

Week Three

The Constituent of the One New Man— the All-inclusive, Extensive Christ Replacing Culture

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:15-18, 27; 2:9-10, 16-18; 3:4, 10-11

Day 1

- I. If we get into the depths of the book of Colossians, we will see that in this book Paul is dealing with the hidden matter of human culture:**
 - A. Paul's use of the word barbarian in Colossians 3:11 is a strong indication that this Epistle deals with culture.**
 - B. Culture is the systematic method that we have developed to exist and to maintain our being—Gen. 4:16-22:**
 1. Culture is the unconscious living of every human being—Eph. 2:2-3; 4:17.
 2. People throughout the world are under the influence of their culture.
 - C. Just as culture exerted a strong influence on the believers in Colossae, culture today exerts a strong influence on us—Col. 2:8-10, 16-18:**
 1. Unconsciously, we are under the influence of the culture into which we were born; the elements of this culture are part of our being—Gal. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20.
 2. When we came into the church life, we brought our culture with us, and this culture undermines our enjoyment of Christ and the church life.

Day 2

3. To a large extent, Christ as the unique element in the church life has been replaced by culture—v. 8; 3:11:
 - a. Subconsciously and unconsciously, we all treasure our culture and place a high value on our particular cultural background.

b. In the church life Christ is replaced by culture more than by anything else—v. 11.

II. The book of Colossians reveals that the all-inclusive, extensive Christ is everything in God's economy—1:15-18, 27:

- A. We need a clear vision of this wonderful Christ being everything to us.
- B. Such a vision will terminate the influence of culture on the experience of Christ and on the church life, and instead of being cultured people, we will be people occupied with, possessed by, and saturated with Christ—3:11b.

Day 3

III. The preeminent, all-inclusive, extensive Christ is our life and the unique constituent of the one new man—vv. 4, 10-11:

- A. The constituent of the church as the new man is Christ and Christ alone; the content of the church is nothing other than the all-inclusive, extensive Christ—1:15-18; 2:9-10.
- B. As our life and the constituent of the one new man, the all-inclusive, extensive Christ replaces our culture with Himself—3:11.
- C. The issue of enjoying Christ as our portion is that we experience Him as the content and the constituent of the one new man, and ultimately, the Christ we enjoy becomes the constituent of the new man—1:12; 3:11.

Day 4

- D. According to Colossians 3:11, in the new man there is no possibility for the various cultural distinctions to continue to exist:
 - 1. There are no cultural distinctions in the one new man, for every part of the new man is constituted with Christ—v. 11.

2. In the church as the new man, there is no room for regional, cultural, or national distinctions and no place for any race, nationality, culture, or social status.
- E. Because Christ is the unique constituent of the new man, there should be no differences among the believers who are part of this new man, and there should be no differences among the churches—1 Cor. 4:17; Rev. 1:12, 20; 22:16.**

Day 5

IV. As the constituent of the new man, Christ is all and in all; Christ is all the members, and He is in all the members—Col. 3:11:

- A. In the church as the new man, Christ is everyone and He is also in everyone—1:27; 3:11.**
- B. On the one hand, in the new man there is no place for the natural person, because Christ is all the members.**
- C. On the other hand, the fact that Christ is in all indicates that the members continue to exist, not without Christ but as those indwelt by Christ—1:27.**
- D. When we take Christ as our life and constitution, we have the sense deep within that we are one with Christ and that Christ is us, and simultaneously, we have an even deeper sense that Christ is in us—3:4.**
- E. In the church as the new man, Christ is everything; this implies that all the believers must be constituted with Christ—1:15-18; 2:16-17; 3:4, 10-11:**
1. We must be permeated with Christ, saturated with Christ, and have Christ organically wrought into our being—Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17a.
 2. Eventually, we will be replaced by Christ, and then, in reality, Christ will be all and in all; He will be every part of the new man—Col. 3:11b.
- F. The new man is Christ in all the saints permeating us and replacing us until all natural distinctions have been eliminated,**

and everyone is constituted with Christ—Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17a; Col. 1:27.

