abundant eternal life. As part of the completed work of Christ, Paul said the Colossians were also “circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” (2:11). The terms, “circumcised” and “circumcision,” are textual links to the person and work of Christ in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New Covenants and continue to build on the New Covenant Exodus theme in Colossians.

The Circumcision of Christ

Circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant and is performed on Jewish males on the eighth day of their birth (Gen. 17:10–14; Lk. 2:21). Physically, circumcision is the removal of foreskin from male genitalia. Spiritually, it is a sign of *belonging* to the Abrahamic Covenant.⁷¹ God told Abraham, in his seed, all the peoples of the earth would be blessed (Gen.12:3). Paul identified Jesus Christ as the seed of Abraham through whom

⁷¹ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 181.

the blessing of Abraham would also come to the Gentiles (Gal. 3:14, 16). Paul was affirming the Colossians participation in the blessing of Abraham.

Circumcision also played a role in identifying with the Mosaic Covenant. Before Moses returned to Egypt to redeem Israel, Zipporah insisted that their second son be circumcised, or God would put Moses to death (Ex. 4:24–26). It would serve as a reminder that the Mosaic Covenant was a covenant of blood (Ex. 4:25).⁷² Also, before a foreigner or slave could participate in the redemption and Passover at the Exodus, he had to be circumcised (Ex. 12:43–44).

The concept of circumcision is also an important element of the New Covenant. At the retelling of the renewal of the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy 10, Moses described the heart of Deuteronomy, the message of the Pentateuch, and the future New Covenant. He told the Israelites to “circumcise” their hearts (Dt. 10:12–16). In order to follow the Lord, there must be a change of heart. The change of heart described as circumcision that allows the Israelites to follow the Lord is also described in Deuteronomy 30:1–10 and verse 6. In this passage, Moses is prophesying about the New Covenant. These promises are similar to the New Covenant passages in Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:22–32.

“in Him you were circumcised with a
circumcision made without hands” (Col. 2:11a)

“in the removal of the body of the flesh by
the circumcision of Christ” (Col. 2:11b)

“dead in your transgressions and
the uncircumcision of your flesh” (Col. 2:13a)

“made you alive together with Him,
having forgiven us all our transgressions” (Col. 2:13b)

⁷² Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 181.

“having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us...having nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:14)

“circumcise your heart” (Dt. 10:16a)

“I will put my law within them and on their heart, I will write it” (Dt. 31:33e-f)

“I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34i-j)

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you” (Ezek. 36:26b-c)

“I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26d-e)

Paul calls circumcision “a seal of the righteousness of the faith” that Abraham had while uncircumcised so that, by faith, he might be the father of both Jewish and Gentile people (Rom. 4:1–25; v.11).

Jesus, again, is shown as fulfilling the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The circumcision of Christ is viewed as fulfilling promises in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New Covenants in light of his death, burial, and resurrection by faith. As a result of the person and work of Jesus Christ in his deity and humanity, 2:8–15 is followed by practical application in 2:16–3:4 and 3:5–4:6.

Summary of “See to It That No One Takes You Captive”

The ministries of teaching and admonishing in Paul’s letter to the Colossians are presented around the biblical, theological, practical, and literary themes of “rescue” and “captive.” As with the theme of rescue, Paul relates the theme of captivity to kingdom, redemption, and atonement by demonstrating Jesus, in his death, burial, and resurrection, as fulfilling redemptive elements of the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, and the New Covenants.

Through faith in the sufficient, completed work of Jesus Christ, the Colossians have been “made complete” and are lacking nothing in this life and the life to come.

Textual Analysis of “In All Wisdom”– Colossians 1:28

Wisdom is a primary theme in Colossians with the word appearing six times in the letter.⁷³ In the text, godly wisdom is contrasted with human wisdom. Jesus Christ, in whom are “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3), is contrary to and in conflict with, the “philosophy and empty deception” of man and the “elementary principles of the world.” These have “the appearance of wisdom” but are of no value” (2:8, 23).

Chapter one described wisdom as spiritual and originating from God. It begins with the fear of God, and knowledge of the Holy One, which is described as understanding (Prov. 2:6). Wisdom results from knowing God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Holy Spirit, and living the transforming truth of Scripture in every facet of life. Wisdom is a result of knowing God, and viewing, approaching, and living life from his perspective.⁷⁴

Paul affirms a biblical theology and definition of wisdom in his letter. Jesus is the embodiment of all wisdom and knowledge (2:3). Paul prayed the saints would be “filled with the knowledge” of God’s will “in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9). He instructed the saints to proclaim, teach, and admonish believers and unbelievers “in all wisdom” (1:28; 3:16). He also taught the Colossians to “walk in wisdom” toward outsiders, making the most of opportunities to fulfill the Great Commission (4:5).

⁷³ Colossians 1:9; 1:28; 2:3; 2:23; 3:16; 4:5.

⁷⁴ Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “wisdom.”

“filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9e)
 πληρωθήτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν
 πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ,

“in all wisdom” (1:28, KJV)
 ἐν πάσῃ σοφία

“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and understanding” (2:3)
 ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ
 τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι

“the appearance of wisdom” (2:23c)
 ἔχοντα σοφίας

“in all wisdom” (3:16, KJV)
 ἐν πάσῃ σοφία

“walk in wisdom toward outsiders” (4:5)
 Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἕξω

In Scripture, the Son, through whom God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16k), is the personification of wisdom (Prov. 8:22–36). He is “the Word” who “became flesh” (Jn. 1:14). Paul shared this truth with the Corinthians when he said, Jesus is “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). For those who are “in Christ,” Jesus became for believers “wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). It is God’s desire for the “manifold wisdom of God” to be made known through the church (Eph. 3:10). Christians who share the word of God and the message of the gospel become agents through whom others receive “all wisdom” (1:28; 3:16).⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 132.

Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis of “Every Man”– Colossians 1:28

In chapter two it was noted that the adjectives “πᾶς” and “πάντοτε” and their various forms appear thirty-nine times in Colossians. The terms in their different forms can refer to “totality” (any, each, every) or serve as a “marker of highest degree” (all, always, whole).⁷⁶ Paul used the adjective “πᾶς” in Colossians 1:28 four times; three times in the phrase “every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον), and once in the phrase “all wisdom” (πάση σοφία).

“admonishing every man” (1:28b)

“teaching every man” (1:28c)

“in all wisdom” (1:28d)

“so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (1:28e)

The phrase “every man” refers to the universal scope of gospel proclamation. The gospel is for every person. Lohse says, this phrase stresses the “the truly ecumenical character of the apostolic message” and “sharply contradicts any attempt to limit the teaching of wisdom to only a small circle of initiates.”⁷⁷

O’Brien says, the phrase serves a dual role. He says, first, the phrase is repeated to emphasize “the universality of the gospel as taught by Paul and his coworkers,” and second, it is repeated “to contrast the intellectual exclusiveness of the false teachers.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ BDAG; Louw and Nida, s.v. “πᾶς;” and “πάντοτε.”

⁷⁷ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 77.

⁷⁸ O’Brien, *Colossians–Philemon*, 88.

Every man: Jew and Gentile

Moo says, there are three applications made from the phrase “every man.” First, the phrase continues a theme introduced earlier in chapter one when Paul said, the gospel “has come to you, just as in ‘all’ the world” (1:6), and the gospel was “proclaimed in ‘all’ creation under heaven” (1:23).⁷⁹ The ministries of proclamation, admonishment, and teaching are, therefore, for the benefit of “every man.” Second, he says, Paul could be directing this emphasis against the false teachers who may have been advocating an elitism “in which salvation was confined to a certain ‘special’ people.”⁸⁰ Third, Moo says, Paul sometimes uses the term “πᾶς” (every) to mean “every kind of person” with “a particular focus on the breakdown of ethnic distinctions (Jew vs Gentile) (see, perhaps, Rom. 11:32).”⁸¹

Pao, Barth, Blanke, and Dunn believe the term “every man” refers to both Jewish and Gentile people. In this verse, “Paul points to both Jews and Gentiles as recipients of God’s work through Christ.”⁸² Contextually, Barth and Blanke say, “it is determined by the preceding elucidations concerning the participation of the Gentiles [1:27] in the hope that is incorporated for Israel and the nations in the Messiah.”⁸³ Dunn says, on a particular level, the term points to the reconciliation of both Jewish and Gentile people in Christ.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 159–160.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸² Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 133.

⁸³ Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 267.

⁸⁴ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 125.

The threefold repetition of “everyone” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον) should not be taken too quickly as meaning “every one of you in Colossae” (NEB/REB “each one of you”). Following so soon after the eightfold repetition of “all” in the hymn in praise of cosmic Wisdom-Christ, it presumably expresses the confident hope not only that those now believing “in Christ” (1:2, 4) will be able thus to be presented before God, but also that “every person” (the human segment of the “all things,” 1:20) will in the end be found “in Christ.” Here again the tie-in between the cosmic Wisdom Christology of 1:15–20 and the historical particularity of the Christian gospel is important.

The focusing of divine Wisdom in Christ should not be thought of as a narrowing of the divine purpose for the cosmos to a particular people or group. As in Galatians and Romans and given the usual content of the “mystery” (see on 1:27), “all” means particularly “everyone”—Jews as well as Gentiles, Gentiles as well as Jews” (e.g., Rom. 1:16; 3:22; 4:11; 10:4, 11; Gal. 3:8, 26, 28). As Christ brought to focus both divine Wisdom and the divine mystery, so the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in Christ brings to focus the reconciliation of “all things” and “everyone.” The church that forgets this has lost sight of the Pauline gospel.⁸⁵

Pao, Moo, O’Brien, Barth, Blanke, and Dunn see both a universal and particular aspect inherent in the term “every man.” The gospel is for “every man” both Jewish and Gentile.

The reconciliation of “all things to Himself” (Col. 1:20) and the reconciliation the Colossians have received in Christ’s fleshly body (Col. 1:22) include the reconciliation of Jewish and Gentile people in Christ.

The word that Paul uses to describe the restored relationship between God, man, and creation is the word “ἀποκαταλλάξαι” (reconciled) and is used only three times in the New Testament; two times in Colossians and one time in Ephesians. It means “to reestablish proper friendly interpersonal relations after these have been disrupted or

⁸⁵ Dunn writes, “The double echo of 1:15–20 and of ‘all’ = Gentiles as well as Jew is sufficient explanation for the triple ‘everyone.’ The emphasis is not quite what we would expect had the letter been directed against a form of spiritual elitism (as, e.g., Lightfoot 168; Abbott 235; Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians* 87; Sappington 186) or ‘heretical conventicles’ (Gnilka, *Kilosserbrieff* 103).” Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 125.

broken.”⁸⁶ In Ephesians 2:14–18, Paul says that Jesus Christ has made peace and reconciliation between two groups: Jew and Gentile. Together, in Christ, the two groups are now reconciled in one body to God as “one new man” through the cross.

For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:14–18).

To make his point, Paul quotes from Isaiah 57:19 in which God promises peace and restoration to those who are far off, the Gentiles, and to those who are near, the Jews. From a biblical, theological, practical, and literary perspective, the term “every man” means both Jewish and Gentile people.

Jim Sibley, Professor of Biblical Studies at the Israel College of the Bible, says, the biblical pattern for evangelism and missions reflected in the ministries of Jesus, Paul, Peter, and the early church is one of both Jewish and Gentile inclusion in the proclamation of the gospel.⁸⁷

The New Covenant is a covenant that has been made by God with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jer.31:31) and ratified with the shed blood of Jesus. When Messiah celebrated the Passover meal with His apostles for the last time, He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood” (1 Cor 11:25). The apostles, as has been demonstrated, represented the spiritual leadership of the remnant, the seed and guarantee of a restored and renewed nation to be saved in the last days. Atonement was made available, first to Israel, then to the church as a whole. The church is a remnant people composed of the remnant of Israel and a remnant of the nations. Through the New Covenant, a way was opened by which Gentiles, as Gentiles, could enter a saving relationship with the God of Israel. The olive tree in Paul’s illustration found in

⁸⁶ Louw and Nida, s.v. “ἀποκαταλλάξαι.”

⁸⁷ Sibley, “The Blindness of Israel and the Mission of the Church,” 240.

Romans 11:17–24, indicates that Gentiles are now able to partake of “the rich root of the olive,” that is, the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant.⁸⁸

The pattern of Jesus’ own ministry and that of the disciples has been shown to include both Jewish and Gentile people in the gospel ministry (Mt. 10:5–6; 15:24; 28:18–20).

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 10:5–6).

But He answered and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 15:24).

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt. 28:18–20).

In Galatians 2:7–9, a *dual* apostleship is revealed to take the gospel to both Jewish and Gentile people. Paul described his own apostleship to the “uncircumcised” (Gentiles) as being just like Peter’s apostleship to the “circumcised” (Jewish).

But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised (Gal. 2:7–9).

A dual apostleship is revealed in the New Testament; Peter, James, and John to the Jewish people, and Paul and Barnabas to the Gentile people. Yet, Peter was the first to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10), and Paul continued to take the gospel to the Jewish people (Acts 9–28). Both men, like Jesus, took the word of God to both groups of people.

⁸⁸ Sibley, “The Blindness of Israel and the Mission of the Church,” 240.

Romans 1:16

Sibley says, the clearest example of Jewish priority and Gentile inclusion in the gospel is found in Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” He says, many view this verse in a historical, chronological sense, as if to say, “The gospel *was* for the Jew first, but the church has moved on now to other priorities.”⁸⁹ The translation of the words, “πρῶτον” (first) and “ἐστίν” (is), however, will not allow a historical, chronological interpretation and application of the verse.

The standard New Testament Greek lexicon translates “πρῶτον” as “of degree, in the first place, above all, especially.”⁹⁰ Other verses where this term is used and demonstrates a priority rather than a historical or chronological interpretation are Romans 2:9–11 and Matthew 6:33.

There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first [πρῶτον] and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first [πρῶτον] and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God (Rom. 2:9–11).

But seek [πρῶτον] His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Mt. 6:33).

In both cases, a “continuing priority” is established in the verse, rather than a historical, chronological sequence.⁹¹ Taking the gospel “to the Jew first” is a priority in Romans 1:16.

⁸⁹ Sibley, “The Blindness of Israel and the Mission of the Church,” 246.

⁹⁰ BDAG, s.v. “πρῶτον.”

⁹¹ Ibid., 246.

The second word that Sibley draws attention to is the copulative verb, “ἐστίν” (is), which links the subject and the predicate.⁹²

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is [ἐστίν] the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom 1:16).

The word, “ἐστίν” (is), is a *gnomic* present tense verb that expresses a “timeless fact” – [the gospel] *is* the power of God for salvation.⁹³ Paul is “stating a universal truth” that is “intrinsic to the gospel.”⁹⁴

The governing verb also applies to the final clause, “to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” The gospel *is* the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes; the gospel *is* to the Jew first; the gospel *is* also to the Greek. Another way of translating the verse is, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for *as long as* it is the power of God unto salvation, *it is especially so* for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”⁹⁵ Sibley says, “far from being a temporary or idiosyncratic methodology in missions, Paul is revealing something fundamental about the gospel itself. He is saying: (1) that the gospel is God’s power onto salvation, (2) that it is for ‘all who believe,’ (3) that it is ‘to the Jew especially,’”⁹⁶ and (4) that it is “also to the Greek.” Luke recounts Paul’s conversion four

⁹² Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 20–21.

⁹³ Ibid., 247. “On gnomic present tense, cf., James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979), 79–80; Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 208–17; James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 363; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 8; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 866ff; and Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 523–25. Other grammarians may use different terminology (e.g., Stanley Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1995), 33. This special use of the present tense here is usually either assumed, without comment, or ignored by commentators.”

⁹⁴ Ibid., 247.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 248.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 248.

times in the book of Acts (9:1–19; 27; 22:1–21; 26:12–18). The Lord told Ananias to share with Paul his new mission.

But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake’ (Acts 9:15–16).

Paul was instructed to take the gospel to “the Gentiles,” to “kings,” and to “the sons of Israel.” Paul tells King Agrippa that Jesus himself sent him to share the gospel with both Jewish and Gentile people in his revelation on the road to Damascus.

And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ‘But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me’ (Acts 26:15–18).

The book of Acts and the letters of Paul show how Paul fulfilled his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles while continuing to take the gospel to the Jewish people first.⁹⁷

Salamis – “the *began* to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews” (Acts 13:5)

Antioch – “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first” (Acts 13:46)

Iconium – “they entered the synagogue of the Jews together” (Acts 14:1)

Philippi – “on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer”

Thessalonica – “according to Paul’s custom, he went to them” [the Jewish people] (Acts 17:1–2)

Berea – “they went into the synagogue of the Jews” (Acts 17:10)

Athens – “he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*” (Acts 17:16–17)

Corinth – “he was reasoning in the Synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:1–6)

Corinth – “he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews” (Acts 18:19)

⁹⁷ Ibid., 250.

Corinth – “he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months”
(Acts 19:1, 8)

Rome – “this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen”
(Acts 28:16–17, 28)

Throughout Paul’s mission trips recorded in the book of Acts, and in his letters, the gospel was always for “every man.” Employing a text-centered, canonical, and compositional hermeneutic, the biblical, theological, and practical scope of proclamation, admonishing, and teaching in Colossians 1:28 is to “every man” both Jewish and Gentile.

Inner-Textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28 and Colossians 3:16

The last set of inner-textual relationships in Colossians 1:28 are with Colossians 3:16. The two verses are united by four inner-textual relationships that together give great insight into the nature of Paul’s instruction.⁹⁸

Colossians 1:28

“Him we proclaim”
“Admonishing every man”
“Teaching every man”
“In all wisdom”

Colossians 3:16

“The word of Christ”
“Admonishing one another”
“Teaching *one another*”
“In all wisdom”

⁹⁸ Colossians 3:16: “Χριστοῦ (of Christ) {A} – Χριστοῦ has strong manuscript support. But instead of the unusual expression ‘the word of Christ,’ which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, several witnesses substitute the more usual ‘the word of God’ or ‘the word of the Lord.’ There is no difference in meaning here between ‘the word of Christ’ and ‘the word of the Lord’; the two are equivalent (Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, p.236).

In some languages, it may be necessary to decide between the subjective genitive, ‘the word which Christ spoke,’ that is, the Jesus tradition, and the objective genitive, ‘the gospel which is about Jesus.’ If the ambiguity may be kept in translation, perhaps it should be here, since in this context ‘there is no reason why the genitive form should be pressed to an either-or decision’ (Dunn, p.236).

Nearly all English translations begin this verse by saying ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you,’ but it should be noted that the subject of the verb in Greek is ‘the word of Christ’ and not the Colossian Christians, as the word ‘let’ might suggest. Barth and Blanke (*Colossians*, p.426) correctly state that ‘the invitation in this verse should not be understood as an invitation to the Colossians, but rather as a request of God to continue to allow his word to dwell also among the Colossians.’ Likewise, Dunn (p. 236) says, ‘the subject of the imperative is not the readers, but something they must open up to and allow to do its work.’” Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, 418–419.

Colossians 1:28 and 3:16 share similar textual features. Both verses *focus* on the person and work of Jesus Christ through proclamation (1:28) and through the indwelling “word” (3:16). Both verses share two identical words, “admonishing” and “teaching.” Finally, both 1:28 and 3:16 share the same *form* for presenting biblical truth – “in all wisdom.” Despite their similarities, however, the *process* and *scope* for Colossians 1:28 and 3:16 are different.

