Paul's Letter to the Colossians Study
Bible Study Session 04
Colossians 1:13-20 : Topic 3.2
"Deliverance in Christ"

Study By
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Greek NT	Gute Nachricht Bibel	NRSV	NLT
13 ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, 14 ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν· 15 ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, 16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· 17 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, 18 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων, 19 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι 20 καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι᾽ αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·	13 Denn er hat uns aus der Gewalt der dunklen Mächte gerettet und uns unter die Herrschaft seines geliebten Sohnes gestellt. 14 Durch den Sohn und in dessen Machtbereich ist uns die Erlösung zuteil geworden: Unsere Schuld ist uns vergeben. 15 Er ist das Bild des unsichtbaren Gottes, der erstgeborene Sohn des Vaters, aller Schöpfung voraus und ihr weit überlegen. 16 Denn in ihm ist alles erschaffen worden, was im Himmel und auf der Erde lebt, die sichtbaren Geschöpfe auf der Erde und die unsichtbaren im Himmel – die Thronenden, die Herrschenden, die Mächte, die Gewalten. Alles hat Gott durch ihn geschaffen, und alles findet in ihm sein letztes Ziel. 17 Er steht über allem, und alles besteht durch ihn. 18 Er ist das Haupt des Leibes, das heißt: der Gemeinde. Er ist der Anfang der neuen Schöpfung, der Erstgeborene aller Toten, der zuerst zum neuen Leben gelangt ist, damit er in jeder Hinsicht der Erste sei. 19 Denn Gott gefiel es, in ihm die ganze Fülle des Heils Wohnung nehmen zu lassen. 20 Durch ihn wollte Gott alles versöhnen und zu neuer, heilvoller Einheit verbinden. Alles, was gegeneinander streitet, wollte er zur Einheit zusammenführen, nachdem er Frieden gestiftet hat durch das Blut, das Jesus am Kreuz vergoss; alles, was auf der Erde und im Himmel lebt, sollte geeint werden durch ihn und in ihm als dem letzten Ziel.	13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into 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 of all creation; 16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.	13 For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son. 14 God has purchased our freedom with his blood and has forgiven all our sins. 15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. 16 Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see -- kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. 17 He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together. 18 Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the first of all who will rise from the dead, so he is first in everything. 19 For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, 20 and by him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross.

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The Study of the Text:[1]

1.   What did the text mean to the first readers?

With verses 13-20, we come to the end of the long Greek sentence that began in verse 9. Paul began with a prayer of thanksgiving, then moved to a prayer of intercession, and now finishes with a section from an ancient Christian hymn celebrating the person and work of Christ. What a sentence! It covers the breadth of Christian experience with profound insights both historically in the impact of the Gospel in his world and also theologically with tremendously perspective understanding of the cosmic Christ who stands in resurrection life at the very throne of God.

Historical Context:

In this text the External History aspect plays the more important role. But the indirect implications of the Internal History have significance as well, and thus will be treated.

External History. In the United Bible Societies *The Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed), variations in wording that are considered significant enough to impact the translation of the passage are found at two places in verses fourteen and twenty.
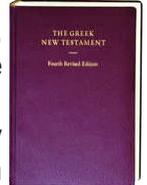
In verse fourteen, the UBS printed text reads ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Some later manuscripts mostly in the Byzantine text family add the words διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, through His blood, to the above relative clause after ἀπολύτρωσιν.[2] Thus the shorter reading without this prepositional phrase is the preferred reading and the most likely original reading.[3]

In verse twenty, the second [δι' αὐτοῦ], through Him, in the middle of the verse is omitted in several major early manuscripts.[4] The inclusion of this preposition has solid external manuscript support but is missing in several very early and significant manuscripts.[5] So the external evidence is mixed. Internally, the omission of

[1]Serious study of the biblical text must look at the 'then' meaning, i.e., the historical meaning, and the 'now' meaning, i.e., the contemporary application, of the scripture text. In considering the historical meaning, both elements of literary design and historical aspects must be considered. In each study we will attempt a summary overview of these procedures in the interpretation of the scripture text.

[2]{A} ἀπολύτρωσιν ℵ A B C D F G Ψ 075 0150 6 33 81 104 256 263 365 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1962 2127 *Byz* [K L P] Lect it[ar, b, d, f, g, mon, o] vg[ww, st] syr[p, pal] cop[sa, bo] eth geo Athanasius Didymus[dub] Chrysostom Theodoret[lat] Cyril; Ambrosiaster Ambrose Pelagius Augustine // ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ (see Eph 1.7) 424 1912 2200 2464 *l* 147 *l* 590 *l* 592 *l* 593 *l* 1159 vg[cl] syr[h] arm slav Gregory-Nyssa; Victorinus-Rome Cassiodorus

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); The Greek New Testament, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000; 2009).]

[3]"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." [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament : An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 412.]

In the text apparatus system of the UBS Greek New Testament, the editors give a rating of the level of certainty regarding the 'most likely original wording' of the text. Their system rates *the adopted reading* according to an A (= virtual certainty) down to a D (= considerable uncertainty). Note the following description from the UBS text editors:

In order to indicate the relative degree of certainty in the mind of the Committee for the reading adopted as the text,[10] an identifying letter is included within braces at the beginning of each set of textual variants. The letter {A} signifies that the text is certain, while {B} indicates that the text is almost certain. The letter {C}, however, indicates that the Committee had difficulty in deciding which variant to place in the text. The letter {D}, which occurs only rarely, indicates that the Committee had great difficulty in arriving at a decision. In fact, among the {D} decisions sometimes none of the variant readings commended itself as original, and therefore the only recourse was to print the least unsatisfactory reading.

[Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), xxviii.]

[4]{C} δι' αὐτοῦ P[46] ℵ A C D1 Ψ 048 0150 6 33 256 365 424 1319 1573 1852 2127vid 2200 Byz [K P] Lect syr[p, h] cop[bo] geo slav Chrysostom[1/2] Theodoret[lat] Cyril[1/5]; Hilary // omit B D* F G I L 075 81 104 263 436 459 1175 1241 1739 1881 1912 1962 2464 *l* 422 *l* 596 *l* 921 *l* 1441[1/2] it[ar, b, d, f, g, mon, o] vg syr[pal] cop[sa] arm eth Origen[gr, lat] Didymus[dub] Chrysostom[1/2] Cyril[4/5]; Victorinus-Rome Ambrosiaster Jerome Pelagius Augustine

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (With Apparatus); The Greek New Testament, 4th Revised Edition (With Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000; 2009).]

[5]"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

it very likely happened either by the copyists seeing the pronoun αὐτοῦ (his) in front of it and then skipping over the phrase δι᾽ αὐτοῦ (through him). Or perhaps, as appears to modern readers, the inclusion of the second instance of this prepositional phrase seemed redundant to ancient copyists also and was omitted. The inclusion of it creates a much more complicated Greek sentence structure that is hard to figure out with certainty. With these factors present, the editorial committee gave the inclusion of the phrase a C rating and additionally enclosed it in brackets to reflect the greater uncertainty of it being a part of the original wording of the letter. But whether included or omitted the essential meaning of verse twenty remains the same.

The Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev. ed) text adds seven more places where variation of wording surfaces in comparing all the existing ancient copies of this text.[6] Again, close examination of these additional variations reveal them to be stylistic in nature and generated by a desire to update the language to the contemporary spelling etc. of the Greek at the time of the copying of individual manuscripts.

The conclusion then is that the adopted reading of the Greek text reflects the original wording of the text at the time of its composition by Timothy under Paul's dictation.

Internal History. The 'beyond human experience' focus of this text does not contain specific historical reference points, apart from the eschatological climax of human history. The time line of the text moves from the earthly Jesus as the Son of God to the victorious Christ who will reign supremely at the close of human history.

Indirectly, the genre issue of a *Christus Hymnus* has historical implications for understanding the role of music in early Christian life and worship. The New Testament contains several examples of early Christian songs,[7] although very little instruction about music in worship is given.[8] The hymn fragments, particularly in

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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."

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament : An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 412-13.]

[6]**Kolosser 1,14**
* εσχ– B co (ἔχομεν is replaced by ἔσχομεν)
* (E 1,7) δια του αιματος αυτου 614. 630. 1505. 2464 *al* vg^cl sy^h; Cass (this phrase is added)
Kolosser 1,16
* τα ℵ² A (C) D² 075. 1881 *M* vg^mss; Eus Lcf et (τὰ added after πάντα)
* τα ℵ² A C D F G 075 m vg^ms; Eus Lcf (τὰ before ἐπὶ)
    | txt P⁴⁶ ℵ* B Ψ 6. 33. 1739. 1881 *pc* lat
* οτι P⁴⁶ (ὅτι added before τὰ πάντα)
Kolosser 1,18
* η P⁴⁶ B 075. 0278. 6. 104. 1175. 1739. 1881 *pc* (ἡ added before ἀρχή)
* P⁴⁶ ℵ*; Ir^lat pt (ἐκ omitted)
Kolosser 1,19
[–κισαι Venema cj] (κατοικῆσαι is replace with κατοίκισαι)
Kolosser 1,20
[αὐ– Griesbach cj] (αὐτόν is replaced with αὑτόν)
* B D* F G I L 075. 0278. 81. 104. 1175. 1241s. 1739. 1881. 2464 al lat^t sa; Or (δι᾽ αὐτοῦ is omitted)
    | txt P⁴⁶ ℵ A C D¹ Ψ 048vid. 33 *M* sy bo; Hil
[Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 524.]

[7]"Several New Testament songs were sung in Christian worship. This repertoire includes the Song of Mary (the *Magnificat,* Luke 1:46–55), the Song of Zacharias (the *Benedictus,* Luke 1:68–79), the *Gloria in Excelsis* or Greater Doxology (Luke 2:14), and the Song of Simeon (the *Nunc Dimittis,* Luke 2:29–32).

"Other New Testament songs or fragments of songs are found in Ephesians 5:14; Philippians 2:6–11; Colossians 1:15–20; 1 Timothy 1:17, 3:16, and 6:15–16; and 2 Timothy 1:11–13. These passages are chiefly doctrinal and didactic. However, in the case of Ephesians 5:14, the baptismal phrase, 'Awake, thou that sleepest,' is liturgical. Moreover, the devotional songs of the book of Revelation discussed in Robert E. Coleman's inspirational text *Songs of Heaven* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980) usually include a doxological stanza of praise. Three of the best known songs of this type are the Song of the Creator (Rev. 4:11), the Song of Judgment (Rev. 11:17–18) and the Song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:3–4)." [Robert Webber, ed., *Music and the Arts in Christian Worship*, 1st ed. (Nashville: Star Song Pub. Group, 1994), 254]

[8]The two main texts with some instruction are Col. 3:16-17 and Eph. 5:18-19.

the letters of Paul, reflect the teaching and encouraging role for music as set forth in Col. 3:16-17.[9] Early Christian worship in the second half of the first century centered on praying, reading sacred scripture, and commenting on / discussing it.[10] Music seems to have played a minor role in the gatherings, but we are left without any clear description of this inside the New Testament. The major role of music in twenty-first century Christian worship practice was unknown in the beginning century. The cultural origin and continuing connections of music with its surrounding culture have shaped the modern practices, rather than a primitive Christian model.

Literary Aspects:

The literary aspects of 1:13-20 play a vital role in the interpretive process. Identification of literary form, the identification of the context, and the analysis of the complex internal flow of ideas are all important to understanding Paul's words here.

Literary Form: At the *broad genre level*, once more we are dealing with an ancient letter. The implications of this center on the occasional nature of the letter. That is, the letter is prompted by circumstances in the believing community at Colossae. When Epaphras arrived at Caesarea where Paul was under Roman arrest, he gave a full report to the apostle of the situation of the church (cf. 1:7-8[11]). Paul was not able to make a personal visit to the church, so he had Timothy pen this letter to the church as the apostle dictated the material to him. The needs of the congregation therefore shape the content and orientation of the letter, since it first of all seeks to speak to them and their needs at that particular moment of time in the late 50s of the first century. The content of these verses serve as a reminder to the Colossians of the Christ they serve.

At the *small genre level*, we are looking at the bulk of the passage being taken from an early Christian hymn (vv. 15-20). Labeled *Christus Hymnus*[12] in modern source critical scholarship, this material was composed and first used for teaching and instruction in Christian worship services.[13] Whether this originated

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[9]Col. 3:16-17 (NRSV): "16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; ***teach and admonish one another*** in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

16 ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικείτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ· διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς ἐν χάριτι, ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ· 17 καὶ πᾶν ὅ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ.

[10]In the beginning two decades of the Christian movement, AD. 30-50 when virtually all Christians were Jewish, the worship model was the Jewish synagogue, where singing usually didn't take place. And at the Jerusalem temple singing was only of the psalms and mostly done by trained choirs, rather than by the congregation. With the massive influx of Gentiles into Christianity beginning with the Pauline mission in the mid-first century the influence of musical forms from the surrounding Greek and Roman worlds began to play an increasing role in Christian worship. Evidently one of these by-products was the expansion of congregational singing during Christian worship services.

[11]Col. 1:7-8 (NRSV): "7 This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8 and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit."

7 καθὼς ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὅς ἐστιν πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 8 ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι.

[12]The determination of this kind of material is made by applying highly technical analysis of ancient texts with the use of a set of signals to detect the presence of poetic structures both at formal and informal levels. The skills for doing this sort of evaluation have been advanced significantly in the last hundred years under the umbrella label of Literary Criticism. The late twentieth century re-focus on the literary aspects of ancient texts in biblical studies renewed and advanced interpretive methods already in place prior to the dominance of Historical Criticism in the eighteen and nineteen hundreds. Numerous methodologies come together as branches of Literary Criticism to help formulate specific procedures in identifying pieces of early Christian tradition that surface in the pages of the New Testament. The process is not without challenges, but does remind us that from the beginning the Christian movement sought to develop an understanding of itself and its beliefs as flowing from and based upon the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The analysis of ancient letters is one of the most recent disciplines to emerge in this. A most influential publication in this field is *The Making of the New Testament* by the recently deceased Baptist scholar and former colleague of mine E. Earle Ellis.

