

Notes on the Greek New Testament Week 116 – Colossians 1:1-23

Day 576: Introduction to Colossians

For the historical background to this letter, see the introduction to Philippians, Week 107, which outlines the background to Paul's 'Prison Epistles', namely, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.

The Origin of the Church at Colossae

Colossae was situated in the southern part of Asia Minor in the fertile Lycus valley ten miles upstream from the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. The city did possess a substantial Jewish minority. Evidence concerning the collection of temple tax by the Jews in Colossae and the other cities of the Lycus valley suggests regular communication between these Jews of the diaspora and Jerusalem.

The church at Colossae appears to have been founded as a 'spin-off' of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. In Acts 19:8-10 we read of Paul's extended ministry at Ephesus, lasting some two and a half years. Luke records that as a result of Paul's ministry, "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." In other words, Paul's ministry at Ephesus had an impact on the whole region as the message was taken from Ephesus to surrounding cities.

It would appear that one who heard the message of the Gospel was Epaphras, a native of Colossae (Col 4:12). He seems to have become one of Paul's ministry team (see the context in Col 4:10-15). He took the message back to his home town of Colossae and it would seem to be primarily through his ministry that a church was formed at Colossae (Col 1:7) – and probably also the church in Laodicea and perhaps Hierapolis (Col 4:13). Paul appears not to have ministered directly in any of these churches (Col 2:1), though he clearly viewed them as within the scope of his care.

A tradition recorded by Eusebius suggests that Philip settled in Hierapolis along with his daughters.

The Threat at Colossae

There is considerable discussion regarding the nature of the threat to the young church at Colossae, a threat addressed by Paul in 2:8-23. Does the threat come from Hellenistic sources, a form of early gnosticism, or is the source Jewish? Dunn argues for the latter, concluding:

Given the various factors outlined ... including the probable origin of the Colossian church from within synagogue circles, the likely presence of Israelite sectarianism within the diaspora, the lack of other evidence of Jewish syncretism in Asia Minor, and the readiness of some Jews to promote their distinctive religious practices in self-confident apology ... we need look no further than one or more of the Jewish synagogues in Colossae for the source of whatever influences were thought to threaten the young church there. The more relaxed style of polemic in Colossians and the absence there of anything quite like the fierceness of the reaction in Galatians further suggests that what was being confronted was not a sustained attempt to undermine or further convert the Colossians, but a synagogue apologetic promoting itself as a credible philosophy more capable of dealing with whatever heavenly powers might be thought to control or threaten human existence.

Referenced Works

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Dunn, James D G | <i>The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996 |
| Eadie, John | <i>Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians</i> , Richard Griffin & Co, 1856 |
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Day 577: Colossians 1:1-8**Verse 1**

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ
 θελήματος θεοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφὸς
 θελημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

Cf. 2 Cor 1:1. Dunn suggests that this letter may have been written by Timothy (so accounting for differences in style from other letters of Paul), but then signed by Paul, thus bearing his approval and authority.

Verse 2

τοῖς ἐν Κολοσσαῖς ἀγίοις καὶ πιστοῖς
 ἀδελφοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ
 εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν.

Κολοσσαῖ, ων f Colossae
 ἅγιος, α, ον; οἱ ἅγιοι God's people

Cf. Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1. "What is striking ... is that Paul felt able to incorporate into this distinctively Jewish self-description small gatherings of predominantly Gentile believers in Christ Jesus." Dunn. Cf. Pss 16:3; 34:9; Dan 7:18; 8:24.

πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy,
 believing

"They complimented their addressees on their faithfulness, fearing that they might prove unfaithful... It was precisely the Colossians continued commitment as brothers, members of the new family gathered around Christ Jesus, that the writers wanted to encourage and sustain." Dunn

ἐν Χριστῷ "Their standing and persistence as brothers was 'in Christ.' Their brotherhood was not one of blood relationship, but rather the spiritual bond of the shared experience of believing in Christ Jesus and knowing that they were accepted by and through him. And this shared experience was itself a source of enabling for their persistence." Dunn

χαρις, ιτος f grace, unmerited favour
 εἰρηνη, ης f peace

"As all commentators rightly note, Paul seems deliberately to have adapted the regular Greek greeting χαίρειν ('hail, greeting'), by replacing it with χαρις ('grace') and to have linked it with the characteristic Jewish greeting, *shalom* = εἰρήνη ('peace')." Dunn.

