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DR. LORIN L. CRANFORD

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JOSHUA WAYNE LOVELACE

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INTRODUCTION[[1]](#footnote-2)

The Christology of Colossians is indeed rich with meaning, since the portrayal of Christ is brought about through cosmic language. This ‘cosmic Christ’ is based on according to some scholars what is described as the Christ hymn in chapter 1:15-20. What is presented about Christology in these verses can be seen throughout the whole of Colossians concerning Christ and his position not only in the cosmos, but also over the church. There are many more references, however, that while small do reflect Paul’s Christology as well. Each reference will be explored to gain a view of how Christ is presented to the Colossians in response to heretical teachings that were trying to deceive the Colossian Christians.[[2]](#footnote-3) Before observing the text at hand, a general overview of Paul’s Christology will be introduced to compare the Christology of Colossians to the major Pauline corpus.

OVERVIEW OF PAULINE CHRISTOLOGY

There are some things to note about Paul’s Christology as a whole. One being that Paul’s conversion and call experience had a great impact on how he viewed Christ. It changed the way he viewed the Law and how he compared it to Christ. For Paul, Christ was the resurrected Messiah, exalted to sit at the right hand of God, which meant his relationship with God was unparallel, because he was the son of God. Being at the right hand of God in a glorious manner, Christ had gained what Adam has lost in the fall at creation, to be the representation of God’s image. In essence, he is the ‘second Adam’. When Christ was resurrected, it was the beginning of the resurrection of the dead, which would be complete when Christ, the Messiah of God, returned to defeat sin and death. The crucifixion of Christ was for Paul not the punishment of God for breaking ‘the law of Moses’, but a large part of the God’s plan of redemption. Paul’s Christology was also affected by his missionary journeys and contact with the early teachings of the church concerning kerygma, and his background as a previous Pharisee, with the hope for a resurrection.[[3]](#footnote-4) In essence,

Paul presents Christ in terms of death, resurrection, and parousia (1) as the crucified Messiah whose death was redemptive; (2) as the Risen Lord whose resurrection has inaugurated the general resurrection of the dead; and (3) as the image of God, the eschatological Adam, who stands at the head of a new humanity that will be revealed when Christ returns and the dead are raised incorruptible.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Paul does not present his Christology in a systematic manner, because when he wrote, he was addressing different issues at some points, and had to present Christ in such a way to rebut these issues for his audience. Hence,

Paul undergirds his arguments and admonitions by reminding readers of what Christ has done for them. Consequently, like his letters, his Christology is occasional in nature…Paul's understanding of Christ and his work is integral to the gospel he preaches. Paul may not systematize his Christological thought, but certain concepts are crucial for understanding what he says.[[5]](#footnote-6)

While Paul might not present his Christology in a definable manner, there are in fact two Christological perspectives at work: Adam Christology and Wisdom Christology. Christ in Adam Christology is represented as the one who through death gave life to humanity, which was dead because of the sin of Adam. Adam Christology represents the complete picture of salvation: Christ through his death eschatologically gave a picture of complete salvation for the community of faith. Wisdom Christology is used to coincide with the monotheistic view of God, and to show the importance of Christ in a universal sense. These two Christologies together are used by Paul to define Christ.[[6]](#footnote-7) Does Colossians emulate these two Christologies, or any of Paul’s

Christological themes? Disagreements exist concerning this concept among scholars, but looking at the text will determine how Colossians is in the scale of Pauline Christology.[[7]](#footnote-8)

CHRISTOLOGY OF COLOSSIANS

CHAPTER 1

1. Paul, an apostles of Christ Jesus through God’s will and Timothy our brother 2. And to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae, grace and peace to you from God our father. 3. We regularly give thanks to God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always praying for your behalf. 4. After having heard your faith in Christ Jesus and the love, which you possess for all the saints.

Paul’s use of “Christ” in verse one is to show his readers that he was worthy of being called an apostle, having the authority “to teach and to deal pastorally with congregations in his care.”[[8]](#footnote-9) In verses two and four, the expression “in Christ” is to indicate how they are incorporated into a brotherly fellowship through Christ Jesus who they have put their trust in.[[9]](#footnote-10) Lastly in verse three, Jesus serves as the one who reveals the character of God the Father.[[10]](#footnote-11)

7. Just as you learned from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant who is faithful for your sake who serves Christ.