The Focus and Form of Colossians 1:28 and 3:16

The personal pronoun, “ὁν” (Him), referring to Christ, is the object of proclamation, and is positioned at the front of 1:28. In 3:16, the phrase, “the word of Christ” (Ὁ λόγος τοῦ χριστοῦ), is the subject, referring to the gospel, and is also centered on Jesus Christ.⁹⁹ It too, is positioned at the front of the verse. In both verses, the verb follows the subject, adding special emphasis to Christ and to “the word of Christ.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, in 1:28 and 3:16, “the word,” centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ, is portrayed as the active, transforming agent of God.¹⁰¹ The person and work of Jesus Christ in “the word of Christ” through proclamation and indwelling are the focus of both Colossians 1:28 and 3:16.

Both the ministries of “admonishing” and “teaching” in 1:28 and 3:16 are also the same. They were both given to instruct the church on ways in which the person and work of Jesus Christ and the word of Christ are ministered. One through an indicative of

⁹⁹ Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 247.

¹⁰⁰ Black, *Learn How to Read New Testament Greek*, 29, 182.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 245–246.

declaration, the word, “proclaim” (καταγγέλλομεν – 1:28), and the other through an imperative of command, “to dwell” (ἐνοικείτω – 3:16).

- “Him we proclaim” (1:28a)
 - “Admonishing” (1:28b)
 - “Teaching” (1:28c)
 - “in all wisdom” (1:28d)
- “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you” (3:16a)
 - Teaching (3:16c)
 - Admonishing (3:16d)
 - “in all wisdom (3:16b)

The focus is the person and work of Jesus Christ through the proclamation of Christ and through the indwelling “word” of Christ. The form for “admonishing” and “teaching” biblical content is “in all wisdom.”

The form in 1:28 and 3:16 is also the same. The form for teaching and admonishing in both verses is, “in all wisdom.” The word, “wisdom” and the phrase, “in all wisdom,” are inner-textual links in Colossians that unite the letter and develop an important structural theme as discussed in chapters two and three. While the focus and the form of the two verses are the same, the process and the scope, however, are different.

Proclaim and Dwell in Colossians 1:28 and 3:16

The controlling verb in 1:28, “proclaim” (καταγγέλλομεν), is present, active, indicative, first-person, plural. The active mood in this case is declarative and states a fact.”¹⁰² The participles that explicitly describe the process for proclamation,

¹⁰² Black, *It's Still Greek to Me*, 98.

“admonishing” and “teaching,” are also present, active, indicative, plural. The object of the verb or the scope for proclamation is “every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον).

Colossians 1:28

Him we proclaim
ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν

admonishing every man
νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον

and teaching every man
καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον

The controlling verb in 3:16 is, “dwell” (ἐνοικεῖτω), which means “to live, to reside,” or “to inhabit.”¹⁰³ It is a word used only by Paul to describe the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11; 2 Tim. 1:14) and the gift of faith that dwells in believers (2 Tim. 1:5). In 2 Corinthians 6:16–18, Paul describes the church as “the temple of the living God.” He then conflated verses, allusions, and echoes from Exodus, Leviticus, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel that referenced the temple, the New Covenant, and God’s promise to indwell his people.

Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I WILL DWELL [ἐνοικήσω] IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.’ Therefore, ‘COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,’ says the Lord. ‘AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ Says the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:16–18).

The way in which Paul instructed “the word of Christ” to indwell the Colossians is the way in which God indwelled the temple and the Holy Spirit indwells believers in fulfillment of God’s covenant promises. God’s presence with his people through his word denotes intimacy, harmony, fellowship and peace.

¹⁰³ BDAG; Louw and Nida, s.v. “ἐνοικέω.”

The word of God and the heart are described as “seed” and “soil” in the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:1–23). When the seed falls on good soil, it bears abundant fruit. This is the man, Jesus said, who hears the word and understands it. Paul wanted the Colossians to bear fruit in their lives. He knew it was a result of the word of Christ dwelling richly in their hearts.

The verb “dwell” is present, active, imperative, third-person, singular. The imperative mood is the mood of volition or intention and is used for giving commands.¹⁰⁴ The present tense expresses continuous, habitual action.¹⁰⁵ The third-person imperative can be translated, “the word of Christ ‘must continually dwell richly’ within you.”¹⁰⁶ The adverb, “richly” (πλουσίως), means, “abundantly,” and pertains to that which “exists in a large amount” and is extremely “valuable.”¹⁰⁷ The proclamation of Christ expresses a broad, outward, missionary focus for the word. The indwelling word of Christ expresses an inward, personal focus. The inward focus of the word of Christ is shared within the church, identified as to “one another,” in 3:16.

Admonishing, Teaching, and Singing in Colossians 1:28 and 3:16

The participles in 3:16 that describe more explicitly the process for indwelling are present, active, indicative. The “teaching” and “admonishing” are applied and ministered to the saints by means of “psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs” (ψαλμοῖς ὕμνοις ᾠδαῖς

¹⁰⁴ BDAG; Louw and Nida, s.v. “ἐνοικέω,” 100.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 101.

¹⁰⁷ Louw and Nida, s.v. “πλουσίως.”

πνευματικαῖς), which modify the two preceding participles.¹⁰⁸ Paul adds “singing” (ᾄδοντες) to the list of participles that describe the means through which “the word of Christ” richly dwells in the Colossians. The focus of the “singing,” however, unlike “teaching” and “admonishing,” which are directed toward believers, is directed to God. O’Brien says, this indicates the “attitude or disposition” that is to accompany instruction and admonition.¹⁰⁹ The Colossians teach one another in psalms, hymns, and songs inspired by the Spirit, and sing with thanksgiving in their hearts to God.¹¹⁰ The teaching and admonishing of the saints in all wisdom are linked to singing to the Lord with thanksgiving.

¹⁰⁸ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 167; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 151; and Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 201; take the view that the nouns, “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” are related to the participle, “singing,” rather than to, “teaching and admonishing.”

Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 427; Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 287–288; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 207–208; and Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 248–249; demonstrate the nouns modify “teaching and admonishing.” Pao, explains: “First, the parallel in Eph. 5:19 clearly points to the relationship between teaching and hymns, while singing belongs to a different clause: ‘speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.’”

Second, elsewhere in Paul, psalms and teaching have also appeared in the same context (1 Cor. 14:26). As has often been stated, more theology is engrained into our hearts through singing than through the printed page or even through preaching.

Third, the datives in “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” go naturally with “teaching and admonishing” as they express means through which instructions can be carried out. If these nouns are to be attached with “singing,” they should be in the accusative case as objects of the act of singing.

Finally, this reading also highlights the parallelism between the two parts that are both introduced by a prepositional phrase beginning with ἐν, followed by a participial clause: ‘in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude singing in your hearts to God.’

Therefore, in terms of structure it seems best that “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” modify their preceding participles. Nevertheless, in parallel phrases in Greek, items that appear in the first one are often also relevant for the second one. In this case, “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” will thus also be relevant for the second clause. To their fellow members of the body of Christ, believers are called to teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. To God, they are to sing these songs.”

¹⁰⁹ O’Brien, *Colossians–Philemon*, 210.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you
Ὁ λόγος τοῦ χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως

teaching *one another*
διδάσκοντες

and admonishing one another
καὶ νοθετοῦντες ἑαυτούς

with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs
ψαλμοῖς ὕμνοις ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς

singing with thanksgiving in your hearts to God
ἐν χάριτι ᾄδοντες ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ·

The Process in Colossians 1:28 and 3:16

The differences in the two verses are in their scope and process. In 1:28, the scope is an outward, missional emphasis through proclamation of the person and work of Jesus Christ to “every man.” The scope in 3:16, however, is inward and directed to members of the church and to God the Father. This is reflected in the dative and accusative personal pronouns “you” (ὑμῖν), “one another” (ἑαυτούς), and the noun “God” (θεῷ) in 3:16.

“every man” (1:28)

“within you” (3:16)

“one another” (3:16)

“to God” (3:16)

Rather than proclaiming Christ through “admonishing” and “teaching” alone, Paul adds “singing” to the method by which “the word of Christ” must indwell every believer. He also names more explicitly the method through which “the word of Christ” is taught and admonished within the Christian community; through “psalms *and* hymns *and*

spiritual songs,” and “singing with thanksgiving in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16). The form for “singing” to God is “in thanksgiving” (ἐν [τῇ] χάριτι).

The word translated, “psalms,” is the Greek word, “ψαλμοῖς,” and originates from the Hebrew word “מְזֹמֶר.” The word can refer to a “melody,” a “song of praise,” an individual psalm, or to the book of Psalms.¹¹¹ The word, “hymns,” is from the Greek word, “ᾠμοίς,” and means, “a song with religious content,” or “a song of praise.”¹¹² The term translated, “spiritual songs” (ᾠδαὶς πνευματικαῖς), reflects divine, theocentric songs inspired by the Holy Spirit and spoken from the heart.¹¹³ The ministry of teaching and admonishing through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs does not imply or necessitate the use of musical instruments.¹¹⁴ They can refer to “poetic, lyrical presentations of theology.”¹¹⁵ The forms are didactic and “intended to teach in an easily rememberable fashion.”¹¹⁶ The Colossians had new lives, new identities, and a new community in Christ. Paul was now instructing them how to live in their new spiritual community, the church, in the perfect bond of unity in Christ.

The proclamation, instruction, and admonishment that results from a theological understanding of Jesus Christ gives birth to practical application as seen in the imperative verbs that apply the person and work of Christ in the church, the family, the workplace, and among the lost.

¹¹¹ BDB, s.v. “מְזֹמֶר;” BDAG, s.v. “ψαλμός.”

¹¹² BDAG, s.v. “ᾠμοίς.”

¹¹³ BDAG; Louw and Nida, s.v. “πνευματικός.”

¹¹⁴ Allen Ross, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds.; (Paris, Ontario: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1985), 779.

¹¹⁵ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 210.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 210.

Both Colossians 1:28 and 3:16 present the person and work of Jesus Christ and “the word of Christ” as the powerful, transforming agent of God through which the church ministers to every person, whether outside the church or within the body of Christ. In both cases, whether proclaiming or indwelling, the person and work of Christ revealed in “the word of Christ” ministered salvation, sanctification, and spiritual transformation to those who received “the word” by faith. Paul applied the truths revealed in Colossians 1:28 and 3:16 to the church at Colossae in order to teach them about the preeminence of Jesus Christ, to warn them about the dangers of false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice, to lead them to spiritual maturity, and to fulfill the Great Commission.

The Scope in Colossians 1:28 and Colossians 3:16

In Colossians 1:28, the perspective is on proclaiming Christ to a wide audience on a broad scale. This is accomplished in two ways through the definition of the word “proclaim” and the repeated phrase “every man.” Paul uses the word, “proclaim” (καταγγέλλομεν), eighteen times in Scripture to describe missionary outreach and proclamation to the Jewish people in Salamis (Acts 13:5), Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:38), and Thessalonica (Acts 17:2–3); and to both Jewish and Gentile people in Berea (Acts 17:13), Athens (Acts 17:23), Rome (Acts 26:23), and Corinth (Acts 18:4; 1 Cor. 2:1).¹¹⁷ The repetition of the phrase “every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον) supports the and definition and application of “καταγγέλλομεν.”

While the perspective in Colossians 1:28 is missional and the audience is “every man,” Jew and Gentile, the perspective in Colossians 3:16 is to “one another” and to God. The literary context of Colossians 3:16 is the practical section of the letter (3:5–4:6)

¹¹⁷ Acts 3:24; 4:2; 13:5, 38; 15:36; 16:17, 21; 17:3, 13, 23; 26:23; Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:1; 9:14; 11:26; Philippians 1:17, 18; Colossians 1:28.

which focuses on the preeminence of Christ in the life of the born-again believer, how Christians should treat one another, and the characteristics of the new self. The section is knit together with the reciprocal pronouns, “ἀλλήλων” (one another) and “ἑαυτοῦ,” (each other), and with the phrases “τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ” (God the Father) and “τῷ θεῷ” (to God).

“do not lie to one another” (3:9)

“bearing with one another, and forgiving each other” (3:13)

“teaching and admonishing one another” (3:16)

“singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (3:16)

“giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (3:17)

The same way in which Jesus Christ “disarmed the rulers and authorities” (ἀπεκδύομαι 2:15), the Colossians have laid aside their old selves (ἀπεκδύομαι – 3:9), and “put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge” according to the image of God (3:10).

Summary of Textual Analysis of Colossians 1:28 and Colossians 3:16

Colossians 1:28 and 3:16 share many similar literary characteristics. Their focus is on the person and work of Jesus Christ through the proclamation and the indwelling word of Christ. Both verses share the ministries of “teaching” and “admonishing” and the form of their content is “in all wisdom.” The perspective of Colossians 1:28 is outward; proclaiming Christ, and admonishing and teaching “every man” on a broad scope to both Jewish and Gentile people. The perspective of Colossians 3:16 is inward among members of the church. The word of Christ is to richly dwell in believers; they are instructed to speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and sing with thanksgiving in their hearts to God. Together, the two verses give great insight into the ministry of the word of Christ to “every man” and to “one another.”

Conclusion

By means of an in-textual, inner-textual, and inter-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 and the letter to the Colossians, the question: “How Do We Proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28? is answered.

Proclamation is the public announcement of the person and work of Jesus Christ and the message of the gospel on a broad scale to a wide audience. The form of the verb reveals continuous, ongoing action and presents a lifestyle of proclamation for Christians and for the church. The proclamation of Jesus Christ is by means of the word of God, beginning with God’s covenant relationships with Abraham, Moses, David, and with Israel in the New Covenant to bless all the peoples of the earth through the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Admonishing and teaching are more explicit ways of describing biblical proclamation and are developed around the literary themes of “rescue” and “captive.” They are textually linked to the Exodus narrative, the Passover, the Day of Atonement, the Davidic Covenant, the New Covenant, and the appointed times of the Lord. Admonishing can refer to rebuking, advising, warning, counseling, and instructing. Teaching means to provide instruction in both a formal and informal setting. Believers are portrayed as being “rescued” from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of Christ in which they have redemption, the forgiveness of sin. Therefore, Paul admonishes the Colossians, not to let anyone take them “captive” through philosophy, tradition, legalism, or syncretism, rather than according to Christ. Paul’s admonishment and teaching are centered on the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Christians are individually and corporately in union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection to eternal life, through whom, believers are “made complete.”

The form and substance by which the person and work of Jesus Christ is proclaimed is “in all wisdom.” Christ, in whom are “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” and, in whom, wisdom is personified, is the form and substance of all proclamation, admonishment and teaching. “In all wisdom” refers to the biblical worldview and Christ-centered content of proclamation, admonishment, and teaching ministries. The phrase, “every man,” refers to the proclamation of Jesus Christ to both Jewish and Gentile people from all nations.

The textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 reveals a biblical theology consistent with the ministries of the triune God; Moses and the prophets revealed in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings; God’s covenant relationship with Abraham, Moses, David, and Israel; the appointed times of the Lord; and the ministries and mission work of the apostles revealed in the New Testament Scriptures. The physical symbols of the spiritual reality of union in Christ for both Jewish and Gentile people from all nations are the two New Testament ordinances of the Lord’s Supper and Believer’s Baptism.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF PROCLAIMING CHRIST IN COLOSSIANS 1:28?

Introduction

A textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 reveals six unique characteristics that Jesus Christ possesses that motivate and inspire his proclamation: (1) his unique relationship to God the Father; (2) his unique relationship to creation; (3) his unique relationship to the new creation; (4) his unique relationship to redemption; (5) his unique relationship to the church; and (6) his unique relationship to the kingdom.

In addition, a textual analysis of the verse reveals a biblical, theological, and practical process for proclaiming the person and work of Jesus Christ on a broad scale to both Jewish and Gentile people that warns them about the dangers of being taken captive by philosophy, false religion, and ascetic practices, and instructs them on their new rescued life in Christ through biblical, Christ-centered teaching applied to the church, the family, the workplace, and to the lost. Through Jesus Christ believers have experienced a New Covenant Exodus, a New Covenant Day of Atonement, and an inheritance in the Messianic Kingdom of God.

What then is the goal of proclamation? Is there a purpose for proclaiming, admonishing, and teaching people in Christ? An in-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 reveals the goal for proclaiming Christ: “so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (1:28e). However, what does this statement mean? How does it relate to the person and work of Jesus Christ? What is the Christian’s role in fulfilling this goal? In order to discover the authorial intent and meaning of the clause, an in-textual, inner-

textual, and inter-textual analysis will be performed on the clause to answer the question: “What is the Goal of Proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28?”

In-Textual Analysis

“Present Every Man Complete in Christ” in Colossians 1:28

In Colossians 1:28, the apostle Paul presents a biblical process for discipleship composed of lifestyle evangelism, ongoing biblical instruction, and goal-oriented presentation that leads to salvation, sanctification, and glorification for both Jewish and Gentile people of all nations in Christ.

The in-textual goal for ongoing Christ-centered discipleship is set forth in the purpose-result *ἵνα* clause in Colossians 1:28e.¹ The clause indicates both Paul’s intention and in his sure confidence that God’s purpose will result in fulfillment.²

“so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (1:28e)
ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ

Wallace says that New Testament writers “employ language to reflect their theology: what God purposes is what happens and, consequently, *ἵνα* is used to express both the divine purpose and the result.”³ The goal of ongoing Christ-centered discipleship is to “present every man complete in Christ.”

¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 473–474.

² Ibid., 473.

³ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 473.

Colossians 1:28 – “Present” (παρίστημι)

The aorist, active, subjunctive, first-person, plural verb translated “to present” is the word “παρίστημι” which means “to cause to be in a place,⁴ to render, to offer” or “to bring before.”⁵ It was shown in chapter two that the first-person plural “we” in 1:28 refers to *all* Christians. The subjunctive mood “is used to grammaticalize *potentiality*.”⁶ In the case of 1:28, the mood is *hortatory* subjunctive which is used “to exhort or command oneself and one’s associates.”⁷

Some believe the verb “present” (παρίστημι) has legal overtones which are similar to bringing someone “before court” and standing in front of a judge.⁸ Others view the word as referring to an offering or sacrifice in the “implied hope of acceptance.”⁹ A third way of understanding the word “present” is from an eschatological perspective. When Paul stated, “present every man complete in Christ,” he thought in terms of “the return of Jesus and the desire to see each Christian mature in the Lord.”¹⁰ Vaughan says,

⁴ Louw and Nida, s.v. “παρίστημι.” The meanings in this domain “are complex in that they involve both events or states and special positions.

⁵ BDAG, s.v. “παρίστημι.”

⁶ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 463. “[The subjunctive mood] It normally does so in the realm of *cognitive probability* but may also be used for *cognitive possibility* (overlapping with the optative) or *volitional intentionality* (overlapping with the imperative). Robertson, *Grammar*, 928–35, has a somewhat similar breakdown. He sees the subjunctive as falling into three general uses: futuristic (cognitive eventuality), volitional, and deliberative. What is missing in his analysis is the overlap between the subjunctive and optative. It should be added here that the tenses in the subjunctive, as with the other potential moods, involve only aspect (kind of action), not time. Only in the indicative mood is time a part of the tense.”

⁷ Ibid., 464. “This use of the subjunctive is used ‘to urge someone to unite with the speaker in a course of action upon which he has already decided’ (Chamberlain, *Exegetical Grammar*, 83). Since there is no first-person imperative, the hortatory subjunctive is used to do roughly the same task. Thus, this use of the subjunctive is an exhortation in the *first-person plural*. The typical translation. Rather than *we should...is let us...*”

⁸ O’Brien, *Colossians–Philemon*, 68–69.

⁹ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 109–110.

“present” refers to “bringing [someone] into God’s presence at the return of Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19–20; 5:23). Only then will God’s work in the believer be complete.”¹¹

Colossians 1:28 – “Complete in Christ” (τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ)

The desired state in which Paul exhorts the church to present every man is “complete in Christ” (τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ).

