

GOD AND MAN: WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR MAN COLOSSIANS 01:12–14

DIVISION OVERVIEW: (Col 01:12–23)

Jesus Christ, Person and Works

This is one of the greatest passages of Scripture ever written. Its importance cannot be overstressed. It is a passage that reveals the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is supreme, above all both in His Person and in His work. Who He is and what He has done for man can never be matched. This is the purpose of this great passage, a passage that covers so much in twelve brief verses: to show to the world just who Jesus Christ is and what He has done.

Griffith Thomas says, “[This] constitutes one of the most important documents in the New Testament for the study of Christology” (*Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, ed. by His Daughter. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1973, p. 45).

Bishop W.R. Nicholson is quoted by Griffith Thomas as saying: “[This is] a Christological statement [that] has scarcely an equal, certainly no superior” (*Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, p. 45).

William Barclay says, “This is a passage of...such importance that we shall have to spend some considerable time on it” (*The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p. 135). He then proceeds to write some seventeen pages on the twelve verses.

A.T. Robertson says: “[This is a] wonderful picture of the person and work of Christ...a full and final answer to the...[false teaching] about Jesus Christ by speculative philosophy and to all modern efforts [to give a] ‘reduced’ picture of Christ” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol. 4, p. 477).

Matthew Henry forcefully says: “Here is a summary...of the gospel concerning the great work of our redemption by Christ” (*Mathew Henry’s Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 752).

The Pre-eminent Christ: God’s Dear Son Col 01:12-23

A. God and Man: What God Has Done for Man, Col 01:12-14

B. God and Christ (Part I): The Person of Christ, Col 01:15

C. God and Christ (Part II): Christ the Creator, Col 01:16-17

D. God and Christ (Part III): Christ the Head of the Church, Col 01:18-19

E. God and Christ (Part IV): Christ the Reconciler of All Things, Col 01:20-23

Note one other thing about this passage. It is couched in the midst of praise and thanksgiving, not in a sermon (Mathew Henry. *Mathew Henry’s Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 752).

Introduction (Col 01:12–14)

God has done three great things for man, things that are so great that they just explode human imagination. If we diligently concentrate upon these three things, the depth of what God has done will erupt in our lives for good. We will never be the same. What has God done for man?

- I. God has given us an inheritance (v. 12).
- II. God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness (v. 13).
- III. God has redeemed us, even forgiven our sins (v. 14).

I. Colossians 01:12 God's Inheritance

God has given us an inheritance. Before we proceed to discuss the inheritance, note two other points.

1. We have to be *prepared*, that is, qualified and made fit before we can receive the inheritance. Man is not qualified or fit to receive anything from God, especially an inheritance, not in his present sinful and corruptible state. If he is to ever receive an inheritance from God, he first has to be made fit and acceptable to God. Note: this is exactly what Scripture says: God has made us qualify. It does not yet say what He did to make us qualify; it simply declares that God has *fitted* us to receive an inheritance from Him.
2. We share the inheritance with all other saints in light. Remember, *saints* (hagios) simply means those who have set their lives apart to live for God (see Col. 1:2). God is Light; therefore, when a person turns his life over to God, he is turning his life over to Light. He is to live and move and have his being in light, that is, in God. He is to walk in the *light of God Himself*, so much so that he, the believer, is called the light of the world. This is what is meant by “saints in the kingdom of light.” They are people who have committed their lives to walk in the light of God. Therefore, they are saints, persons set apart in the light of God.

The point is this: every saint who lives and moves in the light of God is to receive the inheritance of God. But note: since God is light, only those *set apart in light* can live with God. Any person who sets his life apart *in darkness* can never receive the inheritance of God, for darkness can never dwell in light. The light destroys and eliminates the darkness.

3. God has given believers an inheritance. What is the inheritance? Scripture describes the inheritance in the following ways.
 - a. We are heirs of eternal life.

Titus 3:7 *So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

- b. We are heirs of salvation.