Paul in this verse uses the label of ‘servant’ in two ways to indicate to the Colossians that what they received from Epaphras was the true gospel of Christ. Servant or  in the Old Testament was used to indicate one who carried God’s word, to which Paul is alluding. Paul also uses  from a New Testament for those who helped him in his missionary journeys. Ultimately, the two uses of these terms where to validate Epaphras and his ministry.[[11]](#footnote-12)

13. Who rescued us from the power of darkness and transformed us into the kingdom of the son of his love. 14. In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

What is evident is that God has done the delivering of the Christians, however, there is a struggle to understand: “Who does the kingdom belong to?” The “kingdom of Christ” is the kingdom in the present, and the “kingdom of God” as the eschatological kingdom. Christ is the Messiah, but his kingship is under the subjection of God. The term “son of his love” is Semitic in origin, and denotes the closeness of a relationship.[[12]](#footnote-13) The kingdom of Christ, which is a present reality, is connected with redemption, which is also a present reality. The phrase “the forgiveness of sins” is not used very much by Paul, but in this case, with the Colossian heretics who tried to “distinguished between “the remission of sins” as the first stage received in baptism and “redemption” as the final stage coming from the divine Christ.”[[13]](#footnote-14)

One of the most debated portions in Colossians would be Colossians 1:15-20. Scholars have tried to pinpoint whether this was a Pauline or pre-Pauline hymn, and whether he or someone else added or discarded certain portions from the original hymn, and lastly, whether this portion is a hymn or not. Dunn believes that it was a hymn because of reflecting Hellenistic Judaism ideas of Wisdom. "The hymn is itself a sharp reminder that there were front-rank thinkers among the first Christians eager to engage with their contemporaries in the attempt to explain reality. It is also salutary to recall that such christological innovation came in the context of worship and through the medium of hymns."[[14]](#footnote-15) Despite all the debate, Colossians 1:15-20 is rich in Christological meaning.

15. Who is the image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation,

Paul’s use of  in verse 15 connects more to the Jewish understanding of Wisdom, instead of Adam. “Wisdom was with the Lord at the beginning of his work, the creation of the world, while in Wisdom 7:5 the divine Wisdom which is personified, is described as the image () of God’s goodness, i.e. the one who reveals the goodness of God.”[[15]](#footnote-16) Therefore, Christ is the channel from which the world came into existence and the manifestation of the divine Wisdom. Christ is also the , not the first to be created, but the instrument which creation came to exist, unique and the Lord of it because of his status as .[[16]](#footnote-17)

16. Because in him all things were created in Heaven and upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, whether lordships, whether rulers whether power; all things through him and for him all things were created. 17. And he is before all things and all things in Him have their existence,

Verse 16 defines the themes of verse 15 even further. Since Christ is the instrument of God creating the universe, nothing is exempt from his authority, which is demonstrated by the parallels in this verse (heaven/earth; visible/invisible; etc.). Even the hierarchy of angelic powers, which the Colossian heretics probably exalted highly, was subject to Christ. The goal of all creation was Christ. In essence, there is no escape for any part of creation to run from being subject to Christ, because they “were created *in* him, *through* him and *for* him.”[[17]](#footnote-18) In verse 17, the themes of verses 15 and sixteen are restated “Not only was the universe created in the Son as the sphere, by him as the divine agent, and for him as the goal; it was also established permanently “in him” alone."[[18]](#footnote-19)

18. And he is the head of the body, that is the church; who is in the beginning, first born out of the dead, so that he might become in all these things, having preeminence. 19. Because in him God was pleased all the fullness to dwell 20. And through him to reconcile all things to himself, after having made peach through the blood of his cross, through him whether things upon the earth whether things in Heaven.

Paul portrays Christ in verse 18 as the of the church. He is the life source and the controller of the church. He is also firstborn of the dead, or the sign that guarantees an eschatological resurrection of other people. Not only is he first over all creation, but first over resurrection. Christ has covered being first in all things.[[19]](#footnote-20) Verse 19 exemplifies the picture of Christ even more as the having “the fullness to dwell.” What does this phrase mean? Everything that God is dwells in Christ, which means that the Colossians should not have to worry about living under the control of other supernatural powers, because Christ was over them: “God in all his divine essence and power had taken up residence in Christ.”[[20]](#footnote-21) Verse 21 serves as the climax for the hymn. The main inquisition for this verse is “What is reconciled to Christ?” O’Brien would take the approach that it is the whole universe itself, bringing the chaos of the universe back into its divine order through Christ’s cross as a reconciler, while Dunn would see it as the church being reconciled to live out what Christ has done.[[21]](#footnote-22)

22. But now he has reconciled by his fleshly body by death in order to present us as holy and without blemish and blameless in his presence.

