

# **Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 1, The Introduction to the Book of Colossians**

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 1, The Introduction to the Book of Colossians.

My name is Dan Darko. I teach Biblical Studies at Gordon College [now Taylor University in Upland, IN]. My scholarship has, for the most part, in recent years have been focused on the disputed Pauline letters, which I will clarify as to what they mean in the course of these lectures. I study Paul generally.

I know that most Christians like the Old Testament because they have wonderful stories to tell about how God dealt with his people. That is great. I love the Old Testament, and I love to sit down and listen to my friends who teach the Old Testament, which really expands and exposes what God has done in the history of Israel and in our salvation history.

When we come to the New Testament, I also find something of a pattern among students and people in the church. Some like Jesus because Jesus loves all people. Jesus cares about that poor widow and raises the child back to life.

Jesus feeds the hungry. Jesus is this caring person, not only our Lord and Savior but one who is indeed charitable and caring. But when it comes to Paul, some say we love Paul because all the doctrines come from Paul, but not so with my Catholic students in particular.

They like to say that Paul seems great, but why do all the controversial issues come from Paul? Well, I just want to first establish that we are not going to create controversy in the course of this discussion, and we are not going to make Paul this problematic Paul. We are going to learn and grow from our knowledge of the Word of God as we have it in our Bible. Now, let's begin to think about Paul in general.

As we think about Paul, we think about a man who has spent a lot of his time serving the Lord Jesus Christ and doing great things in his kingdom. Paul actually was not someone who began as a Christian. He began as a Jew.

He self-describes, as we will see in Philippians in the course of this lecture, as someone who was a Pharisee. He held on to what he described in his own words as a legalistic Pharisaic figure. Later, he encountered Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, and that was a turning point.

From that day when he encountered Jesus and his life turned around, Paul, who had persecuted the early Christians for quite a good amount of time and testified himself in his writings to that effect, will carry out the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the rest of the world. Paul will go to so many places in the ancient world to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As you look at this map, which tells about Paul's world, you may recognize, if you are familiar with the New Testament, a few names that seem familiar from the New Testament.

You may actually recognize names like Colossae or Colossae. You may recognize names like Ephesus. You may actually recognize names like Thessalonica and Philippi.

And if you are a big fan of doctrine, you may actually recognize this wonderful city here called Rome. You may also recognize cities like Corinth. You may have come across Athens.

Paul traveled around these places, sharing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of salvation that comes through Christ alone. As he develops and shares the gospel, he encounters what we usually find when dealing with any group of people. Paul would deal with churches.

As the groups form, so do they begin to have problems with identity, formation, moral issues, and interpersonal and relational issues. Paul would then write letters to try to address various issues emerging, for the most part, in the churches that he founded or the churches that he was familiar with. Before we get to prisoner epistles, it is very important that we have a bigger picture of what is going on with Paul.

When you pick up your New Testament and begin to look at Paul's letters, it is important to note that Paul actually has his letters arranged in the New Testament, not by accident. You have the gospels, and when it comes to Paul's letters, you may want to observe two key features that emerge. The letters first are arranged according to letters that are written to churches.

You will find, for instance, the letter to Romans comes first, followed by Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, and then you begin to see letters that are written to individuals following the letters that are written to churches. Now, you may want to ask, how do they then determine if letters are written to churches, which comes first and which comes last? Well, scholars seem to think that this arrangement was actually done on the basis of length. And so, as you may observe in your Bible, you will actually notice that quite quickly, the longer letters like Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians seem to come first before the shorter letters.

And so, when it comes to the individual letters, we see that same pattern as well. And so, two areas by which or two things are taken into consideration in how these letters are presented in our Bible are first, letters to the churches, and the length of the letters. Let's just move forward and begin to think about Paul and his writings, what scholars would like to refer to as Pauline letters.

Well, we have about 13 letters that are attributed to Paul. You may know this, and this may be very familiar, but for us to be able to establish where prison epistles fit, it is important for us to understand the scope of this. You may identify all of the letters that Paul wrote on this chart here.