τέλειος

The word “τέλειος” means that which is “fully accomplished, finished or complete.”¹² It can also be defined as, “meeting the highest standard, full-grown, mature, fully developed, or perfect.”¹³ The word can have the sense of the *quality* of “sacrificial victims, of moral character, or of conduct.”¹⁴ Moo says, “τέλειος” is difficult to translate into English.¹⁵

Most of the versions opt for some form of ‘mature’ (RSV; NRSV; ESV; HCSB; NET; REB), but some prefer ‘perfect’ (NIV; NJB; NAB). Neither quite captures the sense of the word. ‘Perfect’ is too strong, ‘mature’ too weak. Rarely does the word in the New Testament have the sense of our English ‘perfect,’ with its connotations of absoluteness (though see, perhaps, Rom. 12:2; Jam. 1:17, 25; 1 Jn. 4:18). ‘Mature,’ on the other hand, is too relative, inviting us to think that we are τέλειος as long as we are doing a bit better than some other Christians we could name.¹⁶

¹⁰ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 242. “This theme dominates the Pauline Epistles. See 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 19–20.”

¹¹ Vaughan, *Colossians*, 193.

¹² Louw and Nida, s.v. “τέλειος.”

¹³ BDAG, s.v. “τέλειος.”

¹⁴ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 125–126.

¹⁵ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 161.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.

The word, then, means to be *fulfilled, fully developed, and complete* in such a way as to stand before God in the finished person and work of Jesus Christ.

ἐν Χριστῷ

The position in which Paul desires every man to be presented “complete” before God is “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ). To be “in Christ” means to be spiritually located in the preeminent person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The term means that believers are now located in a new place, in a new realm, in a new community, with a new life, as a new creation that is eternally fixed and secure. To be “in Christ” means that believers are “shaped by the Christ event” and “live in the dominion of the exalted Lord.”¹⁷

Summary of In-textual Analysis of “Present Every Man Complete in Christ” in Colossians 1:28

The in-textual goal for the ministry of proclamation, admonishment, and teaching is clear: “so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (1:28e). Colossians 1:28e is a purpose-result ἵνα clause that indicates both Paul’s intention for the ministry and his confidence in the ministries fulfillment.

The verb “present” (παρίστημι) refers to the final ministry or action that Christians fulfill in the discipleship process. The purpose and result of proclamation, admonishing, and teaching is so that Christians can present “every man complete in Christ.” The word can refer to presenting someone before a courtroom and judge; presenting an offering or sacrifice; or from an eschatological perspective, to present someone to God at the return of Jesus Christ.

¹⁷ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 10.

The adjective “complete” (τέλειος) describes the final state in which all Christians present every man “in Christ” at his return. It is a difficult term to translate into English, but the sense of the word is spiritual maturity, fulfillment, and perfection. The phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ) is a particular Pauline phrase that means union with the person and work of Jesus Christ and refers to the spiritual location in which all Christians live now and forever. Paul was exhorting the Colossians to fulfill their role in what God had made possible and complete in Christ.

An in-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28e answers the question: “What is the Goal of Proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28?” The goal of proclaiming Christ is for every Christian to be intentionally and actively involved in fulfilling their role in presenting every person spiritually mature and fulfilled in Christ at his return.

Inner-Textual and Inter-Textual Analysis of “Present Every Man Complete in Christ” in Colossians 1:28

In order to discover the goal for proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28 from a text-centered, canonical, compositional hermeneutic, one must go beyond the immediate boundaries of the text and analyze the verse’s textual relationship with the letter on an inner-textual level, and with other sections of the Bible on an inter-textual level. From an in-textual perspective, the goal of proclamation is for every believer to be intentionally and actively involved in the discipleship process for the purpose of “presenting every man complete” or fully mature “in Christ.” What does this mean, however, in relationship to Paul’s letter and in relationship to the canon of Scripture? Is there any more to learn from this verse? To find out, an inner-textual and inter-textual analysis will be performed on the clause to discover its meaning in view of the letter to the Colossians and in view of the canon of Scripture.

The Letter to the Colossians – “Present” (παρίστημι)

Colossians 1:22 – “Present” (παρίστημι)

The verb “present” (παρίστημι) appears twice in the letter to the Colossians. In addition to 1:28, the term appears in 1:22 where Paul describes the relationship between the person and work of Jesus Christ and the believer by faith.

It was demonstrated in chapter three that 1:21–23 and 2:16–4:6 are sections of discourse that apply the salvific work of God the Father through God the Son described in 1:12–20 and 2:6–15 to the believer by faith. The heart of each biblical, theological section is the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ in 1:19 and 2:9. The deity and humanity of Jesus Christ in the incarnation is the foundation of everything that Paul’s says about the person and work of the Messiah and his application in the life of the believer. Paul described the Colossian’s condition before Christ and emphasized their new reconciled life in Christ in 1:21–23.¹⁸

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister (Col. 1:21–23).

Paul said, God “reconciled” (ἀποκαταλλάσσω) the Colossian’s in Jesus’ “fleshly body through death” in order that Christ may “present” (παραστήσαι) them before God “holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (1:22). “παραστήσαι” is an infinitive of purpose¹⁹ and clearly expresses the goal of Christ’s atoning death.

“in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (1:22)

¹⁸ Colossians 1:22a: νῦν δὲ – “but now.”

¹⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 590–592.

παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμόμους καὶ
ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ

The sacrificial reading of Colossians 1:22 is supported by references to Jesus’ “blood,” his “body,” and his “death” in Colossians 1:20 and 1:22.

“through Him to reconcile...having made peace through the blood of His cross”
(Col. 1:20)

δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι...εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ

“in His fleshly body through death” (Col. 1:22)

ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου

The atoning salvific work of God the Father through God the Son has made it possible for sinful man to live daily in the presence of a holy God by faith, and to one day stand before God holy, blameless, and beyond reproach in Christ. Jesus Christ will one day present his church to God the Father as a pure bride. The word “παρίστημι” is also employed in other sections of the New Testament to describe human beings standing before God.

The New Testament – “Present” (παρίστημι)

Ephesians 5:26–27 – “Present” (παρίστημι)

In Ephesians 5:22–33, Paul compares the covenant marriage relationship between Jesus Christ and his bride, the church, with the covenant marriage relationship between a husband and wife. As with Christ and the church, the relationship between husband and wife has meaning, purpose, and fulfillment.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless (Eph. 5:25–27).

In the context of Ephesians 5:26–27, Jesus, in his person and work, has a saving, sanctifying, and glorifying role through the Word of God. One day, he will “present” to himself the church in all her glory.

There are two textual relationships between Colossians 1:22, Ephesians 5:26–27, and Colossians 1:28.

“in order to present you before Him holy and blameless” (Col. 1:22)
 παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους... αὐτοῦ

“so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28)
 ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ

“that He might present to Himself the church...holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:27)
 ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ...τὴν ἐκκλησίαν...ἣ ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος.

First, each verse describes the act of presentation or standing in the presence of God in Christ: “present you before Him” (Col. 1:22); “present every man” (Col. 1:28); and “present to Himself” (Eph. 5:27). Second, each verse speaks of a state in which believers are presented to God in Christ. Whether it is “complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28), or “holy and blameless” (Col. 1:22; Eph. 5:27), believers are prepared to stand in God’s presence in Christ because of Christ’s finished work imputed to individual Christians by faith.

Romans 6:13 – “Present” (παρίστημι)

In Romans 6, Paul instructs the church that believers are dead to sin and alive to God because they are united with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection to walk in “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Because believers are biblically and theologically “dead to sin” and “alive to God in Christ” (Rom. 6:11), Paul says, therefore, “present [παρίστημι] yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:13). Because of the atoning work of Jesus

Christ as the substitutionary sacrifice, believers have “died to sin,” they are “alive to God,” and they are now commanded to “present” (παραστήσατε) themselves and the members of their bodies to God as instruments of righteousness. A Christian’s entire being is designed as an instrument for righteousness in God’s hand dedicated to fulfilling his purposes. Paul elaborated on his instruction in Romans 12.

Romans 12:1 – “Present” (παρίστημι)

The same act of presentation before God is developed in Romans 12:1: “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to ‘present’ [παραστήσαι] your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship (Rom. 12:1). In this context, Paul described the Christian’s body as a “living and holy sacrifice” acceptable to God because of the work of God in Christ. This act of presentation is described as a “spiritual service of worship.” Christians are instructed to identify and develop their spiritual gifts and calling by faith and employ them properly in every relationship of life.

2 Corinthians 4:14 – “Present” (παρίστημι)

The principle of new life in Christ inspired by the Word of God and the hope of the resurrection motivated Paul to continue to proclaim the gospel. He knew that God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead, would also resurrect the church with Christ and “present” (παραστήσει) her to himself in Christ. The hope of the resurrection is designed to spread the manifold grace of God, result in thanksgiving to the Lord, and to renew and inspire the inner man (2 Cor. 4:15).

2 Corinthians 11:2 – “Present” (παρίστημι)

One of the constant battles that Paul fought in his apostleship was the undermining of his ministry by false apostles.²⁰ He used the picture of betrothal and covenant marriage to describe his godly jealousy for the Corinthian church. He viewed himself in this passage as a father betrothing his daughter to her future husband. Paul revealed the seriousness and importance of his ministry to sanctify the church through ongoing discipleship so that he could present her to Christ as a pure virgin.

The meaning of “present” (παρίστημι) is complex because it involves events, states of being, spacial positions, and various participants.²¹ As with the description of the redeeming and atoning work of Jesus Christ in Colossians and the New Testament, there are also textual relationships with the term “παρίστημι” in the Passover narrative, the Mosaic covenant, the ministry of the priesthood, and the Kingdom of God in the LXX.

The Septuagint (LXX) – “Present” (παρίστημι)

Exodus 19:17 (LXX) – “Present” (παρίστημι)

After the Exodus from Egypt, Moses and the Israelites traveled to Mount Sinai. On the fiftieth day after the Passover, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost,²² the Lord “came

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 10:12; 11:1–33; Galatians 1:8–9; Acts 20:27–29; 2 Timothy 3:1–8, 16; Hebrews 13:7; Revelation 2:2.

²¹ BDAG, s.v. “παρίστημι.”

²² Exodus 34:22: ““You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, *that is*, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year.”

Deuteronomy 16:9–12: “You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the LORD your God blesses you; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.”

down” (καταβαίνω) on Mount Sinai and Moses “went up” (ἀναβαίνω) and received the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19:20). In Exodus 19:17, Moses brought the Israelites out of the camp “to meet God” (συνάντησιν τοῦ θεοῦ) and they “stood” (παρίστημι) at the foot of the mountain in God’s presence. Moses was the mediator of the covenant at Mount Sinai between God and the nation of Israel (Heb. 8:4–6). Because of Israel’s sin in the wilderness, the mediation of their relationship with God over time included more law and would come through the office of the priesthood and through the tabernacle.²³

Exodus 34:5 (LXX) – “Present” (παρίστημι)

After the sin of the golden calf, Moses interceded for the nation of Israel and renewed the Mosaic covenant. In Exodus 32:30, Moses told the people, “You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the LORD, perhaps I can make ‘atonement’ for your sin.” The word for “atonement” (ἐξιλάσκομαι) in the LXX is from the Hebrew word *kaphar* (כָּפַר) meaning “to cover.”²⁴ The Lord renewed the covenant with Israel through Moses and God wrote “the ten words” (τοὺς δέκα λόγους) on two new stone tablets (Ex. 34:28). During the time of renewal, the Lord “descended in the cloud and stood [παρίστημι] there with him [Moses] as he “called upon the name of the Lord (Ex. 34:5). The Lord passed by Moses and proclaimed his person and work.

The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations (Ex. 34:6–7).

²³ Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 271–289.

²⁴ BDB, s.v. “כָּפַר.”

God commanded Moses to write additional words to the covenant which included the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 34:18), the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:21a), and the Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 34:21b).

Deuteronomy 10:8 (LXX) – “Present” (παρίστημι)

At the end of the Torah in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses expounded upon the law (Dt. 1:5) and gave commentary on the Pentateuch.²⁵ In Deuteronomy 10, Moses added detail about renewing of the Mosaic covenant which included the ark of the covenant of the Lord and setting apart the tribe of Levi as priests “to stand [παρίστημι] before the Lord to serve Him and to bless in His name” (Dt. 10:8). Their ministry made it possible for the Israelites to come to the tabernacle and offer sacrifices for the atonement for sins, for the holiness of the temple to be maintained, and for the glory of the Lord to dwell in Israel.

Daniel 7:13 (LXX) – “Present” (παρίστημι)

In Daniel 7:13–14 one like a “Son of Man” is presented before the “Ancient of Days.” The expression “Son of Man” is found 195 times in the Bible. It is used to describe: (1) a poetic reference to “man” in Psalm 80:17; (2) a title God used to address the prophet Ezekiel as in Ezekiel 2:1; and (3) a title for the Messiah in Daniel 7 and in the New Testament. In Daniel 7 the prophet receives a vision of the throne of heaven. In the vision, the Son of Man is *presented* (παρίστημι) before the Ancient of Days and given glory, worship, and a kingdom in which all the peoples and nations will serve him forever (Dan. 7:13–14).

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of

²⁵ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 423.

Days and was presented [παρίστημι] before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13–14).

Sailhamer says, the images found here are textual links to David’s covenant in 2 Samuel

7 and other sections of the Bible that speak of the Messiah.²⁶

The visions in chapter 7 are not only central in importance to the book of Daniel but they also provide the basis for much of the eschatological and messianic hope in the remainder of the Bible. Almost anywhere in the Bible where the Messiah is spoken of one will find that the basic imagery and central concepts are shaped by the visions of this chapter. Central to these visions is the appearance of the Son of Man coming in the clouds to receive the eternal kingdom from the Ancient of Days (vv.13–14). The imagery and ideas found here are not themselves new. They are taken from earlier biblical texts in the Pentateuch and the historical books. Chief among these is 2 Sam. 7, the promise of an eternal kingship in Jerusalem that God made to the house of David. In general terms the visions of this chapter are arranged to show a contrast between the kingdoms of man and the kingdom of God.²⁷

Daniel 7:13–14 is quoted, alluded to, and echoed in the gospels,²⁸ the epistles,²⁹ and in the Revelation.³⁰

The verb “present” (παρίστημι) is a textual link, allusion, and echo to standing in God’s presence in the context of the Passover narrative, the Mosaic covenant, the ministry of the priesthood, and the Kingdom of God in Christ. The word “atonement” (ἐξιλάσκομαι) in Exodus 32:30 is a textual link to the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 and the ministry of the “scapegoat” (ἄφεσις – Lev. 16:26) in which Paul applied to Christ

²⁶ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 402.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 402.

²⁸ Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; John 3:35.

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:20–22; Philippians 2:9–11.

³⁰ Revelation 1:6–7, 13; 11:15; 14:14.

and the “forgiveness” (ἄφεσις) of sins in Colossians 1:14, and was discussed in chapter three of the research.

Summary of Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis of “Present” – (παρίστημι)

The verb “present” (παρίστημι) has rich and complex usage in Scripture because it can refer to events, states of being, spacial positions, and various participants. In the context of Colossians and the letter’s textual relationship with the canon of Scripture, the word means to stand before God or to stand in God’s presence as with Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:18). The word is also used for the priests standing in the presence of the Lord mediating the relationship between God and Israel (Dt. 10:8). The word also expresses the action taken by those presenting the Son of Man before the Ancient of Days and given his eternal kingdom at heaven’s throne (Dan. 7:13–14).

In the New Testament, the term can refer to the individual responsibility that each Christian has in presenting themselves continuously before God as an act of worship and service (Rom. 6:13; 12:1). The verb “present” (παρίστημι) can also express the action taken by Christians participating in ongoing discipleship in order to present one another fully mature in Christ (Col. 1:28). It is finally an expression of the ministry of Jesus Christ as he presents believers and the church before himself and God the Father at his return (Col. 1:22; Eph. 5:27).

Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis “Complete in Christ” (τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ) in Colossians 1:28

The phrase, “complete in Christ” (τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ), is unique in the Bible and appears only one time in Colossians 1:28. The word translated “complete” (τέλειος) is used fifteen times in the LXX and nineteen times in the New Testament. The phrase “in

Christ” appears over 160 times in Pauline literature. Together, the phrase describes a state of maturity or fullness in Christ.

The Letter to the Colossians – “Complete” (τέλειος)

Colossians 4:12 – “Complete” (τέλειος)

Epaphras was introduced in Colossians 1:7–8 and much has been written about him throughout this work. His name and ministry are an important part of the biblical, theological, practical, and compositional fabric of the letter. It is fitting that his ministry also adds depth and understanding to the term “τέλειος.”

It was through Epaphras’ ministry that the Colossians heard, understood, and learned the Word of God, and were bearing fruit in their lives (1:5–7). He was also the one communicating with Paul about the health of the church (1:8). Like Paul in 1:9 and 1:24–2:2, Epaphras labored “earnestly” (ἀγωνίζομαι) for the saints in prayer, instruction, hardship, and ministry.

“we have not ceased to pray or you” (Col. 1:9)

“For this purpose also I labor, striving (ἀγωνίζομαι) according to His power, which mightily works within me” (1:29)

“For I want you to know how great a struggle (ἀγών) I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face” (2:1)

“Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring (ἀγωνίζομαι) earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God” (4:12)

Epaphras was “always laboring earnestly” for the Colossians “in his prayers” so that (ἵνα) they would “stand perfect” and “fully assured in all the will of God.”

Paul’s description of Epaphras’ prayer has three elements: (1) “stand perfect” – σταθῆτε τέλειοι; (2) “fully assured” – πληροφορέω; and (3) “in all the will of God” – ἐν παντί

θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ. All three elements have textual, thematic, and ministerial connections to Paul's ministry.

The terms “stand,” “perfect,” and “all the will of God” are inner-textual links with Paul's ministry. Paul's prayer for the Colossians is for them to be “filled with the knowledge of His [God's] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9) and his ministry struggle is to “present every man complete” or fully mature “in Christ” (1:29–2:1). The third term also has textual, thematic, and ministerial connections with Paul's ministry. The verb “stand” (ἵστημι) expresses an action or state of being that results from accompanying events.³¹ The desired action or state of being on the part of Epaphras and the Colossians is the conflict that results between their belief in Christ by faith and the imposing threat of false teachers. The unity and shared purpose of both Paul and Epaphras' ministry are a prominent compositional feature of the letter to the Colossians.

Paul

“filled” (1:9)
πληρωθῆτε

“the knowledge of His will” (1:9)
τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ

“present every man complete in Christ” (1:28)
ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ

Epaphras

“fully assured” (4:12)
πεπληροφορημένοι

“in all the will of God” (4:12)
ἐν παντὶ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ

“that you may stand perfect”
(4:12) ἵνα σταθῆτε τέλειοι

The Colossians had been rescued from the domain of darkness (1:13), reconciled to God (1:22), and made complete in Christ (2:10). Now, they were under the threat of being taken captive by false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice (2:8). Epaphras prayed they would “stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.” Dunn says, the passive voice may suggest “divine enablement” as in Romans 14:4.³²

³¹ Louw and Nida, s.v. “ἵστημι.”

³² Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 280.

“Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4).

The desires of both Paul and Epaphras were not only for people to be converted, but for them to mature, develop fully, and to stand firm in the will of God by faith.³³

The New Testament – “Complete” (τέλειος)

Matthew 5:48 – “Complete” (τέλειος)

In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount he records God’s standard of righteousness in 5:48: “Therefore you are to be perfect [τέλειος], as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

God is “τέλειος” and this quality belongs to him alone. Man is not equal to God, so this “cannot be a command for sinners to become God’s ethical equals.”³⁴ Yarbrough says, it is rather a call to “be imitators of God...as dearly beloved children” (Eph. 5:1). Christians are instructed to imitate the Lord, who is perfect (τέλειος), and to reflect his perfection in their lives.³⁵ In addition, Paul told the church, not only to imitate God, but also to imitate him as well: “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). The practical examples given by Christ that set forth God’s standard of righteousness in Matthew 5:48 are: (1) love your neighbor (v. 43a); (2) love your enemy (v. 44a); (3) pray for those who persecute you (v. 44b); and (4) beware of practicing your righteousness before men (6:1a).