Paul in this verse emphasizes how Christ through physical death of his “fleshly body” had reconciled the Colossians from their old ways. This reconciliation occurred as a past event through the death of a historical Christ, not through a symbolic death. The goal of the death of Christ was to present the Colossians to God in an acceptable way. It has been interpreted that “holy”, “without blemish”, and “blameless” refer to the Old Testament requirements for sacrifice, and that through the death of Christ this could be achieved. O’Brien would see this presenting on judgment day, while Dunn sees the hints of Old Testament sacrificial language, but concludes like O’Brien that it is through Christ that allows for such a worthy presentation.[[22]](#footnote-23)

24. Now I am rejoicing in the sufferings in behalf of you and I complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for the sake of his body, which is the church.

Another verse that has been highly debated in Colossians would be verse 24. What does Paul mean when he mentions that he completes what lacks in the suffering of Christ? First would be to translate the clause as if Paul has to supply what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ. Another method would be to translate as an objective genitive “for the sake of Christ” or as a genitive of quality “which resemble those of Christ.” Lastly, Paul could have experienced the suffering in a “mystical union” with Christ. O’Brien tends to lean toward interpreting the text as suffering being a “necessary prerequisite to being glorified with him.”[[23]](#footnote-24)

While vs. 26 and 27, connect with each other in talking about Christ as the mystery, which will not be explored in this paper. However, for the sake of the last portion in verse 27, “Christ in you, the hope of glory”, can be iterated as such: "Christ in you" is the "the hope" of that "glory" because retransformation into the divine image and glory is a lifelong process already underway in the person of faith."[[24]](#footnote-25)

28. Whom we are proclaiming as we exhort every person and as we teach every person with full wisdom, in order that we might present every person mature in Christ.

Paul’s goal can be understood in what he means by . Paul according to O’Brien has the “Parousia in mind.” Paul would not be satisfied until every Christian reached maturity, which would be complete until the last day.[[25]](#footnote-26) Lohse brings out another point. Paul might have been rebutting the heretics of Colossae with the true version of wisdom and perfection, which was to be achieved through Christ only: “Whoever belongs to the exalted Christ and follows his command will be “perfect in Christ.”[[26]](#footnote-27)

CHAPTER 2:

6. Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus as the Lord, in him continue walking,

In verse six the reference to receiving Jesus Christ with the term indicated that the Colossians received a certain tradition. Not only did they receive baptism, they received Jesus Christ himself “as their tradition,” but in a creedal confession of “Jesus Christ is Lord,” the Lord of all that has been discussed earlier.[[27]](#footnote-28) Paul continues to encourage the Colossians to “continue walking” in Christ. When Paul uses the term “walking”, he plays of the Old Testament and Jewish understanding that when one walks, that means the way they life and behave. He reminds them because of their commitment to Christ meant to shed off any other teachings.[[28]](#footnote-29)

7. Being firmly rooted and being built up in him and being established in faith as you have been taught, as you abound in thanksgiving.

Verse 7 uses metaphors of how the Colossians should be growing in Christ. is a reference to a building metaphor, in the sense of a foundation for a building. is used as well for the building imagery to demonstrate that the lives of the Colossians showed be based upon Christ. Finally is used to encourage the Colossians to continue in their faith with Christ so that they will become established, and give thanks to Christ with hymns.[[29]](#footnote-30)

8. Be on your guard, lest someone will be the one who takes you captive through philosophy and through empty deception according to the traditions of men according to the basic elements of the world and not according to Christ;

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Verse 8 hints about the ‘false teaching’ Paul has been refuting becomes known. Two words of interest in the verse have a great impact on the meaning. is very vast in its interpretation only within the Greek word, but the Jewish world as well. From the Greek perspective, was to pursue knowledge, and the Jewish perspective was Wisdom. What Paul obviously connects this term to is to the false teachings that are trying to infiltrate the Colossians, and is described as empty and vain. However, Paul never goes into detail exactly on the content, but underscores the fact that this new philosophy is a “tradition of men” or something that seems to have “antiquity, dignity, and revelational character.”[[30]](#footnote-31)