But I also want to quickly draw your attention to what is not so familiar to people outside the academic circles: what we call the disputed Pauline letters and the undisputed Pauline letters. To say a Pauline letter is undisputed is to say that generally, most scholars if not all, hold that these letters are written by Paul without dispute. In other words, when we think about who wrote these letters, who sat down or even worked with someone to produce this letter for the church becoming part of our Bible, in fact, then we would say, without a doubt, this comes from Paul, and we can treat it as such, we can work with it as such.

But it is not so with the disputed Pauline letters. Disputed Pauline letters are letters that, as we speak today, 2014 in the 21st century, we are in serious contention in scholarship as to which of these letters really came from Paul. And which one came from someone other than Paul?

It may interest you to know that that is the area I specialize the most in scholarship, disputed Pauline letters. In other words, I pretend I am a lawyer to defend what Paul has done and what Paul has not done and to put the evidence on the table. When we come to prison, epistles, which is our focus in this particular series, are to observe that the four letters that are highlighted here are letters that were written in jail.

So, think about someone incarcerated writing these letters from jail, hence prison epistles. Strictly speaking, we may add one more letter to the prison epistles, namely 2 Timothy, which is also a letter that is understood to have been written from jail. But just pause a minute because we have been focusing on scholarship these days, placing 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus into a different column called pastoral epistles to examine letters that are written to individuals and what they have to teach us as theologians and what they have to teach us as Christians in the church trying to live out our faith.

On Prison Epistles, it may interest you to see what is going on here. The same scholars who are in serious contention about disputed and undisputed still will locate two of the prison epistles in the undisputed column and two in the disputed column. What is going on? We will begin to look at that.

What we are going to do in the Prison Epistles discussion here will have a few aspects to it. One of them is this. We would assume, as I argue elsewhere, that though we have disputed Pauline letters, there is enough reason to argue that Paul indeed wrote these letters.

That is not to say my colleagues who disagree with someone like me and other scholars don't have any good argument to make. We will look at that. But let's assume in this lecture that my personal position, call it my personal bias, that Paul wrote Philippians, Paul wrote Philemon.

We don't dispute that a lot. Paul, in Darko's view, wrote Colossians and Ephesians, even though I'm very eager and continue to engage my colleagues who disagree with me on that. Getting back to another aspect of prison epistles, we also have Colossians and Ephesians.

These two letters are often treated. If you went to the bookstore to buy a commentary, it may not surprise you to find that there are commentaries on Ephesians and Colossians. Or if you find a commentary on Colossians alone, you will see the commentator writing in the introduction how close this letter is to Ephesians.

The same is true when you pick up commentaries on Ephesians. They are going to show how these two letters are quite similar. So let me just try to clarify a few of that in this lecture as to what is going on with this.

Colossians and Ephesians are often treated together for the simple reason that they share a common style and their theological framework; in other words, the way they convey doctrinal issues seems to have the same pattern. Linguistic structures are quite similar in many ways, which I will explain later. The worldviews of these two letters are remarkably similar.

Not to go back to the map, but if you remember when I referred you to the map, you would notice in the map that actually Colossians and Ephesians are quite close in proximity. So, it's no wonder the worldview around the same time seems to be similar as we will see in this lecture. As far as the style is concerned, one may notice that if you are reading Greek, which is not so clear in English, in English, we try to simplify it for the audience or the reader to be able to work with very well.

You will see longer sentences; you will see words that are used to repeat what we will call Hendiadys, and you will see how certain constructions are made in awkward ways in Greek, different from what we have in other Pauline letters. It is also true that if you look at these two letters closely, you will actually find certain things that are not found in the undisputed Pauline letters. These two letters are very interested in principalities and powers, for instance.

They pick up theological issues, and they use Christ as the basis to establish how families should function. When they talk about salvation, they talk about salvation in concrete terms as a transfer from a specific past, mediated by the act of God in Christ and directed towards a particular future. These letters are quite clear, and it's no wonder people like Calvin and others consider some of these letters to be their favorite, especially Ephesians.