Day 6

- G. **When we have the vision of the all-inclusive, extensive Christ with the adequate experience of Christ, the one new man will appear among us in a practical way, and we will realize the life of the new man—3:10-17; Philem. 10-16.**
- H. **If Christ is the living of all the saints, then only He will be in the new man, and all the saints, whatever their nationality, will live Christ; then in a real and practical way, Christ will be all the members of the new man—Col. 3:11; Phil. 1:21a.**
- V. **The New Jerusalem will be the final consummation of the one new man—Eph. 2:15-16; 4:24; Col. 3:10-11; Rev. 21:2, 9-10:**
 - A. **When we have become the New Jerusalem, we will enjoy the life of the universal one new man.**
 - B. Today we may have a foretaste of this enjoyment by allowing the all-inclusive, extensive Christ to replace our culture, to constitute us with Himself, and to make us all part of the one new man in reality and practicality—Col. 1:27; 2:10; 3:4, 10-11.

WEEK 3 — DAY 1

Morning Nourishment

Col. 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

2:8 Beware that no one carries you off as spoil through his philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.

In Colossians Paul is dealing with the hidden matter of man's culture. A strong indicator of this is the use of the word barbarian in 3:11, a word not used in either 1 Corinthians 12:13 or Galatians 3:28, verses parallel to Colossians 3:11. Paul's use of the word barbarian in Colossians indicates that this Epistle deals with culture.

The source of the trouble among the believers in Colossae was culture, Jewish culture and Greek culture. I believe that all the churches in Asia Minor had been saturated with Jewish culture, particularly with respect to religious observances, and with Greek culture, particularly related to philosophy. At the time of Paul, the culture in the Mediterranean region included three main elements: Jewish religion, Greek philosophy, and Roman politics. Two of these elements—Jewish religion and Greek philosophy—had invaded the church.

Just as culture exerted a strong influence on the believers in Colossae, culture today exerts a strong influence on us. Unconsciously, we are under the influence of the culture into which we were born. It seems that the religious and philosophical elements of culture are part of our being. In many groups in Christianity the political element of culture is present also. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 273-274)

Today's Reading

In Colossians 2:18 Paul says, "Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize, in self-chosen lowness and the worship of the

angels, dwelling on things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his mind set on the flesh.” Here Paul warns the believers not to be defrauded through self-chosen lowliness, or so-called humility. He does not warn them about fleshly indulgence. Humility is one of the best human virtues. In many ethical teachings, a high value is placed on humility. In certain respects, humility is even a finer virtue than love. But even humility can be used to defraud the believers of the enjoyment of Christ.

The principle is the same today. Satan, the subtle one, is still using ethics and religion to defraud Christians of the enjoyment of Christ. In saying this, I am not referring to others, such as those in the Catholic religion, but especially to us in the Lord’s recovery. If we get into the depths of the book of Colossians, we shall see that it deals not with sin or with the law, but with man’s culture. Culture is the unconscious living of every human being. This is true both of primitive society and of advanced countries as well. The principle is the same everywhere. People throughout the world are under the influence of their culture.... According to the book of Colossians, what defrauds us of the enjoyment of Christ and frustrates the church life is our culture.

The book of Colossians speaks to our need today. Mainly we are not troubled by the sinful things, as in 1 Corinthians, nor by the law, as in Galatians. But we are all unconsciously and subconsciously under the influence of culture. When we came into the church life, we brought our culture with us. This culture is now undermining our enjoyment of Christ. Culture is the systematic method we have developed to exist and to maintain our being. The stronger our culture is, the more critical we shall be of others. Based upon the culture we have, we develop our type of asceticism, our own practices to restrict the indulgence of the flesh. Our asceticism is the method we devise to restrain ourselves and to keep from doing sinful things. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 274-276)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msg. 33

WEEK 3 — DAY 2

Morning Nourishment

Col. 3:10-11 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

The problem in Colossae was not sinfulness, as in Corinth; it was culture. Asceticism and philosophy are two of the leading products of culture. Uncultured people are wild, altogether without any form of asceticism. Furthermore, those of a low culture do not have philosophy. The more cultured people are, the more highly developed their philosophy is. The Greeks are strong in philosophy, whereas the Jews are known for their religious observances. Most religious observances are related to the putting down of the flesh and to the suppression of the self.