Heb 1:14 *Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*

- c. We are heirs of the promises made to Abraham, that is, the promises to inherit the world and to be a citizen of a great nation of people.

Gal 3:29 *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (See Rom. 4:13)*

Rom 4:13 *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*

- d. We are heirs of glory.

Rom 8:17 *Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

- e. We are heirs of righteousness.

Heb 11:7 *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

- f. We are heirs of the gift of life.

1 Pet 3:7 *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

- g. We are heirs of God's very special favour — heirs that will stir the praise of His glory.

Eph 1:11-12 *In him [Christ] we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.*

Eph 1:14 *Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.*

- h. We are heirs of the reward, of the inheritance and all that it includes.

Col 1:12 *Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

Col 3:24 *Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

- i. We are heirs of the eternal inheritance.

Heb 9:15 *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

- j. We are heirs of an immortal and perfected body that will be given us when Christ returns.

1 Cor 15:50-54 *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” (see 1 Pet. 1:3-4)*

II. **Colossians 01:13 Deliverance from Darkness**

God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

1. Note two things about the “dominion of darkness.”
 - a. The “dominion of *darkness*” indicates there is a kingdom, a realm, a world of darkness. Darkness means just what is indicated: a person is unable to see and understand or know. Picture the scene: a person trying to walk and stumble through a world of darkness. He cannot see or understand:
=> who he really is => where he has come from
=> where he is => where he is going

This is the very situation of natural man, the man who has not been delivered from the world of darkness by God. The man in darkness does not know...

- who he is: why God created him and what God has planned for man.
- where he has come from: that his origin is God: that God created him.
- where he is: that the world was made by God and that it has an eternal purpose in the plan of God.
- where he is going: that he is an eternal being who is to either live forever in the light of God’s presence or in the darkness away from God’s presence.

The point to see is that darkness is a realm or a world in which the unbeliever lives and moves. He never knows these things, never knows the truth of his world and life nor of God. He walks in a life and world of darkness, blinded from the truth. (See *Darkness*, Eph. 5:8.)

b. The “dominion of darkness” also indicates that the darkness is not only a realm or world, but a *dominion* — an active dominion that enslaves men and stands in opposition to the light of God. The *world of darkness* is a kingdom in rebellion against God. This is the very reason men struggle against God so much. It is difficult to imagine the antagonism of most men against God, yet it is true. Just imagine how contradictory it is to see a *rational creature*...

- cursing God
- denying God
- rejecting God
- hurting people
- damaging himself
- ridiculing, persecuting and killing those who profess God

There is no way a rational creature would act like this unless he was enslaved by the dominion of darkness.

Mat 6:23 “*But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*”

John 1:4-5 “*In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*”

John 3:19 *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

Rom 13:12 *The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.*

2 Cor 3:14 *But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.*

2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Eph 4:18 *They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.*

1 John 2:11 *But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.*

2. Note that it is God Himself who has rescued us from darkness. The word *rescued* (*erurato*) means to rescue or snatch from darkness. A person lost in pitch black darkness is hopeless unless someone rescues him. And note: he cannot be rescued by those who are lost in the same darkness as he is. No person who is in the world of darkness has light, or else he would use the light to get out of the darkness. This is the very reason God had to rescue man. He alone is light; therefore, He alone could reach down and snatch man from the darkness. How did He do this? The answer is given in the next point.
3. God transferred us, brought us into the kingdom of His dear Son, into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must always remember that the kingdom of Christ already exists.

- => His rule and reign already exists in the spiritual world or spiritual dimension of being, that is, in heaven.
- => His rule and reign already exists in the hearts and lives of believers in this physical world or physical dimension of being.

The message of the glorious gospel is that God has transferred the believer from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. (See *Kingdom of Heaven*, Mt. 19:23-24.)