They are similar in content, worldview, and material because think about any other letter in Paul that you find references to demons, the powers, principalities, and powers. You find them in Corinthians, but the way Corinthians talks about them, it's almost something that is going on in the cognitive arena, namely what is going on in the mind, the battle that is going on in the thoughts, and how we negotiate and handle things, and sometimes this language is also used to refer to political powers. You may also want to notice something that forms the reason why scholars treat these two letters together, and that is the words that are used literally; the vocabulary that is used in these two letters is shared in many ways. You may find up to a third of the vocabulary used in Colossians used in Ephesians.

If I were to just show you a quick example, I would give you a chart like this. Just take a moment to open your Bible and make some of these comparisons on your own. You may be surprised to see the language that is used, the thought that is conveyed, the idea or the aim that is being pivoted here to be quite similar.

In fact, when you come to the last comparison, you may actually be surprised to find out how even people who are greeted are quite similar. This is, for the most part, the reason why scholars would like to treat this together. But it is also noteworthy that they are not as close as we want to present them in most cases because though they use the same words, the two letters disagree in the way the language is used, the order in which they are presented, up to 40% of the time.

So, the same language is used, but it is not used necessarily in the same way, for the same reason, to meet the same aim. Therefore, verbal agreement does not necessarily mean they use the language similarly. One may also explain it this way: that they are similar, of course, because the same person wrote them.

And if the same person wrote them, then it should be quite straightforward that if you wrote them within a similar time frame, you will have the same ideas. Think about an email you wrote recently. Another email you wrote to a friend explaining the same issue without copying or forwarding the previous email you sent.

You may find yourself in a place where you are actually using the same words, the same sentence structure, and the same concept to convey the idea that you

conveyed in the first email to your friend. Or maybe you like the old-school way, which I cherish. I have a friend who likes to receive handwritten letters from me.

If you like to write letters or cards by hand, pick up the Christmas cards you write to a lot of people. And you begin to notice that for the cards that you actually write, three, four, five lines, you seem to be conveying the same thoughts in a particular year to most of the people that you were wishing well in that Christmas season. Is that a coincidence? Perhaps you may want to look at how we explain the relationship between efficiency and collusion in that sense.

If the same person is writing them at the same time, chances are that there will be overlap in terms of vocabulary and structure. Now, let's begin to move forward and begin to address an issue related specifically to Colossians, which begins our lectures on prison epistles. So, in this particular series on prison epistles, we look at four letters: Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians.

For no particular reason, for no theological reason, for no particular persuasion, the order in which they are presented in this class is not reflective of dates or structure or anything like that. It's just arranged in a way that I think perhaps if they are presented that way and you are following the series, you may be able to actually have the opportunity to pause and to learn and to follow the thoughts in these writings.

So, let's begin to look at Colossians. As I mentioned earlier on, Colossians' authorship is disputed. So, let's begin to address the authorship issue.

Pauline authorship is disputed on the basis of language, thought, and style. Scholars have argued that the language that is used in Colossians doesn't seem to be a common feature in the letters that are not disputed in Pauline's writings. The thought in terms of theology goes the same way, and in fact the style is one area where scholars have a lot of contention.

I'll give you an example. If you look at the first part of Colossians, you may find sometimes, in chapter one, eight verses show up in the Greek text as one sentence, sometimes longer. Scholars say, oh, Paul doesn't write that way.

Does Paul write that way? Was Paul in a particular mood that way? Oh, I am a native African. I spent a lot of time in Europe. That has not changed my accent a bit.

I spent a lot of time in the United States. But boy, let me tell you something: everywhere I go, they remind me. When I get going, I speak too fast.

And sometimes I just go bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, and I'm stopped, and they tell me, especially in churches, can you just slow down a bit? Well, it may

surprise you to know that my graduate students usually think I make shorter sentences. I pause often. I take time to clarify things, and I don't run at that pace.