The next term of interest would be . While there is enough ambiguity to understand “elements” in different ways, the best interpretation would be that is a reference to the principalities and powers that control the lives of men. Dunn would also agree that this term reflects the worship angelic beings. He comments,

he Christ who embodies the secret of both cosmos and history must obviously serve as the yardstick by which all other claims to religious insight (not least claims regarding human relationships with and within the cosmos) should be measured. It was precisely the failure of such speculation to grasp the significance of Christ and of his death that demonstrated their emptiness and deceitfulness.[[31]](#footnote-32)

9. Because in him dwells all the fullness of the godhead in bodily form,

Verse 9 also seems to repeat the same ideas of the Christian hymn in chapter 1:19. There is an emphasis on the resurrected and exalted Christ in this verse as being the one in which the deity of God dwells in its uttermost fashion. The last concern for this verse is, “How did Christ manifest himself?” There are some opinions that Christ was expressed through the body of his church, however, the most appropriate understanding for this verse would be associated with Christ being the incarnate one.[[32]](#footnote-33)

10. And you are full in him, who is the source of all beginning and of all authority,

Verse 10 in is conjunction with verse 9. Paul used the term “fullness” to encourage the Colossians that Christ has allowed to the Colossians to be filled “in him”, and that “fullness” was not out of their reach. Paul more than likely is using this term against the false teachers who taught a different manner of “fullness”. In light of Christ being the head of all these powers and principalities, the Colossians did not have to worry about them, because they were under the Lordship of Christ. It is important to note that “Nowhere in Pauline teaching is the cosmos called Christ’s body; rather the church is so described and through it alone is the cosmos to be brought into unity with him.”[[33]](#footnote-34)

11. In whom also you have been circumcised with a circumcision from Christ, 12. Having been buried together with him in Baptism in whom also you were raised together through faith in the power of God who raised him up from the dead;

Very intriguingly, Paul pulls out a circumcision metaphor in verse 11. This circumcision metaphor should be understood to refer to the death of Christ, his crucifixion was the circumcision.[[34]](#footnote-35) Verse 12 invites two other metaphors concerning Christ for the Colossians: they were buried in baptism with him and resurrected with him. This connects with the circumcision imagery in verse 11. As they had died with Christ, which represents the circumcision of Christ, so they were buried with him in baptism. The imagery of baptism relates to the burial of Christ, who was in the tomb before his resurrection. Tannehill makes a good observation about dying with Christ:

for Paul, the death and resurrection of Christ are not present only in baptism…the continuing life of the believer is characterized by participation in Christ's death and resurrection…the participation in Christ's death which takes place in the ongoing life of the believer is based upon a decisive, past death with Christ, and it might be argued that baptism is the foundation of the believer's death and resurrection with Christ…The individual is baptized "into Christ" and "into his death," that is, through baptism he enters the new dominion which is determined by Christ and his saving acts. This means that he has been "buried with" Christ, that is, through baptism into Christ's death he has been fully and finally separated from the old life.[[35]](#footnote-36)

The act of resurrection was through the power of God. Because of dying and being raised with Christ, the Colossians should reflect that in their lives.[[36]](#footnote-37)

13. And you although being dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive together with him, after having granted forgiveness to us all your trespasses.

Verse 13 comes to enhance the idea of verses 11 and 12 to state the Christ had made them alive, and forgave them of their sins. The uncircumcision of their flesh reflected the Colossians being separated spiritually from God, and they had a new life with Christ through his death and resurrection, which ‘circumcised’ them and restored to a relationship with God.[[37]](#footnote-38)

14. After having wiped out the record of debts against us in the divine decrees which was hostile to us, and he took it away from your midst after nailing it to the cross;

The legal language in verse 14 indicates how the cross played a role in paying the debts of the Colossians. The record of the sins of the Colossians in “the divine decrees” was dealt with in Christ’s crucifixion. Not only was the record purged forever so the Colossians could start anew in Christ, but it was destroyed because of being “nailed to the cross”.[[38]](#footnote-39)

15. After having disarmed the rulers and powers he made a show of in openness, having marched them in a public victory parade through it (the cross).

