

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 1, Introduction to Colossians Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 1, Introduction to Colossians, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Daniel K. Darko's Prison Epistles, Session 1 introduces the Book of Colossians as part of a lecture series focused on letters Paul wrote while imprisoned. Darko, a Biblical Studies professor, outlines the series' scope, focusing on the disputed Pauline letters and his own stance generally supporting Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians. The lecture discusses the historical context of Colossae, the recipients of the letter, and the ongoing scholarly debate surrounding its authorship, exploring arguments related to style, language, and theological themes. Darko also considers ancient authorship practices and the early church's awareness of pseudonymous writings, setting the stage for an in-depth examination of Colossians in subsequent sessions.

**2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 1 – Double click icon to play
in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org
[BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New
Testament → Pauline Epistles → Prison Epistles).**



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3. Briefing Document: Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 1, Introduction to Colossians

Briefing Document: Introduction to the Book of Colossians (Dr. Daniel K. Darko)

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the key themes and arguments presented by Dr. Daniel K. Darko in the first session of his lecture series on the Prison Epistles, focusing specifically on the introduction to the Book of Colossians. Dr. Darko, a Biblical Studies professor (formerly at Gordon College, now at Taylor University), sets the stage for understanding Colossians by addressing its authorship, its relationship to other Pauline letters (especially Ephesians and Philemon), and the historical context of the city of Colossae and its church.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Introduction to Paul and His Letters:

- Dr. Darko begins by acknowledging the varied reception of Paul's writings, noting that while some admire his doctrinal contributions, others find his teachings controversial. He aims to approach Paul without creating unnecessary controversy, focusing on learning and growth from the Word of God.
- He highlights Paul's background as a Pharisee before his conversion on the road to Damascus, which marked a significant turning point in his life, leading him to spread the gospel throughout the ancient world.
- Paul's letters in the New Testament are intentionally arranged, primarily by recipient (churches first, then individuals) and secondarily by length (longer letters preceding shorter ones).

2. The Pauline Corpus and the Prison Epistles:

- There are 13 letters attributed to Paul, categorized by scholars into "undisputed" and "disputed" Pauline letters.
- **Undisputed:** Generally accepted by most scholars as written by Paul.
- **Disputed:** Authorship is debated in contemporary scholarship. Dr. Darko specializes in this area.
- The Prison Epistles, the focus of this lecture series, include Philippians, Philemon (considered undisputed by most), and Colossians and Ephesians (classified as

disputed). 2 Timothy is sometimes included but often categorized with 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus as Pastoral Epistles.

- Dr. Darko notes the interesting situation where two Prison Epistles are typically undisputed, and two are disputed.

3. The Close Relationship Between Colossians and Ephesians:

- Colossians and Ephesians are frequently studied together due to their shared style, theological framework, linguistic structures, and similar worldviews.
- "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."
- They share a significant portion of vocabulary, with up to a third of Colossians' vocabulary appearing in Ephesians.
- They exhibit interest in similar theological themes, such as "principalities and powers."
- However, Dr. Darko emphasizes that while they share words, these words are not always used in the same way, order, or for the same aim. "Therefore, verbal agreement does not necessarily mean they use the language similarly."
- He offers the analogy of writing multiple emails or handwritten letters on the same topic around the same time to explain the potential for overlap in vocabulary and structure if the same author wrote them.

4. The Disputed Authorship of Colossians:

- Pauline authorship of Colossians is disputed based on arguments related to language, thought, and style.
- Critics point to longer sentences and unique vocabulary or theological emphases not commonly found in undisputed Pauline letters.
- 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."
- Dr. Darko presents arguments in favor of Pauline authorship:
- He questions who the unnamed associate of Paul would be.

- He highlights Colossians 4:18, where Paul writes, "I, Paul, write these greetings with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you." Some scholars interpret this as Paul affirming his authorship even if an amanuensis was used.
- He draws on his "village experience" where a scribe might write a letter at someone's dictation, and the sender would still claim ownership and responsibility for the content.
- The strong similarities between Colossians and the undisputed Prison Epistle Philemon, including shared authors (Paul and Timothy) and a similar list of greetings, make it difficult to argue for different authorship. James Dan's observation is quoted: "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."
- Paul's style and vocabulary could have been influenced by his circumstances, such as being in jail or the people surrounding him. He uses his personal experience of his English changing after returning to Ghana as an analogy.

