**Paul's Letter to the Colossians**

**"IF IT WALKS LIKE A DUCK”**

**Colossians 1:1-29**

**“He’s Got The Whole Enchilada In His Hands”**

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f you’re searching for the right church to attend, as a public service, here’s a tip. You might be in the wrong church if...

• In December the church is "closed for the holidays."

• On your second visit they ask *you* to be the pastor.

• The organist wears a cape and mask and plays in the basement.

• The flowers up front are a big horseshoe that reads "Preakness."

• The choir number is a medley of Pearl Jam’s greatest hits.

• During the offering the ushers wear ski masks.

• The morning service is carried “live” on Comedy Central.

#### Now Entering Colosse

#### Drive Carefully

#### Turkey Crossing

Colosse, a once-thriving textile town on the strip from Rome to the Euphrates in midwestern Turkey, was pancaked by a first century earthquake. Today its ruins lie mute near the village of Honaz.

Paul writes this letter to believers in Colosse from prison in Rome about 60-62 A.D. to (a) reaffirm that Jesus Christ is totally God; and (b) to dispel the toxic heresy seeping into that start-up church that was distorting the Gospel which they’d so enthusiastically embraced.

C.S. Lewis, who authored *The Narnia Tales*, ditched atheism to follow Christ in his 30’s. He wrote, “Most dogs cannot understand pointing. You point to food on the floor; the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact, no meaning.” Sometimes we’re intently “looking at” something but unwilling to “look along” it to get the point. Let’s approach the Bible doggedly, but not dog-like!

“Look along” the Gospel, and we discover its childlike simplicity.

Look only “at” it, and up pops misshapen syncretism, i.e., the melding of several beliefs into one do-it-yourself, religious recipe.

Jesus is not to be stirred in with Mohammed, Buddha, Ghandi, Mary, Moses, Abraham or any tempting morsel. He’s not a ham hock to toss into the *soup de jour*, as some were doing in Colosse. The Bible promises that each of us will ultimately know the answer to “What is truth?” ‘Til then, a jambalaya of ideas lures those who cook up their own god. But only the one *true*, big-G God passes life’s taste test.

**DISCUSSION: Anything hard for you to swallow here?**

Let’s dive into Colossians ch. 1 (p.442, The Message).

#### You Say Good-bye, But Paul Says Hello

#### Colossians 1:1-2

Born into a Jewish family of Pharisees, tutored by the finest mind in Israel, appointed to its highest court, a tormentor of Jesus’ first followers, Saul was seismically changed by God into Paul, Christ’s first missionary (1 Timothy 1:12-18). His new life would make TV’s *Dr. Danger* look like Mr. Rogers. Said to be short, bald, bow-legged, with a long nose, one continuous eyebrow, a long beard and deep-set eyes …. just think Danny DeVito with Lurch’s looks.

DISCUSSION: What was Paul’s role in “God’s master plan?” Does that plan include you? If so, what’s your role?

#### The Word’s Out -- Your Reviews Are In

#### Colossians 1:3-8

#### The Colosse Christians’ faith in Jesus and their love for people was the buzz. Our faith is not to be Top Secret. We’re to be out of the closet. That, says Paul, happens when we hear and recognize the truth of God’s message, then crave to know Him even better.

**DISCUSSION: Hear … recognize … crave. Where are you in that progression? Describe what goes on in that stage.**

#### Your Spiritual Mapquest

#### Colossians 1:9-14

To know God better, download Paul’s prayer, urging us to …

• **Live up** to who God says you are (Ephesians 1 and 2)

• **Stand up** in God’s strength to repel Satan’s come-ons and hits

• **Send up** thanks to God for making you a co-heir with Christ of heaven’s inestimable assets

To live this way, Paul asks God to give His children …

• An intimate, Bible-informed **wisdom** grounded in who God is

• **Conduct** befitting one who knows Jesus as Lord and Savior

• **Dedication** to what God’s called you to do

• A passion for **excellence** in serving God and man

• **Perseverance** to run life’s race with hope and joy

• **Gratitude** to God for all that comes your way

DISCUSSION: Which are the toughest for you?