The Colossian believers devoted much attention to matters of culture and did not want to be like barbarians or Scythians. Hence, Paul pointed out that in the church as the new man, there is no room for either the cultured or the uncultured. There is no place for philosophy, asceticism, or observances. The Colossians were not sinful like some of those in Corinth. However, the believers in Colossae replaced Christ, the constituent of the new man, with various aspects of culture. Some treasured philosophy, whereas others treasured religious observances. These things were allowed to come into the church life as substitutes for Christ. But in the new man there is room for nothing other than Christ. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 268-269)

Today's Reading

In Colossians 3:15 and 16 Paul charges us to let the peace of Christ arbitrate in our hearts and to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. If we allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts, this peace will settle all the disputes among us.... Just as a referee is needed to settle disputes in a

game or contest, so the Colossians needed a referee, an arbitrator, to calm down all the differing opinions. It is significant that only in the book of Colossians, a book that deals with culture and its isms and practices, does Paul speak of the inward arbitration of the peace of Christ. This arbitrator calms down all the opinions which have their source in our culture.

When the peace of Christ calms our opinions, the word of Christ, which is to dwell in us richly, replaces them. Instead of our opinions, we then have the word of Christ. The New Testament reveals clearly that the word of Christ is the Spirit. Furthermore, Christ today is the life-giving Spirit. Our Christian life is altogether a matter of Christ as the living Spirit. We do not need isms, philosophies, practices, or observances. We need the experience of Christ as the life-giving Spirit. The brothers need not try to love their wives, nor the sisters to submit to their husbands. Rather, we all should contact Christ and let Him be our love and submission. Christ today as the life-giving Spirit is in our spirit. We need to say, "Lord Jesus, I thank You that You are here. You are in me all the time to be whatever I need." If we would practice this, we need a clear vision that Christ is everything to us. Such a vision will slay our philosophy, asceticism, opinions, and isms. It will even terminate the influence of culture on our experience of Christ. Then, instead of being cultured people, we shall be people occupied with, possessed by, and saturated with Christ.

There is no doubt that our hearts need to be comforted and knit together in love unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding. But the goal of this comforting of our hearts is that we would have the full knowledge of Christ as the mystery of God [Col. 2:2]. We should not allow the concern with the heart to keep us from the realization that we need Christ, the mystery of God, to be everything to us. Moment by moment, we need to take Him as our life and live by Him. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 276-277)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msgs. 32, 63-64

WEEK 3 — DAY 3

Morning Nourishment

Col. 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.

1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things.

In Colossians 1:9—3:11 we see seven major aspects of Christ: that Christ is the portion of the saints (1:9-14), that He is the first both in creation and in resurrection (1:15-23), that He is the mystery of God's economy (1:24-29), that He is the mystery of God (2:1-7), that He is the body of all the shadows (2:8-23), that He is the life of the saints (3:1-4), and that He is the constituent of the new man (3:5-11). These aspects of Christ are presented in a marvelous sequence. First we see that Christ is the portion of the saints and last that He is the constituent of the new man. This indicates that the ultimate issue of enjoying Christ as our portion is that we experience Him as the content and constituent of the new man.... To say that the enjoyment of Christ as the portion of the saints results in the experience of Christ as the constituent of the new man indicates that the enjoyment of Christ results in the church life.... Christ is the all-inclusive portion of the saints, typified by the good land. If we enjoy Christ as such a portion, the result will be the new man with Christ as the content.... In this new man Christ is all and in all. Hence, it is crucial for us to learn to live Christ as the constituent of the new man. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 263-264)