5. Ancient Understandings of Authorship:

- Dr. Darko explains different levels of authorship in antiquity:
- Writing by one's own hand.
- Dictation to a scribe.
- Co-authorship.
- A friend or disciple acting as an amanuensis.
- Pseudonymous authorship (writing in someone else's name, often much later).
- He argues against the idea of Colossians being a late pseudonymous work, emphasizing that the time gap between Paul and the supposed forgery would be too short and that the early church was vigilant against such writings.
- He cites Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History and 2 Thessalonians as evidence of the early church's awareness and rejection of falsely attributed writings. "we reject the writings falsely inscribed with their names since we know that we did not receive such from our fathers." (Eusebius)

- 2 Thessalonians warns against deception regarding the day of the Lord, suggesting vigilance against false teachings and writings.

6. Background of the Letter to Colossae:

- The letter was written to the church in Colossae, a city in modern-day Turkey (ancient Asia Minor/Anatolia), approximately 120 miles from Ephesus.
- Colossae was part of a tri-city area with Hierapolis and Laodicea.
- The city was intellectually inclined and deeply religious, with a mix of pagan religions and a significant Jewish population. Dr. Darko cites Philo and Josephus as evidence for Jewish settlers in Asia Minor.
- The church in Colossae was not founded by Paul himself but likely by Epaphras, a convert who had contact with Paul.
- Dr. Darko estimates the date of the letter to be after 50 C.E./A.D., after Paul had spent time in Ephesus.

7. Purpose of Future Sessions:

- Dr. Darko concludes by stating that future sessions will delve into the purpose of the letter to Colossians and begin examining the first chapter of the book.

Key Quotes:

- "We are going to learn and grow from our knowledge of the Word of God as we have it in our Bible."
- "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."
- "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."
- "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."
- "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."

- "Such overlap, Dan writes, can be the result only of deliberate contrivance or closeness of historical origin." (Quoting James Dan on the similarities between Colossians and Philemon)
- "To say the letter was not written by Paul is to say it is fake. We should reject it."
- "we reject the writings falsely inscribed with their names since we know that we did not receive such from our fathers." (Quoting Eusebius)
- "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."

Conclusion:

Dr. Darko's introductory lecture on Colossians lays a crucial foundation by addressing the significant debate surrounding its Pauline authorship. He presents arguments for and against Pauline authorship, highlighting the close relationship between Colossians and Ephesians, and the compelling similarities it shares with Philemon. Furthermore, he provides essential historical context regarding the city of Colossae and the establishment of its church. By engaging with these issues, Dr. Darko prepares the audience for a deeper exploration of the letter's purpose and theological content in subsequent sessions, while clearly stating his own inclination towards accepting Pauline authorship.

4. Study Guide: Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 1, Introduction to Colossians

Study Guide: Introduction to the Book of Colossians

Key Concepts to Understand

- **Paul's Letters:** Understand the general structure of Paul's letters in the New Testament (letters to churches followed by letters to individuals, arranged roughly by length).
- **Pauline Authorship:** Differentiate between undisputed and disputed Pauline letters and understand the basis for this distinction (language, thought, style).
- **Prison Epistles:** Identify the four primary prison epistles (Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians) and the additional letter sometimes included (2 Timothy).
- **Authorship of Colossians:** Understand the arguments for and against Pauline authorship, including the mention of an associate, Paul's concluding remark in Colossians 4:18, stylistic and theological differences, and the close relationship with Philemon.
- **Ancient Authorship:** Be familiar with different understandings of authorship in the ancient world (writing by hand, dictation, co-authorship, amanuensis, pseudonymity).
- **Pseudonymity:** Understand the implications of pseudonymity and the early church's awareness and rejection of falsely attributed writings (Eusebius, 2 Thessalonians).
- **Context of Colossae:** Know the geographical location of Colossae (Asia Minor/Anatolia, near Ephesus, Laodicea, and Hierapolis), its characteristics (intellectually apt, deeply religious, some commercial activity, Jewish presence), and that Paul had not personally visited the church there.
- **Founding of the Colossian Church:** Understand that Epaphras, likely a convert of Paul, was the founder of the church in Colossae.
- **Dating of Colossians:** Be aware that if Paul authored the letter, it was likely written after 50 C.E. during his imprisonment.
- **Relationship between Colossians and Ephesians:** Understand why these two letters are often studied together (common style, theological framework,

linguistic similarities, similar worldviews, geographical proximity), while also noting their differences in the way language is used and the order of presentation.

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. How are Paul's letters generally arranged in the New Testament, and what factors are believed to have influenced this arrangement?
2. What is the key difference between the undisputed and disputed Pauline letters, and what are the primary bases upon which scholars question the authorship of certain letters?
3. Name the four primary prison epistles. Why are they called "prison epistles"?
4. What are some of the arguments used by scholars who dispute Paul's authorship of Colossians?
5. According to the lecture, what evidence suggests that Paul was at least involved in the writing of Colossians, even if he didn't physically write the entire letter himself?
6. Describe at least two different ways authorship was understood in the ancient world beyond physically writing a text by hand.
7. What does the lecture suggest about the early church's awareness of and response to pseudonymous writings, referencing specific examples?
8. Where was the city of Colossae located, and what were some of its key characteristics during the time Paul's letter was likely written?
9. According to the lecture, who was likely responsible for founding the church in Colossae, and what was Paul's direct connection to this church?
10. What are some of the reasons scholars often treat the letters of Colossians and Ephesians together in their study?

