

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

Approximate date: 60-62 C.E.

Time period: season of extreme error in parts of the Body of Messiah, during the first imprisonment of Paul

Author: the Apostle Paul

Location of author: Rome

Target audience and their location: Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Colossae

The letter to the Colossians is commonly classified among the Prison Epistles (also including Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). The author of Colossians is stated to not only be Paul (1:23), but we see the closing attestation, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand" (4:18, NASU). The Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Colossians has not been significantly disputed by many conservatives,¹ even though it is doubted by many liberals. Claims against Pauline authorship are usually offered on the basis of the themes witnessed in the letter, and its vocabulary.² It is important to be aware, however, that not all liberals are convinced that Pauline authorship of Colossians is something so impossible.³ It is also understandable, that given the mention of Timothy as a co-sender of the Epistle to the Colossians (1:1), that Timothy could have played some kind of a role in the letter's composition as Paul's amanuensis. Specific terms appearing in Colossians, which do not appear in the agreed-upon genuine Pauline letters,⁴ may be the result of the false teaching that needed to be countered.

Colossians is unique, because the Biblical record does not attest that the Apostle Paul ever visited Colossae, yet there is a large amount of personal involvement in his letter. Paul is not personally, or at least directly acquainted, with the Colossians. Paul does, however, know a great deal

about the Colossian assembly through Epaphras (1:7-8), a dedicated servant who took the time to visit Paul during his imprisonment, to inform him of the situation(s) that had arisen in Colossae. The city of Colossae was located in Asia Minor on the trading road between Ephesus and the Euphrates River. Apparently, the gospel message had been carried to Colossae by Epaphras, who was a native of the city (4:12), during Paul's three-year ministry tenure in Ephesus (1:7-8; cf. Acts 19:10), and an assembly of Believers had been established.⁵

Those who accept genuine Pauline authorship of Colossians consider the letter to have been written in the same general time frame of Ephesians and Philippians, likely between 60-62 C.E. from Paul's imprisonment in Rome.⁶ The actual composition of the Epistle to the Colossians is tied to that of the Epistle to Philemon, given the fact that the same people, who extend greetings to the Colossians, are the same ones who extend greetings to Philemon (Colossians 4:10-14; Philemon 23-24). For this reason, many commentaries on Colossians are often paired with Philemon. The Epistle to the Colossians and the Epistle of Ephesians do have some kind of a relationship, given the considerable overlap in their contents, but there are debates as to which letter was written first. Is Colossians a condensed version of Ephesians? Or, is Ephesians an expanded version of Colossians? Many today opt for Colossians being written before Ephesians (see the entry on **Ephesians** for more details).

Paul's audience in the Colossian assembly was predominately non-Jewish. Colossae was originally a Phrygian city, but later Hellenized.⁷ It was a major trading center for many centuries prior to Roman expansion, but in the First Century C.E. had become

¹ Cf. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 572-577; P.T. O'Brien, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 150-151; Carson and Moo, pp 517-520.

² Victor Paul Furnish, "Colossians, Epistle to the," in *ABD*, 1:1092-1094.

³ G. Johnston, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *IDB*, 1:658-659; Morna D. Hooker, "Colossians," in *ECB*, 1404.

⁴ The agreed-upon genuine Pauline letters, by both liberals and conservatives, are: Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon.

⁵ Cf. F.F. Bruce, "Colossians, Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 1:733; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 654-655; O'Brien, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 147-148.

⁶ Bruce, "Colossians, Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 1:733; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 577-580; O'Brien, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 152; Carson and Moo, pp 521-522.

⁷ O'Brien, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 147.

secondary to cities like Laodicea.⁸ The Phrygians were a subjugated people mentioned all the way back in works such as Homer's *Illiad*. In the Fifth Century B.C.E. when Colossae was at its peak, the people would have largely spoken Phrygian,⁹ but Hellenization brought Greek as the dominant language of business: "During the Hellenistic and Roman periods the use of the Greek language naturally spread in this region" (*IDB*).¹⁰ There was also a large number of Jews in Phrygia, with it being estimated that in the First Century C.E. as many as 7,500 Jewish freemen were present in the region.¹¹ "The Jews of this region were known for their laxity in observing their law" (*IDB*).¹² The claim by some Messianics that Paul would have written to the Colossians in Hebrew or Aramaic is without historical merit, especially when the Jews of Colossae, widely lax in their observance of the Torah, would not have been really using either. A written Greek origin for Colossians is well-assured, given that the only other major linguistic option for Paul would have been a local dialect like Phrygian.