Today's Reading

In the geographical region between Rome and Colossae were many different kinds of people. However, in this region near the Mediterranean, the new man had come into being and was living in a practical way. Although travel was not convenient, there was considerable traffic among

the churches. There is a lesson for us here. Although we enjoy all the modern conveniences and means of transportation, there may not be as much traffic among the churches today as there was at the time of Paul.... I have never composed a letter containing as many personal greetings as there are in the book of Colossians. Think of how many names are mentioned in 4:7-17.... Paul also refers to the brothers in Laodicea, the church in the house of Nymphas, and the church of the Laodiceans.... All these names indicate that with Paul there was a sense, a consciousness, of the new man.

This new man who was living on earth in a practical way was constituted of those who according to culture and social status were Greeks, Jews, circumcision, uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slaves, and free men. However, ...the actual constituent of the new man is Christ and Christ alone. Because Christ is the unique constituent of the new man, there should be no differences among the believers who are part of this new man. Furthermore, there should be no differences among the churches, for example, no difference between the church in Laodicea and the church in Colossae. This is proved by Paul's word regarding the reading of letters [in 4:16].... What Paul wrote to the Colossians was also for the Laodiceans, and what he wrote to the Laodiceans was for the Colossians. What fellowship, oneness, harmony, and intimate contact this implies!

In 4:7 Paul says, "All the things concerning me, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow slave in the Lord, will make known to you." Paul had charged Tychicus to make known to the Colossians all that concerned him. If Paul did not have the consciousness of the new man, he would not have regarded it necessary to give Tychicus such a charge. Rather, he may have thought to himself, "Why should I tell those in Colossae the things that concern me? They are in Asia Minor, and I am here in Rome, far away from them." Paul, however, had the sense of the new man. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 258-260)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msg. 31

WEEK 3 — DAY 4

Morning Nourishment

Col. 4:16 ...When this letter is read among you, cause that it be read in the church of the Laodiceans also, and that you also read the one from Laodicea.

Rev. 1:11-12 ...What you see write...and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus...and to Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.

The existence and living of the new man in a practical way is a matter of tremendous significance. The Roman Empire covered a vast area and embraced many different peoples. In the attempt to unify the people culturally, the Roman Empire used the Greek language. However, the Roman Empire was not successful in uniting the various peoples. The differences among the nations, races, and social classes remained. The Jews were still Jews, and the Greeks were still Greeks. The distinction between slaves and masters was by no means eliminated. But in spite of all the differences among nationalities, races, and classes, there was on earth in a practical way the one new man created in Christ Jesus. There were not merely local churches in various cities—there was one new man in a real and practical way. (Life-study of Colossians, p. 260)

Today's Reading

It is shameful for the church in any locality to isolate itself from other churches. How wrong it is for us to have the attitude of standing apart from other local churches, fearing that others may interfere with our affairs or otherwise trouble us.... Any church which holds such an attitude has a consciousness only of itself, not of the totality of the new man. Those who insist on this attitude cause the new man to be fragmented, to be broken into pieces. Nevertheless, many churches and many individual believers as well have the attitude that they will leave others alone if others in turn will leave them alone. They do not care about the churches in other places, and

they do not want other churches to be involved with them. Those who have this attitude lack the sense, the consciousness, of the one new man. Praise the Lord for the portrait of the living of the new man in Colossians 4:7-17! By these verses we see the practical expression of the new man.

In Paul's heart was not simply a particular local church or a certain saint, but the one new man. Paul knew a great many saints. But in the verses devoted to fellowship, he mentions certain ones as representatives of the various peoples who, with Christ as their constituent, compose the new man. In this way he presents a full picture of the living of the new man. My burden in this message is that we would be impressed with this crucial point.