Answer Key for Quiz

1. Paul's letters are generally arranged first by letters written to churches (in order of perceived length, from longest to shortest), followed by letters written to individuals (also roughly by length). The primary factors believed to influence this arrangement are the intended audience (churches vs. individuals) and the length of the letters.

2. Undisputed Pauline letters are those that virtually all scholars agree were written by Paul, while disputed Pauline letters are those where scholarly debate exists regarding whether Paul was the actual author. The primary bases for questioning authorship include differences in language, theological concepts, and writing style compared to the undisputed letters.
3. The four primary prison epistles are Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians. They are called "prison epistles" because they are understood to have been written by Paul while he was incarcerated (in jail).
4. Arguments disputing Paul's authorship of Colossians often cite differences in vocabulary and linguistic style (e.g., longer, more complex sentences), theological themes (e.g., emphasis on principalities and powers), and overall style compared to his undisputed letters.
5. The lecture points to Paul's concluding greeting in Colossians 4:18, written in his own hand, as evidence of his involvement and affirmation of the letter's content. Additionally, the close similarities between Colossians and the undisputed letter of Philemon, including shared names and grammatical structures, suggest a common origin with Paul.
6. Beyond writing by hand, authorship in the ancient world could involve dictation to a scribe (where the named individual is still considered the author), co-authorship (writing in collaboration with someone else), the use of an amanuensis (a secretary or trained writer who composes the letter according to the author's instructions), and in more controversial cases, pseudonymity (writing under a false name).
7. The lecture suggests the early church was vigilant against pseudonymous writings, referencing Eusebius' historical account of rejecting falsely inscribed apostolic writings and 2 Thessalonians' warning against false teachings claiming the day of the Lord had already come, implying an awareness of potential forgeries.
8. Colossae was located in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey/Anatolia), approximately 120 miles from Ephesus and near the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. It was characterized as a city with an intellectually inclined and deeply religious population, with some level of commercial activity and a notable Jewish presence.

9. Epaphras, likely a convert of Paul during his time in Ephesus, is believed to have founded the church in Colossae. Paul had not personally visited the church but had heard about its situation through Epaphras and felt compelled to address emerging issues through this letter.
10. Scholars often treat Colossians and Ephesians together due to significant similarities in their vocabulary, linguistic structures, theological frameworks, worldviews, and even some of the individuals greeted in the letters. Their geographical proximity also contributes to this common treatment.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the arguments for and against Pauline authorship of the Book of Colossians. Analyze the evidence presented in the lecture, including stylistic differences, theological themes, and the historical context of ancient authorship.
2. Explain the significance of the distinction between undisputed and disputed Pauline letters for New Testament scholarship. How does the debate surrounding the authorship of Colossians impact our understanding and interpretation of the letter?
3. Describe the various ways authorship was understood in the ancient world. How does this understanding inform the debate about who wrote the Book of Colossians, and what are the implications of considering these different forms of authorship?
4. Analyze the relationship between the Book of Colossians and the Book of Ephesians based on the information provided in the lecture. What are the key similarities and differences between these two letters, and why are they often studied together?
5. Discuss the historical and geographical context of the city of Colossae and its early church as presented in the lecture. How might this context have influenced the issues addressed in the Letter to the Colossians and Paul's approach in writing to them (assuming Pauline authorship)?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Undisputed Pauline Letters:** Letters generally accepted by the vast majority of scholars as having been written by Paul himself.
- **Disputed Pauline Letters:** Letters for which scholarly debate exists regarding whether Paul was the actual author.
- **Prison Epistles:** The letters of Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians, traditionally believed to have been written by Paul during one or more of his imprisonments. 2 Timothy is sometimes included in this category.
- **Pastoral Epistles:** The letters of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, addressed to individuals in pastoral leadership roles in the early church.
- **Amanuensis:** A secretary or scribe employed to write from dictation or under the direction of another person.
- **Pseudonymity:** The practice of writing a text under a false or assumed name.
- **Hendiadys:** A figure of speech in which two words are joined by "and" to express a single compound idea.
- **Eusebius:** A 4th-century Christian historian whose writings provide valuable information about the early church.
- **Colossae:** An ancient city in Phrygia (Asia Minor/Anatolia) that was the recipient of Paul's Letter to the Colossians.
- **Ephesus:** A major city in Asia Minor where Paul spent a significant amount of time during his missionary journeys.
- **Laodicea:** A city near Colossae and Hierapolis, often mentioned in connection with them.
- **Hierapolis:** Another city in the same region as Colossae and Laodicea.
- **Antiochus III:** A Seleucid king who, according to Josephus, relocated Jewish families to Asia Minor.
- **Philo:** A Hellenistic Jewish philosopher from Alexandria who wrote about the large Jewish population in Asia Minor.
- **Josephus:** A 1st-century Romano-Jewish historian whose writings provide historical context for the New Testament period.