[13]Music seemed to play an important role in the ancient world, both religiously and non-religiously. However, the Greek word for music, συμφωνία, only shows up in Luk. 15:25 in reference to the party thrown by the father for his prodigal son. And here the precise reference is not clear; συμφωνία could refer to the sound produced by several instruments playing at the same time, a group of musicians playing together, or a wind instrument similar to a modern bagpipe being played. Cf. Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. S.v., συμφωνία.

Interestingly, some eleven different Hebrew words are translated as 'music' from the Old Testament, mostly in relating to vocal singing. Much more reference to music is contained in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. Music included both the playing of various instruments and the singing of songs. Most of the Israelite music had its origins in the surrounding or preced-

at Colossae or not is unknown; most likely it came from elsewhere to Colossae. This material is incorporated into Paul's letters with both Paul being knowledgeable of it and his readers also having familiarity with it. Many second century Church Fathers provide glimpses of insight into what took place in the beginning Christian century, and these help paint the picture of how the process worked among early Christians.

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ing middle eastern cultures such as Egypt. Little indication exists to suggest that the Hebrews developed their own style of music distinct from that of their neighbors until very late in their history. Music was mostly non-religious and was used for celebrations in both public ceremonies and private entertainment. Its use sometimes comes under severe criticism from the prophets (cf. Amos 6:4-5). Music and dance often were performed together.

The religious use of music by the Israelites underwent dramatic changes as their culture moved from nomadic tribesmen in the patriarchal era to rural farmers in the conquest to an increasingly urbanized culture from David onward. Early on, Israelite music differed very little from that of their pagan neighbors in their idolatry as is reflected in the loud, frenzied singing and dancing of the Israelites (Exod. 32:19) and the worshippers of Baal (1 Kings 18:26-29). During the conquest period, music and dance often were linked to prophesying in a feverous ecstatic trance as is reflected in 1 Sam. 10:5 and 2 Kings 3:15. Once the temple was established by Solomon in a now urbanized cultural setting, religious music increasingly was turned over to professionals, namely the Levites in the temple, and the worshippers became largely passive listeners during worship.

"These levitical singers, whose original leaders are said to be Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman (1 Chr 25:1) were probably even more prominent in temple worship during the Second Temple period following the Exile. They were joined in the organization and performance of all liturgical music by several other groups, including those associated with Chenaniah, 'leader of the music of the singers' (1 Chr 5:27), and Mattithiah and five other men, who were 'to lead with lyres' (1 Chr 15:21). Still another group, the Korahites (1 Chr 6:7), were also apparently members of the musical community, since their name appears in the superscription of a number of psalms (42; 44–49; 84–85; 87–88).

"Each guild would have ultimately created and become associated with a particular repertoire of songs — thereby aiding in the transmission and survival of this sacred music (Sarna *EncJud* 13: 1317). Their survival during the Babylonian Exile and their importance to the establishment of the Second Temple community can be seen in the list of the exiles who returned with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem. Here it states that 200 male and female singers (Ezra 2:65) as well as 128 'sons of Asaph' (2:41) were a part of the company of returnees." [Victor H. Matthews, "Music and Musical Instruments: Music in the Bible" In vol. 4, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 933.]

By the middle of the first Christian century Jewish religious music was centered in the temple until its destruction in AD 70, which signaled a huge turning point in religious music among Jewish people. The use of musical instruments in sabbath worship in the synagogues was strictly forbidden by this time (as was the banning of the playing of instruments and singing generally during the sabbath), and the singing that might be done (music was optional in sabbath worship and required the presence of a minimum of twelve well trained singers before music could be included) in the worship services was without the aid of any musical instrument (cf. *m. Besa* V:2). With the temple in ruins, the synagogue became the sole center of corporate worship among the Jews and the role of music underwent yet further evolution. It is here that the role of the Jewish cantor emerges, who basically did the 'singing' in the synagogue. "The choral singing of the temple was replaced by a single cantor. The cantor was a layman who, according to tradition, had to have the following qualifications: 'He had to be well educated, gifted with a sweet voice, of humble personality, recognized by the community, conversant with Scripture and all the prayers; he must not be a rich man, for his prayers should come from his heart.' His most important job was the cantillation of the Law and the Prophets. A series of accents and punctuations, forerunners of actual musical notation, were indications for the cantor in the musical interpretation of the Scripture." [Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale reference library (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 922.] A distinctive style of vocal singing without instruments emerged, that carefully distinguished itself from the 'secular' music of the surrounding cultures of the Greeks and Romans. Recent Jewish and Christian scholarship has been able to successfully trace the foundations of the medieval Gregorian chant to this developing Jewish musical style.

Apostolic Christianity drew heavily from the synagogue model especially in the 'Jewish only' stage of Christianity in the first half of the beginning Christianity century. And this is reflected in isolated references to music only in 1 Cor. 14:7-8, 15, 26, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16-17, Luke 7:31, 15:25, Matt. 11:7, 26:30, Mk. 14:26, Acts 16:25, Rev. 4:11, 5:9-10, 7:15-17, and 11:17-18. The singing done in the church occupied a minor role in worship, and in spite of growing Hellenistic musical influence, from all indication, it reflected the Jewish antagonism "to instrumental music, so closely associated with pagan religions and the spectacles of the Roman colosseum, [that] continued for several centuries." [Victor H. Matthews, "Music and Musical Instruments: Music in the Bible" In vol. 4, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 934.]

"While the Jewish rabbis considered music an art form for the praise of God, and the Greek philosophers thought of it as a powerful moral force in creation, the Romans considered music mainly as entertainment. The music of the Roman games was neither religious nor philosophic and, from the accounts of witnesses, it was not technically exceptional. In the Roman Empire musicians were given a lower status and looked on as mere entertainers. One reason the early church did not include instrumental music in their worship was in reaction to the debased secular use of instruments by the Romans." [Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988), 1508. S.V., Mary Hopper, "Music and Musical Instruments."]

"Logically, most of the hymns found in the NT are based on Hebrew poetic psalm forms, but there is Greek and Latin influence also. The hymns from the Gospel of Luke have become well-known canticles adopted by the church: the Magnificat (Lk 1:46–55), the Benedictus (1:68–79), the Gloria (2:14) and the Nunc Dimittis (2:29–32). While patterned after the psalms of the OT, these hymns are full of confidence in the salvation of Christ and in his imminent return. Other Christological hymns found in the NT include the prologue to the Gospel of John, Ephesians 2:14–16, Philippians 2:6–11, Colossians 1:15–20, 1 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 1:3, and 1 Peter 3:18–22." [Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale reference library (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 923.]

One of the challenges in this kind of analysis is drawing boundary lines between a pre-formed Christian hymn and a pre-formed confession of faith. Given the rhythmic way in which ancient Koine Greek was 'spoken' -- in a noticeable musical pattern -- the difference between citing a poetic expression as a confession of faith and singing it as a hymn would not have been very great. The absence or use of musical instruments would have been a major difference here. But for the interpretive objectives of the written forms in texts, not much difference between the two genres is present.