Is that the same person? That's just a thought to hold on to as we go on in this lecture. Paul and authorship on Colossians is disputed. And scholars are arguing that maybe an associate of Paul wrote this letter.

Some of us have often asked our colleagues, so who exactly do you think is the associate who wrote this letter? The common answer is, well, we think somebody else wrote it, but we don't know who actually wrote it. We just have reasons to explain that Paul couldn't have written this letter. Okay, so I just have an idea that Christian scholars and not-so-conservative or evangelical Christian scholars, both in evangelical circles and non-evangelical circles, have scholars who are arguing that Paul didn't write this letter, and his associate wrote that.

But in my count in recent years, perhaps in the last 15 years, the majority of the scholars I find in evangelical scholarship actually argue for Pauline scholarship. Some say, well, it's not an associate of Paul, but actually, this is what happened. Paul and his associate wrote this letter.

And they are quick to make reference to Colossians 4, verse 18, and say, you know what, perhaps an associate of Paul wrote this. Then, after the associate finished writing, Paul wrote verse 18, which reads, I, Paul, write these greetings with my own hand. Remember my chains.

Grace be with you. To end the letter. So, some scholars will argue that actually Paul was there.

Paul was behind this letter. But that does not mean Paul was actually writing it by hand. He got someone else to write it, and then, in the end, he wanted to assert that, in fact, he was responsible for everything that went on in this letter.

And in fact, he is the main person behind this letter. So, he tends to say, I, Paul, with emphasis to say, I did it. Actually, I did it with someone, and even someone wrote it for me.

I just want you to know that this is me. This reminds me of some of my village experiences I would like to share with you. Some of my New Testament colleagues in scholarship like to make fun of me for my village experience.

But this is where village experience is very useful. Growing up in a village where perhaps over 90% of the people could not read and write one page with clarity in English, there was a common pattern where a person may call someone who can write or read to write a letter for them, and then they will sign even in the person's

name and send the letter as a letter that is for them. Customarily, when I did something like that for my uncles or my mom or for some of my relatives, they would ask me to repeat what I had written several times just to make sure that I was conveying what they asked me to write.

Now, the irony is this. I will write the letter in English, but then they will insist two or three times that I repeat it so that they can be sure that I am conveying their thoughts. Is that what is going on with Paul here that he says, you know what? For some reasons, maybe for reasons beyond control, or even because he's tired or whatever, you come up with whatever reason. Let me ask one of my associates, let's say Timothy Wright, and then let me sign underneath that I'm responsible for this.

These are my words. If that is so, do we treat the letter as Pauline and still dispute that Paul wrote them? That is a thought to hold on to. One of the things I find intriguing, which brings me to why I'm more and more persuaded Paul wrote Colossians, is that Colossians and Philemon have so much in common.

In fact, when you look at those two letters, they are so close. It's as if someone wrote the first letter and then went on and wrote the second one. You go on and say, wow, what is happening here? Look at the names of the people that are showing up in these letters.

Even look at the grammar. Look at how the sentences are constructed. How could one be written by an authentic Paul and one not be written by Paul? That alone is hard for me to get my head around.

Having considered all this, I should point out a British scholar called James Dan. Dan is a prominent scholar in Pauline scholarship. Dan tried to say that Paul wrote Colossians, but Paul didn't write Colossians.

He tried to get it in two ways, and it becomes very, very interesting when you read Dan's commentary on Colossians. But Dan has this to say about the last point I made on the dispute of Pauline authorship. The two letters name precisely the same authors, Paul and Timothy, and more or less the same list of greeters: Epaphras, Aristarchus, Mark, Demas, and Luke.

As you see in the quotation. Such overlap, Dan writes, can be the result only of deliberate contrivance or closeness of historical origin. In other words, he himself is saying that when you compare Colossians and Philemon, there is every reason to realize that if it is not coming from the same person, there must be some secret wording somewhere between these two letters.

I say it's Paul. That is where it's all coming from. Paul could have changed his style towards the end of his life.



Paul had spent some time in jail, and a lot of things had changed. He was surrounded by different groups of people. Indeed, I returned from my native land, Ghana, just about 10 days ago.