Christ through the cross shook up the principalities by exposing “their true character. By putting them on public display, God exposed the principalities and powers to ridicule. This open manifestation of their being divested of dignity and authority only serves to demonstrate more clearly the infinite superiority of Christ.”[[39]](#footnote-40) Like in a Roman military parade celebrating a victory, Christ did the same with the powers and principalities with much triumph. However, this does not mean that Christ destroyed those powers and principalities, but defeated them, and one day they will have to submit to his reign.[[40]](#footnote-41)

16. Therefore, let no one judge you by eating and by your drink or in regard to a feast or concerning a new moon festival or concerning Sabbaths; 17. Such things are a shadow of things about to happen, that is the body of Christ.

Because of all what has been said about Christ, the Colossians should not allow anyone to judge them based on insufficient standards that do not even measure up to Christ. There are many reasons why some in the ancient world people practiced certain dietary restrictions. One being that asceticism was the means for one to obtain purity, and getting one prepared to receive a divine revelation from a particular deity. These practices are only a shadow: “Christ and his new order are the perfect reality to which these earlier ordinances pointed. These prescriptions of days gone by were but a shadow. They have lost any binding force. Since the reality is here, the things of the shadow no longer constitute a norm for judgment.”[[41]](#footnote-42)

19. And by not holding fast the head from out of whom the entire body through the joints and through the ligaments being nourished and being held together, the entire body grows the growth that God desires. 20. If you died with Christ from the basic elements to this world, why as living in the world do you allow yourselves to become obedient to rules and regulations?

Verse 19 is an extension of verse 18 rebutting the heretics and their teachings. What the heretics where doing was holding on to those angelic beings of the cosmos, instead of to Christ, who is the head, which had been mentioned earlier that he is the nourishment of the body and the controller of it as well. The only way the body receives any energy is if it is attached to the head. The growth of the body of Christ is growing because it is attached to Christ, and furthermore, it is according to God. In essence, the growth of God for the body of Christ is through Christ being the head, and growing in the sense with the power of the divine to perfection. Verse 20 then focuses on the Colossians in light of what has been discussed about Christ. Being liberated by dying and resurrecting with Christ, why would the Colossians allow themselves to be placed under such regulations outside Christ? The Colossians had been tempted, or course, but Paul was giving them a wake-up call.[[42]](#footnote-43) Dunn concludes with this verse in a powerful way:

The conclusion is equally clear: there is no need to live any longer "in the world." That can hardly mean that the Colossian Christians should try to live as though physically abstracted or cut off from the world; believers are as much still "in the world" in that sense as they are still "in the flesh." It must mean that they are no longer to live under the authority of "the elemental forces" which rule "the world," living lives determined by reference to these forces, living as thought the world itself was ultimately determined by such factors, as though the values and conduct which they stood for were what really counted in daily life. The death of Christ spelled the end of all such systems; his death and resurrection provided the key insight into the reality of the world. Why look anywhere else for the basis of daily living?[[43]](#footnote-44)

CHAPTER 3

1. Therefore since you have been resurrected together with Christ, keep on seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God;

In light of the Colossians having being resurrected with Christ that has been discussed earlier, Paul points their direction toward heaven, where Christ was sitting at the right hand of God. For the Colossians to “seek things above” meant that to avoid the false teachings and focus on heaven, which is used to indicate the new age to come. “The Colossians Christians have already participated in the world to come, the powers of the new have broken in upon them, they already participate in the resurrection life of Christ. Thus their aims, ambition, indeed their whole orientation is to be directed to this sphere.”[[44]](#footnote-45)

3. For you have died and your life is hidden together with Christ in God; 4. Whenever Christ may be revealed, your life, at that time also you will be together with him in glory.

The statement “your life is hidden together with Christ in God” is intriguing indeed. Obviously this is eschatological language that Paul is using, because life is used “to describe the life of the age to come which will be received on the final day and which through the resurrection of Christ from the dead has become for the believer a present reality…is a secret to the unconverted…remains unrevealed until the end.”[[45]](#footnote-46) Since “Christ has his being in God…those who belong to Christ have their being too.”[[46]](#footnote-47) Verse 3, in essence, lets the Colossians know where their source of life is founded.