Many MSS, followed by TR, add και κυριου Ἰησου Χριστου. Metzger comments, "The words, which are absent from a variety of witnesses, some of them early, have no doubt been added by copyists who assimilated the text to Pauline usage; certainly no reason for deliberate omission suggests itself."

Verses 3-23

Paul's letters regularly move into thanksgiving and prayer after the salutation. However, the content always reflects the particular situation of the readers – they are never mere form, they are real prayers.

Verse 3

Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου
 ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν
 προσευχόμενοι,

εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks

The plural implying Paul and Timothy, or Paul and his companions.

τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ "Contained in it is the implicit Christian claim that God, the one God made known to Israel, is now to be understood no longer simply as 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." Dunn

παντοτε always
 προσευχομαι pray

"The unceasing nature of this prayer (παντοτε, 'always, at all times') is one of the most characteristic features of Paul's opening assurance of his prayers for his readers, whether attached to the εὐχαριστεῖν ('thank' – 1 Cor 1:4; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3) or to the προσευχεσθαι ('pray,' as in Rom 1:10 and Phil 1:4)." Dunn

Verse 4

ἀκούσαντες τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ
 Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας
 τοὺς ἁγίους

News of the churches reached Paul regularly.

πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

"Perhaps more than any other word, 'faith' sums up the distinctive feature of the Christian gospel and life for Paul... sheer trust in the power and grace of God." Dunn

ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους
an active concern for one another. "and not
just for one another, if the 'all the saints' is to
be taken seriously. Here may be indicated a
network of mutual support and encouragement
as Christians moved among the different towns
of Asia Minor." Dunn

Verse 5

διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν
τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ
λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope

For the linking of faith, hope and love, cf. 1
Cor 13:13; Gal 5:5-6; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8 also
Rom 5:1-5. Faith and love are here described
as a response to the hope contained in the
gospel, cf. 1:23, 27.

ἀποκειμαι be stored away
οὐρανος, ου m heaven
προακουω hear before or previously

I.e. their first hearing of the gospel.

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality; ἐν ἀ. truly
εὐαγγελιον, ου n good news, gospel

"It was this truth of the gospel (or the truth of
this gospel) to which Paul dedicated his whole
life as an apostle. At all events, there is
probably a further implication (as in Galatians)
that this is a truth that has to be stoutly
maintained against teachings that (in this case)
deny or diminish the eschatological thrust of
the gospel's emphasis on hope." Dunn

Verse 6

τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, καθως και ἐν
παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν καρποφορούμενον
καὶ αὐξανόμενον καθως και ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀφ•
ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν
χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ•

παρόντος Verb, pres ptc, m gen s παρειμι
be present

Maybe 'which has come to you'

καρποφορούμενον Verb, pres midd ptc, m
acc & n nom/acc s καρποφορεω bear
fruit, be productive

"In 1:10, as elsewhere, the fruit is thought of in
terms of good moral character (the verb in
Luke 8:15 and Rom 7:4; the noun in Paul:
Rom 1:13; Gal 5:22; Phil 1:11). But here it
could simply denote the success of the gospel
in winning more and more to belief in Christ
Jesus and in the hope offered." Dunn

αὐξανω and αὐξω grow, spread,
increase, reach full growth

ἐπιγινωσκω perceive, understand

'recognised what God's grace truly is'

Verse 7

καθως ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ
ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὅς ἐστιν
πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,
ἐμάθετε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl μανθανω
learn, find out

Ἐπαφρας, α m Epaphras

"As a native of Colossae (4:12) he presumably
first encountered Paul and was converted
through his preaching during Paul's long stay
in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10), some 120 miles
distant on the coast and directly accessible by
road from the Lycus and Meander valleys...
Whether he became a regular member of Paul's
mission team, as did so many others whose
names are preserved for us in Paul's letters ...
we cannot say. But it may have been Paul's
missionary strategy to concentrate his own
energies in the major cities, while sending out
mission teams to towns in the region (... cf.
Acts 19:10). It is not too fanciful to imagine
Epaphras, anxious to share the good news with
his own townsfolk, volunteering to evangelise
Colossae and devoting himself to labouring for
the gospel there and in the nearby cities of
Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13). In Paul's
terms, therefore, Epaphras may be called
'apostle of Colossae' (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-2), though
the fact that the letter to Colossae was then
written by Paul and Timothy, without
including Epaphras as fellow author, despite
his recent (?) presence (1:8: cf. Phm 23),
presumably implies that Epaphras saw himself
simply as Paul's emissary." Dunn