5. FAQs on Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 1, Introduction to Colossians, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: The Book of Colossians and Pauline Authorship

1. What are the "Prison Epistles" mentioned in the source, and which books are included? The "Prison Epistles" refer to letters traditionally understood to have been written by the Apostle Paul during one or more of his imprisonments. The source identifies four primary Prison Epistles: Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians. It also mentions that 2 Timothy could be strictly considered a Prison Epistle, but is often grouped with 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus as the Pastoral Epistles.

2. Why is the authorship of some of Paul's letters, particularly Colossians and Ephesians, disputed among scholars? The authorship of Colossians and Ephesians is debated primarily based on perceived differences in language, theological thought, and writing style when compared to Paul's undisputed letters (like Philippians and Philemon). For example, these disputed letters often feature longer, more complex sentences and vocabulary not as prevalent in the undisputed letters. They also exhibit a particular interest in "principalities and powers" and a developed understanding of Christ's role in creation and the church.

3. What arguments does Dr. Darko present in favor of Paul's authorship of Colossians? Dr. Darko argues that despite the stylistic and linguistic differences, there are strong reasons to believe Paul wrote Colossians. He suggests that Paul's circumstances (being in prison), his potential use of an amanuensis (scribe), and the similarities between Colossians and the undisputed letter of Philemon (including shared individuals and grammatical structures) point towards Pauline authorship. He also raises the point that writing styles can change over time and depending on circumstances. Furthermore, he highlights the difficulty in accepting that the early church, being vigilant against false teachings, would have embraced a deliberately pseudonymous letter as authoritative.

4. What is the significance of the close relationship between the letters of Colossians and Ephesians? Colossians and Ephesians are often studied together because they share significant similarities in theological themes, vocabulary (with a substantial overlap), and overall worldview. Their linguistic structures and style of conveying doctrinal issues also exhibit common patterns. Additionally, geographically, Colossae and Ephesus were relatively close, suggesting a potentially shared cultural and religious context influencing the content of the letters. However, Dr. Darko also notes that while they share

vocabulary, the letters don't always use that language in the exact same way or for the same purpose.

5. How does the source explain the practice of authorship in the ancient world, and how does this relate to the discussion of Pauline authorship? The source outlines several ways authorship was understood in antiquity. Besides writing by one's own hand, authorship could include dictating to a scribe, co-authorship, or having a friend or disciple write on one's behalf (*amanuensis*). A more problematic form was pseudonymity, where someone would write in the name of a famous figure long after their death. Dr. Darko suggests that the close proximity in time between Paul and the writing of Colossians makes the scenario of deliberate pseudonymity less likely and less accepted by the early church, who were wary of forgeries.

6. What do we know about the city of Colossae, the recipient of Paul's letter? Colossae was a city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), about 120 miles from Ephesus. It was part of a tri-city area that included Hierapolis and Laodicea. While not as large or commercially significant as Ephesus, Colossae was described as a place where people were intellectually inclined and deeply religious, with a mix of pagan religions and a significant Jewish population. Its location near a major highway facilitated communication and the delivery of letters. Importantly, Paul himself had not visited Colossae, and the church there was likely founded by Epaphras, who had been in contact with Paul.

7. What was likely the occasion or purpose for Paul writing the letter to the Colossians? Paul wrote to the church in Colossae to address emerging issues and problems within the community. While the specifics will be explored in later sessions, the fact that Paul had not personally founded or visited the church suggests that he was responding to information he had received, likely from Epaphras, about the challenges the Colossian believers were facing regarding their identity, moral conduct, and interpersonal relationships, potentially influenced by local religious and philosophical ideas.

8. What is Dr. Darko's overall approach and perspective on studying the Book of Colossians and the Prison Epistles? Dr. Darko approaches the study of Colossians and the Prison Epistles with a scholarly lens, acknowledging the ongoing academic debates, particularly regarding authorship. However, he leans towards affirming Pauline authorship of Colossians. His aim is to encourage a thorough engagement with the text, prompting readers to ask critical questions and grow in their understanding of God's Word. He emphasizes learning and growing together, even amidst scholarly disagreements.