Verse 4 takes the theme of “hiddenness” from verse 3 concerning the “life” of the Colossians and expounds on it. In the end, when Christ comes, that life that was founded in Christ will make itself known and together with Christ, in glory. Glory in this verse refers to when the likeness of Christ will be achieved by the Colossians, not in a complete futuristic sense, but a “realized eschatology…’already-not yet’”.[[47]](#footnote-48)

15. And let the peace that comes from Christ be the judge in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and become thankful ones. 16. Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you, with all wisdom as you teach and admonish each other with psalms, with songs with spiritual songs with praise singing in your hearts to God; 17. And all that you may do in word or deed, may you do all things in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The peace of Christ in the hearts of Colossians according to verse 15 was to allow the one who is peace rule amongst the Christian brethren in Colossae. That peace that drew them to Christ should be the very thing they show to each other. The “word of Christ” in vs. 16 was expressed through the teaching and preaching about the gospel, especially through Epaphras. It was Paul’s desire to see the peace of Christ to dwell with the Colossians as well as the gospel that had been preached to them. Through the indwelling of the Word in the midst of the Colossians, Christ could truly rule their lives and bless them, and motivate them to sing and teach. Paul encouraged the Colossians to do everything in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord. The name of Christ refers to all of salvation. When one confessed in the name of Jesus Christ, they committed their lives to him, and their behaviors were to reflect their commitment in light of the name. The Colossians knew that being identified with a name meant being identified with who that person was with the name. To name the name of Christ could have meant losing all status and power.[[48]](#footnote-49)

CHAPTER 4

3. Praying at the same time for us, in order that God may open a door in order to speak for the word the mystery about Christ, because of which also I stand chained.

The last verse that refers to Christ can actually be understood in two ways. The mystery could be Christ or the revelation of the mystery in Christ who is the Messiah.[[49]](#footnote-50)

CONCLUSION

The Christology of Colossians is rich indeed, when it comes to Paul referring to Christ in a cosmic manner. However, there is no evidence especially when comparing Colossians to the Pauline corpus as a whole that it lacks any of the Christological threads that runs throughout them. There are references to the death and resurrection, Christ as the exalted Messiah, Christians who are “in Christ” that have new life through him. Further, the “realized eschatology” mentioned earlier pulsates through the veins of Colossians, even more so in Paul’s general Christology and how it relates to eschatology. Yet Colossians does put a greater emphasis on this ‘cosmic Christology’, but in such a way as to be the ‘climax’ of Paul’s Adam and Wisdom Christologies united in a glorified whole.

Paul had to deal with a teaching he never faced before that was occurring in Colossae, and had to show how Christ annulled all those teachings that could have tempted the Colossians in ‘falling away’. Christ is the only mediator between God, man, and creation, which he redeemed through his death of the cross. Some of very themes Paul has preached about Christ come in a compelling manner to challenge those who would proclaim ‘another gospel’ and not Jesus Christ as Lord, and that eschatologically the work he started would be completed when he returned in glory.[[50]](#footnote-51)

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1. This document was typed on Microsoft Word 2007 on a HP laptop. Page numbering is off due to difficulty with Microsoft. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 4 of Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Frank J. Matera, “Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John: A Study in the Diverse Unity of New Testament Theology,” under *Theological* ***Studies*** 67, no. 2 [Je 2006]: 237-256. http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=3&hid=21&sid=bf30cec5-2e20-4e22-a02a-0ee6a4ecf81c%40sessionmgr7 [accessed March 20, 2008].

   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Ibid., 246. Cf. Elias Andrews, *The Meaning of Christ for Paul* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), 21: "We may say, therefore, that the sources upon which Paul drew were several and varied. Among them we may list Old Testament religion and prophecy; Jewish Messianic conceptions; Pharisaic theology, with its belief in angels, in the resurrection, and in judgment; the Jewish idea of "wisdom" and the Greek conception of the "Logos"; indirect influence of the mystery religions and Stoicism; and supremely his knowledge of Jesus, and his inheritance form the beliefs of the early Christians." [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 132.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Robert F. Berkey and Sarah A. Edwards, *Christology in Dialogue* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1993), 100, 103-107, 164.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Cf. Earl Richard, *Jesus: One and Many The Christological Concept of New Testament Authors* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988), 341-347; Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 4 of Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), xiv.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 4 of Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), 2. Each verse will be my own translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Ibid., 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Ibid., 4. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1996), 55 comments "Contained in it is the implicit Christian claim that God, the one God made known to Israel, is now to be no longer simply as the Father of Israel, but most clearly as the Father of Jesus Christ, and only as such "our Father," Father of Gentiles as well as Jews."