The presence of the pre-formed hymn in our text is normally identified as contained in verses 15-20, and with verses 13-14 serving to introduce and set up the reference. But the flow of ideas and the patterns of Greek grammar use are close enough between these two units that one can't dogmatically conclude that the cited material begins in verse 15, and not before. This conclusion is mostly based on vocabulary differences between the two units and the shift from God to Christ as the central subject of discussion, thus the label *Christus Hymnus*.[14]

Literary Setting: The larger setting of vv. 13-20 is verses 9-20 that together make up a single sentence in the Greek text. The series of relative clause declarations that make up vv. 13-20 are anchored in the antecedent of the first relative pronoun 'who' in verse 13 going back to God the Father in verse 12. Verses 13-14 expand the reference to God's 'having qualified' the Colossian believers for Heaven (τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί). In verse 13, a shift is made from the Father to the Son in the work of redemption. The subsequent pronouns (vv. 15, 17, 18b) all go back to the Son as their antecedent.

Although the boundary line is not clearly drawn, at some point between verse 9 and verse 20, Paul transitions from the letter Proem to the letter body. Clearly by verses 21-23, he has made the transition into the body proper of the letter. This kind of fluid movement from Proem to body section can be traced in ancient letters, and so is not something unusual or distinctive to Paul, or to this particular letter.

Literary Structure: The block diagram of the original Greek text, expressed in the rather literal English translation below, helps identify the organization of ideas in the passage. One should remember that vv. 13-20 are a continuation of the single sentence begun in verse 9. The diagram below does not include the core declaration in verse nine, but assumes it as the foundation for these elements: we do not cease praying, asking, and...

```
1.12                          giving thanks to the Father
                                          who has made us fit
                                          |     for a portion
                                          |           of the inheritance
                                          |               of the saints
                                          |           in light;
                                          who rescued us
1.13                                      |     from the powers
                                          |           of darkness,
                                          |     and
                                          --- transferred us
                                              into the kingdom
                                                  of His beloved Son
                              ---------------------------------|
```

[14]"***Christuslied*** oder ***Christushymnus*** nennt man zum einen Texte im Neuen Testament (NT), die in poetisch-liedhafter Weise ein christliches Glaubensbekenntnis enthalten, zum anderen allgemein religiöse Gedichte, Choräle oder Hymnen, die besonders die Gestalt Jesus Christus zum Inhalt haben. In einem weiteren Sinn werden auch einige auf den Messias bezogene Texte des Alten Testaments bzw. der Hebräischen Bibel (Tanach) im Christentum manchmal "Christuslied" genannt." ["Christuslied," Wikipedia online]

```
1.14                                                         in whom we have redemption
                                                                    the forgiveness
                                                                        of our sins;
1.15                                                    who is the image
                                                           |        of the invisible God,
                                                           |     first born
                                                           |          of all creation,
                                    /-------------------|
1.16                                because in Him were created all things,
                                                  in Heaven          |
                                                      and            |
                                                  upon the earth, |
                                                                      things visible
                                                           |     and
                                                           things invisible,
                                                            whether thrones
                                                            whether lordships
                                                            whether authorities
                                                            whether powers,


                        through him
                              and
                        for Him,
3    all things are created;
1.17        and
4    He is
          before all things,
          and
                    in Him
5    all things...exist,
1.18        and
6    He is the head of the body,
     |                          the church;
       who is the beginning,
                    the first born
                          of the dead,
                                        in all things
          in order that...He might have preeminence,
            |-------------------|
1.19        |                                              in Him
          because God was pleased for the complete fullness to dwell
1.20                                          and
                                           through Him
                                  to reconcile all things
                                      to Himself
                                      having made peace
                                        through the blood of His cross,
                                       [through Him]


                                        whether things on the earth,
                                        whether things in Heaven.
```

    These complex dependent clauses and main clause declarations reflect an eloquent praise to both God and Christ. God is the focus in verses 13 and 14. Christ becomes the dominant focus in verses 15-20. Inside the hymn in vv. 15-20, Christ's deity is celebrated on the basis on His work as Creator (vv. 15-17). His role as Head of the church is then affirmed in vv. 18-20, perhaps as a second set of reasons for His deity.[15]

[15]One important note here. The complexity of this lengthy series of clauses, both relative and conjunctory, has led to differing

The emerging pattern built into the hymn is best reflected as

Stanza one: ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου (v. 15a)
> **Refrain**: πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως (v. 15b)
> **Elaboration**, Causal: vv. 16-17

Stanza two: (v. 18a-b)
> καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας·
> ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή,
> **Refrain**: πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν (v. 18c)
> **Elaboration**, Purpose / Causal: vv. 18d-20)

One should remember that ancient Greek poetry does not correspond in any way to modern western poetry. Although ancient Greek meter is present in the text, it is very difficult to reflect this in any way through translation into a modern western language. This largely because Greek poetry did not function in any familiar style comparable to contemporary patterns of poetic meter. In the New Testament, one is additionally faced with the challenge of poetic texts written in Greek and often with strong tones of either Hebrew or Aramaic poetry impacting their Greek expression. Thus the translator is faced with a hybrid expression that blends Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic patterns into a single expression. Most Bible translators, when it is important to reflect ancient poetry -- either in Hebrew or Greek -- simply adopt the standards for poetic expression in the modern language they are working with and reproduce a modern poetry expression as the closest way to signal the presence of poetry in the biblical text.[16]

Exegesis of the Text:

In light of the internal structure of the passage described above, the following exegesis will center on the two divine references: God in vv. 13-14 and Christ in vv. 15-20. This approach better reflects the natural division of thought within the passage itself.

How God has qualified us for Heaven, vv. 13-14: "13 He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"

13 ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ, 14 ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

The first relative clause, v. 13, depends upon the Father to define 'who' as the pronoun antecedent.[17] In two rich expressions, Paul defines the Christian experience of salvation at the moment of conversion.

First, God has intervened in our life to move us out of danger and into safety. This intervention has the negative and the positive aspects. The negative side is a 'rescue' (ἐρρύσατο).[18] The echoes of the Exodus

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conclusions about the inner connection of the various elements. The above diagram reflects the understanding of the UBS *Greek New Testament* rev. 4th edition. The alternative, which has much to commend it, is reflected in the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* 27th rev. ed. This sees statements 3 through 6 in the above diagram as a continuation of the subordinate 'because...' clause in verse 16, thus providing additional reasons for the deity of Christ as the image of God. The N-A 27th ed. text also formats verses 15-20 as poetry, although the formatting pattern is not particularly helpful for understanding the inner connection of the elements in these verses. Which pattern is more accurate is difficult to say with certainty. Thus one cannot take a dogmatic stance for either understanding. The impact on the meaning of the text is largely the prominence given to Jesus as the head of the church. The first pattern stresses this role slightly more than the alternative.

[16]From personal experience in doing Bible translation, this is without question the most difficult aspect of translating the biblical text into a modern language.

Also, really serious attention to this literary aspect of the biblical text by Bible translators has only surfaced in the last three to four decades. Prior to the mid-twentieth century little if any attention was given to this, in part because translators had little or no training to know how to handle such texts in the Bible. The dramatic increase in sensitivity to poetry in the Bible has been parallel to and shaped by the increased attention to the literary aspects of the biblical text for interpretation that has emerged in the last half of the twentieth century.