³³ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 281.

³⁴ Robert Yarbrough, *Baker Theological Dictionary*, s.v. “perfect, perfection.”

³⁵ *Ibid.*, s.v. “perfect, perfection.”

Matthew 19:21 – “Complete” (τέλειος)

Another example of God’s standard of righteousness and perfection pertains to wealth. Jesus told a young man who owned a lot of property when he asked, “what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life” (Mt. 19:16)? Jesus replied, “If you wish to be complete [τέλειος], go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Mt. 19:21). When the young man heard the words of Jesus, he “went away grieving.” The reaction of the disciples was, “then who can be saved” (Mt. 19:25)? Jesus responded, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Mt. 19: 26). The state of “τέλειος” only comes from God the Father through God the Son and is applied in the believer’s life by faith. As with the other terms, the state of “τέλειος” has important application in the LXX.

The Septuagint (LXX) – “Complete” (τέλειος)

Genesis 6:9 (LXX) – “Complete” (τέλειος)

The word “τέλειος” has a lofty place in Scripture. The first time the word appears in the Bible is in Genesis 6:9 to describe Noah’s character: “Noah was a righteous man, blameless (τέλειος) in his time; Noah walked with God.”

As with the story of the Israelites, the sin of the golden calf, and the renewal of the Mosaic covenant, in the midst of God’s grief and judgment over man’s sin, there is abundant grace.³⁶ God saw the wickedness of man and that “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). The Lord was “sorry” that he made man, “grieved in His heart,” and wanted to “blot out” man from the face of the earth (Gen. 6:6–7).

³⁶ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 118.

Moses wrote, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). In Genesis 6:9–12 the character of Noah is revealed, which Sailhamer says, lies behind God’s response of grace.³⁷

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. These are *the records of the generations of Noah*. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth (Gen. 6:8–12).

“Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8)

“Noah was a righteous man” (Gen. 6:9b)

“blameless (τέλειος) in his time” (Gen. 6:9c)

“Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9d)

“Noah became the father of three sons” (Gen. 6:10a)

Noah’s life and character are viewed against the corruption and sinfulness of man. “Noah represents the obedience of faith. He is saved from the divine judgement of the flood.”³⁸ Noah “walked with God,” he was “blameless,” and his faith was characterized in building the ark which saved mankind and creation (Gen. 6–9).³⁹

³⁷ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 118.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

³⁹ “The first covenant God made with humanity after the Fall was his covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:8–17). That covenant is important to the overall purpose of God because it clearly shows the scope and extent of God’s plan of salvation. The Noachic covenant shows that God’s plan to restore lost humanity was not focused narrowly on saving human souls. It was rather aimed at the salvation and restoration of all creation. Thus, through the Noachic covenant God entered into a covenant with the whole of creation. This covenant serves as the foundation, the basis, of all subsequent covenants. In essence, the remaining covenants in the Bible are aimed at fulfilling God’s sweeping covenant that he established with Noah.” Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*, 37.

Exodus 12:5 (LXX) – “Complete” (τέλειος)

The second time the word appears in Scripture is in the Passover narrative. In this narrative, the condition of the Passover lamb is described as “unblemished” (τέλειος), meaning without defect and perfect. The unblemished Passover lamb was killed at twilight, the blood was placed on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the homes in which they ate (Ex. 12:5–7). When the Lord saw the blood, he passed over the homes, and spared the firstborn male in each home. The selection and sacrifice of the Passover lamb and placing the blood on the doorposts and lintel of the homes, where demonstrations of faith on the part of the Israelites.

Deuteronomy 18:13 (LXX) – “Complete” (τέλειος)

In Deuteronomy 18, the role of the priest is summarized, and the office of the prophet is introduced. “Before introducing the office of the prophet, Moses emphatically prohibits all other means of knowing the will of God.”⁴⁰ The office of the prophet was the means by which Israel would now discern the will of God.

Moses instructs the Israelites not to imitate the detestable acts of the nations in the land of Israel (Dt. 18:9). In Deuteronomy 18:13, he says, “you shall be blameless [τέλειος] before the Lord your God. The test of blameless character would be determined by how faithful the Israelites were to God’s word through the prophet.

Abraham is called a prophet in Genesis 20:7, and the existence of prophets is presupposed in the Pentateuch (Ex. 7:1; Nu. 11:29; 12:6, Dt. 13:2–3). The present text [Dt. 18:15–22], however, is the first to discuss the office of the prophet. The historical basis of the office is Israel’s request for a mediator at Sinai (Ex. 19:16–19; 20:19–21). Fearing to stand in God’s presence, the people asked Moses to go before the Lord and return God’s words to them. Thus the prophet was to be ‘like Moses.’ This suggests that the office of the prophet was to play an important role in the further

⁴⁰ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 455.

history of God's dealings with Israel. Indeed, a major section of the OT canon is devoted to the work of the prophets (Isaiah–Malachi). The prophet was to be God's mouthpiece to the people. Just as Aaron spoke God's words to Moses and was thus called a prophet (Ex. 7:1), so the prophet(s) whom the Lord would later raise up would speak to the people on God's behalf.

Because the prophet spoke on God's behalf, his words were to be taken as the final authority. For this reason, strict measures were taken to ensure that false prophets would not arise among the people to lead them away from the Lord. The simple test of a true prophet was whether his words came true. This suggests that an important role of the prophet was 'foretelling' the future.⁴¹

In the last verses of Deuteronomy, the author echoes the promise of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18 and looks ahead to a single, messianic figure who will fulfill this promise.

Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (Dt. 34:10–12).

At Peter's second sermon in Jerusalem at Pentecost, he quoted Deuteronomy 18:18 recorded in Acts 3:22–24 and applied it to Jesus Christ.

Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and *his* successors onward, also announced these days (Act 3:22–24).

Jesus himself referred to Moses, the role of the prophet, and his own ministry in John 5:46: "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." To be

⁴¹ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 456.

“blameless” (τέλειος) means to be faithful to God’s word through Jesus and through the biblical prophets, who spoke of Jesus Christ, *the Prophet*.⁴²

1 Chronicles 28:9 (LXX) – “Complete” (τέλειος)

Prior to King David’s death, in his final words to the nation, he gave a word of biblical wisdom and instruction to his son Solomon that goes right to the heart of the meaning of “τέλειος.” Like, the other examples from the LXX, it fits in with the literary structure and message of Colossians.

As for you, my son Solomon, know [γινώσκω] the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole [τέλειος] heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever (1 Chron. 28:9).

In the literary context of 1 Chronicles 28 “τέλειος” means to serve God with a whole heart and a willing mind. Serving God with a whole heart and a willing mind comes from experientially knowing God in a personal relationship and continually seeking him.

Summary of Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis of “Complete” – (τέλειος)

A survey of Scripture affirms the lofty role that the term “τέλειος” holds in Scripture. The word is used to describe an attribute of God; God is “τέλειος” or “perfect”

⁴² “The New Testament writers take great pains to show that Jesus was the prophet promised to Moses. Jesus was, in fact, a new Moses. The Gospel of Matthew presents him as God’s spokesman, who, like Moses, gave God’s word to his people on a mountain (Matt. 5–7). Like Moses, menacing events preceded Jesus’ birth (Ex. 1:22; Matt. 2:16), and he had to remain in Egypt awaiting the time of his entry into the land (Ex. 2; Matt. 2:13).

Moses spent forty years in the desert, and Jesus spent forty days. Moses crossed the Red Sea as his baptism in preparation for his ministry (1 Cor. 10: 1–2); Jesus crossed through the Jordan River as his baptism in preparation for this ministry (Matt. 3:13–17). During Moses’ ministry, the birth of Jesus was predicted by a wise man from the east, the seer Balaam, who saw the coming of Christ as a ‘star [coming] out of Jacob’ (Num. 24:17). At the birth of Jesus, wise men came from the east, ‘who saw his star in the east and [came] to worship him’ (Matt. 2:1–2).

In John’s Gospel, the woman at the well recognized Jesus as a prophet (John 4:19) and concluded he was the Messiah (4:25), a statement that Jesus confirmed (4:26; cf. also 6:14; 7:40). It is little wonder then, that in the book of Revelation, John also identifies Jesus as the promised prophet who reveals to his churches ‘what will take place later’ (Rev. 1:19; cf. Matt. 24:25).” Sailhamer, *Christian Theology*, 65.

(Mt. 5:48). He in turn, wants his children to imitate his perfection and to be “perfect” (Mt. 5:48). The adjective also describes God’s righteous standard necessary to gain eternal life, something that is impossible for man and possible only with God (Mt. 19:21). The term also has a prominent role in the LXX.

The word refers to the righteous and “blameless” (τέλειος) life that Noah lived *walking with God* by faith in the midst of a wicked generation (Gen. 6:5–9). The word describes the condition of the “unblemished” (τέλειος) lamb that was sacrificed and whose blood was placed on the doorposts and lintel of the Hebrew homes that saved the firstborn of all of boys and livestock in Egypt (Ex. 12:5).

Moses commanded the Israelites to be “blameless” (τέλειος) before God as he introduced the office of the prophet. It was faithfulness to the words of the prophets that revealed “blameless” character in Israel (Dt. 18:13). Another nuance to the term is revealed in David’s last words to the nation of Israel when he turns to his son, Solomon, and exhorts him to serve the Lord with a “whole” (τέλειος) heart and a willing mind, which comes from knowing God in a personal relationship and continuing to seek after him. The discussion about the goal of proclamation in Colossians 1:28 turns now to an analysis of the Pauline phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ).

The Letter to the Colossians – “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ)

The phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ) is a distinctive Pauline phrase occurring more than eighty times in his letters and over 160 times in various forms in Paul’s literature.⁴³ The spiritual position “in Christ” is an element of the believer’s “union with Christ.” Grudem defines “union with Christ” as a phrase used to “summarize several different

⁴³ Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 49; Vaughan, *Colossians*, 172–173.

relationships between believers and Christ through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation. These relationships include the fact that we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ.”⁴⁴

To be “in Christ” refers to the believer’s spiritual position, his personal and experiential relationship with the person and work of Jesus Christ, and his new identity.

The phrase in different forms is a distinctive feature of Colossians.

“faithful brethren in Christ” (1:2)
πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ

“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (1:14)
ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν

“in Him all things all things were created” (1:16)
ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα

“in Him all things hold together” (1:17)
τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν

“all the fullness to dwell in Him” (1:19)
ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3)
ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (2:9)
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς

“in Him you have been made complete” (2:10)
ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι

“in Him you were also circumcised” (2:11)
Ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετμήθητε

“buried with [in] Him” (2:12)
συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν

“raised up with [in] Him” (2:12)
ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε

⁴⁴ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 840.

“alive together with Him” (2:13)
 συνεζωοποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ

“having triumphed over them in Him” (2:15)
 θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ

“raised up with Christ” (3:1)
συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ

“your life is hidden with Christ in God” (3:3)
 ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ

“revealed with Him in glory” (3:4)
 ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ

The phrase “in Christ” refers to a variety of relationships in Scripture and in Colossians. It reflects the Christian’s position, relationship, and identity. The term speaks of a new position “in Christ.” Believers are “in Christ” in whom “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). In Adam all mankind dies; so also “in Christ” all mankind are made alive (1 Cor. 15:22). Through the sin of Adam condemnation came to all men (Rom. 5:18a). Through Christ there resulted in justification of life to all men (Rom. 5:18b). The term emphasizes the new spiritual position of believers in the sense that they are “united with Christ, joined to him as closely as limbs are joined to the body of which they are a part.”⁴⁵

In addition, the term speaks of a personal relationship “with Christ” in a shared, intimate, spiritual bond with the living Lord and with fellow members in the body of Christ. In union with Christ “represents the formula frequently used by Paul to describe the intimate relationship which exists between Christians and their Lord; this is a corporate reality, a relationship that exists between people who have a common loyalty

⁴⁵ Vaughan, *Colossians*, 173.

and devotion to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.⁴⁶ Believers are incorporated into the body of Christ, in union with the risen Lord, and in fellowship with him.⁴⁷ Christians have died to their old self and their lives are “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). They have been “buried with Him” (Col. 2:12), “raised up with Him” (Col. 3:1), are “alive together with Him” (Col. 2:13) and will be “revealed with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Jesus Christ is the believer’s “life” (Col. 3:4).

The phrase also describes a new identity – *Christian* (Χριστιανός). The word “Christian” or “Christians” is used three times in Scripture.⁴⁸ Christians are “born-again” as a “new creation” in Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Cor. 5:17). The old things have passed away and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17). McKnight says, all of Paul’s theology is wrapped up in this one phrase – “in Christ.”⁴⁹

One can say that all of Paul’s theology is contained in this expression, and within that very circle of ‘in Christ’ we can locate even the doctrine of justification. If one counts all the letters attributed to Paul, the expression occurs eighty-three times, but this number expands considerably when we also consider the similar expressions ‘in the Lord,’ ‘with Christ,’ ‘into Christ,’ and ‘through Christ.’ This expression ‘in Christ’ includes both objective and the subjective dimensions. As for the objective, ‘in Christ’ we are justified (Rom. 3:24), we have eternal life (6:23), freedom (8:2), new-creation life (8:39), grace (1 Cor. 1:4), resurrection life (15:22), removal of the veil (2 Cor. 3:14), reconciliation (5:19), expansion...to include Gentiles in the church (Gal. 3:14; 5:6), a renewed mind (Phil. 2:5), and abundant riches (4:19). As for the subjective, we reckon ourselves dead in Christ (Rom. 6:11), there is no condemnation (8:1), we are a one-body people (12:5; Gal. 3:28), we labor with others in Christ (Rom. 16:3), we are sanctified in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2), we enter into new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), we find freedom in Christ (Gal. 2:4) – that is, the

⁴⁶ Bratcher and Nida, *A Translators Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 5.

⁴⁷ Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, 9.

⁴⁸ Acts 11:26; 26:29; 1 Peter 4:16.

⁴⁹ McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 85.

churches are all ‘in Christ’ (1:22).⁵⁰ It expands: in Col. 1:16 all things were created ‘in Christ.’ In summary, ‘Paul’s perception of his whole life as a Christian, its source, its identity, and its responsibilities, could be summed up in these phrases.’⁵¹

This expression, then, is the inaugurated eschatological reality into which the Christian has been placed, and it also evokes the new-creation realities that a person discovers. Christ both indwells the believer (Gal. 2:19–20), and the believer dwells ‘in Christ.’⁵²

To be “in Christ” means to belong to Christ, to be a member of his body, and to participant in the new creation inaugurated through his death, resurrection, ascension, and return. Believer’s “in Christ” have a new spiritual position, a new personal and experiential relationship, and a new identity. Paul emphatically and enthusiastically exhorted the Colossians to proclaim Jesus Christ on a broad scale to Jewish and Gentile people, and to admonish and teach them through biblical, Christ-centered instruction, with the perceived, intentional goal of presenting every Jewish and Gentile person “complete in Christ” (Col. 1:28e).

Summary of Inner-Textual and Inter-Textual Analysis “Present Every Man Complete in Christ” in Colossians 1:28

Paul enthusiastically exhorted the Colossians to view their lives in relationship to God the Father through the person and work of God the Son, Jesus Christ. Together, in one perfect union (יהוה – Dt. 6:4), God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, has the sovereign, preeminent, and initiatory role in creation, redemption, and the new creation.

⁵⁰ Dunn highlights how other expressions, such as “in the Lord,” contain similar themes, 49–50.

⁵¹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 399.

⁵² McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 85–86.

God alone is Creator, Redeemer, Justifier, Sanctifier, Glorifier, and King. God is “continually involved with all created things in such a way that he: (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes.”⁵³ It is “in Him [God]” that mankind lives and moves and “exists” (ἔσμεν – Acts 17:28). God is the “living immanent Principle” of mankind and all creation.⁵⁴

In Colossians, Paul acknowledges that it is “by the will of God” that he is an “apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). God is the one to whom thanks are given (1:3, 12; 3:17). It is God who has qualified the Colossians to “share in the inheritance of the saints in light” and “rescued” them from the domain of darkness and transferred them to Christ’s kingdom (1:12–13).

Paul exalts the preeminent role of God the Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” and the “firstborn of all creation” (1:15). He is the “Head” of the church, and the “firstborn from the dead” (1:18). One day he will have “first place in everything” (1:18). In Christ, all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form (1:19; 2:9). In union with the finished work of Jesus Christ in his death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return, believers, in Christ, have been “made complete” (2:10).

In 1:28e, Paul speaks highly of the important role that Christians have in fulfilling the purposes of God in Christ. In all of God’s initiatory, providential and sovereign acts, God works through human beings. Mankind, created in the image and likeness of God, although fallen, has the covenant promises “in Christ” for salvation, sanctification, and

⁵³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 315.

⁵⁴ Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, *Acts*, vol. 3, 126.

glorification. Mankind also has the opportunity, the responsibility, the empowerment, and the significance in God's design to play an under-shepherding role in salvation through *proclamation*, in sanctification through *admonishing* and *teaching*, and in glorification through *presenting* every man before God spiritually mature and fulfilled in Christ. The goal of proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28 is for *every* Christian to be intentionally, diligently, and relationally involved in evangelism and discipleship to fulfill their role in presenting "every man" spiritually mature and "complete in Christ."

A final component in understanding the goal for proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28 is centered around Paul's imperative command in Colossians 2:6: "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him." In this instruction, Paul continued a biblical, theological, practical, and compositional theme introduced in 1:10 and that he continued to develop in 3:7 and 4:5 to accomplish the goal of spiritual maturity in the lives of the Colossians and all Christians.

Inner-textual and Inter-textual Analysis "Walk in Him" (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε)

The term "walk" is used 216 times in Scripture. The verb has two meanings in the Bible. The first is in a literal sense as one going along and moving about on foot. However, the word is more often used in Scripture in a metaphorical sense to refer to a person's conduct or way of life.⁵⁵

Paul used the term "walk" (περιπατέω) four times in his letter: (1) to express his prayer request and heartfelt desire for the Colossians (1:10); (2) to instruct the Colossians on how to fulfill his prayer request and heartfelt desire (2:6); (3) to remind the Colossians

⁵⁵ Wesley L. Gerig, *Baker Theological Dictionary*, s.v. "walk."

of how they once lived before Christ (3:7); and (4) to instruct the Colossians how to conduct themselves among those who do not know Christ (4:5).

“walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (1:10)
περιπατήσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου

“in Him walk” (2:6, lit. trans.)
 ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε

“you also once walked” (3:7)
 ὑμεῖς περιεπατήσατέ ποτε

“in wisdom walk” (4:5, lit. trans.)
 Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε

The biblical, theological, practical, and compositional theme introduced by the word “walk” (περιπατέω) reveals the teaching and instructional path that leads to spiritual maturity in the letter to the Colossians. Paul expresses the purpose for his prayer and ministry in the introduction to the letter: “so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (1:10). Throughout the rest of the introduction, the body of the letter, and the conclusion, Paul goes about proclaiming Christ, and teaching and admonishing with Christ-centered instruction, with the goal of presenting the Colossians “complete in Christ.” Paul composed the emphatic instruction from Colossians 1:28 into the theological and literary structure of his letter.