My wife told me that when I came back the first two days, my English was not even the kind of English I used to speak. I was speaking African English. I had expressions that actually had the background of my native language, just translating directly from the language into English.

And I had to catch myself. And it became really helpful as she noticed that over the days, I'm actually beginning to speak like the husband she knows who speaks to her in America. So, I say, I speak African English, and I speak American.

Is it possible that Paul's surroundings even affected the vocabulary he used? It is so difficult, in my view, on the basis of textual critical analysis. In other words, manuscript evidence is something that scholars examine to find out where something is coming from. It is difficult for me, even on the theological side of things, as I will show in the study of the text itself.

Whether one can actually say with the confidence that some of my colleagues used to accept this position that Paul actually didn't write this letter. I think Paul wrote it. Is it different from the other ones? Yes.

Are there stylistic differences? Yes. Are there theological differences? Yes. Are there some linguistic features that are different? Yes.

But is it not true about all of us who travel and spend longer time in different places that actually these things become true in how we do things? You may want to know that scholars who push for Pauline authorship and those who dispute Pauline authorship work with an assumption that we don't normally disclose to the church or to the average Jewish. So, that is the assumption of who was an author by the time of the New Testament. In other words, if you pick up a document, how do you determine who wrote what? There are a few levels or different ways of explaining who was an author forming this conversation.

So, in antiquity, you may have the author being one who wrote by his or her own hand. That is established is not a big deal. An author or someone who will be known as an author could also be someone who did not write by their own hand but who detected to someone to write.

That person will still be the author. The other is co-authorship, to write with someone. In fact, in the case of Colossians, as we have in verse 18, Paul is quite confident to assert that he was not doing it all by himself.

He might have someone who wrote the first part for him, and he was appending the last line of the letter or the last two lines. An author could also be a friend or a disciple of the main figure. Now, this is where it becomes very interesting because we can use what we call amanuensis, where a person who knows the other person is asked to write some of these things, or you can also have what we call a pseudonymous author, someone who comes in later on knowing that the person is famous.

So, I'll give you an example. Think about a famous figure in your area. And the famous figure happens to be famous in your eyes because they have written a great piece.

And the person writing this great piece has become a person who is part of your life because you like to read them and all that. And so, someone who is a fan of that person, just like you, thinks years later that this person is famous. Let me write something and pretend that it is this person who wrote it.

It will sell and convey some of the ideas of that person. This is where the discussion on authorship becomes interesting regarding Colossians because those who dispute Pauline authorship are quick to rush to that end to make it look as if Paul didn't write it and, therefore, the letter is fictitious. That is problematic for quite a good number of reasons.

Because though we have evidence of the effect of all these forms of authorship in the ancient world, it is very, very difficult to think about a secret test. A group of people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and personal savior. A group of people meets regularly to pray and discuss the word of God.

A group of people who are trying and striving to be who God wants them to be. Telling themselves that, hey, we found this fictitious letter, and we will call it our secret test. It will form part of the basis of our doctrine and practice.

Just think about that as we think about authorship because it almost makes it sound as if a naive bunch of people were collecting some material. That is actually forgery. Not knowing that it is a forgery.

By the way, they are closer to the time the test was written than us 2,000 years later. And we make it sound like this bunch of people who are so screwed up upstairs here are actually coming out with all this. It is difficult to think about it that way.

But in scholarship today where we have people who don't have church affiliation or are not confident to talk about even their faith in Christ, it is very easy to make that argument as almost an argument of contempt on those who believe otherwise. As

far as the authorship of Colossians is concerned, let's begin to look at these key points here. To say the letter was not written by Paul is to say it is fake.

We should reject it. At least, that is how some scholars, not all, but some scholars, agree to that effect. But one of the things we should be thinking about or I should point out to you, is that normally in the ancient world, where someone was writing in somebody's name pretending they were that person, it so happens that the time gap between the original person and the person pretending to be the other person tends to be a vast amount of time.