[17]"giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light."
εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί,

[18]"v 13, composed of two corresponding lines, adds a substantiating explanation to v 12. It switches from the second person plural used in the summons of v 12 to the first person plural. In a creedal statement the community pronounces that it has been freed by God's redeeming act. The Greek ῥύεσθαι (to save, rescue, deliver) is usually the LXX translation of the Hebrew hiphil of נצל, and it describes God's helping and saving intervention. He delivered his people from the hands of the Egyptians (Exod 14:30; Judg 6:9, 13), from bondage (Exod 6:6), and from the hands of all its foes (Judg 8:34). This deliverance occurs according to his great mercy (Neh 9:28), according to his mercy (LXX Ps 32:18f), for his name's sake (LXX Ps 78:9). Just as he assisted the whole of his people, so also he shows his saving help to the pious individual by delivering him from the hand of his persecutor (2 Sam 12:7)

deliverance of ancient Israel are loud in this expression.[19] God has produced a new deliverance, this time from different authorities, of different people, with a different deliverer, and for a different objective.[20] "We" are the people being delivered, not the ancient Israelites. And "we" means believers in Jesus Christ. Instead of deliverance from the Egyptian slave masters, we have been rescued from the control of 'the power of darkness' (ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους). Satan rules over the world as one spreading 'darkness' that blinds the eyes of people to keep them from discovering God. By keeping them 'in the dark' they do not become 'children of light' (cf. v. 12). But this plan of the Evil One has been eliminated by God. Almighty God has demonstrated His superior power to the Ruler of the Darkness by rescuing His people from the Devil's clutches.

The positive side is that God 'has transferred us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son' (καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ). The translation of the Greek verb μετέστησεν varies with English

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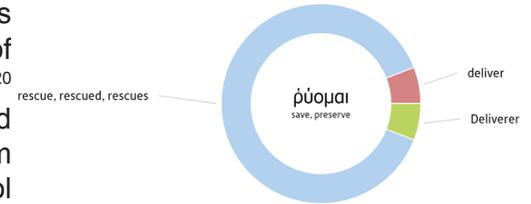
and by assisting him against his foes (LXX Ps 7:2). The Qumran community also spoke its praises of the liberating act of God: the host of those who follow the teacher of righteousness are saved by him from the house of Judgment (1 QpHab VIII, 2), but idols are not able to save their worshippers on the day of judgment (1 QpHab XII, 14). The covenant of God assures all those who live according to its commandments that he will save them from all snares of the Pit (CD XIV, 2). Those praying praise God in the words "You have redeemed my soul from the hand of the mighty" (1 QH II, 35), and "You have redeemed my soul from the Pit" (1 QH III, 19). [Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon a Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon.*, Translation of *Die Briefe an Die Kolosser Und an Philemon.*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 36]

[19]Of the 17 uses of the verb in the NT, 12 of them are in the writings of the apostle Paul. But all 17 uses convey the idea of rescue and deliver from harm:

"**ῥύομαι** mid. dep. (Hom.+—Anz 275f; FChase, The Lord's Prayer in the Early Church: Texts and Studies I/3, 1891, 71ff) fut. ῥύσομαι; 1 aor. ἐ(ρ)ρυσάμην, impv. ῥῦσαι **Mt 6:13**; pf. 3 sg. ἔρυσται [=εἴρυσται] AcPlCor 1:8. Pass.: fut. ῥυσθήσομαι LXX; 1 aor. ἐ(ρ)ρύσθην (on the spelling w. one ρ or two s. B-D-F §11, 1; 101 p. 48; Mlt-H. 101f; 193) *to rescue from danger, save, rescue, deliver, preserve τινά someone* (Hippol., Ref. 8, 10, 3; Theoph. Ant. 3, 9 [p. 224, 15]) **Mt 27:43;** 1 Cl 16:16 (both Ps 21:9); **2 Pt 2:7;** 1 Cl 8:4 (Is 1:17); 22:8 (Ps 33:20) v.l.; 55:6; 2 Cl 6:8 (Ezk 14:18). τινὰ ἀπό τινος *rescue, save, deliver, or preserve someone fr. someone or someth.* (B-D-F §180; s. also Rob. 517f.—Pr 2:12; Is 25:4; Ezk 37:23; 1 Macc 12:15; PsSol 4:23 al.; TestReub 4:10; JosAs 12:7; ApcSed 16:7; Sib-Or 2, 344; ἀπὸ τῆς πλάνης Orig., C. Cels. 5, 33, 39; Did., Gen. 154, 20) **Mt 6:13; Lk 11:4 v.l.** (on the subject matter s. Hierocles 25 [ln. 61], 474 Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἢ πολλῶν κε κακῶν λύσειας ἅπαντας); **2 Ti 4:18;** 1 Cl 60:3b; D 8:2; 10:5. Pass. **Ac 5:15 v.l.; Ro 15:31; 2 Th 3:2;** 1 Cl 60:3a. Also τινὰ ἔκ τινος (Anacreon 111 Diehl; Hdt. 5, 49; Diod S 12, 53, 1; hymn to Isis: SEG VIII, 548, 27 [I B.C.]; PBad 48, 3 [126 B.C.] ἐκ πολεμίων; LXX; TestSim 2:8; Jos., Ant. 12, 407; Just., D. 111, 3; Mel., P. 68, 489.—Aristoxenus, Fgm. 113 ῥύεσθαι καὶ ἐρύεσθαι διαφορὰν ἔχει πρὸς ἄλληλα. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ῥύεσθαι ἐκ θανάτου ἕλκειν, τὸ δὲ ἐρύεσθαι φυλάττειν=ʽῥύεσθαι and ἐρύεσθαι are different: ῥ. means rescuing fr. death, but ἐ. to ward off [death]') **2 Ti 3:11**; from death (SibOr 2, 81; Just., D. 111, 3) **2 Cor 1:10a;** 1 Cl 56:9 (Job 5:20); 2 Cl 16:4 (w. acc. to be supplied); fr. the power of darkness **Col 1:13** (cp. JosAs 15:13 ἐκ τοῦ σκότους); fr. wrath to come **1 Th 1:10**; fr. blood-guilt 1 Cl 18:14 (Ps 50:16); fr. all afflictions 22:7 (Ps 33:18); fr. eternal punishment 2 Cl 6:7; fr. temptation **2 Pt 2:9**. τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; *who will set me free from this body of death?* **Ro 7:24**. ἐκ δεσμῶν ἐρύσατο τὸν κόσμον ὅλον (God, who) *rescued the entire world from its chains* AcPl Ha 3, 7. ἐκ χειρὸς ἀνόμου ὁ θεὸς ἐρύσατο τὸν Ἰσραήλ 8, 10. εἴρυσταί σε κύριος ἐκ χειρὸς ἀνόμου *the Lord rescues you from a lawless hand* AcPlCor 1:8 (on the form Schwyzer I 681 n. 1: 'praesentisches Perfekt'). Pass. ῥυσθῆναι ἐκ χειρός τινος *be rescued from someone's power* **Lk 1:74** (cp. Jos., Vi. 83, Ant. 7, 151; JosAs 28:3 ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν τῶν ἀδελφῶν). ἐκ στόματος λέοντος *be saved from the jaws of the lion* **2 Ti 4:17**. ῥ. τινά τινι *save someone by someth.* (Diod S 13, 64, 6 ἐρρύσατο χρήμασι τὴν ἰδίαν ψυχήν=his life by means of money) 2 Cl 6:9. Also ῥ. τινα διά τινος 1 Cl 55:1. Abs. **Mt 27:43** (for a 'divine' rescue of a θεοσεβής fr. extreme danger s. Hdt. 1, 86, 2, Croesus on the pyre: Κῦρος βουλόμενος εἰδέναι εἴ τίς μιν δαιμόνων ῥύσεται τοῦ μὴ ζῶντα κατακαυθῆναι=Cyrus wishing to know whether some divinity would rescue (Croesus) from being burned alive. S. also Ps 21:9); **2 Cor 1:10b;** AcPl Ha 2, 30. ῥυσθείητε ἀπὸ τούτων ἁπάντων *may you be delivered from all these* (men or sins) D 5:2.—Subst. ὁ ῥυόμενος *the deliverer* **Ro 11:26** (Is 59:20); 1 Cl 35:11 (Ps 49:22).—DELG s.v. ἔρυμαι. M-M. EDNT. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 907-08.]