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved
συνδουλος, ου m fellow-servant
πιστος, η, ον see v.2

ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν Some MSS, including p⁴⁶ &* B
D⁸⁷* read ἡμῶν. Metzger writes, "Although
on the basis of superior Greek evidence ἡμῶν
might seem to be preferable, a majority of the
Committee, impressed by the widespread
currency of ὑμῶν in versional and patristic
witnesses, considered it probable that copyists
introduced the first person pronoun under the
influence of the preceding ἡμῶν and the
following ἡμῖν."

διάκονος, ου m & f servant, helper,
minister

Verse 8

ὁ καὶ δηλωσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν
πνεύματι.

δηλωω make clear, indicate, inform

ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι 'the love the Spirit has awakened in you'

Day 578: Colossians 1:9-14

Verse 9

Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, οὐ πανόμεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ.

Cf. 1:3b. "As they were fruitful from the very day they heard the gospel, so Paul and Timothy have been prayerful from the very day they heard of their response to the gospel." Dunn

παυω mid stop, cease, cease from
προσευχομαι see v.3
αἰτεω ask; mid ask for oneself, request
πληρωθῆτε Verb, aor pass subj, 2 pl
πληρωω fill, make full
ἐπιγνωσις, εως f knowledge, recognition
θέλημα, ατος n see v.1
σοφια, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence
συνεσις, εως f understanding, insight

The two nouns are distinguished by various commentators as either:

- i) theoretical wisdom and practical discernment;
 - ii) General wisdom and specific insight.
- Eadie argues that spiritual insight is a particular form of wisdom, wisdom imparted to the believer by the Holy Spirit.

πνευματικος, η, ον spiritual, pertaining to the spirit

Verse 10

περιπατήσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπίγνωσει τοῦ θεοῦ.

περιπατεω walk, walk about, live

A characteristically Jewish term for conduct, cf. Ex 18:20; Deut 13:4-5; Ps 86:11; Prov 28:18; Is 33:15, also Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 2:12; Eph 4:1.

ἀξίως adv (from ἀξιός) worthily
ἀρεσκεια, ας f desire to please

Here alone in the NT and only in Prov 31:30 in LXX. The verb is used by Paul in Rom 8:8; 1 Cor 7:32; Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4,15; 4:1.

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting
καρποφορεω see v.6
αὐξανω and αὐξω see v.6

ἐπιγνωσις, εως f see v.9

Dunn thinks the dative is instrumental and that 'knowledge of God' is 'the basis from which or means by which the fruitbearing and growth 'in every good work' is to come about."

Verse 11

ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν, μετὰ χαρᾶς
δυνάμει Noun, dat s δυναμις
δυναμούμενοι Verb, pres pass ptc, m nom pl
δυναμοω strengthen, make strong

A Semitic doubling, 'empowered with all power', cf. Eph 1:19.

κρατος, ους n might, strength, power, dominion, mighty deed

δοξα, ης f glory

τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ another Semitism, 'his glorious might.' "Since transformation into heavenly splendour (glory) is part of the hope for heaven (see also 1:27 and 3:4), the prayer is in effect for that process to be forwarded already here on earth (cf. 2 Cor 4:16-5:5; see also 1:27." Dunn

ὑπομονη, ης f patience, endurance
μακροθυμα, ας f longsuffering, patience

Concerning the nouns 'patience' and 'longsuffering', Eadie states, "Both of them and their correspondent verbs are used not simply in reference to the pressure of present evil, but also to the prospect of coming deliverance, and as adjuncts or qualities of faith or the life of faith."

μακροθυμα is used sometimes of divine forbearance, Rom 3:4; 9:22; 1 Tim 1:16; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 3:15.

χαρα, ας f joy

Opinion is divided as to whether 'with joy' belongs with what precedes it or with what follows. Dunn follows the punctuation of the UBS text in taking the phrase with what follows. Joy was characteristic of NT Christianity – not least in the midst of hardship and suffering.

Verse 12

εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἰκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί.

εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks

The unusual τῷ πατρὶ without some qualification has given rise to a number of textual variants.