Walk – הִלֵּךְ / περιπατέω

As with the themes of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, the principle of walking with God has a wealth of Hebrew and Jewish tradition in Scripture.⁵⁶ From the

⁵⁶ Genesis 2:9; Exodus 31:3; 35:31; Ps. 119:66; Proverbs 1:7; Exodus 28:3; Deuteronomy 4:6; 34:9; Ps. 49:3; 51:6; Isaiah 11:2; 33:6; 53:11; Nehemiah 8:2; 10:28. See also: Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008); W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements of Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948).

beginning of the Abrahamic covenant, the metaphor for “walk” describes a personal relationship with God and faithfulness.

The Abrahamic Covenant

The word “walk” (περιπατέω) is a translation of the Hebrew word *halak* (הלך). The principle of walking with God and walking in his ways was introduced in Genesis 17:1–2 in the Abrahamic covenant narrative (Gen. 12–22).

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk (הלך) before Me and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly” (Gen. 17:1).

Sailhamer says, as important as the Noahic covenant is for establishing the outside perimeters of God’s plan of salvation, the Abrahamic covenant provides the focus.⁵⁷

In it [the Abrahamic covenant] God takes the necessary steps to restore all humanity to himself. He promises to restore his original blessing to all humanity through the physical seed of Abraham: ‘All peoples on earth will be blessed through you’ (12:3). The blessing spoken of here is the blessing for which God created humanity: ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it’ (Gen. 1:28).⁵⁸

The imperative “blameless” is dependent on the preceding imperative “walk” and does not have the sense of a command, but of a “consequence” of an initial condition: “If you walk before me, you will be blameless.”⁵⁹ This portion of the Abrahamic covenant promises an exceeding number of descendants (17:2), a multitude of nations (17:4–5), abundant fruitfulness (17:6), a line of kingship (17:6), and a reaffirmation of the land promise in Genesis 15:18–21 (17:8). It is an “everlasting covenant” (17:7), the sign of which is circumcision (17:10–14), and both Abram and Sarai’s names were changed to

⁵⁷ Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*, 38.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁹ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 179.

Abraham and Sarah in the process (17:5, 15). The textual and theological relationships between Abraham and the Colossians in Genesis 17:1, 6 and Colossians 1:6, 10, and 2:6 are listed below.

Abraham – Genesis 17:1, 6

“walk before Me” (הלך)

“exceedingly fruitful” (καὶ αὐξανῶ σε σφόδρα)

The Colossians – Colossians 1:6, 10; 2:6

“walk in Him” (περιπατέω)

“bearing fruit” (καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον)

“bearing fruit” (καρποφοροῦντες)

The Colossians had a personal relationship with the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16), and they were “bearing fruit” in their lives and ministry. Paul prayed they would continue “bearing fruit” in *every* good work. To bear more fruit, he instructed them to “walk” faithfully in their relationship with Christ – “walk in Him” (Col. 2:6).

The Mosaic Covenant

Another example of walking with God is given in Exodus 16:4. God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt and provided clean water, sweet manna, and fresh meat for them on their way to Mount Sinai and the land of Israel. As a test of their faith, to see if they would “walk” in his instruction, God told them to collect only enough food for one day.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk (הלך) in My instruction (Ex. 16:4).

God told the Israelites, if they would “walk” (הלך) in his statutes and keep his commandments, he would bless them with covenant promises (Lev. 26:1–13). In addition, he said, “I will also walk among you and I will be your God, and you shall be My people” (Lev. 26:12).

Israel – Exodus 16:4

“walk in My instruction” (הלך)

Israel – Leviticus 26:3, 12–13

“walk in My statutes” (הלך)

“I will also walk among you” (הלך)

“I...made you walk erect” (הלך)

The Colossians – Colossians 2:6

“walk in Him” (περιπατέω)

The New Covenant – Israel

Paul was instructing the Colossians to “walk” in Christ and in the New Covenant promises in which the Holy Spirit had endued power to fulfill. In Ezekiel 36:24–28, God says he will: (1) gather Israel from the nations where he has scattered them; (2) cleanse them from their sin; (3) give them a new heart; (4) put his Spirit within them; (5) give them new life; and (6) cause Israel to “walk” in his ways.

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to ‘walk’ (הלך) in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God (Ezek. 36:24–28).

Israel – Ezekiel 36:27

“cause you to walk in My statutes” (הלך)

The Colossians – Colossians 2:6

“walk in Him” (περιπατέω)

The New Covenant passage in Ezekiel is placed alongside the promise of the Messiah, the Son of David, who will reign as King, bring peace and blessing, and cause his people to “walk” in his ways.

My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will ‘walk’ (הלך) in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever (Ezek. 37:24–28).

Israel – Ezekiel 37:24

“they will walk in My ordinances” (הלך)

The Colossians – Colossians 2:6

“walk in Him” (περιπατέω)

The New Covenant – Israel and the Nations

The promise of the New Covenant with Israel includes all the nations walking with God and is a major theme of the prophetic literature. The promise in Isaiah 2:2–3 is so prominent in Scripture that the prophecy is quoted in both the major and minor prophets (Micah 4:1–2).⁶⁰

Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may ‘walk’ (הלך) in His paths.’ For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2–3).

Israel & the Nations – Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:1–2

“all the nations” (לְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם)

“we may walk in His paths” (הלך)

The Colossians – Colossians 2:6

“the Gentiles” (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν)

“walk in Him” (περιπατέω)

⁶⁰ The terms “major” and “minor” prophets have nothing to do with the importance of their content but refer to the length of their composition. The twelve minor prophets are shorter works. They were often bound together and circulated in one scroll and referred to as the “Book of the Twelve.” William K. Smith, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Hosea.”

One of the prominent biblical, theological, practical, and compositional themes in Scripture on both a macro-structural and micro-structural level is to “walk” with God. In Genesis 5:21–24, the author singled out Enoch and repeated the phrase, “Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5:22, 24). Repetition is important in biblical narrative and Moses is clear that Enoch escaped death because he “walked with God” (הלך).⁶¹ The phrase “walked with God” describes a “life of faithfulness and obedience to God.”⁶² Noah is described as “a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9). Now, Paul was exhorting the Colossians, who were enjoying the blessings of the New Covenant Exodus in Messiah Jesus, to fulfill a New Covenant promise – “in Him walk” (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε – Col. 2:6).

Colossians 1:10 – “Walk” (περιπατήσαι)

Colossians 1:9–14 is Paul’s prayer for the Colossians. Paul asked for the Colossians to “be filled with the knowledge of His [God’s] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9e). The purpose for his prayer is introduced with the infinitive of purpose, “walk,” (περιπατήσαι): “so that you will ‘walk’ in a manner worthy of the Lord” (1:10a). Paul’s description of walking in a manner worthy of the Lord begins with a prepositional phrase that parallels the walk: “to please *Him* in all respects” (1:10a). Walking with the Lord means to “please” God in all things. Paul composes a series of four participles to express actions that reflect behavior (the walk) “worthy of the Lord.”

⁶¹ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 108.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 108.

“bearing fruit in every good work” (1:10b)
 ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες

“increasing in the knowledge of God” (1:10c)
 αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ

“strengthened with all power” (1:11a)
 ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι

“giving thanks to the Father” (1:12a)
 εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ

The Colossians were constantly bearing fruit and it was increasing in their lives (1:6b). Paul understood that “bearing fruit” was the result of hearing, understanding, and obeying the word of God (1:5b; 1:6d).

“heard in the word of truth, the gospel” (1:5b)
 προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

“constantly bearing fruit and increasing” (1:6b)
 καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον
 “heard and understood the grace of God in truth” (1:6d)
 ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ

From his prayer (1:9–14), Paul transitioned into the first christological section addressing the person and work of Jesus Christ (1:15–20), followed by a section on practical application (1:21–23). The practical application is followed by a description of his own personal ministry and the ministry of the church (1:24–2:3).

Colossians 2:3 provides further christological insight into the nature of Jesus Christ and a textual link to Paul’s prayer: “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). Paul was portraying Jesus Christ as the embodiment of all wisdom and knowledge. The only one through whom the Colossians could understand God’s divine will and plan revealed in Scripture. In Paul’s biblical theology, to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will and all spiritual understanding meant to be filled *with* Christ and walking *in* Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Colossians

“filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual understanding” (1:9e)

πληρωθήτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ

“increasing in the knowledge of God” (1:10c)
αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ

The Nature of Jesus Christ

“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3)

ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοί

Paul moved from the unique nature and status of Christ (2:3) to the persuasive and deceptive false teachers and their doctrine (2:4). Although he was not physically with them, Paul was with them “in spirit.” He rejoiced to see their “good discipline” and the “stability of their faith in Christ” (2:5).

Colossians 2:6 – “In Him Walk” (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε)

Colossians 2:6–7 is an introduction to Paul’s defense of the gospel as he focused on the problems the church was facing from false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice (2:6–3:4). The introduction to the defense of the gospel is followed by another theological section focusing on the person and work of Jesus Christ in 2:8–15. Practical application for Paul’s defense of the gospel and his instruction for the church, the family, the workplace, and to the lost is in Colossians 2:16–4:6. The letter ends with personal instruction and a final greeting in Colossians 4:7–18.

Paul was writing to “saints and fellow brethren in Christ” (1:2). His pastoral heart is reflected in his love and concern for the Colossians and the church at large. He wanted the Colossians to know (εἰδέναι) of his ongoing struggle for them, for the Laodiceans, and for all those who had not met him in person (2:1).

Paul wanted their hearts to be “encouraged” and “knit together in love” and for them to attain the enormous “wealth” that comes from fully understanding both God and his will (2:2). This understanding comes from “a true knowledge of God’s mystery –

Christ *Himself* (2:2). The kind of encouragement, unity, knowledge, and understanding that Paul desires would only come through the proclamation of Christ, and through Christ-centered, biblical admonishing and teaching. For in Christ (ἐν ᾧ) are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3).

In order to fulfill his desire for their spiritual growth and for further explanation of the person and work of Jesus Christ, Paul transitioned to his argument and reason for writing with the clause, “I say this” (Τοῦτο λέγω, ἵνα – 2:4a).

“I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument”
(Col. 2:4).

What Paul had told them about the nature and stature of Christ was so that no one would “delude” them with “persuasive argument” (2:3–4b).

Paul, therefore, commanded the church, “as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* ‘walk in Him’” (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε – 2:6). He wanted the Lordship of Christ and their union with Christ to be lived out through ongoing, continuous discipleship and spiritual growth.

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him, having been firmly rooted *and now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and* overflowing with gratitude (Col. 2:6–7).

Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord (1:10), walking in Christ (2:6), and walking in wisdom toward non-believers (4:5) are contrasted with the way in which the Colossians used to walk (περιπατήσατέ – 3:7); that walk is described as walking in immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (3:5–7).

Walk in Christ

“so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (1:10)

περιπατήσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου

“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (2:6)

Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε

“Conduct yourselves (lit: in wisdom walk) with wisdom toward outsiders” (4:5)

Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε

Walk Before Christ

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them (3:5–7).

The biblical and theological instruction to “walk” in Christ is presented in 2:8–15. The deity and humanity of Christ in the incarnation translated into spiritual transformation for the Colossians (2:9).

“For in Him all the fullness [τὸ πλήρωμα] of Deity dwells in bodily form” (2:9)

“and in Him you have been made complete [πεπληρωμένοι]” (2:10a)

Paul instructed the Colossians to “walk” in Christ because they were “made complete” in Christ. They were instructed to walk in the reality of the fullness of their position “in Christ.”

Personal Relationships

The Colossian’s “walk” in Christ was not only designed to fend off false teachers (2:8), but it was also designed to bear fruit in every relationship of their lives (3:17): in their personal lives (3:1–7; 4:2–4), in their relationships within the church (3:8–16), in their relationships within the family (3:18–21), in their relationships within the workplace (3:22–4:1), and in their relationships among the lost community (4:5–6).

Colossians 3:7 – “In Them You Also Once Walked” (ἐν οἷς ὑμεῖς περιεπατήσατέ ποτε)

Paul contrasted walking in a manner worthy of the Lord (1:10) and walking in Christ (2:6) with how the Colossians walked before their life in Christ (3:5–7). He began a new stage in his discourse with the inferential conjunction “οὖν” translated “therefore” to deduce the preceding section (3:1–4).⁶³

The Colossians had been “raised up with Christ” (3:1). They had “died” and their life was now “hidden with Christ in God” (3:3). One day, at Christ’s return, they would be “revealed with Him in glory” (3:4). Paul instructed them, therefore, to consider the members of their earthly body as “dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed” (3:5). Because of man’s sin, God’s wrath would one day come upon sinners – “the sons of disobedience” (3:6).⁶⁴

Lay aside the old self (ἀπεκδύομαι)

Paul reminded the Colossians, before Christ, they too once lived in those very same sins (ἐξῆτε ἐν τούτοις). This is the second time he has referenced their life before

⁶³ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 673.

⁶⁴ Colossians 3:6: “[ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας] ([upon the sons of disobedience]) {C} – It is extremely difficult to decide whether the words ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας were added in most witnesses by copyists who remembered these words in Eph 5.6 (where no manuscript omits the words), or whether these words are absent in the manuscripts listed because a copyist accidentally skipped over them. For the following reasons, the longer reading seems to be original: (a) it has very widespread manuscript support; (b) the following words ἐν οἷς (among whom [masculine]) in v.7 seem to require the presence of ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας; and (c) the words καὶ ὑμεῖς (you [plural] also) in v.7 seem to assume a previous mention of unbelieving Gentiles. But since there is significant manuscript support for the omission of the longer reading. The words have been placed within brackets to indicate uncertainty about the original text.

If the longer reading is followed. A literal translation of ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας may have no clear meaning in some languages. This expression ‘reflects Hebrew language usage’ (Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, p.405) and means ‘disobedient persons.’ Dunn (*The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, p.217) further notes that in this context, disobedience is disobedience to God. This expression may be translated ‘those who do not obey him’ (TEV) or ‘those who oppose him’ (FC), or ‘those who are disobedient’ (NRSV).

Several translations (RSV, NIV, REB, TOB) follow the shorter reading. If this reading is followed, then the relative pronoun οἷς in the phrase ἐν οἷς in v. 7 will be neuter (not masculine) and must be translated as ‘among which,’ referring to the sins listed in v.5.” Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, 417–418.

Christ (1:21). He was now naming some of their “evil deeds” first mentioned in 1:21. The description of the Colossian’s state of being before Christ, and the state of all men before Christ, is portrayed as a *walk* and a *life*.

“alienated” (1:21b)

“hostile in mind” (1:21c)

“*engaged* in evil deeds” (1:21d)

“immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which amounts to idolatry” (3:5)

“in them you also once walked” (περιεπατήσατέ – 3:7a)

“when you were living in them” (ἐζήτε – 3:7b)

The radical change of direction and eternal transformation in the lives of the Colossians are signaled in both 1:22 and 3:8 by what Dunn calls a “genuine Paulinism” to express the moment of “divine reversal” (νυνὶ δὲ – but now).⁶⁵

Paul instructed them to put their sin aside (ἀποτίθημι) and to rid themselves of all anger, wrath, malice, slander *and* abusive speech (2:8). The same way in which Christ “disarmed” or “stripped” (ἀπεκδύομαι) the rulers and authorities of their power (2:15), is the same way Paul instructed the Colossians are to lay aside, disarm or strip off (ἀπεκδύομαι) the old man with his evil practices (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ).

The “old self” is literally “the old man” (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον) and is the old unregenerate self or nature. Corresponding to the stripping off the “old man” is putting on

⁶⁵ Romans 3:21; 6:22; 7:6; 11:30; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Philemon 11; Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 9:26. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 107.

the “new man.” The metaphor is one of *laying aside* old clothing and *putting on* new clothing.⁶⁶

“But now you also put them all aside” (3:8)

νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόθεσθε

“since you laid aside the old self” (lit. old man – 3:9)

ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον

“put on the new self” (3:10)

ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον

All three verbs are in the reflexive middle voice in which “the subject is involved in the action” and “refers the result of the action directly to the subject.”⁶⁷ The old self is “like a dirty, worn-out garment that is stripped from the body and thrown away. The new self that reflects the new regenerate nature is like a new suit of clothing that one puts on and wears.”⁶⁸

Put on the new self (ἐνδύω)

The term that Paul used to express the action for putting on the “new” man is the word “ἐνδύω.” The verb means “to put on clothes, to cloth, or to dress.”⁶⁹ Like other words in Pauline literature, “ἐνδύω” has a rich biblical theology and personal application.

The first example of God’s grace in judgment is Genesis 3:21. Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden and they were aware of their nakedness (Gen. 3:7). The Lord God “made garments of skin” for Adam and Eve and he “clothed” (ἐνδύω) them

⁶⁶ Vaughan, *Colossians*, 213.

⁶⁷ Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 80.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, s.v. “ἐνδύω.”

(Gen. 3:21). Although it is not in the text, there may be “some hint of sacrificial slaying of the animals in making these garments” to cover their nakedness (עִירָם).⁷⁰

In Exodus the word is used to express the action taken to cloth (ἐνδύω) the priests in “fine linen” to cover their nakedness (הַיָּרֵךְ), and to consecrate them before entering God’s presence to serve in the tabernacle (Ex. 28:40–43). This was true in Leviticus 16:24 when the high priest put on (ἐνδύω) fine linen, entered the tabernacle, and made atonement for himself, his family, and for the nation of Israel.

In Psalms the Lord God reigns in heaven and he is clothed (ἐνδύω) with splendor, majesty, and strength (Pss. 92:1; 103:1). When Christ returns the armies of heaven will return with him clothed (ἐνδύω) in fine white linen (Rev. 19:14).

Christians are a born-again new creation humanity. They are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and they are living in the presence of God “in Christ” as a New Covenant priesthood. New covenant priests are imputed with Christ’s righteousness and clothed in Christ’s righteousness by faith. Paul pointed to the “ongoing participation of believers as they become what they already are”⁷¹ – saints of God in Christ. He instructed them to “put on” (ἐνδύω) the identity they already possessed in Christ.

Now, as “saints” (Col. 1:2) who had been “chosen of God, holy and beloved” (Col. 4:12), and whose lives were “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3), Paul instructed the Colossians to “put on [ἐνδύω] the new self” who was being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him in which there was no distinction between “Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all” (3:10–11).

⁷⁰ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 94.

⁷¹ Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 226.

Colossians 3:10 “Being Renewed to a True Knowledge” (τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν)

Paul instructed the Colossians to “put on the new self” (ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον) who was being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.” The “new self” is the new regenerate man with the new nature. He is living in union with Christ; instructed to “put on” the “new” man; and to “walk” in Christ.

The new man with the new nature himself is being “renewed” (ἀνακαινῶω) to a “true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν). Whereas the Christian is involved in *putting off* the old man and *putting on* the new man, the present participle “being renewed” is a passive voice in which the Christian is “receiving the action of the verb.”⁷² The new man is constantly in a process of being renewed by God. Paul used the same word and principle in 2 Corinthians 4:16: “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed [ἀνακαινῶω] day by day.”

The “renewing” of the new man is to a “true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.” The word translated “true knowledge” is the Greek word “ἐπίγνωσις” which conveys the idea of “definite information, a degree of thoroughness, and competence.”⁷³ The word is used twenty times in the New Testament, sixteen times by Paul, and refers to the knowledge of God in Christ.⁷⁴ Paul used the term four times in Colossians.

“that you may be filled with the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1:9)

“increasing in the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of God” (1:10)

⁷² Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, 78.

⁷³ Louw and Nida, s.v. “ἐπίγνωσις.”

⁷⁴ BDAG, s.v. “ἐπίγνωσις.”

“all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, *resulting* in a true knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of God’s mystery, *that is*, Christ *Himself*” (2:2)

“a true knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) according to the image of the One who created him (3:10)

Like Colossians 1:15–18, Colossians 3:10 has inter-textual relationships, allusions and echoes with the creation, the new creation, and the triune God in establishing and fulfilling covenant promises in Christ. Paul wrote how God was fulfilling his covenant promises to the Colossians and to all mankind to restore the blessings of life and fellowship lost in Eden.