[20]"The Christian community prays to God 'deliver us from evil' (Mt 6:13 ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ) and awaits its Lord 'who delivers us from the wrath to come' (τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης 1 Thess 1:10). The anxious question 'who will deliver me from this body of death?' (τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου Rom 7:24) is answered by the confession in Col 1:13, God 'has delivered us from the power of darkness' (ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους)." [Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon a Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Translation of *Die Briefe an Die Kolosser Und an Philemon.*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 36]

translations.[21] The limited use of this verb in the New Testament[22] suggests movement to point B, while the previous verb conveys movement from point A. This is reenforced by the prepositions 'from' (ἐκ) and 'into' (εἰς) with the respective verbs. God moves us from the control of darkness (τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους) into the control of His beloved Son (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ). Paul doesn't often use the term 'Kingdom' to refer to salvation.[23] The Aorist tense of both verbs unquestionably points to the moment of conversion by the believer as the point of divine transfer. The Aramaism 'the kingdom of the Son of His love' (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ) is equivalent to 'the kingdom of His beloved Son.' We confess Jesus as Lord and He is the Son whom the Father dearly loves.

In verse 14, it is in this Jesus that we have experienced redemption (τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν), which Paul defines as forgiveness of sins (τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν). This expression in verse 14 comes back to define what has been achieved by the divine intervention at conversion. This rescue and transfer (ἐρρύσατο... καὶ μετέστησεν) produces the experience of being liberated from the control of evil forces (τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν). As an ancient slave experienced liberation[24] in being freed from his slavery, the believer is freed from the tyranny of sin and death. The key aspect of this redemption is then defined by Paul as 'forgiveness of sins' (τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν). In Eph. 1:7, the two concepts are linked together as here: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" [ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ]. The present tense verb 'we have' (ἔχομεν) underscores ongoing the possession of this redemption as the outgrowth of the rescuing action of God in conversion. When linked back to the idea of 'inheritance' (τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου) in verse 12, this salvation is moving toward eschatological climax in its completion at the close of human history.

Thus, the thanksgiving expressed by Paul for the Colossians (1:12) is for the wonderful way that God has qualified us for Heaven (εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί). In his elaboration of this in verses 13-14, we gain greater insight into just how God has done this. That God had already done such a work in the lives of the Colossians prompted thanksgiving to God from the apostle. Our realization of it both in our lives and in the lives of other believers should generate profound thanksgiving to God as well.

The Christ we celebrate, vv. 15-20: "15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." (15 ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, 16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· 17 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, 18 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ
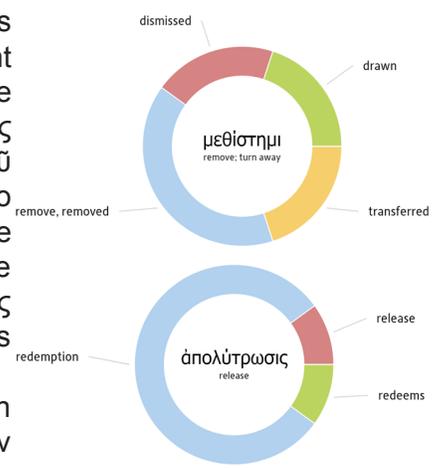
[21]Note: "translated us into", ASV; "hath translated us", KJV, AV (1873); "did translate us", YLT; "turned us loose in", Cotton Patch Version; "transferred us into", RSV, NRSV, NRSV Rev Int, ESV, HCSB, HDNT; NetBible, NASB95, NLT, WuestNT; "brought us safe into", GNT; "brought us into", NIV, ISV, NICV, NIrV, TNIV; "hat uns versetzt in", LB (1912); "sets us up in", Message; "conveyed us into", NKJV; "nos trasladó," BdA.

[22]Five instances are found in the New Testament: Lk. 16:4; Acts 19:26 (2x); 1 Cor. 13:2; Col. 1:13.

[23]The idea of 'kingdom' is used only 14 times in Paul's writings, and virtually everywhere but in Col. 1:13 it is 'the kingdom of God' that is designated. Some commentators seek to draw a distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God, but such distinction is without foundation and twists the meaning of the text. Whether Christ is ruling or God is ruling over the lives of His people is immaterial conceptually. Christian conversion brings the believer under the rule of God through Christ by the presence of His Spirit.

[24]The Greek word for 'redemption' (ἀπολύτρωσις) is used ten times in the New Testament, with seven of them in Paul's writings: Rom. 3:24, 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14, 4:30; Col. 1:14. The verb ἀπολυτρόω ("I release on payment of a ransom") is not used in the New Testament.

τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων, 19 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι 20 καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι' αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς).

Three central motifs form the organizing conceptual structure of this Christ centered hymn: image of God, creator of the world, head of the church.[25] Clearly Christ is presented in His connection with the Heavenly Father, and then in connection with the world as both Creator and Savior. The grammatical structure of the original text clearly signals pre-formed tradition that is incorporated largely in place into the letter at this point.[26] Some adaptation for the specific use here was most likely made, but grammatical signals point strongly to a previously formed structure.

One of the implications of this assessment relates to a common interpretive conclusion drawn from verses 15-20. Many scholars look to these verses as a major source of indirect identification[27] of the 'opponents of Paul' at Colossae who were introducing false teaching to the church. The fact that this material was composed outside of Colossae for Christian teaching and worship in many different places minimizes the legitimate conclusions possible about the specific situation of false teachers and teaching at Colossae. It can still signal some of the problems in very general ways, but very little detailed implication about false teaching at Colossae can be deduced from this text legitimately.[28] Most more helpful for this assessment is 2:8-23.

Image of God, v. 15: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου).

Christ is affirmed in two ways: as the image of God and as the first born of all creation.

Christ is declared to be the very image of the invisible God, εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου. The conceptual point of this declaration is that the God who cannot be seen by physical eyes has taken shape and form in the person of Jesus Christ. In 2 Cor. 4:4, Paul wrote earlier to the Corinthian believers that Christ is the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ. In this affirmation, Paul speaks of the glory of Christ (τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ,) with the point that Christ reflects the very Presence of God Himself. The fourth Gospel writer will later make a similar point beginning in the Prologue (1:18) that "no one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.). Later this gospel writer will remind us through the words of Jesus (14:9), "He who has seen me has seen the father" (ὁ ἑωρακὼς ἐμὲ ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα). The writer of Hebrews with different terms makes the same basic point about Jesus in 1:3: "He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως). All this to say that early Christianity had a clear vision of the person of Christ as the divine Son of God on a plane of equality with the Father. Thus the hymn opens with the affirmation of the full deity of Christ.