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    [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 4 of Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Ibid., 28; James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1996), 77-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 4 of Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 86; O’Brien, 32-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. O’Brien, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. O’Brien, 44-45; James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 86-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. O’Brien, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Ibid., 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Ibid., 48-51. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 99 “Overall we must speak of the inextricable complementarity of Paul's Adam christology with his Wisdom christology, both emphasizing the divine purpose of creation and Christ's supremacy over (the rest of) creation, but the one in terms of creation (Wisdom) and the other in terms of creation redeemed (last Adam)" [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. O’Brien, 53. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 101 adds another angle: “the importance of the language is to indicate that the completeness of God's self-revelation was focused in Christ, that the wholeness of God's interaction with the universe is summed up in Christ." [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. O’Brien, 56. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 104. The question could be raised in how Colossians 2:14 should help to interpret this verse. It seems that Paul allows for a reconciliation of creation, then focuses on the Christian community in light of the cross as the means of reconciliation. There is room for interpretation of both, but need to be separated between the two verses. Like O’Brien, 56-57 mentions, this submission to Christ is eschatological, but not everything including powers and people will bow down easily, but peace will be made. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. O’Brien, 67-69. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. O’Brien, 77-79. Maybe another possible interpretation in light of James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 114-117 is that Paul understood his suffering as a consequence of preaching the Gospel, and that his sufferings were for the Colossians. The phrase “what is lacking” might be what Christ in his earthly body did not do: he was not suffering while Paul was preaching in human form, but like Christ who suffered to preach the gospel of the kingdom Paul was continuing in his footsteps. The lack could be what the Christians were the Christ like Paul were filling up: spreading the gospel and suffering as Christ until the last days. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. O’Brien, 89-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon,* Hermeneia, trans. by William R. Pehlmann and Robert J. Karris, ed. by Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. O’Brien, 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Ibid., 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Ibid., 106-108. Cf. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 143, "the implication is that a characteristic and fundamental feature of their relation with Jesus as Christ and Lord should be gratitude for what God has done in and through him. As rootedness and foundation depends on the faith called forth by the gospel, so growing from the root and building upon the foundation can be successful only in an atmosphere of thankfulness to God." [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. O’Brien, 109-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 151. Cf. O’Brien, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. O’Brien, 110-113. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Ibid., 113-114. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Ibid., 115-117. Cf. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 158 "If there is a moral note in "flesh" here, it probably reflects a variation of Paul's Adam christology at this point. It was not simply "his flesh" that Christ stripped off, but the flesh of the first Adam, representing "all things" in their domination by the powers, this being necessary before he could assume his Adamic reign over "all things". A cosmic circumcision of human flesh was a necessary preliminary to cosmic rule…that conversion-initiation could consequently be understood as a sharing in that circumcision, but it is precisely a sharing in *his* circumcision-death, not an independent act of Christians' own circumcision-death." [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A study in Pauline Theology* (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann, 1966), 41. Cf. O’Brien, 118-121; James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 159, demonstrates how baptism reflects the idea of Christ’s death and resurrection. The believer “sinks” below the waters symbolizing Christ’s death and is brought out of the water to represent his resurrection. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. O’Brien, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. O’Brien, 121-124. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Ibid., 124-126; James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. O’Brien, 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Ibid., 128-129. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Ibid., 138-141. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 177 would also agree “Christ is the substance to the shadow of Jewish food laws and feast: he is the reality which casts its shadow backward in time; they are provisional, inferior copies whose inadequacy is now evident in the light of the real.” [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. O’Brien, 146-149. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. O’Brien, 159-161. Ibid. 161-163, comments that Christ sitting at the right hand of God was a sign of honor, and was to point to “the centrality and supremacy of Christ in the heavenly realm…Since he is in a position of supreme authority no principality or power can prevent their access to this realm and to God’s presence.” [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. O’Brien, 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Ibid., 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Ibid., 166-169. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 208. The unveiling is "eschatological; it reveals what will happen at the end of time…The important point, however, is the assurance to the Colossian Christians that if they live out of the perspective and resource just spoken, they will be vindicated in the parousia. Despite the present hiddennes of their "life," which might make their attitudes and actions in their present living somewhat bewildering to onlookers, they could nevertheless be confident that Christ, the focus of their life, would demonstrate to all the rightness of the choice they had made in baptism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. O’Brien, 204-212. James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 234-241. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. O’Brien, 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 4 of Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), xiv; Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 132-172. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)