ἰκανώσαντι Verb, aor act ptc, m dat s
ἰκανω make capable, make fit

Here the sense is 'qualify'. It implies a lack of previous qualification to share in this inheritance, previously considered exclusive to Israel.

μερις, ἰδος f part, portion, share
κληρος, ου m lot, share, part, place

An assigned portion. There is here an allusion to the division and allotment of the land of Canaan.

ἅγιος, α, ον holy
φως, φωτος n light

A reference to glory as a characteristic of the believer's inheritance. Cf. Lk 16:8; Jn 12:36; 1 Thess 5:15.

Verse 13

ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκοτοῦ καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ,

ἐρρύσατο Verb, aor midd/pass dep indic, 3 s
ῥυομαι save, rescue
ἐξουσια, ας f authority, power
σκοτος, ους n darkness, evil

On being brought out of darkness into light cf. Eph 5:8-14; 1 Peter 2:9.

μετέστησεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s
μεθιστημι remove, bring (into)

Full sharing in the kingdom of God is in the future, cf. 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1,18. The language here is "the exaggerated expression of rich spiritual experience and full confidence (hope) that what had already been done (aorist tense) would be completed without fail (cf. Phil 1:6 with 3:20, and Eph 1:3 with 1:13-14)." Dunn

Verse 14

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

"The focus switches directly to Christ, leading into the powerful 'Christ hymn' of 1:15-20." Dunn

ἀπολυτρωσις, εως f redemption,
deliverance, setting free

Cf. 1 Cor 1:30. "Given the clear echo of the settlement of the promised land in 1:12, the compound word would probably evoke thought of Israel's ransom from slavery in Egypt and from captivity in Babylon, which were usually described with the uncompounded verb λυτρουν ('deliver, ransom,' e.g., Deut 7:8; 9:26; 15:15; Isa 43:1, 14; 44:22-24; 51:11; 52:3). In that case the great acts of Israel's redemption are being understood typologically as foreshadowing the eschatological redemption of Gentile as well as Jew to share in the new promised land ('the kingdom of God's beloved Son')." Dunn

ἄφεσις, εως f forgiveness, cancellation
(of sins)

ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

Dunn stresses the fact that forgiveness of sins was central to Judaism and its sacrificial cult, but then comments "The one step clearly taken beyond Jewish thinking on forgiveness is the location of forgiveness no longer in the cult, or even simply in directness of prayer to God, but once again 'in Christ.' As particularly in Galatians, it is the possibility of Gentiles being 'in Christ' that brings them within the sphere of God's gracious forgiveness. 'In Christ' is the key to it all."

Day 579: Colossians 1:15-20

Colossians 1:15-20

These verses are thought by many to be a pre-Pauline hymn, taken up by Paul and adapted to his own use in this part of his letter (see particularly Ralph P. Martin's commentary on *Colossians and Philemon*) – though it is always possible that Paul was the author of the hymn. "That Christians at such an early stage should be willing to use such language of Christ tells us much of 'the intellectual vitality of the early Christian communities' (Houlden ...) and of their willingness to use categories fundamental to wider philosophical thought in their attempts to explicate the significance of Christ and to communicate it to a wider audience. 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." Dunn

Verse 15

ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,
πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,

The ideas of this verse reflect Jewish theology concerning Wisdom and, in Hellenistic Judaism, the logos. Some suggest that the hymn was originally a Jewish hymn regarding Wisdom, here taken up and Christianised by Paul.

εἰκὼν, ονος f likeness, image, form,
appearance

εἰκὼν means "Representation and
manifestation" Lightfoot

ἀορατος, ον unseen, invisible

Cf. Jn 1:18. Christ is the one who makes God known. Paul's words repeat "the familiar conviction shared by all the biblical writers that God is spiritual and invisible (Jn 1:18; 4:24; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16) and unknown except for his self-revelation. That self-disclosure is seen supremely in his Son, Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:4-6) who 'embodies' the character of God." Martin

πρωτοτοκος, ον first-born, first
κτισις, εως f creation, what is created,
act of creation

The phrase reflects Proverbs 8:22 but does not imply that Christ was the first of created beings since verse 16 makes it clear that he is the source of all created things. Due weight should also be given to the notion of 'firstborn' as 'heir' – the one who inherits all from the Father.