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[25]Although assessments vary as to whether this hymn has two or three strophes, the better understanding appears to be the two strophe perspective, with the possibility of Paul having modified the original hymn somewhat in order to make it fit the situation of Colossae. James Dunn charts out the signals of the two strophe understanding as follows:

1:15	"who is the firstborn"	1:18b
1:16	"because in him"	1:19
1:16	"all things, through him, to him"	1:20

[James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon : A Commentary on the Greek Text, in The New International Greek Testament Commentaries.* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 81]

[26]"These six verses are cast in a form of rhythmical prose which is found in much early Christian hymnody. The repetition of key words or phrases indicates the strophic arrangement. There appear to be two main strophes, *(1)* vv. 15–16, and *(3)* vv. 18b–20, with the transition between them supplied by *(2)* vv. 17–18a. Each strophe begins with "He is" (lit., "who is") and exhibits the key words "firstborn," "because in him," "through him," and "all things." The transitional lines begin and end with "He indeed is" or "He is also" (identical in Greek), the former summing up the preceding strophe, the latter introducing the following strophe." [F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, Includes Indexes., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 52.]

[27]By 'indirect identification' is meant that when the apostolic writer strongly emphasizes one perspective, the false teachers are assumed to be emphasizing the opposite idea. This method of assessing the negative situation with the targeted recipients of a letter rests upon somewhat questionable grounds logically, however.

[28]Such reasoning comes very close to the classical *argumentum ex silentio*. Very easily can the circumstantial nature of the ancient letter be pushed to an extreme level in order to justify such deductions from a text in the letter. One is on much more solid grounds when dealing with statements clearly alluding to contrary ideas being present among the recipients of the letter. Col. 2:8-23 represents this kind of text in Colossians, not the pre-formed *Christus Hymnus* in 1:15-20.

This affirmation evidently builds upon and modifies a relatively common perspective in Hellenistic Judaism in the ancient world that the invisible God could be known through Wisdom as the divine Logos of God.[29] Paul's point, similar to that in the fourth Gospel, is that Jesus is that divine Logos and thus reflects the wisdom of the Heavenly Father expressed to human beings. In Him does the invisible God become visible.

And then it moves immediately to declaring Christ as 'the first-born of all creation' (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως). Edward Lohse makes an important point here:[30]

> The description of the pre-existent Christ as the "first-born before all creation" (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) is not intended to mean that he was created first and thereby began the succession of created beings. Rather, it refers instead to his uniqueness, by which he is distinguished from all creation (cf. Heb 1:6). The point is not a temporal advantage but rather the superiority which is due to him as the agent of creation who is before all creation. As the first-born he stands over against creation as Lord.

In relation to the created order Christ stands as superior over all. Thus the idea taken from the metaphor of the son born first in the family is not that of his birth, but, instead, the superior position that this son enjoyed in the family as the first born.[31] A connection to the material creation is assumed, but Christ is not limited by the limitations of creation.

Creator of the world, vv. 16-17: "16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· 17 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν,).

The title 'First Born of All Creation' (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) sets up the first strophe of the hymn in vv. 16-17. This is introduced as the basis (ὅτι ...) for the declarations about Christ as image and first-born. Note from the English translation the pattern:

in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
        things visible and invisible,
        whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers —
all things have been created through him and for him.

Jesus' connection to the created order is defined as 'in him' (ἐν αὐτῷ), 'through him' (δι᾽ αὐτοῦ) and 'for him' (εἰς αὐτὸν).[32] Thus Jesus stands closely linked to the created order, not detached and cut off from it. Thus it is through Him that a connection between the divine and creation is possible.

The scope of creation includes everything, both visible and invisible (τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα). Particularly associated with the invisible are "thrones or dominions or rulers or powers" (εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ

[29]"More to the point here is the importance in Hellenistic Judaism of the thought of divine Wisdom as the 'image of God' (particularly Wis. 7:26; Philo, *Legum allegoriae* 1:43); also of the divine Logos in Philo (*De confusione linguarum* 97, 147; *De fuga et inventione* 101; *De somnis* 1.239; 2.45; Eltester 110). The invisible God makes himself visible in and through his wisdom (Feuillet, *Sagesse* 173–74). The importance of this in Hellenistic Judaism was that 'image' could thus bridge the otherwise unbridgeable gulf between the invisible world and God on the one side and visible creation and humanity on the other — denoting both that which produces the divine image and the image thus produced.[13] In Jewish theology Wisdom and Logos (the two are often equivalent) thus become ways of safeguarding the unknowability of God by providing a mode of speaking of the invisible God's self-revelatory action (his 'image/likeness' being stamped, his 'word' spoken) by means of which he may nevertheless be known ('the knowledge of God'; see on 1:9 and 10). The Wisdom and Logos of God could thus function in effective Jewish apologetic within a wider Hellenistic milieu, where other similarly functioning terms were less suitable ('glory of God' too Jewish, 'Spirit of God' too non rational)." [James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* in The New International Greek Testament Commentaries. (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 80]

[30]Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon a Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon.*, Translation of *Die Briefe an Die Kolosser Und an Philemon*, Hermeneia -- a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 43.

[31]The Christian heresy of adoptionism makes the fatal mistake of taking the point of the metaphor as being birth rather it being superior position.

[32]"The 'in him' is the beginning of a sequence of prepositional phrases by means of which the creation of 'all things' is described: 'in him, through him, to him.' Such use of the prepositions 'from,' 'by,' 'through,' 'in,' and 'to' or 'for' was widespread in talking about God and the cosmos. So particularly pseudo-Aristotle, *De mundo* 6: ὅτι ἐκ θεοῦ πάντα καὶ διὰ θεοῦ συνέστηκε; Seneca, *Epistulae* 65.8: "Quinque ergo causae sunt, ut Plato dicit: id ex quo, id a quo, id in quo, id ad quod, id propter quod"; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.23: ἐκ σοῦ πάντα, ἐν σοῖ πάντα, εἰς σέ πάντα; so also Philo, *De cherubim* 125–26: τὸ ὑφ᾽ οὗ, τὸ ἐξ οὗ, τὸ δι᾽ οὗ, τὸ δι᾽ ὅ; and already in Paul (Rom. 11:36 and 1 Cor. 8:6, as partially also in Heb. 2:10)." [James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text, in The New International Greek Testament Commentaries.* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 85]

εἴτε ἐξουσίαι). These are terms affirming invisible dynamics that exert powerful influence over human affairs on earth, most always in destructive ways.[33] These powers attack people either directly or indirectly through their human agents, evil men. The hymn celebrates Christ's superiority to all these powers. Ultimately they will bow down in acknowledgement of Him and His control.

The final affirmation in verse 16 is that "all things have been created through him and for him" (τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται). All of the created order owes its existence to Christ and finds its reason for being in Him. The use of 'through him' (δι' αὐτοῦ) does not detract from God as Creator in Genesis one and two. Christ stands as the agent of creation, while the Heavenly Father is the source of Creation. The second preposition affirms that creation exists for Christ, that is, it realizes its reason for being only in Christ.