Sometimes it is 100 years or more. If what scholars are arguing for in terms of pseudonymity or false authorship is correct, then we are saying that in just a span of 20 years or so, somebody was faking to be Paul, and the people who lived believed them. Apart from New Testament studies, we can't actually make such an argument of ancient literary analysis to make sense in terms of pseudonymity in that sense.

Because the person has to die, the contemporaries even die, the person who is being invoked, their memory is being invoked, their tradition is being invoked because the generation around it didn't even know that person, and all this is passing on. But scholars who are still arguing for pseudonymity say the date could be right, I'm submitting that. That is quite a big leap to make until I find evidence that contradicts my position.

The other thing to note here on the issue of authorship is what we know about the early church. Tests like two Thessalonians suggest to us that the early Christians were aware of synonymous authorship, and they were prepared to reject any writing that came to them as Christian writing that bears a false name. And I'll show you that test in a few minutes.

The other thing I also want to draw your attention to is what we have in Eusebius' collection for recounting the history of the early church. Eusebius seemed to give us the indication that the early church was so aware of pseudonymity that they were prepared to reject anything that would come to them, such as a letter bearing the name of Paul or Peter, which was not written by them. So that should give us at least some reason to believe that they were watchful and they would not yield in accepting anything that is not from Paul to be Paul.

So, let's look at the Eusebius test for instance. So, in this Eusebius Ecclesiastical History in 6:12. 1:6 we receive both Peter and the other Apostles of Christ but as experienced men we reject the writings falsely inscribed with their names since we know that we did not receive such from our fathers. That is to say, and these are people who are ready to do their best to reject what is not of Paul.

Look at the one in Thessalonians. In 2 Thessalonians, you open your Bible, there is the NIV translation. You may use any other translation to check this. Asserting that the day of the Lord has already come.

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way so that that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed; the man doomed to destruction. Here, we have a clue to indicate that there was some degree of vigilance in the early church. Yes, it is true.

We should be first to submit that in Christianity today, there are some people who hold on to certain beliefs and do things that are disturbing. Yes, there are some people who make Christianity look like another form of Taliban. But it is maybe too far and we should submit it is too far to actually assume that.

To be a Christian is to be a person who does not think, who does not assess, and the early Christians were so gullible, being thrown here and there, just believing and accepting whatever comes. It is one of the reasons I think we should think about Colossians as Paul. Those closest to Paul say they were checking out for things like that.

There are a lot of theological similarities that are not pointed out in these letters, which we find in other Pauline letters as well. I don't know where you stand, and I don't know if I'm able to persuade you enough or if I'm able to pose enough questions for you to think about the possibility that Paul wrote Colossians. But I'd like to assume that you share with me that Paul wrote Colossians or assume that I assume that Paul wrote Colossians, and let's work with that framework, and I encourage you to read as much as you can on this subject.

And I just hope and hope and hope and hope that you come to my side of the debate because the evidence will speak for itself if you are asking the right questions. That brings me to a quick look at the background of where this letter was written to. The letter was written to Colossi.

Colossi was a part of the ancient world that, in modern day, we call Teke, Asia Minor. Another name for Asia Minor that you may come across either in the introduction of the books of your Bible or some material that you may come across is Anatolia. Colossi was 120 miles away from Ephesus.

It was not as big of a city as Ephesus. It was also in close proximity of two other cities so it was actually often referred to as a tri-city area in some of the ancient writings. It is close to a city called Hierapolis.

And Laodicea. Some of the distinctives of this city are spelled out by a colleague of mine, Larry Kreiser, who wrote a very nice piece. Even though I should say here in

the disclaimer, if you read my review of Kreiser's book, I critique him on how he uses some of his evidence.

But I should give Kreiser, who is a professor at Oxford University, some very good credit here in giving us a lot of evidence to show how the coins, the traditions, the archaeological evidence, what we call numismatics, monuments, and inscriptions that are written on monuments tell us about this city called Colossi. It was a place where people were intellectually apt but they were also deeply religious. There was some commercial activity in the area, but not as much as we had in Ephesus.