The Colossian congregation became a hub of doctrinal problems, all of which necessitated a personal visit from Epaphras to Rome to meet with Paul. The religious background of the Colossians would have been consistent with the standard Greco-Roman pantheon of deities, but there is some evidence of worship to Egyptian deities as well,¹³ and the probable presence of mystery cults in the region also begs some questions. This religious diversity likely came from Colossae having been a center of trade, although at the time of the letter, Colossae's influence was waning.

"[T]he Colossae of Paul's day seems to have been a cosmopolitan place in which differing cultural and religious elements mingled" (O'Brien).¹⁴ What was the Colossian false teaching, then? Some conclude that it was Jewish, some conclude that it was pagan, and others conclude that it was an amalgamation of errors.¹⁵ That the Apostle Paul has to carefully direct his words to the false teaching is something detectable throughout his letter. Because Paul had not encountered the Colossians directly, he had to carefully subvert whatever false ideas were circulating in Colossae. Generally speaking, interpreters today have opted for the Colossian false teaching involving some kind of mix of a diverse

number of influences, ultimately choosing a false teaching that combined elements of paganism and mystery religion with the local Judaism. The evil factors some have suggested that were present in Colossae were "syncretistic influences including ideas from neo-pythagoreanism, Iranian and Egyptian influences, and also...Jewish mysticism" (Guthrie).¹⁶ While one will likely find materials on Colossians where Gnosticism is suggested as an errant component of the false teaching, this would have to be classified as a proto- or incipient-Gnosticism, which would later develop into the more developed Gnosticism confronted in the Christian writings of the Second and Third Centuries.

We see a variety of issues at hand that Paul must address in his letter, all of them critical to place in the context of the Colossian false teaching being subverted. The errant ideas and influences present included: asceticism (2:18), angel worship (2:18), a depreciation of Yeshua's Divinity as some kind of intermediary no different than the angels (1:15-20; 2:2-3, 9), supposed visions (2:18), and a reliance on worldly wisdom (2:4, 8). The warning about "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" (2:18, NASU), adequately summarizes a good part of the false teaching. As such, Paul urges the Colossians not to be taken captive "through philosophy and empty deception...according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Messiah" (2:8, NASU). How things like the Sabbath, or the appointed times of the Torah were connected to the false teaching (2:16), is certainly something debated among expositors. While it has been tempting among many to quote these verses by themselves, thinking that the Colossians have been led astray by Jewish errors—one cannot ignore the placement of the Sabbath or appointed times *alongside of* self-abasement and asceticism.

Understanding the hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 is also important for readers, especially for being informed as to the early Christological controversies in the First Century Body of Messiah.¹⁷ Was Yeshua the Messiah just an exalted figure, perhaps like that of the figure of Wisdom seen in much ancient Jewish literature? Or, is Yeshua the Deity Himself, with the hymn employing some subversive language to what had been circulating in Colossae, in order to establish the Messiah's supremacy? The meaningless, humanistic philosophy countered in Colossians was surely depreciating the Messiah being the Divine Son of God. One of the most direct statements regarding Yeshua's Divinity appears in

⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, "Colossae," in *ABD*, 1:1089.

⁹ Johnston, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *IDB*, 1:658.

¹⁰ F.V. Filson, "Phrygia," in *IDB*, 3:806.

¹¹ Arnold, "Colossae," in *ABD*, 1:1089.

¹² Filson, "Phrygia," in *IDB*, 3:807.

¹³ Arnold, "Colossae," in *ABD*, 1:1089.

¹⁴ O'Brien, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 147.

¹⁵ Johnston, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *IDB*, 1:660; Bruce, "Colossians, Epistle to the," in *ISBE*, 1:733-734; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 565-571; Furnish, "Colossians, Epistle to the," in *ABD*, 1:1090-1091; O'Brien, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 148-149.

¹⁶ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 571.

¹⁷ O'Brien, "Colossians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 152.

Colossians 2:9: “For in Him all the fullness of [the] Deity¹⁸ dwells in bodily form” (NASU).