If we are conscious of the one new man, we should no longer think that the churches in our country have nothing to do with the churches in other nations. Instead, we shall realize that all the churches are the one new man today. May we look to the Lord that we may not be sectarian in any way. We would not be sectarian either individually as believers or corporately as local churches.... If at the time of Paul, when travel was not convenient, there could be traffic among the churches, how much more should there be today with all the modern conveniences? By means of the traffic among the churches, we experience in a practical way the living of the new man.

After Paul tells us that Christ is our life and the constituent of the new man, he charges us to let the peace of Christ arbitrate in us and to let the word of Christ inhabit us.... At Babel the cultural divisions of mankind came into being.... But according to Ephesians 2:15, Christ's death on the cross has abolished all the cultural ordinances and differences and terminated them. Christ's purpose in doing this was to create in Himself one new man and thereby make peace This very peace, the peace of Christ, is what Paul refers to in Colossians 3:15. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 260-262, 278)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 216

WEEK 3 — DAY 5

Morning Nourishment

Col. 1:27 ...God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

3:10-11 And have put on the new man...where...Christ is all and in all.

In Colossians 3:10 and 11 Paul speaks of the new man, where...Christ is all the members, and He is in all the members. There is no room for the natural man. There is no room for Americans or Chinese, for British or French, for you or me.... In the church as the new man, Christ is everything. This implies that He is every brother and every sister. This also implies that every brother and sister must be constituted of Christ.... If we would be constituted of Christ, Christ must be added into us more and more. We must be permeated with Christ, saturated with Christ, and have Christ organically wrought into our being. Eventually, we shall be replaced by Christ. Then, in reality, He will be all and in all. He will be every member, every part, of the new man.

The new man does not come into existence by taking Christians from various countries and bringing them together. That would be a new organization, not the new man. The new man comes into being as we are saturated, filled, and permeated with Christ and replaced by Him through an organic process. The new man is Christ in all the saints permeating us and replacing us until all natural distinctions have been eliminated and everyone is constituted of Christ. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 454-455)

Today's Reading

Perhaps you are wondering how Christ can be all in the new man. For this to be a reality, we must take Christ as our life and live Him, not ourselves. If Christ is the living of all the saints, then only He will be in the new man.... All the saints, whatever their nationality may be, will live Christ. Then in a way that is real and practical, Christ will be all the members of the new man. Christ will be you, and Christ will be me. Because we all live

Christ, not ourselves, Christ will be all of us, every member of the new man.

In Colossians 3:11 Paul says not only that Christ is all, but also that He is in all. In other words, on the one hand, Christ is all the members, and on the other hand, He is in all the members. Since Paul says that Christ is all, why is there the need for him to say that Christ is in all? If Paul did not say that Christ is in all, only that He is all, then we may think that in the new man Christ is needed and that we are not needed. We should not think that, because Christ is all the members in the new man, we are nothing and are not needed. On the one hand, the Bible does say that in the new man there is no place for the natural person because Christ is all the members. Yet, on the other hand, Paul says that Christ is in the members. The fact that Christ is in the members of the new man indicates that the members still exist.

When we take Christ as our life and live together with Him, seeking the things which are above, we have the sense deep within that we are one with Christ and that Christ is us. But simultaneously we have an even deeper sense that Christ is in us. Therefore, it is true to say that Christ is both in us and that He is us. We are part of the new man with Christ in us. We continue to exist, but we do not exist without Christ; we are those indwelt by Christ. Now we can rejoice and say to the Lord, "Lord Jesus, when I take You as my life and live together with You, You are me. I am altogether one with You. But, Lord, I am still here, for You are in me. I am here, but I am here with You." According to our experience, we all can give such a testimony. When we live Christ and are one with Him, we say, "Lord Jesus, this is not me—it is You." However, at the same time, we have the sense that we are with the Lord and that He is in us. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 536-538)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msgs. 52, 60; The Conclusion of the New Testament, msgs. 217-218

WEEK 3 — DAY 6

Morning Nourishment

Col. 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

Rev. 21:2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

According to Colossians 3:10, the new man is being renewed “unto full knowledge.” Some translations say “in full knowledge” instead of “unto full knowledge.” However, the Greek preposition should be rendered “unto.” This rendering indicates that full knowledge is the issue of renewing, its result, not the means of being renewed. For example, children grow unto knowledge, but they do not grow by means of knowledge. The more children grow, the more they know.... They grow unto knowledge, increasing in knowledge as they grow and develop.