John 3:3 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

John 18:36-37 *Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."*

Acts 14:22 *Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.*

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

1 Cor 15:25 *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*

Heb 1:8 *But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepture of your kingdom.*

Rev 11:15 *The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."*

Isa 9:7 *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

Jer 23:5 *"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land."*

III. Colossians 01:14 Redemption, Forgiveness

God has redeemed us, even forgiven our sins (see *Redemption* and *Forgiveness*, Eph. 1:7. Eph. 1:7 and Col. 1:14 are almost identical verses.) ■

EPHESIANS 01:07 REDEMPTION — RANSOM

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.” Ephesians 01:07

God has redeemed us and forgiven our sins. The word *redemption* (apolutrosin) is one of the great words of the Bible. It conveys the idea of deliverance or setting a man free by paying a ransom. For example, a prisoner of war or a kidnapped person is ransomed or redeemed; or a convicted criminal is freed from the penalty of death. In every case the man is powerless to free himself. He cannot pay the penalty demanded to liberate himself from his situation or bondage. Note several significant facts.

1. Man has been captivated or kidnapped by several forces.
 - a. The force of sin. All men sin and cannot help but sin. Man is sold under sin. Sin has captivated him (Rom. 3:23; 7:14).
 - b. The force of corruption and death. The whole creation is corrupt (Rom. 8:21). Everything wastes away; it deteriorates, decays, ages, and eventually dies. Corruption and death have captivated man. (See 1 Cor. 15:42, 50; Gal. 6:8; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2:12, 19.)
 - c. The force of Satan. All unbelievers are under the power and influence of Satan. He has blinded their minds to the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). He works in the those who are disobedient (Eph. 2:2). They are captivated by him (1 Jn. 5:19).
2. Three key ideas are included in the concept of redemption.
 - a. Man needs to be liberated, delivered, and set free.
 - b. Man is unable to liberate himself. He has no energy, no power, no ability to free himself.
 - c. God has redeemed man by the blood of His Son Jesus Christ. God Himself has paid the ransom for man’s release — the ransom of a life for a life. God gave His own Son so that man might be set free. Man has been redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ (see Lev. 17:11; Mt. 20:28; Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Col. 1:14; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:18f; 2 Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4). This is extremely important to note: when a man *truly* calls upon the Lord to save him, God buys him right out of the marketplace of this corruptible life (Rom. 10:13). God redeems him once for all, purchases and removes him from further sale. He is redeemed eternally (see Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Col. 4:5).
3. God redeems man because of the riches of His grace (see Eph. 2:8-9). He loves man with an unbelievable love — a love so great that it spurs Him to do whatever is necessary to save man.

Lev 17:11 *For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.*

Mat 20:28 *Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Rom 3:24 *And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

1 Cor 6:20 *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

1 Cor 7:23 *You were bought [redeemed] at a price; do not become slaves of men.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Col 1:14 *In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

1 Tim 2:5-6 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given in its proper time.*

Heb 9:15 *For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

2 Pet 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

Rev 5:9 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."*

Rev 14:3-4 *And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. □*

EPHESIANS 01:07 FORGIVENESS

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. **Ephesians 01:07***

The word *forgiveness* (aphesin) means to send off, to send away, to release, to let go. The word for *sin* (paraptomaton) means transgression, trespass, a falling by the way, or deviating from the way. All men...

- have transgressed the law of God
- have deviated from God
- have fallen from the way of God

Therefore, all men stand guilty of having broken the law of God, and the penalty for breaking the law is death. However, the blood of Jesus Christ brings forgiveness to men. How? Jesus Christ died *for man*. He took the penalty of sins and bore the punishment Himself. He was able to do this because He was the Perfect and Ideal Man, and as the Ideal Man, He could stand for and represent all men. When He died, He died as the Ideal Man, as the Representative for all men. Any person who really believes that Jesus Christ died for him is forgiven his sins. God takes his faith and counts it as the death of Jesus Christ. God sees the man as being *in Jesus Christ*, as being in the death of Jesus Christ. God counts the death of Jesus Christ for the death of the man. Therefore, the guilt and penalty for breaking God's laws are completely removed. The man's sins and guilt are sent away or washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Acts 13:38 "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you."

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me [Christ Jesus].

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. □