Verse 16

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς
οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὄρατα καὶ τὰ
ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε
ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ
καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται,

ἐν αὐτῷ Martin understands this to mean 'for
Him'. Christ is creation's goal. The phrase is
linked with the previous concerning Christ as
firstborn. The idea is primacy over creation.

κτιζω create, make

γη, γης f earth

ὄρατος, η, ον visible

ἀορατος, ον unseen, invisible

εἴτε if, whether

εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε
ἐξουσίαι thought to be a Pauline addition to
the original hymn. "Sacrificing the balance of
the hymn in order to add a further reference to
Christ's superiority over all beings in heaven
as well as on earth." Dunn

θρονος, ου m throne

Dunn argues 'heavenly thrones'.

κυριοτης, ητος f (angelic) power
(believed to have some control over human
fate); authority

Cf. Eph 1:20-21.

ἀρχη, ης f beginning, origin, power
ἐξουσια, ας f authority, power

Cf. 2:10,15 also 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10;
6:12).

ἔκτισται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s κτιζω
create, make

Verse 17

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα
ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.

Again, the verse has parallels with Prov 8:20.

συνέστηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s
συνιστημι and συνιστανω intrans hold
together, have one's proper place

His lordship extends not only over the original act of creation but also over the continuance of all that is in being. "Paradoxical as it may seem, the wisdom which holds the universe together is most clearly to be recognised in its distinctive character by reference to Christ. This will mean, among other things, that the fundamental rationale of the world is 'caught' more in the generous outpouring of sacrificial, redemptive love (1:14) than in the greed and grasping more characteristic of the 'authority of darkness' (1:12)." Dunn

Verse 18

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος,
τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος
ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πάσιν
αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,

κεφαλη, ης f head

σωμα, τος n body

ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

Christ's headship over all of creation is for the sake of the church. Again, it is suggested that the image of the cosmos as a body was common in Greek thought and was reflected in Hellenistic Judaism (in such writers as Philo). The sense of the original hymn is transformed by the addition of the words 'the church'. Dunn adds, "to assert that Christ is head of the church does not narrow his cosmic mediatorial role; rather, it expands the significance of the claims made for the church."

The second half of the verse begins a second strophe of the 'hymn' which parallels the first, beginning with a deliberate repetition of ὅς ἐστιν. The first strophe speaks of Christ's preeminence with respect to creation, the second with respect to the new creation.

ἀρχῆ, ἡς f see v.16
πρωτοτοκος, ον see v.15
νεκρος, α, ον dead

Cf. Rev 1:5. The firstborn is the founder of a people, cf. Gen 49:3 and Rom 8:29. "The sense of a new beginning of creation could hardly be clearer, that with Christ's death and resurrection what had been expected as the end of all things and renewal of creation in a new age was already operative in and through this same Christ." Dunn

γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι
πρωτευω have first place, be above all
else

Here alone in the NT.

Verse 19

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

εὐδοκεω be pleased, take
delight/pleasure in

πληρωμα, τος η fulness, completeness

I.e. 'all *his* fulness'

κατοικεω live, settle, inhabit

Paul is asserting that God was dwelling in Christ in all his fulness, perhaps against the background of false teachers who said that there were spiritual powers outside of his control. "The importance of the language is to indicate that the completeness of God's self-revelation was focussed in Christ, that the wholeness of God's interaction with the universe is summed up in Christ." Dunn

Verse 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.

ἀποκαταλασσω reconcile

This double compound only here and Eph 2:16. A term possibly coined by Paul.

εἰρηνοποιεω make peace
αἷμα, ατος f blood
σταυρος, ου m cross

The second δι• αὐτοῦ p⁴⁶ & A *et al* is omitted by B D* G *et al*.