In contemporary Christianity, when Colossians is appealed to, it is viewed as a letter to refute how modern Believers “are tempted to go along with the philosophy of the times” (Carson and Moo).¹⁹ Alas, though, there is probably not as much appreciation for Colossians among lay readers, compared to Bible expositors trying to evaluate the problems and challenges faced by the First Century *ekklesia*.

The Epistle to the Colossians has a wide amount of contemporary importance for today’s broad Messianic movement, even though our collective engagement with Paul’s letter tends to be a bit low. It can be difficult when Messianics encounter statements such as, “Basically the heresy was Jewish” (Bruce, *ISBE*),²⁰ although whatever it involved it was not a “straightforward form of Judaism” (Bruce, *ISBE*).²¹ This involves a little careful historical examination, that many Messianics are not sensitive enough to do in their reading of the letter.

Colossians ch. 2 is often a problem chapter for today’s Messianic community for a variety of reasons. What does “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” (2:14, NASU), really communicate? Is this “certificate of debt” (*cheirographon*, χειρόγραφον) the Torah? Is it the record of sin and/or the capital penalties of the Torah, absorbed by Yeshua’s sacrifice? This is probably a place where Messianics need to take a cue from those post-Reformation Protestant interpretations, which have viewed “the certificate of debt” as involving the record of sin, and the capital punishment of the Torah declared upon Law-breakers, nullified via His sacrifice. The Law of Moses and its standard of holiness for God’s people, being nailed to the cross, would not be an appropriate interpretation of Colossians 2:14.²²

One of the most frequently quoted verses from Colossians, to any Messianic Believer, is: “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” (2:16, NASU). Does this mean that these practices are unimportant? What Colossians 2:16 says need not be difficult at all, if it is textually recognized that Torah practices like the Sabbath, appointed times, or some kind of kosher eating—were caught up together with other ascetic observances (2:18-23), designed to appeal, or even appease, the cosmic powers (2:15). Inappropriate Sabbath keeping or appointed time observance was

caught up in association with some very ungodly activities. Torah practices in general, as a part of the early Messianic community’s standard lifestyle, are not in view.²³

Being informed as to the different contours of the Colossian false teaching, the larger questions that the Epistle to the Colossians asks today’s Messianic movement are quite substantial. Are there similar errors present in the Messianic community, like those refuted, or at least subverted, by Colossians? There are surely those within the Messianic world who deride Yeshua the Messiah as the Divine Savior, there are those who entertain some kind of mystical or secretive ideas about God, and there are those who are a bit ascetic in their Torah observance. It is easily observed that the Epistle to the Colossians is not a frequently accessed text among Messianic Believers—read in its entirety. The Epistle to the Colossians has some rather firm (if not damning) words that can be applied to Messianics who give some deal of credence to the views and perspectives of the Jewish mystical tradition (Kabbalah), in their personal spirituality or theology. In the future, having a much fuller appreciation for the message of Colossians is likely to be quite critical for the emerging Messianic movement and doctrinal issues being debated.

Consult the commentary *Colossians and Philemon for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee for a more detailed examination of Colossians.

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¹⁸ Grk. *tēs Theotētos* (τῆς θεότητος), with the definite article “the.”

¹⁹ Carson and Moo, 529.

²⁰ Bruce, “Colossians, Epistle to the,” in *ISBE*, 1:733.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² Consult the FAQ, “Colossians 2:14.”

²³ For a further review of Colossians 2:16, consult the article “Does the New Testament Annul the Biblical Appointments?” by J.K. McKee, appearing in his book *Torah In the Balance, Volume I*.

1

Salutation

¹ Paul, an apostle of Messiah Yeshua by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
² to the holy ones and faithful brothers and sisters in Messiah *who are* at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Paul Thanks God for the Colossians

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Person and Work of Messiah

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

^a The CJB has bolded "being fruitful and multiplying" for 1:6, noting a possible allusion to Genesis 1:28: "God blessed them: God said to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth'" (CJB).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paul's Ministry to the Assembly

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

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

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

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

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

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

2

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

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

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

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

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

^a Grk. noun *stauros* (σταυρός) or verb equiv. *stauroō* (σταυρώω); “**to fasten to a cross, crucify**” (BDAG, 941). History fully attests that criminals in the Roman Empire were crucified upon some kind of a cross. It was an extremely brutal, humiliating, and painful way to suffer and die. It was intended to serve as a public warning to others not to infuriate the Roman state:

“Under the Roman Empire, crucifixion normally included a flogging beforehand. At times the cross was only one vertical stake. Frequently, however, there was a cross-piece attached either at the top to give the shape of a ‘T’ (*crux comissa*) or just below the top, as in the form most familiar in Christian symbolism (*crux immissa*). The victims carried the cross or at least a transverse beam (*patibulum*) to the place of the execution, where they were stripped and bound or nailed to the beam, raised up, and seated on a *sedile* or small wooden peg in the upright beam. Ropes bound the shoulders or torso to the cross. The feet or heels of the victims were bound or nailed to the upright stake. As crucifixion damaged no vital organs, death could come slowly, sometimes after several days of atrocious pain” (Gerald G. O’Collins, “Crucifixion,” in *ABD*, 1:1208-1209).

A Messianic version the CJB often uses an alternative like “execution-stake,” instead of the more traditional “cross” for *stauros*, some of which is intended to counter traditional Jewish hostility to the sign of the cross. A Messianic version like the TLV, however, will frequently use the traditional “cross” for *stauros*, although it may also use “execution-stake” as well. The PME uses the new alternative, “wooden scaffold.”

^b Grk. *pithanologia* (πιθανολογία); “enticing words” (KJV); “beguiling speech” (RSV); “fine-sounding arguments” (NIV).

Fullness of Life in Messiah

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

^a Grk. *hoti en autō katoikei pan to plērōma tēs Theotētos sōmatikōs* (ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς); “because in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead” (Brown and Comfort, 701). This was inappropriately rendered by the 1998 ISR Scriptures as, “all the completeness of the Mightiness bodily,” with a slight improvement in the 2009 edition as, “all the completeness of Elohim-ness bodily.”

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

^c Grk. *to kath’ hēmōn cheirographon tois dogmasin* (τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρογράφων τοῖς δόγμασιν); “the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us” (NASU); “the handwriting in the ordinances that is against us” (YLT).

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

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

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

^f Grk. *ha estin skia tōn mellontōn, to de sōma tou Christou* (ἡ ἐστὶν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ); this clause is sometimes rendered as “but the body is Christ’s” (ASV).

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

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

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

The New Life in Messiah

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

²¹ "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"

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

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

3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

^a Grk. verb *dogmatizō* (δογματίζω); "of persons, to submit to ordinances" (LS, 207).

^b The CJB has bolded "man-made rules and teachings" for 2:22, noting a possible allusion to Isaiah 29:13: "Then *Adonai* said: 'Because these people approach me with empty words, and the honor they bestow on me is mere lip-service; while in fact they have distanced their hearts from me, and their 'fear of me' is just a *mitzvah* of human origin'" (CJB).

^c The CJB has bolded "sitting at the right hand of God" for 1:6, noting a possible allusion to Psalm 110:1: "A psalm of David: *ADONAI* says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool'" (CJB).

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

Social Duties of the New Life

- ¹⁸ Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter against them.
²⁰ Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord.
²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, so that they will not lose heart.
²² Slaves, in all things obey those who are your lords according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as people-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord.
²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people;
²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; you serve the Lord Messiah.
²⁵ For the one doing wrong will be paid back for the wrong that he has done, and there is no partiality.

4

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

Exhortations

- ² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving;
³ praying at the same time for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Messiah, for which I have also been imprisoned;
⁴ that I may make it clear, as I ought to speak.
⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, redeeming the time.
⁶ Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

Final Greetings

- ⁷ Tychicus will inform you *about* all my affairs, *our* beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.
⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know *about* our affairs and that he may comfort your hearts,
⁹ together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will inform you *about* all that *is going on* here.
¹⁰ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received commands: if he comes to you, receive him);
¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus^a; these are the only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are from the circumcision^b, *and* they have been a comfort to me.
¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Messiah Yeshua, greets you, always striving for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.
¹³ For I bear him witness that he has much toil for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for those in Hierapolis.
¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.

^a Grk. *lēsous ho legomenos Ioustos* (Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰούστος); Delitzsch Heb. NT *Yeshua ha'nikra Yustos* (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַנִּקְרָא יוֹסְטוֹס); Messianic versions typically have something along the lines of "Yeshua, the one called Justus" (CJB) or "Yeshua who is called Justus" (TLV).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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