So, think about Paul writing about this area where pagan religions were dominant. There were a lot of Jews settling in that area in modern-day Turkey by this time in the first century. Colossi was close to a highway that actually gave it access to a lot of things.

That is to say, it is very easy to deliver a letter to Colossi as well. If we are to have a quick look at a map, you will see the tri-cities. You see here, Colossi is here.

One of the closest cities here is Laodicea. And another here is Hierapolis. In fact, some scholars sometimes argue whether Colossians or even Ephesians, which sometimes is located here, was written to Hierapolis or whether the letters were meant to circulate around this area.

For the Jews in Asia Minor, some have questioned whether it is really true that there were Jews in Asia Minor. And let me just highlight that in trying to cap this session here. There was, in fact, evidence to suggest that there were a good number of Jews in Asia Minor at the time. We had Jewish settlers there.

There was actually a deliberate attempt to bring Jewish settlers here. Philo indicates to us that there was a large Jewish population in Asia Minor. And we also know that Antiochus III actually took about 2,000 Jewish families in Josephus' Antiquities 12.

Josephus actually recounts how Antiochus took a good number of Jews to put them in this part of the world. So, we know that Jews were there. And so, if the texts in Colossians begin to give us hints about Jewish activities, we should not be surprised or ask, what is the proximity between Asia Minor and the Jewish settlers in Palestine? And what is going on here? It is fairly straightforward to know that post-Alexander the Great if you remember your high school history, the world was a world where people moved from place to place.

There were more Jews living in Alexandria, as some scholars will estimate, than they lived perhaps in the Holy Land, as we call it. Or there were a good number of Jews in modern-day Turkey area. There may be some Jews going as far as Rome.

So, it is not far-fetched to read a text from the first century to Colossi. Alluding or showing that there was a Jewish presence in this place. The church in Colossi is where we end this first hour of the lecture.

It may interest you to know that at the time Paul was writing, Paul had not visited the city. However, as you can see from the map, Paul spent a significant amount of time in Ephesus. And so, Paul was known in the area.

If this letter is written by Paul, as I argue, we may want to date this letter after 50 C.E. Christian Era, or A.D. as we will call it. And we will place the one who founded this church mainly in the hands of Epaphras, whom we know about in the text that we will look at. So let me just quickly recap something about this letter.

And all this material that seems necessary or unnecessary. First, when we open our New Testament, and we look at Paul, we have 13 letters attributed to Paul. Of those letters, four are identified as the prison epistles.

Two of those four, Philippians and Philemon, are classified as undisputed. Authorship of Paul is not disputed at all. Two, Colossians and Ephesians, are deemed disputed Pauline letters.

In other words, scholars are still arguing about whether Paul wrote them or not. Trying to establish that Paul wrote them, I drew your attention to the fact that scholars who disagree with Pauline authorship highlight style, language, thought, or theology. I also went on to show you that, in fact, if you look at all those stylistic features and what we know about pseudonymous authorship in the ancient world, it is unlikely that someone as close as the time of Paul would write this letter.

Because that would be unconventional, I went on to try to make a case that, actually, Paul could have written this letter, either asking someone to write it so that he would be there supervising what was going on and writing the concluding remark in chapter 4 verse 18. Or, for the most part, he wrote that letter and made a strong affirmation at the end that he, indeed, is the author of this letter.

But I also wanted to leave you with some understanding of the context we are talking about. That this is a church that Paul did not found himself and had not visited. There were issues in the church.

A guy who had come into contact with Paul, perhaps Paul's convert, Epaphras, is probably the one who founded the church. Paul would address issues that were emerging in the church. When we come back, we will look at the purpose of this letter and begin to look at the first chapter of this letter and what the text has to teach us about what Paul has to address.

I hope that the beginning makes you excited to know more about this letter called Colossians. Keep learning with me. Keep asking the hard questions.

And together, we will grow to become the men and women God wants us to be.  
Thank you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 1, The Introduction to the Book of Colossians.