#### Getting Our Ducks In A Row

#### Colossians 1:15-20

Dr. Paul gives a post-grad course on Jesus’ credentials. As God’s Son, and fully God at that, He’s the top gun, the beginning, center and destination of *everything* (Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:5-11). He’s the visible image of His invisible Father. What’s God like? Look at Jesus. Like Dad, like Son (2 Corinthians 4:5-6).

The cosmos is careening toward a day when everyone and everything will bow before Jesus, the One who holds galaxies in place with the same power He used to create every single atom, and to bolt from His grave. He’s the Originator *and* the Terminator.

The Bible says Jesus *spoke* the universe into being. “Universe” comes from Latin: *uni* means “single;” *verse* is “spoken word.” Universe = a single spoken word. Is that ironic? Or intentional!

But this mumbo jumbo, warm-up act for Gnosticism held that the world was *not* created by Jesus, but by a less-than-God but super-human intermediate being who formed heaven and earth out of existing matter. (Woops … how’d *that* matter get there!)

Astrophysicist Dr. Hugh Ross cites fifty-nine elements locked into perfect balance so that our universe can rock on, i.e., Earth is the only planet we know of with an atmosphere that can sustain life. If we were closer to the sun, we'd be stir-fried. Farther, we’d be popsicles. And Earth's daily rotation lets the sun warm us evenly.

Our moon’s gravity causes tides, keeps oceans from stagnating and inside their beaches. Earth’s unique supply of liquid water is vital for life. This acute precision demands a loving Master Designer/God reinforcing Paul’s “Everything comes from Him. Everything happens through Him. Everything ends up in Him” (Romans 11:33-36).

Gnostic nonsense held that Christ is but a mere super-angel. But He claimed to be God; His life, death and resurrection fulfilled hundreds of Old Testament prophecies; He lived a sinless life, did miracles, and was seen by 500-plus people on twelve occasions *after* He rose from the dead. Because He defeated the grave, so can we!

**DISCUSSION: What questions does all this raise for you?**

#### “You Talkin’ To Me?”

#### Colossians 1:21-23

Inventory what Jesus did for you, Paul reminds us. You’d rejected Him (no matter how you spin it). But as “CEO of Everything,” He traded His golden slippers for flip-flops, and took the nails so your sins could be forgiven permanently. Now you’re right with God, holy, blameless in His eyes (Romans 5:1-11, 2 Corinthians 5:16-20, Ephesians 2:14-15). *Jesus* did that, not some angel stunt-double. How, says Paul, can you not love a Savior like that!

**DISCUSSION: How do you see Jesus vs when you were a kid?**

#### It’s A Mystery To Me

#### Colossians 1:24-29

Paul was keenly conscious that he paid with his sufferings so that Colosse – and we – could hear God’s Good News. This “mystery” was breaking news which God exposed exclusively through Paul (Acts 22:17-21). It means that (a) now both Jew and Gentile may come to God by personal faith, not by “being good or religious” (Colossians 4:2-4; Galatians 6:14-16; Ephesians 2:7-18, 3:1-10; Romans 16:25-26; Titus 1:2-4); and (b) God the Holy Spirit lives IN us until Jesus returns to take His followers to be with Him always.

#### If He Walks Like God

Everyone has a date with God (Hebrews 9:27-28). Those who’ve come to Jesus will be with Him *always*. The rest languish forever in an unthinkable, fiery blackness the Bible calls hell -- a place God prepared NOT for people, but solely as the last stop for Satan and his demons. By dint of Christ’s dying to buy you back from sin, God’s stamped “Permanently Forgiven” by your name in His ledger.

He’ll credit you with His forgiveness the instant you agree with Him that you’re sinner, needing a Redeemer, and that you now welcome Jesus as your Savior. Why not pray, “God, I do that now. How can I resist any longer? This ol’ sinner thanks you for my clean slate! Why me!! But I receive it humbly, in Jesus’ lofty name. Amen.”

His Deal

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