This principle of growing unto knowledge applies to our spiritual life. If we seek the things on earth instead of the things above, we shall not have the renewing of the new man. This means that we shall not experience the growth of the new man. It is extremely difficult for the new man to grow as long as we seek earthly things. But when we seek the things above, the new man grows within us. The result of this growth is full knowledge. Therefore, the new man grows unto full knowledge. Years ago, the new man within you had not grown very much. This made it difficult for you to know spiritual things. But now that the new man has grown within you, it is much easier for you to understand spiritual things. This indicates that growth issues in knowledge. This is the reason Paul says that the new man is being renewed unto full knowledge. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 554-555)

Today's Reading

How can we, the New Testament believers, realize the life of the universal new man in a practical way? Among those Christians who set

their mind on the things on earth, there is no renewing of the new man and no possibility of having the life of the new man in a practical way. But when we set our mind on the things above, spontaneously the new man grows and is renewed within us. This causes our whole being to be renewed and transformed. Then wherever we may be, we can have the practice of the new man. Recently I heard of a young brother in the Navy who visited a number of churches in the Far East. He enjoyed good fellowship with the saints. To be sure, this brother experienced the life of the new man. Although he was from the United States, he could be merged in the spirit of fellowship with so many saints from the Orient.

If we are not willing to set our minds on the things above and thus do not open the way for the new man to increase within us, it will be very difficult for us to experience the life of the new man in a practical way. But if we set our mind on the things above, the new man will spread from our spirit into our soul. Then no matter where we may be with the saints, we shall realize the life of the new man.

Colossians is definitely a book on the all-inclusive Christ. However, in this book Paul also speaks of the new man. The practical life of the new man comes out of the revelation of Christ and the experience of Christ. When we have the revelation of Christ with the adequate experience of Christ, the new man will appear among us in a practical way, and we shall realize the life of the new man.

God's goal is to have this one new man, which ultimately will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Therefore, the New Jerusalem will be the final consummation of the one new man. When we are in the New Jerusalem, we shall enjoy the life of the universal one new man. Today we may have a foretaste of this enjoyment by setting our mind on the things above and giving a free way for the new man in our spirit to spread into our whole being. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 557-558)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msg. 62

<< WEEK 3 — HYMN >>

Hymns, #495 Christ is God's centrality

Experience of Christ — As God's Centrality and Universality

- 1 Christ is God's centrality
And His universality;
He is God's delight and joy
Throughout all eternity.**
- 2 He's th' embodiment of God,
In Him all God's fulness dwells;
His unique supremacy
And His Godhead none excels.**
- 3 All God's purpose is for Him,
That He might be all in all;
All the things in heav'n and earth
With Himself are made withal.**
- 4 All creation is for Christ,
Everything was made by Him;
'Tis by Him all things subsist,
He's the hub and He's the rim.**
- 5 In redemption He is all,
All through Him is reconciled;
By His blood all things with God
Now in peace are domiciled.**
- 6 He the great beginning is,
And the Church's living Head;
He her life and content too,**

And the firstborn from the dead.

**7 In God's Kingdom He's the King,
All the pow'r to Him is giv'n;
In His glory He shall rule
Over all in earth and heav'n**

**8 In new heaven and new earth
Center of all things He'll be,
For the Godhead and for man
Throughout all eternity.**

**9 God intends in everything
Christ should have preeminence,
And that such a Christ of all
We should now experience.**