Genesis and Deuteronomy

“In the beginning God created...
and the Spirit of God hovered over the deep
(Gen. 1:1–2)
בְּרֵאשִׁית – “In the first-born Son”
אֱלֹהִים – “God”
רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים – “the Spirit of God”

Colossians 3

“being renewed” (Col. 3:10)
τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον

Genesis and Deuteronomy

“Let Us make...” (Gen. 1:26)
נַעֲשֶׂה

Colossians 3

“God created man in His own image” (Gen. 1:27)
κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ ἐποίησεν αὐτόν

“image of the One who created him”
(Col. 3:10)
κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν

“knowledge” (Gen. 2:9, 17)
γινώσκω

“true knowledge” (Col. 3:10)
ἐπίγνωσις

“clothed them” (Gen. 3:21)
ἐνδύω

“put on” (Col. 3:10)
ἐνδύω

“the tree of life” (Gen. 3:22)
ζωή

“Christ, who is our life” (Col. 3:4)
ζωή

“live forever” (Gen. 3:22)
ζήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα

“revealed in glory” (Col. 3:4)
ἐν δόξῃ

“you are a holy people” (Dt. 7:6)
λαὸς ἅγιος

“holy” (Col. 3:12)
ἅγιοι

“the LORD your God loves you” (Dt. 23:5)
 ἠγάπησέν σε κύριος ὁ θεός σου

“beloved” (Col. 3:12)
 ἠγαπημένοι

“God has chosen you” (Dt. 7:6)
 προεἶλατο κύριος ὁ θεός σου

“those who have been chosen of God”
 (Col. 3:12) ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ

What Paul asked for in his prayer for the Colossians (1:9–10) and what he fought for in his ministry (2:2–3) was being fulfilled by the divine initiative and agency of God and by human responsibility and faith in Christ.

The Triune God in Creation and the New Creation

The triune nature of God and the textual relationship between God the Father and God the Son in creation and the new creation in Colossians 1:15–18 and Genesis 1:1–2 was demonstrated in chapter two of the research. The textual relationship between the triune God in creation and the new creation is now shown in Colossians 3 and Genesis and Deuteronomy.

The triune God is sovereign in creation and in the creation of mankind in his own image male and female (Gen. 1:1–2; 1:26–27). The triune God was also sovereign in the creation and the new creation of mankind in the image of Christ (Col. 3:10). The “image of the One who created him” (Col. 3:10) refers to the triune “God” who created “man” in his own “image” (Gen. 1:1–2; 26–27). Mankind is created *in* the “image of God” male and female (Gen. 1:27; Col. 3:10).

As the third member of the triune God, God the Holy Spirit was also active in the creation, the creation of man, and in the new creation (Gen. 1:1–2; 26–27; Col. 3:10). The “Spirit of God” was said to be “hovering over the face of the waters” in Genesis 1:2b.⁷⁵ The work of the “Spirit of God” was also active in building the tabernacle, which is

⁷⁵ Gen. 1:2b: וַיִּרְיַם אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵם עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם.

viewed compositionally as the means of restoring mankind's lost fellowship with God in Eden through the New Covenant in Christ.⁷⁶ In both the creation account (Gen. 1–2) and the building of the tabernacle (Ex. 25–30) the work of God was accomplished by the “Spirit of God.”⁷⁷ “As God did his ‘work’ (מְלָאכָה) of creation by means of the ‘Spirit of God’ (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים), so Israel was to do their ‘work’ by means of the ‘Spirit of God.’ The theme of the work of the “Spirit of God” is part of the Pentateuch’s focus on the New Covenant.”⁷⁸

These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb (Dt. 29:1).

You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, *even* all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today, in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today (Dt. 29:10–15 NAU).

⁷⁶ “The instructions for the work of building the tabernacle are written in such a way that they provide an interesting parallel to God’s own work of creation recorded in Genesis 1. Just as the Creation narrative portrayed the heavens and earth as the arena in which God would have fellowship with humans, so here the tabernacle is pictured as the means of restoring humanity’s lost fellowship with God. Thus, the account of Creation in Genesis 1–2 and the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–30 have several significant similarities.”

“There is a lesson to be learned from this mystery. That is, the fact that the NT writers explain many of the tabernacle’s parts as ‘shadows’ of the reality revealed in Christ (e.g., Heb 9:5) is in keeping with the purpose of these chapters. One could say that these chapters await just the sort of spiritual explanation that the NT gives them. Without such an exposition, their sense would remain uncertain. The NT sees the tabernacle and the service associated with it in these texts as a picture of the work of Christ (Jn. 2:19–21; Heb 8:2; 9:11–12), of the individual believer (1 Cor. 6:19), and of the church (1 Tim. 3:15; Heb 3:6; 10:21).” Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 298–300.

⁷⁷ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 55–56.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 56. Also see, Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 471–475.

Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live (Dt. 30:6).

Paul developed the ministry of the “Spirit of God” in the life of the believer through the “work” of spiritual renewal and regeneration promised in the New Covenant.

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing [ἀνακαίνωσις] by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life (Tit. 3:5–7).

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing [ἀνακαίνωσις] of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom 12:2).

The “Spirit of God” is involved in fulfilling the work and the will of God in the creation and the new creation. Paul said, the “Spirit of God” was renewing the believer “to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Col. 3:10). God the Holy Spirit is actively working in communion with God the Father and God the Son to reverse the effect of the Fall in Genesis 3 and to call out a people for his own possession (Tit. 2:11–14).

Knowledge – ἐπίγνωσις and γινώσκω

Of all the fruit bearing trees in the garden of Eden, only “the tree of life” and “the tree of the knowledge [γνώστὸς] of good and evil” were identified by name (Gen. 2:9). The first time God “commanded” man in Scripture was in Genesis 2:16–17 when he commanded the man, saying: “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge [γνώστὸς] of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

In his temptation, the serpent said, “surely you will not die,” for God knows (οἶδα) that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing [γινώσκω] good from evil” (Gen. 3:4–5). Eve saw the fruit of “the tree of the knowledge [γνώστός] of good and evil” was “good for food,” a “delight to the eyes,” and “desirable to make *one* ‘wise’” (לִפְנֵי); in other words, to give her knowledge, understanding and insight. The temptation and sin of Adam and Eve are viewed as a quest for knowledge and “wisdom” apart from God.⁷⁹ “While to our modern age such a prospect may seem desirable, to the author of Genesis it is the worst fate that could have befallen humankind, for only God knows [οἶδα] what is good for humanity.”⁸⁰ When Adam’s eyes were opened, it was not the “good” that he saw, but it was the knowledge [γινώσκω] of his nakedness, which God in his grace “clothed” (ἐνδύω) with garments of animal skin (Gen. 3:7, 21).⁸¹

Eve’s quest was to “be like God, knowing [γινώσκω] good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). “The irony lies in the fact that in their creation they were already ‘like God’; they had been created ‘in his image.’”⁸² Paul wrote, the believer is “being renewed to a ‘true knowledge’ according to the image of the One who created him” (Col. 3:10). The “true knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) to which the Holy Spirit is renewing the believer is to a “true knowledge” of God. The triune God has reversed the curse of sin and death inaugurated in the garden of Eden through the new creation in Christ. As part of the new creation, the triune God is also restoring the image of God in man to the image of Jesus Christ.

⁷⁹ Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 86.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 86.

Renewed – ἀνακατινῶω

The Christian is now “being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image to the One who created him” (Col. 3:10). The “image of the One who created” man is the incarnate Son of God Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ *is* the “image of the invisible God” in whom are “hidden all the treasures of ‘wisdom and knowledge’” (τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως – Col. 1:15; 2:3). The incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, is the image of God and the embodiment of knowledge to which believers are now being renewed. Paul was proclaiming Christ, and admonishing and teaching the Colossians in Christ, to conform them into the image of Christ, who is the perfect image of God their Creator. When God recreates mankind, it is a recreation in the image and likeness of God personified and embodied in Jesus Christ. Paul described the same process in a different way in Romans 8:29–30.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (Rom. 8:29–30).

Eternal Life – ζωή

Jesus Christ is a tree of eternal life. He is the “branch” and “shoot” from the “root” and “stem of Jesse” who “will bear fruit” (Isa. 11:1). He is the “true vine” in whom Christians must “abide” as his branches so they too can bear “fruit” (Jn. 15:5). Jesus Christ is the “Branch of the Lord” that will be “beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth *will be* the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel” (Isa. 4:2). Jesus Christ *is* the Christian’s eternal life (Col. 3:4).

Chosen of God – ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ

The phrase “chosen of God” (ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ – Col. 3:12) is used only two times in Scripture yet the biblical, theological, and practical understanding of the doctrine originates before the foundation of the world. The word “chosen” is from the Hebrew word *bachar* (בָּחַר)⁸³ and the Greek word *eklektos* (ἐκλεκτός)⁸⁴ meaning “to choose, choice, or chosen.”⁸⁵

Election encompasses the entire range of divine activity from before the foundation of the world in eternity past (Eph. 1:4), through the creation of the heavens and the earth *ex nihilo* (Gen. 1–2), to the creation of the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem in the new creation (Rev. 21–22).⁸⁶ The means by which God fulfills his election is through “covenant”⁸⁷ defined in chapter two as a “formal agreement between two or more persons, usually involving requirements, promises, and stipulations that had to be kept if the covenant were to remain firm.”⁸⁸ Those whom God chose to bring forth his election through covenant to bless all nations in the Messiah were Abraham (Gen. 12–22), Moses (Ex. 19 – Lev. 27), David (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17; Ps. 89), and Israel (Dt. 30; Jer. 31; Ezek. 36). For Jesus said, “salvation is from the Jews” (ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν – Jn. 4:22).

⁸³ BDB, s.v. “בָּחַר.”

⁸⁴ BDAG, s.v. “ἐκλεκτός.”

⁸⁵ Louw and Nida, s.v. “ἐκλεκτός.”

⁸⁶ Timothy George, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “election.”

⁸⁷ George, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “election.”

⁸⁸ Sailhamer, *Biblical Prophecy*, 35.

The first time the word “chosen” (בָּחַר) is used in relation to God’s choice is in Deuteronomy 4:37 and his election of Israel. It was because of God’s gracious love for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he chose Israel.

Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose [בָּחַר] their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power (Dt. 4:37).

The election of Israel, like that of individual believers, was not based on law or obedience, but on God’s gracious and merciful love for the patriarchs.⁸⁹ The second time the word is used is also in relation to God’s election of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:6–7.

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen [בָּחַר] you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Dt. 7:6–8).

The election of Israel and their redemption from Egypt pointed toward a greater redemption for Jewish and Gentile people by a greater Moses (Heb. 3:1–3), who offers a better covenant (Heb. 7:22), with better promises (Heb. 8:6), and a better hope (Heb. 7:19), through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Heb. 7:22). Paul said, “from the standpoint of the gospel they [Israel] are enemies ‘for your sake’ [the Nations], but from the standpoint of God’s choice [ἐκλογή] they are beloved for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:28–29).

⁸⁹ “It is not without purpose that at this point in the speech Moses refers to the patriarchs (Dt 4:37). Throughout the Pentateuch the patriarchs, particularly Abraham, are used as examples of what it means to ‘keep God’s laws’ (Gen. 26:5). Thus when the Pentateuch calls for obedience to God’s ‘statutes and commandments,’ it should be remembered that the foremost example of one who kept these ‘statutes and commandments’ is Abraham (Ge 26:5), a man who lived by faith (Gen. 15:6). Thus from the perspective of the whole Pentateuch, the reader is here being called upon to live a life like Abraham, a man of faith. Faith is thus seen as the means of ‘keeping the Law.’ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 435.

In addition to choosing the nation of Israel for his own possession and for his own purposes, God also chose (בָּחַר) individuals such as Abraham through whom all the peoples of the earth would be blessed (Neh. 9:7). He chose (בָּחַר) David to lead Israel as their king (2 Chron. 6:6). God chose (בָּחַר) the tribe of Levi to stand and serve the Lord on behalf of his people (Dt. 18:5). He chose (בָּחַר) the city of Jerusalem for himself to place his name, to manifest his presence, and to manifest his glory (1 Kgs. 11:36). He chose (בָּחַר) the Messiah himself to bring forth salvation to all the nations (Isa. 42:1). Within God's sovereign plan of election, he has chosen (ἐκλεκτός) to save a remnant of both Jewish and Gentile people who they themselves would choose (בָּחַר – Jos. 24:15) to believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 49:6; Lk. 2:32; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:1).⁹⁰

Conflating verses from the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, Paul said that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the Jewish people (περιτομή) to confirm the covenant promises to the patriarchs (τῶν πατέρων) and for the Gentiles (ἐν ἔθνεσιν) to glorify God with his people (Rom. 15:7–13).⁹¹

Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written,
 ‘THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME.’ Again he says,
 ‘REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE.’ And again, ‘PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES

⁹⁰ The relationship between the doctrine of election for Israel and the Church is beyond the scope of this research. For a biblical, theological, and practical analysis of the “two peoples of God, one way of salvation” view see, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2016), 650–679; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 577–598; James Ray Sibley. 2012. “The Blindness of Israel and the Mission of the Church.” PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 232–236; Bruce A. Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 68–97.

⁹¹ 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1; Isaiah 11:10.

PRAISE HIM.’ Again Isaiah says, ‘THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.’ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:7–13).

Paul was writing to Gentile Christians in Colossae (Col. 1:27; 4:12). He instructed them that they too were part of God’s elect; they were “chosen of God” (ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ), holy, beloved, and set apart for covenant blessing, worship, ministry, and service in Christ.

In matters of the new nature, justification by faith, membership into the body, heirs and partakers of the promises in Christ, and in growth toward spiritual maturity, there is no distinction between “Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:11).

There is a unity of the spirit and a bond of love within the “new man” in the body of Christ. The reconciliation of “all things” to God in Christ that has taken place on a cosmic level between “things on earth” and “things in heaven,” and the victory over “rulers and authorities” in the new creation, has also brought about complete unity to the new humanity in Christ (Col. 1:20; 2:15; 3:11).

Colossians 4:5 – “Walk in Wisdom Toward Outsiders” (Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω)

The last example of the “walk” in Christ is the way in which the Colossians are to relate to those who did not know Jesus Christ. Paul instructed them to “walk in wisdom toward outsiders” (Col. 4:5, ESV). In this clause, Paul illustrates the relationship between true knowledge and new creation behavior.⁹² He instructed them to “walk in wisdom” among sinful people who do not yet know Jesus Christ.

⁹² Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, 295.

Walking “in wisdom” refers to *all spiritual wisdom in Christ* (1:9; 2:3, 6). The knowledge and understanding of God in Christ is designed to relate not only to those in the church, the family, and the workplace, but it is also designed to engage outsiders with the gospel. Paul gave three examples to illustrate the wise walk: the issue of time, modes of speech, and interpersonal relationships.

The first issue as it related to outsiders was the issue of time. Walking in wisdom toward outsiders meant literally “redeeming the time” (τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι). Paul penned the same instruction to the Ephesians.

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:15–17).

Although God is eternal and timeless, he created, ordained, and appointed time (Gen. 1:1–5, 14–19; Lev. 23; Gal. 4:4). God the Father is Lord over time and God the Son is Lord of the Sabbath (Mt. 12:8). All of creation is fallen including time. Paul said, “the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16). Christians have been redeemed or purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ for God’s own possession (Tit. 2:11–14). Paul now instructed the Colossians to “redeem” or purchase “the time” by filling it with God’s wisdom and presence by walking wisely in Christ among the lost. “Redeeming the time” can also be translated “making the most of the opportunity” (Col. 4:5). With every person or situation that presents itself, God has a perfect will. Paul instructed the Colossians to “redeem the time” by walking “in wisdom,” sharing the gospel, and reflecting the presence of Christ as a New Covenant priest among the lost.

The second characteristic of walking in wisdom among the lost is the mode of speech. Paul said, “let your speech [ὁ λόγος] always be with grace, *as though* seasoned

with salt” (4:6a). The term “word” (λόγος) is used seven times in Colossians. The word serves as a bracket to frame the letter and an internal link that unites the text.

“the word [λόγος] of truth, the gospel” (1:5)

“the word [λόγος] of God” (1:25)

“the appearance [λόγος] of wisdom” (2:23)

“the word [λόγος] of Christ” (3:16)

“in word [λόγος] or deed” (3:17)

“a door for the word [λόγος]” (4:3)

“let your speech [λόγος] always be with grace” (4:6)

There is debate as to whether Paul is referring to the gospel or words in general.⁹³ The literary context appears to be a reference to the gospel specifically and to all words in general.⁹⁴

Paul asked for prayer so that a “door for the word [λόγος]” would be opened, and he would know how to speak forth the “mystery of Christ” (4:3–4). He then transitioned to the Colossians and their ministry among unbelievers (4:5–6). The term “grace” (ἐν χάριτι) refers to God’s “grace” in three other occurrences in Colossians (1:2, 6; 4:18). The next phrase, “seasoned with salt” (ἁλατι ἠρτυμένος), also has biblical and theological application. Salt was symbolic of the everlasting nature of covenant, and the offerings and allotments for the Levitical priests (Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5). Paul instructed the Colossians that Christian speech was designed to be guided by the Holy Spirit, intentionally gracious, and full of eternal, Christ-centered wisdom.

⁹³ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 329–330.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 330.

The third example to illustrate walking wisely among the lost is relationships with people. Paul said, the reason for walking in wisdom, redeeming the time, and speaking the word with grace was so the Colossians would know how to “respond to each person” (εἰδέναι πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι). In Paul’s mind, every person they met was either in need of Christ, or if they were already in Christ, in need of wise, gracious words of love, encouragement, affirmation, edification, admonishment, or instruction (1:28; 3:16; 4:6).

As New Covenant priests, the Colossians were instructed to intentionally and relationally engage every person with the message of the gospel and to reflect the person and work of Jesus Christ in word and deed (3:17). Paul described this as walking “in wisdom” toward outsiders and was characterized by being aware of the divine nature of time, gracious speech, and responding appropriately to every person. Paul proclaimed, admonished and instructed the Colossians to live as New Covenant priests in new creation relationships through a series of imperative verbs.

Imperative Verbs in Colossians – “In Him Walk” (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε)

The goal for spiritual maturity in Christ through proclamation, admonishing and teaching in Colossians is composed around the biblical, theological, practical and compositional theme of *walking* “in Christ.” The theme is communicated practically through a series of imperative verbs beginning with the command to “walk” in Christ (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε) in Colossians 2:6.

Within the body of the letter there are at least twenty, possibly thirty, imperative verbs written into the text from Colossians 2:6 to Colossians 4:18 in which Paul was

either proclaiming, admonishing, or teaching the Colossians how, to walk in Christ.⁹⁵ The Colossian's new life in Christ was designed to reflect Christ-centered, Spirit-filled, loving relationships in which they proclaimed the gospel, admonished and taught believers and unbelievers through biblical instruction, and spoke to one another as children of God. The new self was "being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created them" – the image of Jesus Christ (3:10).

Imperative Verbs that Admonish and Teach in Colossians

- "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him" (2:6)
- "Therefore, no one is to act as your judge" (2:16)
- "Let no one keep defrauding you" (2:18)
- "keep seeking the things above" (3:1)
- "Set your mind on things above" (3:2)
- "Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead" (3:5)
- "put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive language" (3:8)
- "Do not lie to one another" (3:9)
- "Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" (3:12)
- "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (3:15)
- "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (3:16)
- "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (3:18)
- "Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them" (3:19)
- "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things" (3:20)

⁹⁵ Nathan E. Han, *A Parsing Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 369–372.