Verse 17 brings another angle into the picture: "He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν). Christ is pre-existent, that is, He is not a created one. His being pre-dates the creation of the world. He is a supra-natural entity who stands before and above the creation.[34] Thus, the continued existence of creation depends on Him. Were He to step away from creation, it would collapse in destruction immediately.

What this first strophe of the hymn, vv. 15-17, has celebrated is the close connection that the divine Christ has to the created world. Perhaps, this theme made the hymn work at Colossae with a tendency of some to shift into more traditional Greek ways of thinking that claimed huge distance between the invisible and the visible with such a chasm between the two realms that no bridging of the two was possible. Certainly such thinking was foundational to the Platonic dualism that was influential extensively during this era. But whether from this strophe of the hymn one can deduce that the false teachers at Colossae were early Gnostic philosophers infiltrating into the church with false ideas about Christ is highly questionable. Far more likely is the apostle's efforts to combat a growing cultural adaptation of the Gospel that posed dangers for correct understanding of Christ.

Head of the church, vv. 18-20: "18 He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." (18 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων, 19 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι 20 καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι' αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς).

The second strophe of the hymn moves to the climatic affirmation of Christ's central role in the life of the believing community. A series of affirmations about Christ is given (v. 18), then followed by a rationale (vv. 19-20).

The believing community is the place of existence on earth. As the "head of the body" (ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος) He is its source of existence, just as creation owes its existence to Him. The body is "the church," τῆς ἐκκλησίας, the believing community.[35] Here it is unnecessary -- and ultimately counter productive[36] -- to posit

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[33]Note similar expressions in **1 Cor. 15:24** ("Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power," πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν,); **Eph. 1:21** ("far above all rule and authority and power and dominion [πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος], and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come."); **Eph. 3:10** ("so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places," ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις); **Eph. 6:12** ("For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers [τὰς ἀρχάς], against the authorities [τὰς ἐξουσίας], against the cosmic powers of this present darkness [τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου], against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."); and **Col. 2:10** ("and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority [πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας].").

[34]"He is "before all things" (πρὸ πάντων), which means that as the pre-existent one he is Lord over the universe. This refers back to the designation "first-born before all creation" (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) and it emphasizes once again the unique position of Christ as Lord over the cosmos." [James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon : A Commentary on the Greek Text, in The New International Greek Testament Commentaries.* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 87]

[35]τῆς ἐκκλησίας (the church) stands in apposition to τοῦ σώματος (the body), through the genitive of apposition function of the Greek spelling of ἐκκλησίας. That is, ἐκκλησίας 'renames' σώματος with a defining term that moves from metaphor (σώματος) to direct specification (ἐκκλησίας).

[36]The popular concept of a 'universal church' is ultimately derived in Protestant thinking from the Roman Catholic claim of

the modern 'universal church' thinking into Paul's words. Every believing community becomes the expression of Christ's presence on earth and owes its existence completely to Him. In the following relative clause, Christ stands in superior position since He ἐστιν ἀρχή, is the beginning. This clearly defines the following phrase πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, first born from the dead, in terms of superiority. This is qualified in connection to the church, rather than creation, as ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, from the dead.[37] The church, as Christ's body, gains its life from the resurrected Jesus. The objective of this raising Jesus from the dead was ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων, in order that He might become first in everything. Thus Christ stands in a position of absolute superiority over both the church and all creation. This dependency on Christ grows out of Christ's resurrection, which stands as the promise of the resurrection of the believing community at the close of the age. Also it enables Him to reign supremely as Lord over everything, especially in the church.

The causal foundation for this is affirmed in verses 19-20 with the conjunction ὅτι. Upon what foundation does the superiority of Christ in the church rest? Two reasons are given.

First comes the 'fullness of God' (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα) in Christ (v. 19). God was Himself pleased (εὐδόκησεν) that in Christ (ἐν αὐτῷ) the completeness of God's own being (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα) resided (κατοικῆσαι). This powerful affirmation of the complete deity of Christ as the full expression of the Divine Presence on earth establishes the link of Christ to the Father, which then qualifies him to become the reconciler between God and sinful creation.

Second, that leads to God's efforts through Christ (δι' αὐτοῦ) to reconcile (ἀποκαταλλάξαι) everything in creation (τὰ πάντα) to Himself (εἰς αὐτόν), v. 20. Creation has through its sinfulness become alienated from its Creator. The process of reconciling creation with its Creator flows through the blood of the cross of Christ (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ,) who makes peace possible between creation and God (εἰρηνοποιήσας). In the believing communities of the church one discovers that reconciliation and experiences it on the human side (cf. vv. 21-23 for amplification). This reconciliation is intended to become complete by bringing into harmony the material world (εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) and Heaven (εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς). Although not mentioned directly here, the clear teaching of Paul is that such a complete reconciliation between Heaven and earth awaits the second coming of Christ at the close of the age. At that point the full presence of sin and evil -- along with all those who have identified themselves with this evil -- will be eradicated totally from God's creation, thus enabling the perfectly holy Presence of God to be manifested in creation.

Out of this eloquent hymn of praise to Christ, Paul communicates the heart of the gospel to his Colossian readers, and ultimately to us today. The hymn reflected the widely adopted views of early Christians in general, and the incorporation of it into this letter affirms to the Colossians the beliefs of many other Christians along with the endorsement of this belief by Paul and Timothy. This will set an important backdrop for correcting errors in the thinking of the Colossians in chapter two of this letter. But before he begins this correction he will affirm the Colossians in a personal way in 1:21-23.

2.   What does the text mean to us today?

What can we learn from this passage? One clear implication for contemporary Christian worship is to be the Christ centered focus of our singing. This Christus Hymnus centers on Christ, and His impact on both creation and the gathered community of believers. All kinds of background questions arise about the manner, method, extent and role of singing and music for corporate Christian worship from the setting of this early Christian hymn. These will be addressed in greater detail in the study on Col. 3:16-17, which builds off this background with more direct teaching on this subject. The Christ centered focus of not only this early Christian hymn but uniformly all the others in the New Testament calls us to careful examination of our understanding of who Christ is, especially in relationship to the Heavenly Father and in relationship to creation and the community of believers.

Give some careful thought to the following questions:

being the only true church of Christ in this world. As an alternative to Roman Catholic claims, the ecumenical movement beginning in the early 1900s began speaking of an abstraction labeled 'the universal church' which was understood to include all Christians of every denomination irregardless of theological belief. But the New Testament knows nothing of such a concept, and clearly does not teach it.

[37]The attaching of the resurrection reference ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν (from the dead) to the metaphor πρωτότοκος, first born, clearly stresses the image of superiority to πρωτότοκος. Being the first one that God raised from the dead clearly puts Christ in a superior role in the church as its own source of spiritual life. Thus the church completely owes its existence to this resurrected Christ.

1)	How expansive is your understanding of Christ?

2)	What is your view of the created world? Especially, its purpose?

3)	Do you have a clearly defined perspective of the 'invisible' powers at work in creation?

4)	Who runs the church?

5)	What does 'reconciliation' suggest about humanity?