εἴτε see v.16
γῆ, γης f earth

Christ's victory on the cross effectively overcame every evil agent and rendered it powerless. "The implication is that the purpose, means and manner of (final) reconciliation have already been expressed by God, not that the reconciliation is already complete... What is being claimed is quite simply and profoundly that the divine purpose in the act of reconciliation and peacemaking was to restore the harmony of the original creation, to bring into renewed oneness and wholeness 'all things,' 'whether things on the earth or things in the heavens' (see on 1:16). That the church has a role in this is implied in the correlation of 1:18a with 1:20. And when we include the earlier talk of the gospel 'in all the world (κοσμος) bearing fruit and growing' (1:6), and the subsequent talk of the ages-old mystery being made known among all the nations (1:27), the implication becomes clear: it is by its gospel living (1:10) and by its gospel preaching (1:27) that the cosmic goal of reconciled perfection will be achieved (1:28...) ... [The church is] the community in which that reconciliation has already taken place (or begun to take place) and whose responsibility it is to live out (cf. particularly 3:8-15) as well as to proclaim its secret (cf. 4:2-6)." Dunn

Day 580: Colossians 1:21-23

Verse 21

Καὶ ὑμᾶς ποτε ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους καὶ ἐχθροὺς τῇ διανοίᾳ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς,

ποτέ enclitic particle once, formerly, at
one time

ἀπηλλοτριωμένους Verb, perf pass ptc, m
acc pl ἀπαλλοτριομαι be a stranger
to, have no connection with

The verb 'to be' with the perfect participle expresses a persisting state of affairs (in the past, as made plain by ποτε). The alienation and reconciliation (v.22) both have God as their object.

ἐχθρος, α, ον enemy, one hated
διανοια mind, thought, understanding
πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

The evil works are the outward evidences of a mind at enmity with God.

Verse 22

νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σωματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου, παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμωμούς καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ,

νυνι (originally an emphatic form of νυν)
now

Cf. Rom 3:21; 6:22; 7:6; 11:30; 1 Cor 15:20; Philem 11, for Paul's expression of this moment of divine reversal.

ἀποκατάλασσω see v.20

σωμα, τος η body

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body, human nature

θανατος, ου m death

Emphasises the physical death of Jesus as the means by which reconciliation has been achieved.

παριστημι and παριστανω present, bring into one's presence

Eadie refers to this as an 'infinitive of design'

ἅγιος, α, ον holy

ἄμωμος, ον faultless; without blemish

"Used most commonly in the LXX of the physical perfection required of the sacrificial animal (e.g., Exod 29:1; Lev 1:3, 10 etc., Num 6:14 etc.; Ezek 43:22-25; 45:18, 23; 46:4-6, 13), though naturally such perfection became a metaphor for blamelessness before God (2 Sam 22:24; Pss 15:2; 18:23; 19:13 etc.). The same overtone carries over into New Testament use (Eph 5:27; Phil 2:15; Jude 24; Rev 14:5; explicitly in Heb 9:14 and 1 Pet 1:19). The parallel is particularly close with Eph 1:4: ἁγίους καὶ ἀμωμούς κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ (κατενώπιον only in these two passages in the Pauline letters)." Dunn

ἀνεγκλητος, ον beyond reproach, without fault

A legal term meaning 'free from accusation or charge', hence 'irreproachable' cf. 1 Tim 3:10 and Titus 1:6-7.

κατενώπιον before, in the presence of

"There is an echo of the Pauline idea of sacrificial interchange, where the spotless sacrifice by dying as a sin offering is somehow interchanged with the blameworthy sinner and its spotlessness transferred to the sinner (so most explicitly in 2 Cor 5:21). This has been taken up in the formal imagery of formal presentation to judge or king or emperor, where it is the irreproachable character of those presented that guarantees their acceptance." Dunn

Verse 23

εἰ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖοι καὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε, τοῦ κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν, οὗ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος..

γε enclitic particle adding emphasis to the word with which it is associated

ἐπιμενω remain, stay, persist in

πίστει Noun, dat s πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

Cf. Rom 8:13, 17; 11:22; 1 Cor 9:27; 10:11-12; Gal 5:4.

τεθεμελιωμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom

πι θεμελιω found; establish firmly

ἑδραῖος, α, ον firm, steadfast

μετακινεω shift, move, dislodge

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope, what is hoped for

εὐαγγελιον, ου η good news, gospel

"A life of faith is one of hope and leads to glory... The perseverance of the saints ... is not inconsistent with exhortation to permanence of faith, and warnings of the sad results of deviation and apostasy. He who stops short in the race, and does not reach the goal, cannot obtain the prize... For man is not acted upon mechanically by the grace of God, but his whole spiritual nature is excited to earnest prayer and anxious effort." Eadie

κηρυχθέντος Verb, aor pass ptc, m gen s

κηρυσσω preach, proclaim

κτισις, εως f creation, what is created

διάκονος, ου η m & f servant, minister