- “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so they will not lose heart” (3:21)
- “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men” (3:23)
- “Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven” (4:1)
- “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*” (4:2)
- “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity” (4:5)
- “Greet the brethren who are at Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house” (4:15)
- “When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans” (4:16)
- “Say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it’” (4:17)
- “Remember my imprisonment” (4:18)

Beginning with the command to “walk” in the Lordship of Jesus Christ (ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε – 2:6), Paul admonished and taught the Colossians through a series of twenty to thirty imperative commands that addressed every relationship of life. Jesus Christ was not only the Colossian’s Savior, but he was also their Lord, and master of every area and relationship of life (παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον – 2:6). God the Father has bestowed upon God the Son the name that is above every name in order that all creation would acknowledge “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11).

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9–11).

The clause “every knee will bow” is an inter-textual quote from Isaiah 45:23. God himself is speaking about his supreme, sovereign, powerful role as Creator, Savior, and Source of all truth (Isa. 45:18–25). He is calling out to “the ends of the earth” to turn to him and “be saved” (Isa. 45:22). Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man (1:19; 2:9). He is Savior and Lord (1:22; 2:6). Paul is proclaiming, admonishing, and teaching the preeminence of Jesus Christ and the eternal, transforming impact he has on every relationship of life.

Conclusion

An in-textual, inner-textual, and inter-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28e answers the question: “What is the Goal of Proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28?” Colossians 1:28e is a purpose-result ἵνα clause that indicates both Paul’s intention for writing and his full confidence in the fulfillment of the desired goal. Paul enthusiastically and emphatically exhorted the Colossians to view their lives in relationship to the triune God and in relationship to others, to fulfill the Great Commission, and to present every person fully mature in Christ.

The verb “present” (παρίστημι) refers to the final ministry or action that Christians fulfill in the discipleship process – presenting one another fully mature in Christ. The term can refer to bringing someone before a judge in a courtroom, offering a sacrifice in hope of acceptance, or it can refer to presenting someone before God in his presence. The word “complete” (τέλειος) can mean fulfilled, mature, complete, perfect, or blameless. The phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ) is a uniquely Pauline expression that describes the Christians new spiritual location, personal relationship, identity, and community. The term encompasses the entire range of Paul’s biblical theology and practical application of the person and work of Jesus Christ in a person’s life.

In-textually, the goal of proclamation, admonishing, and teaching is for every Christian to be intentionally, diligently, and relationally engaged in fulfilling their role in the Great Commission by evangelizing the lost, admonishing and teaching believers and unbelievers, with the goal of presenting every person fully mature in Christ at his return. Inner-textually, the Christian's role in evangelism and discipleship is cast in the light of Christ's work in presenting his church to God the Father holy, blameless, and beyond reproach at his return (1:22). Every Christian has an under-shepherding role to join in the person and work of the triune God with fellow members of the body of Christ in fulfilling the discipleship process. Inter-textually, Christians are viewed as New Covenant priests living in communion with God and fellow believers interceding for others and ministering the word of God through proclamation, admonishing, and teaching.

The biblical, theological, practical, and compositional theme introduced by the word "walk" (περιπατέω) reveals the teaching and instructional path that leads to spiritual maturity in Colossians. Walking in "a manner worth of the Lord" (1:10) and walking "in wisdom" among outsiders (4:5) are cast against the alienated and sinful way in which the Colossians used to walk and live before Christ (1:21; 3:5-7). Beginning with the command in Colossians 2:6 to live under that Lordship of Jesus and "walk in Him," Paul presented twenty to thirty imperative commands that admonish and instruct the Colossians how to live as New Covenant priests who were being renewed in the image of Jesus Christ (3:10). Inter-textually, the Colossians were portrayed in a long line of chosen saints such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Christ himself, who were faithful to God and ministering the word of truth in every relationship of life.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Colossians 1:28 is one of the most powerful and transforming verses in all the Bible. Paul's instruction emphatically inspires every member of the church to intentionally, relationally, and diligently proclaim the person and work of Jesus Christ to all Jewish and Gentile people from every nation on a broad scale. Paul also enthusiastically motivates every member of the body of Christ to admonish and to teach all Jewish and Gentile people from every nation through a process of comprehensive, integrated, biblical truth in all wisdom. The purpose for proclaiming Christ, and for admonishing and teaching in Christ, is so that every member of the church can present all Jewish and Gentile people from every nation to God fully mature in Christ at his return.

The knowledge and understanding for Paul's inspired intent was acquired through a discourse analysis that examined the apostle's use of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, quotes, allusions, echoes, and themes on the basis of grammar, syntax, semantics, and text criticism, as well as, an analysis of the text's literary and compositional features on both a micro-structural and macro-structural level, that give cohesion, consistency, unity, meaning, and biblical theology to the text. To accomplish the purpose, goals, and intent for the research study, the following questions were posed:

Research Questions

- Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?
- How do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?
- What is the goal of proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28?

The discourse analysis began with an inner-textual analysis of the text of Colossians to determine the compositional boundaries of the text, as well as, to determine the internal linguistic relationships that bind the text together, develop compositional structure, literary themes, meaning, and biblical theology to the letter. The inner-textual analysis of the letter was followed by an in-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 to determine the meaning of the verse based on its grammar, syntax, semantics, text criticism, and theology. The in-textual analysis of Colossians 1:28 was followed by an inner-textual and inter-textual analysis of the verse to discover the text's meaning in relationship with the text of Colossians and with the text of the canon of Scripture to develop a biblical, theological, and practical understanding and theology for the verse.

The purpose of chapter five is to offer concluding observations from the study and to suggest recommendations for further research. The concluding observations will focus on a review of Colossians 1:28. The recommendations for further research will focus on *Differentiated Instruction* and its relationship to the term "every man" in Colossians 1:28, and present an outline for a process to fulfill the proclamation, admonishment, and teaching ministry in the local church from *Real-Life Discipleship* by Jim Putman.¹

Review of Colossians 1:28

The purpose of the qualitative research was to arrive at the authorial intent of Colossians 1:28 using discourse analysis to discover what Paul meant when he wrote, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ." The goals for the research were two-fold: (1) To contribute to the academic community a biblical exegesis for a foundational

¹ Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010).

text in Christian education, discipleship, and spiritual transformation using discourse analysis. (2) To contribute to the academic community a biblical theology of Christian education and discipleship that leads to spiritual transformation and maturity in Christ. The intent for this study was to further the knowledge, understanding, and application of Colossians 1:28 for the church and the Christian academic community, and to demonstrate that one of the most powerful verses in all of Scripture serves as a locus and foundation for developing a biblical, theological, and practical process for Christian education, discipleship, spiritual transformation, and fulfillment of the Great Commission to both Jewish and Gentile people from every nation.

Research Assumptions

The research assumptions for the discourse analysis presuppose several philosophical, biblical, theological, and practical positions. First, there is one true God. Second, the one true God exists as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Third, God has chosen to reveal himself in and through the canon of Scripture – the Bible. Fourth, through the transgression of Adam, there resulted in condemnation to all men. Through one act of righteousness, the sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, there resulted justification of life to all men. Fifth, God has ordained a supernatural process of spiritual transformation for the justification, sanctification, and glorification of all mankind through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Sixth, God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Seventh, God is the savior of all men, especially believers. Seventh, the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men. Eighth, God does not want anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance. Ninth, members of the church are called individually and corporately to engage in God’s work to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples by

evangelizing, baptizing, and teaching Jewish and Gentile people from every nation. Tenth, although everyone in the church has a teaching role in the family, the church, the school, the workplace, and the community, God has uniquely called and spiritual gifted some members of the church to teach and to the teaching ministry with the goal of spiritual transformation and conformity to Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:28

The person and work of Jesus Christ are the object, the content, the purpose, and the goal of Christian proclamation. Colossians 1:28 begins with Jesus Christ (ὃν ἡμεῖς) and ends with Jesus Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ). The text is an asyndetic inclusio that exhorts, creates urgency, emphasizes the importance of the text, and binds the verse together into a meaningful unit. The controlling verb “proclaim” (καταγγέλλω), and two participles “admonishing” (νουθετοῦντες) and “teaching” (διδάσκοντες), are composed to establish and describe a biblical process for proclaiming Jesus Christ.

Internally, the verse is knit together with an asyndetic clause, the conjunction “and” (καί), and the repetitive phrase “every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον). Paul applies a primary literary theme in the form of a phrase, “in all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ), to describe the form for proclamation. The purpose for proclamation is identified with a purpose-result ἵνα clause. The purpose for proclaiming, admonishing, and teaching the person and work of Jesus Christ in all wisdom is described by a uniquely Pauline clause, “so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ), which describes both the spiritual condition and the relationship that Christians will enjoy forever. The verse presents the process, the scope, the form, and the goal of evangelism and discipleship for the church.

Colossians 1:28

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

ὄν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ, ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ.

- The Process for Proclamation in Colossians 1:28: “admonishing and teaching.”
- The Scope for Proclamation in Colossians 1:28: “every man.”
- The Form for Proclamation in Colossians 1:28: “in all wisdom.”
- The Goal for Proclamation in Colossians 1:28: “to present every man complete in Christ.”

Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?

Paul instructed the church to proclaim Jesus Christ because he possesses six unique characteristics revealed in Colossians that inspire and motivate his enthusiastic proclamation: (1) God the Son has a unique relationship with God the Father; (2) God the Son has a unique relationship to creation; (3) God the Son has a unique relationship to the new creation; (4) God the Son has a unique relationship to redemption; (5) God the Son has a unique relationship with the Church; and (6) God the Son has a unique relationship to the Kingdom. The person and work of Jesus Christ revealed through the word of God in creation, redemption, and new creation are embodied in Christ’s unique characteristics and relationships. Jesus Christ is revealed as the person through whom the curse of sin, death, and alienation in Adam are reversed, the blessings of Eden are being restored in the new creation, and the covenant promises to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Israel are in the process of being fulfilled for both Jewish and Gentile people in Christ.

Inter-textual Links to Jesus Christ and God's Biblical Covenants in Colossians

Adam

“God created man in His own image” (Gen. 1:27)
according to the image of the
One who created him” (Col. 3:10)

“Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:27)

“she took from its fruit and ate
...and he ate” (Gen. 3:6)

“I will put enmity between
you and the woman” (Gen. 3:15)

“He drove the man out *of the garden*” (Gen. 3:23)

“guard the way to the tree of life” (Ge. 3:24)

“He shall bruise you on the head” (Gen. 3:15)

“You shall bruise him on the heel” (Gen. 3:15)

Noah

“I will never again curse the ground...

I will never again destroy every living thing,
as I have done” (Gen. 8:21)

Noah

“Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant
with you, and with your descendants after you;
and with every living creature” (Gen. 9:9-10)

Abraham

“And in you all the families of the
earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:3)

“he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned
it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6)

The Colossians

“renewed to a true knowledge

“constantly bearing fruit
and increasing” (Col. 1:6)

“*engaged* in evil deeds” (Col. 1:21)

“you were formerly alienated

“disarmed the rulers and
authorities...having triumphed
over them” (Col. 2:15)

“in his fleshly body through
death” (Col. 1:22)

“to reconcile all things to
Himself,
having made peace through the
blood of His cross...whether
things on earth or things in
heaven” (Col. 1:20)

The Colossians

“the Gentiles, which is
Christ in you, the hope of glory”
(Col. 1:27)

“your faith in Christ Jesus”
(Col. 1:4)

“I will make nations of you” (Gen. 17:6)

“Epaphras, who is one of your number” (Col. 4:12)

“I will make you exceedingly fruitful” (Gen. 17:6)

“constantly bearing fruit and increasing” (Col. 1:6)

“kings will come forth from you” (Gen. 17:6)

“the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:13)

“you shall be circumcised” (Gen. 17:11)

“you were also circumcised” (Col. 2:11)

Moses

“The blood shall be a sign for you... when I see the blood I will pass over you and no plague will befall you to destroy you” (Ex. 12:13)

“having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20)

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of life that makes atonement” (Lev. 17:11)

“in whom we have... the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14)

“The Lord’s Passover” (Lev. 23:5)

“in whom we have redemption” (Col. 1:1)

“The Feast of Unleavened Bread” (Lev. 23:6)

“having been buried with Him” (Col. 2:12)

“The first-fruits of your harvest... before the Lord for you to be accepted” (Lev. 23:10-11)

“have been raised up with Him” (Col. 3:1)

David

“I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever” (2 Sam. 7:13)

“transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:13)

“I will establish his throne forever” (1 Chron. 17)

Israel

“for I will forgive their iniquities, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34)

“in whom we have... the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13)

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you” (Ezek. 36:26)

“put on the new self who is being renewed” (Col. 3:10)

“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes” (Ezek. 36:27)

“walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (Col. 1:10)

“walk in Him” (Col. 2:6)

“I will be your God” (Ezek. 36:28)

“in wisdom walk”
(lit. trans. Col. 4:5)

“Grace to you and
peace from God our Father”
(Col. 1:2)

Why do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28

Paul’s enthusiastic and emphatic exhortation was inspired by Jesus Christ’s preeminent status revealed in two theological sections in Colossians 1:13–20 and Colossians 2:3, 9–15. The heart of each theological section is the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ in the incarnation in Colossians 1:19 and Colossians 2:9. The theological sections are followed by practical sections in Colossians 1:21–23 and Colossians 2:16–4:6 that apply the person and work of Jesus Christ to individual lives in the church, in the family, in the workplace, and among the lost.

Inter-textually, God the Father proclaimed his person and work in Scripture (Ex. 33:19); Israel proclaimed God’s person and work in Scripture (Dt. 32:3); the God the Son proclaimed his person and work in Scripture (Lk. 4:18); and the church proclaimed the person and work of God in Christ in Scripture (Acts 4:2). Paul enthusiastically and emphatically exhorted the Colossians and all Christians to join in the work of God to proclaim the preeminence of the person and work of Jesus Christ as Lord.

How do we proclaim Christ in Colossians 1:28?

The admonishing and teaching ministries in Colossians 1:28 are developed around the biblical, theological, practical and compositional themes of “rescue” (ῥύομαι – 1:13), “walk” (περιπατέω – 2:6), and “captive” (συλαγωγέω – 2:8). Paul himself had been rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God’s beloved

Son Jesus Christ (Acts 26:15–18). He was faithful to the Lord and to his calling to proclaim the message he himself had received to the Colossians, and to admonish and teach them to how to walk “in Christ” (ἐν αὐτῷ). Paul inter-textually linked the Colossians’ fruitfulness to their faith in Jesus Christ, as received in the word of God through Epaphras, and to the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises to Noah (Gen. 6–9), Abraham (Gen. 12–22), Moses (Ex. 19–Lev. 27), David (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17), and to Israel (Dt. 30; Jer. 31; Ezek. 36; Lk. 22; Heb. 8; 10).

The Colossians’ “rescue” (1:13) is biblically, theologically, practically, and compositionally structured and developed around the Colossians’ new creation life in Christ (1:13–14; 2:6–4:6), their unregenerate life before Christ (1:21; 2:13; 3:5–7), and the threat of false teachers, false doctrine, and false practice in the church (2:8–23). The Colossians’ new creation life in Christ is described by the Christian virtues “faith, hope,” and “love” (1:4–5), and by the covenant promises of “bearing fruit” (1:6), inheritance in the “Messianic Kingdom of God” (1:12–13; 4:11), a “New Covenant Exodus” (1:14a), a “New Covenant Day of Atonement” (1:14b), and a “New Covenant Priesthood” (3:1–4:6). Paul described the Colossians’ union with Christ in his death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return as a new location, a new relationship, a new identity, a new community, and a new life “in Christ” (2:6–4:6).

Paul therefore, admonished the Colossians, not to be taken “captive” by false teachers, false doctrine, and false practices (2:8), and taught them how to “walk” in the fulfillment of New Covenant promise “in Christ” (2:6). As with the proclamation ministry, the ministries of “admonishing” and “teaching,” and the themes of “rescue, captive,” and “walk,” are consistent with the canon of Scripture, a biblical theology, and the compositional themes in the Bible.

The form for proclamation, admonishing, and teaching in Colossians 1:28 is “in all wisdom.” *Wisdom* is a primary theme in Colossians and in Scripture. Jesus Christ is the embodiment and personification of God’s wisdom. Godly wisdom is contrasted with man’s wisdom, human philosophy, false religion, and false practices in the letter to the Colossians. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3). Man’s wisdom amounts to human tradition, the elementary principles of the world, and empty deception which have only the appearance of wisdom but are of no value (2:8; 23). Paul instructed the Colossians to become agents of God’s wisdom as they proclaimed Christ, and admonished and taught the wisdom of God in Christ.

What is the goal of proclaiming Christ in Colossians 1:28?

The goal for proclaiming Christ, and for admonishing and teaching people in Christ, is to present all Jewish and Gentile people from every nation to God fully mature in Christ when he returns. Simply put, the goal of evangelism and discipleship in Colossians 1:28 is *Christlikeness*.

As with the proclamation, admonishing, and teaching ministries, the ministry of presentation is modeled after Jesus Christ himself. Paul said, Christ “reconciled” (ἀποκαταλλάσσω) the Colossians in his fleshly body through death, to “present” (παρίστημι) them holy, blameless, and beyond reproach before God (1:22).

Christians are a born-again new creation humanity who are “being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created [them] him” (Col. 3:10). Paul instructed the Colossians to “put on” the new self (Col. 3:10). Members of the church are exhorted to proclaim Christ, to admonish and teach in Christ, and to speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in [their] your hearts to God” (Col. 3:15). God has uniquely designed the new creation humanity so

that Christ dwells in every Christian heart (Col. 1:27); the peace of God is uniquely designed to rule in every Christian heart (Col. 3:15); and the word of Christ is uniquely designed to richly dwell in every Christian heart (Col. 3:16). The purpose for which Christian's minister is the goal of *Christlikeness*; to restore the image of God in man, and to conform man to the image of Jesus Christ.

Christians have an important, under-shepherding role to join the person and work of the triune God and evangelize and disciple all Jewish and Gentile people from every nation. Presenting one another fully mature to God in Christ at his return is the last ministry the Christian completes to fulfill the Great Commission. Colossians 1:28 possesses all the characteristics of a text. The verse demonstrates cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, and textuality which give the text both meaning and a biblical theology consistent with the canon of Scripture. Colossians 1:28 is a locus and foundation for understanding, establishing, and developing a biblical, theological, and practical process for evangelizing and discipling Jewish and Gentile people to fulfill the Great Commission in any generation.

Differentiated Instruction and “Every Man” in Colossians 1:28

The goals for this research were two-fold: (1) To contribute to the academic community a biblical exegesis for a foundational text in Christian education, discipleship, and spiritual transformation using discourse analysis. (2) To contribute to the academic community a biblical theology of Christian education and discipleship that leads to spiritual transformation and maturity in Christ.

One of the most exciting opportunities for further research and one that could bear lasting fruit in the future for learning theory and Christian education design is the dynamic relationship between *differentiated instruction* and the audience identified by the

phrase “every man” (πάντα ἄνθρωπον) in Colossians 1:28. How can the church and the Christian education community take the biblical, theological, and practical principles set forth in Colossians 1:28 and apply them to the principles of differentiated instruction to restore the image of God in students, and to conform students into the image of Jesus Christ?

The discourse analysis interpreted the phrase “every man” from a biblical and theological perspective using a text-centered, canonical, and compositional hermeneutic as referring to Jewish and Gentile people from all nations. Differentiated instruction is a teacher’s response to learning needs guided by general principles of differentiation which recognize that each student is created in the image of God with different learning preferences and styles. The purpose and intent for this section is to describe differentiated instruction.

