



KINGDOM GROUP STUDY 2019

SUBVERSIVE WORLDVIEWS
(Colossians 1:1-14)

SUBVERSIVE ALLEIGANCE
(Colossians 1:15-23)

SUBVERSIVE SUFFERING
(Colossians 1:24-2:5)

SUBVERSIVE WORSHIP
(Colossians 2:8-3:4)

SUBVERSIVE COMMUNITY
(Colossians 3:5-4:6)



INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE

Colossians is a letter written by the apostle Paul in the first century AD (c.60), composed to Christian believers in the small city of Colossae in ancient Turkey. The church had been planted by a church leader known as Epaphras, who had been converted by Paul in Ephesus, and had carried the gospel over to Colossae.

Paul's letter to the Colossians has many similarities to Ephesians, mainly because he most likely composed both of them around the same time, and sent them with the same letter-carriers to the region of Asia-minor. These letter carriers were Tychicus and Onesimus.

Onesimus was the run away slave of prominent church leader, Philemon. Of course, there is a whole New Testament letter dedicated to Philemon. Onesimus was converted to Christianity while in Paul's care, and was subsequently sent back to Colossae, with the letter to the Colossians church and the letter to his former master, Philemon.

The incredible thing about the letter to the Colossians, is that in virtually every section, Paul is intentionally contrasting the reign of Jesus with the earthly reign of the Roman Empire. He is encouraging the church to adhere to Jesus as the true ruler, and embrace the alternative way of living that he has brought to the world. In every sense, Paul is reminding the church that they are to be subversive to the Empire in their desperate desire to honour Jesus. This means, intentionally challenging the Empire and its icons and idols and value systems, through the acts of holy living, embracing a diverse and loving community and sacrificing cultural-acceptance for the sake of Christ.

Why should we care?

Our current cultural landscape in post-Christian Sydney has much more in common with ancient Colossae than you might think. Though we aren't ruled by an Empire per say, the power of western culture is based upon the fact that normal people like you and I wholeheartedly adhere to the values that this culture praises. Individualism and material consumption are really the main two forces of western culture. The idea that *the self* is centre, allows us to be easily targeted by the mass marketing machine for material consumption. The notions of self-fulfilment and self-sufficiency that we have come to be lathered in have confused many Christians' sense of identity. Paul's letter to the Colossians encourages us to understand our true identity in Christ, where everything is about Jesus and his kingdom and not about us. And most importantly, this understanding of our rootedness in Jesus *must*

create disciples who *act* out of this identity. And that action subverts the forces of the Empire.

Subversive Worldviews

Intro: Paul introduces his letter to the Colossian church by encouraging them in their love spurred on by the hope of the gospel and by their acceptance of God's grace. Yet he prays a very specific prayer for the church, one that outlines the need for the church in Colossae to recapture a kingdom worldview, which will naturally subvert the worldview of the Roman Empire.

READ Colossians 1:1-8

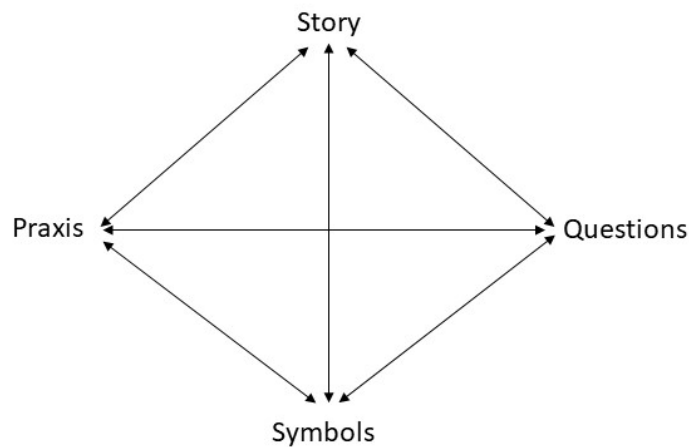
Q. Imagine if a letter written to our church was discovered in the year 2200. How do you think our church would be described? What insights about our involvement in mission, our worship of God and our growth as a community of disciples could be learned from this letter?

Q. What are some of the insights we can get from the introductory verses to Paul's letter to the Colossian church? (v1-8).

READ Colossians 1:9-14

Q. What does Paul's prayer for the Colossians tell us about their growth areas as a church? (i.e. discerning the will of God, walking to please him, producing fruit, growing in knowledge of God, experiencing his power, enduring in faith)

Q. On Sunday we learned about the importance of worldviews, and how worldviews are always shaped by Empire (or the dominant culture). Empire worldviews consist of a STORY that becomes the overarching narrative that all people and all systems operate in. The PRAXIS is a set of rhythms and systems that implement the story of the Empire (i.e. Ancient Rome's story of the *Golden Age of peace and security for the world* was implemented visibly by the *praxis* of temple worship and imperial cults). The SYMBOLS of the Empire were images and icons that further reminded the people of what the story of the Empire was, thus strengthening it further.



Then there are a set of worldview questions that every individual or community asks of the Empire's Story, Praxis and Symbols. We ask these questions internally, and rarely externally.

- Where are we?
- Who are we?
- What's wrong?
- What's the remedy?
- What time is it?

1. See if you can answer these questions from a Colossian's point of view living in the 1st century.
2. Then, answer these questions from your 21st Century Sydney-sider point of view.
3. Then, answer these questions from a biblical worldview. How does this worldview differ from our dominant cultures' story, praxis and symbols.

Q. Paul intends to shift the Colossian worldview from one dominated by the Roman Empire, to a biblical God-centred one.

How can we allow the biblical worldview to frame our life now? I.e. how can

we live by God's story, engage in a praxis flowing out of this story and centre ourselves on the symbol of Jesus (Colossians 1:15)?