Differentiated Instruction²

Differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching in which “educators actively plan for students’ differences so that all students can best learn. In a differentiated classroom, teachers divide their time, resources, and efforts to effectively teach students who have various backgrounds, readiness and skill levels, and interests.”³ A differentiated instructor employs principles such as flexibility, assessment, flexible grouping, respectful tasks, and collaboration in order to tailor instruction to meet individual needs and promote student success.

² Unless otherwise noted, information on Differentiated Instruction are from Kenneth S. Coley. 2017. “Current Theory and Practice in Teaching.” Lecture, EdD 8201 Integrative Seminar I, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, June 28, 2017.

³ “Differentiated Instruction.” Accessed October 29, 2018. www.ascd.org/research-a-topic-differentiated-instruction-resources.aspx.

Flexibility

To achieve clearly stated learning goals, both teachers and students understand that time, materials, modes of teaching, student grouping, expression, assessment, and other learning tools are elements that can be used in a variety of ways to promote individual and whole-class success.

Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process of recognizing, studying, and appreciating student differences for the purposes of instructional planning, teaching, learning, and success. Through ongoing assessment, teachers monitor their students in relation to learning goals, as well as, their students learning needs and interests.

Flexible Grouping

Flexible grouping helps ensure student access to a wide variety of learning opportunities and working arrangements. Flexible grouping employs whole-class, small-group, and individual learning arrangements. Students can be grouped according to student academic needs, strengths, weaknesses, interests, or learning patterns.

Respectful Tasks

This principle says that every learner must have tasks that are equally interesting and equally engaging. The students must be provided with equal access to essential understanding and skills. The teacher's goal is that each student feels challenged, finds their work appealing, and engages with the information, principles, and skills which give that learner power to understand, apply, and move on to the next learning stage, most of the time, in the discipline being studied.

Collaboration

Under the instructor's leadership, teachers and students work together to fulfill learning goals and achieve student success. Instructors study their students, involve them in the learning process, and promote independent learners.

The Importance of Differentiated Instruction

Differentiation of instruction is important because each learner is uniquely created in the image of God with different learning styles and preferences, different motivation, different prior experiences, and each student must be engaged (Gen. 1:27). Once a student is engaged, the teacher begins to support students and help them achieve their learning goals through scaffolding⁴ which provides procedural, metacognitive,⁵ conceptual, and strategic support for the student in the learning environment (Gen. 1:27).

⁴ Instructional scaffolding is a learning process designed to promote a deeper level of learning. Scaffolding is the support given during the learning process which is tailored to the needs of the student with the intention of helping the student achieve his or her learning goals. It is a learning structure on which to build vertically and horizontally- These supports may include resources, a compelling task, templates and guides, guidance on the development of cognitive and social skills. The use of instructional scaffolding occurs when modeling a task, giving advice, providing coaching, outlines, recommended documents, storyboards, or key questions. Scaffolding is providing instructional support and guidance to students in various ways. There are three essential features of scaffolding that facilitate learning: 1) interaction between teacher and learner; 2) learning should take place within the learner's zone of proximal development, the distance between the learner's current level of knowledge and that which is beyond; 3) the support and guidance is gradually removed as the learner becomes more proficient. Tina Stavredes, *Effective Online Teaching: Foundations and Strategies for Student Success* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011), 73–85, 103, 186.

⁵ Metacognition is the knowledge of specific strategies used in the process of thinking and learning. Information processing is a complex process. Learners must have specific strategies to attend to incoming information, draw on knowledge in long-term memory, and store new information into meaningful schemata that can enhance storage and retrieval. Metacognition is the process of thinking about thinking and learning. Metacognition supports information processing by actively controlling what learners think as they learn. Through the process of self-regulation, learners can use a number of strategies to effectively process information and ensure knowledge acquisition. Strategies include planning, monitoring, and evaluating progress toward a specific learning goal. *Ibid.*, 48–50.

The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” Kenneth Coley, Senior Professor of Christian Education and Director of the Doctor of Education Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, explains the differentiated instruction process.

God has big plans for the students he has entrusted to me. My role as a teacher is to understand the teaching-learning process, cast a vision, create a culture for growth, design curriculum, select methodologies, engage students, model truth, teach for transformation and change, assess, monitor and adjust as needed.⁶

Differentiated instruction recognizes that students are not the same and that access to equal education necessarily means that, given a certain goal, each student should be provided resources, instruction, and support to help them meet that objective. The goals for an instructor who wants to adopt a differentiated instruction process are: (1) Commit to the Lord; (2) Commit to the students God has entrusted; (3) Commit to fellow instructors; and (4) Commit to the teaching-learning process of change and spiritual formation through differentiated instruction. In addition to the relationship between differentiated instruction and the audience identified as “every man” in Colossians 1:28, another opportunity for further research that could bear lasting fruit is the relationship between the biblical, theological, and practical discipleship process in Colossians 1:28 and the *Real-Life Discipleship* process designed by Pastor Jim Putman. Pastor Putman is the founder and senior pastor of Real-Life Ministries in Post Falls, Idaho. The outline for his discipleship process is given below.

⁶ Kenneth S. Coley. 2017. “Current Theory and Practice in Teaching.” Lecture, June 28, 2017.

Real-Life Discipleship Outline⁷

1. The Real-Life Discipleship Process
 - a. Share
 - b. Connect
 - c. Minister
 - d. Disciple
2. Share
 - a. Share the Gospel
 - b. Share your Life
 - c. Share New Truth
 - d. Share New Habits
3. Connect
 - a. Connect to God
 - b. Connect to Small Group
 - c. Connect to Large Group
 - d. Connect to Purpose
4. Minister
 - a. Train to Minister
 - b. Equip for Ministry
 - c. Provide Ministry Opportunities
 - d. Release to do Ministry under Supervision
5. Disciple
 - a. Explain the Discipleship Process

⁷ Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 77–155.

- b. Release to Disciple with your Help
 - c. Release to Disciple Alone
6. The Spiritual Stages of the Real-Life Discipleship Process
- a. Spiritually Lost
 - b. Spiritual Infant
 - c. Spiritual Child
 - d. Spiritual Young Adult
 - e. Spiritual Parent
7. Spiritually Lost
- a. Characterized by Unbelief
 - b. Form of Engagement – Share the Gospel
8. Spiritual Infant
- a. Language and Behavior characterized by Ignorance of Biblical Truth and Practice
 - b. Form of Engagement
 - i. Share your Life
 - ii. Share New Truth
 - iii. Share New Habits
9. Spiritual Child
- a. Language and Behavior characterized by Self-centeredness
 - b. Form of Engagement
 - i. Connect to God
 - ii. Connect to Small Group
 - iii. Connect to Large Group

iv. Connect to Purpose

10. Spiritual Young Adult

- a. Language and Behavior characterized by God-centeredness, Other-centeredness, and Service.
- b. Form of Engagement
 - i. Equip for Ministry
 - ii. Provide Ministry Opportunities
 - iii. Release to do Ministry under Supervision

11. Spiritual Parent

- a. Language and Behavior characterized by Intentionality and Strategy
- b. Form of Engagement
 - i. Explain the Discipleship Process
 - ii. Release to Disciple another with your Help
 - iii. Release to Disciple Alone

The *Real-Life Discipleship* process of *Share, Connect, Minister, and Disciple* outlined above and fully developed in Jim Putman’s book, “Real-Life Discipleship,” is a practical approach to applying Colossians 1:28 in a local church.

The relationship between *Differentiated Instruction* and the audience identified as “every man” in Colossians 1:28, and the relationship between the biblical, theological, and practical process for discipleship in Colossians 1:28 and the *Real-Life Discipleship* process, are both areas for further study and research, and could bear lasting fruit in the future.

Conclusion

When educators, pastors, church leaders, and Christians were asked by The Navigators and The Barna Group, if they could change one thing about the way in which their churches made disciples, the majority said they would like to see “a more clearly articulated plan, or approach, to discipleship.”⁸ Colossians 1:28 is a foundational verse for Christian discipleship. The text is often taught, quoted, and referenced in Christian education literature in the context of spiritual transformation, developing Christlikeness, spiritual maturity, Christian curriculum, and discipleship. In the verse, Paul emphatically exhorts all Christians and the ministry of every local church to be intentionally, diligently, and relationally engaged in proclaiming the person and work of Jesus Christ in all wisdom to both Jewish and Gentile people from every nation with the specific goal of presenting one another to God fully mature in Christ at his return. It is the intent of this discourse analysis to offer educators, pastors, church leaders, and Christians a text-centered, canonical, and compositional exegesis of Colossians 1:28 to fulfill that very purpose, so that together, we may fulfill the Great Commission in our generation.

⁸ *The State of Discipleship*. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015), 7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Akin, Daniel L., ed. *A Theology for the Church*, rev. ed. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014.
- Alter, Robert, and Frank Kermode, eds. *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 1987.
- Anthony, Michael J., and Warren S. Benson. *Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the 21st Century*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003.
- Atkerson, Steve. *Ekklesia: To the Roots of Biblical Church Life*. Atlanta, GA: New Testament Restoration Foundation, 2003.
- Aune, David E. *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*. Edited by Wayne A. Meeks. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1987.
- Beetham, Christopher A. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008.
- Black, David Alan, and David S. Dockery, eds. *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.
- Black, David Alan, ed., with Katharine Barnwell, and Stephen Levinsohn, *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992.
- Black, David Alan. *It's Still Greek to Me: An Easy-to-Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.
- . *Learn How to Read New Testament Greek*. exp. ed. Nashville, TN: Broad and Holman Publishers, 1994.
- . *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995.
- . *Using New Testament Greek in Ministry: A Practical Guide for Students and Pastors*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993.
- Blaising, Craig A., and Darrell L. Bock, eds. *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

- Bodine, Walter R, ed. *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers*. Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Brand, Chad O., Tom Pratt, Jr., Robert L. Reymond, Robert L. Saucy, and Robert L. Thomas. *Perspectives on Israel and the Church: 4 Views*. Edited by Chad O. Brand. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.
- Bratcher, Robert G., and Eugene A. Nida. *A Translators Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1977.
- Brooks, James A., and Carlton L. Winbery. *Syntax of New Testament Greek*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979.
- Buswell, Oliver J. *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962.
- Buksbazen, Victor. *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 2008.
- Calvin's Commentaries: The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*. Translated by T.H.L. Parker. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965.
- Carson, D.A., Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992.
- Cullman, Oscar. *The Christology of the New Testament*. rev. ed. Translated by Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A.M. Hall. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1963.
- Davies, William David. *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*. London: SPCK, 1948.
- De Beaugrande, Robert, and Wolfgang Dressler. *Introduction to Text Linguistics*. New York, NY: Longman, Inc., 1981.
- De Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. Edited by Charles Bally, and Albert Sechehaye. Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Group, 1986.
- DeYoung, Kevin, and Greg Gilbert. *What is the Mission of the Church: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2011.
- Diprose, Ronald E. *Israel and the Church: The Origin and Effects of Replacement Theology*. Rome, Italy: Instituto Biblico Evangelio Italiano, 2000.
- Duvall, J. Scott, and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

- Earley, Dave, and Rod Dempsey. *Disciple Making Is: How to Live the Great Commission With Passion and Confidence*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.
- Eavey, C.B. *Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers*, 7th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1940.
- . *History of Christian Education*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1964.
- Eldridge, Daryl. *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995.
- Elias, John L. *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Perspectives*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2002.
- Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992.
- Fanning, Buist M. *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*. Oxford Monograph Series. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1980.
- Frei, Hans W. *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974.
- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2016.
- . *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*. rev. ed. Tustin, CA, 2003.
- Gaebelein, Frank E. *The Pattern of God's Truth: The Integration of Faith and Learning*. Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2014.
- Gallaty, Robby. *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus' Final Words Our First Work*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2015.
- Gangel, Kenneth O., and Warren S. Benson. *Christian Education: It's History and Philosophy*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983.
- Glaser, Mitch and Zhava. *The Fall Feasts of Israel*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1987.
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*. vol. 1. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1984.
- Gruber, Dan. *The Church and the Jews: A Biblical Relationship*. Hanover, NH: Elijah Publishing, 1997.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.

- Gutek, Gerald L. *Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Education: A Biographical Introduction*, 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Peterson Education, 2011.
- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. rev. ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990.
- Hamilton, Sharon. *Essential Literary Terms: A Brief Norton Guide with Exercises*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.
- Han, Nathan E. *A Parsing Guide to the Greek New Testament*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971.
- Hay, David M. *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1989.
- Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Hengel, Martin. *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of the Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983.
- Hill, David. *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series. vol. 5. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000.
- Howard, Kevin, and Marvin Rosenthal. *The Feasts of the Lord: God's Prophetic Calendar from Calvary to the Kingdom*. Orlando, FL: Zion's Hope, Inc., 1997.
- Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006.
- Kaiser, Walter C. *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.
- Kaiser, Walter C., Jr., and Moises Silva. *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
- Kennedy, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Knight, George R. *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006.
- Lambert, Dan. *Teaching that Makes a Difference: How to Teach with Holistic Impact*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004.
- Larson, David. *Jews, Gentiles, and the Church: A New Perspective on History and Prophecy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publisher, 1995.

- Lockerbie, D. Bruce. *A Passion for Learning: A History of Christian Thought on Education*. Colorado Spring, CO: Purposeful Design Publications, 2007.
- Longenecker, Richard N., ed. *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*. Grand William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- _____. *The Ministry and Message of Paul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971.
- McClain, Alva J. *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*. Winona Lake, WI: BMH Books, 1974.
- McRaney, Will, Jr. *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003.
- Melick, Rick, and Shera. *Teaching that Transforms: Facilitating Life Change Through Adult Bible Teaching*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*. (4th rev. ed.). 2nd ed. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: United Bible Societies, 1994.
- Missler, Chuck. *The Feasts of Israel*. Coeur d'Alain, ID: Koinonia House, Inc., 2016.
- Moule, Handley Carr Glyn. *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1959.
- Moulton, James H. *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. 3rd ed. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1985.
- Nadler, Sam. *Messiah in the Feasts of Israel*. Charlotte, NC: Word of Messiah Ministries, 2007.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- Omanson, Roger L. *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators*. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: German Bible Society, 2006.
- Postell, Seth David. *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publication, 2011.
- Postell, Seth David, Eitan Bar, and Erez Soref. *Reading Moses, Seeing Jesus: How the Torah Fulfills Its Goal in Yeshua*. exp. 2nd ed. Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2017.
- Putman, Jim. *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples*. Carol Stream, IL: NavPress, 2010.

- Reed, James E., and Ronnie Prevost. *A History of Christian Education*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1993.
- Richards, Lawrence O., and Gary J. Bredfeldt. *Creative Bible Teaching*, rev. ed. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1998.
- Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934.
- . *A Harmony of the Gospels: The Standard Broadus Harmony thoroughly Revised, Rearranged and Enlarged*. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1922.
- Runge, Steven E. *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 2010.
- Ryken, Leland. *A Complete Handbook of Literary Forms in the Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014.
- Ryken, Leland, and Tremper Longman, III, eds. *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993.
- Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999.
- Saphir, Adolph. *The Divine Unity of Scripture*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, nd.
- Sailhamer, John H. *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.
- . *Biblical Prophecy*. Zondervan Quick Reference Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
- . *Christian Theology*. Zondervan Quick Reference Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
- . *How We Got the Bible*. Zondervan Quick Reference Library. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
- . *The Life of Christ*. Zondervan Quick Reference Library, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.
- . *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.
- Saucy, Mark. *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: A 20th Century Theology*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1997.
- Showers, Renald E. *There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and*

- Dispensational Theology*. Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1990.
- The Navigators. *The State of Discipleship*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015.
- Vlach, Michael J. *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010.
- . *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God*. Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2017.
- Waggoner, Brad J. *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2008.
- Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics – An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: 1996.
- Wegner, Paul D. *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999.
- Wilkins, Michael J. *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.
- Wurthwein, Ernst. *The Text of the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Translated by Erroll F. Rhodes. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.
- Wyckoff, D. Campbell. *The Gospel and Christian Education: A Theory of Christian Education for Our Times*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, nd.
- Yount, William R., ed. *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996.
- . *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008.
- Zuck, Roy B. *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching*. Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, 1963.

Articles

- Anderson, Gary. "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52/1 (1990): 21–29.
- Bar-Efrat, Shimon. "Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative." *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980): 154–173.
- Burney, Charles Fox. "Christ as the ἀρχή of Creation." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 27/106 (1926).

- Luter, A. Boyd. "Discipleship and the Church." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (1980): 267–273.
- Reed, Jeffery T. "Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal." *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 39/2 (1996): 223–240.
- Sibley, Jim R. "You Talkin' To Me? 1 Peter 2:4-10 and a Theology of Israel." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 59 (2016): 59–75.
- Turner, David L. "Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (2002).

Dissertations and Theses

- Allen, David Lewis. "An Argument for the Lucan Authorship of Hebrews." Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Arlington, 1987.
- Guthrie, George Howard. "The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis." Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991.
- Hudgins, Thomas W. "Luke 6:40 and the Theme of Likeness Education in the New Testament." Ed.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013.
- Sibley, James Ray. "The Blindness of Israel and the Mission of the Church." Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012.
- Tyler, Larry A. "An Analysis of Amillennialism, Historic Premillennialism, Progressive Dispensationalism, and Traditional Dispensationalism: A Hermeneutical Analysis of the Fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants in Contemporary Evangelical Research." Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006.
- Vlach, Michael J. "The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism." Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004.

Internet Resources

- Keating, Corey. "More Grammatical Terms Related to Greek and English." Available from www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/more_terms.htm.

Commentaries

- Anders, Max, gen. ed. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1999.

- Barth, Markus, and Helmut Blanke. *Colossians*. The Anchor Bible. Translation by Astrid B. Beck. vol. 34b. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994.
- Bruce, Frederick Fyvie. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984.
- Dunn, James D. G. *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, James*. Ariel's Bible Commentary. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2005.
- Harris, Murray J. *Colossians and Philemon: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013.
- Jamieson, Robert, Andrew Robert Fausset, and David Brown. *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, 3 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 2002.
- Leighton, Robert. *A Practical Commentary upon the First Epistle General of Peter*. vol. 1. Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1864.
- Lightfoot, J.B. *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993.
- Lohse, Eduard. *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Hermeneia, Translated by William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971.
- Martin, Ralph P. *Colossians: The Church's Lord and the Christian's Liberty – An Expository Commentary with a Present-Day Application*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1972.
- McKnight, Scot. *The Letter to the Colossians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018.
- Melick, Richard R., Jr. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. The New American Commentary. vol. 32. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1991.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008.
- Moule, Handley Carr Glyn. *Colossians Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness from St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon*. New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, nd.

- O'Brien, Peter T. *Colossians-Philemon*. Word Biblical Commentary. vol. 44. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.
- Pao, David W. *Colossians & Philemon*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Pokorney, Petr. *Colossians: A Commentary*. Translated by Siegfried S. Schatzmann. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991.
- Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *Paul and the Intellectuals: The Epistle to the Colossians*. rev. ed. Edited by W.C. Strickland. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1959.
- Sailhamer, John H. *Genesis*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, rev. ed., vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2008.
- . *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*. NIV Compact Series. Grand Rapids, MI: 1994.
- . *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.
- Schweizer, Eduard. *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary*. Translated by Andrew Chester. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982.
- Seitz, Christopher R. *Colossians*. Brazos Theological Commentary of the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014.
- Stein, Robert H. *Luke*. The New American Commentary Series. vol. 24. Edited by David S. Dockery. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1992.
- Talbert, Charles H. *Ephesians and Colossians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Turner, David L. *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament. Edited by Robert W. Yarbrough, and Robert H. Stein. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008.
- The Moody Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014.
- Vaughan, Curtis. *Colossians*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary. vol. 11. Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1978.
- Wilson, R. McL. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*. New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2005.
- Wright, Nicholas Thomas. *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1986.