



International Conference – Feb. 2023

General Theme: **Christ: The Connecting
Center of God's Work**

Mess. 1: **The background of the letter to the
Colossians**

Scripture Reading: Col 1:13-20

Link to this Message on the IVPT Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHDQ34TMSeg>



Offering Centre

<http://institutovidaparatodos.org.br/central-de-ofertas/>



**Series logo
under review.**

Word given by brother Pedro Dong, transmitted by Instituto Vida para Todos directly from São Paulo, Brazil, on 01/15/2023. Text not revised by the author.

1. We are going to open the study of a new book of the Bible, Colossians. We anticipate that there will be enough time for the production of the Daily Food. The book of Colossians is a continuation of the book of Ephesians. In this transition, there will be no sudden change or turbulence, but a natural flow of the river of grace that we saw in Ephesians. I also want to say that we are not concerned with doing a doctrinal Bible study, as there are already many of them, done by good Bible teachers. **Our concern is to hear what the Lord has to say to the Church, so that it can cooperate with Him in carrying out His will in this end time.** This is our focus. We are not here just to acquire knowledge, but we want to be useful. The treasures of the prophetic Word were unlocked for the Church in Philadelphia. We want to value, appreciate and love this word reverently, practicing it so that God's will may be completed in our generation. That is our hope and expectation.

2. **The overall theme of the Colossians Conference will be "Christ, the Connecting Center of God's Work". Everything God has done, is doing, and will do has Christ at its center. Christ is the center that connects and link all things.** However, we cannot fail to make a connection with the book of Ephesians. The Lord has been very generous to us. We didn't expect to extract so much wealth this past semester. The Lord brought many things to pass in His work and expansion here on earth. Continents were reached and revitalized through the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, dynamic colporting and all the tools given by God to us in these last times. The book of Ephesians shows us, as never before, that there is a river. No one would imagine that right at the beginning of Ephesians there is a river that is poured out of a window in heaven for the Church (Eph. 1:3). Once we did not understand this, as we were still in the doctrinal sphere, of mere teaching, but through the revelation of his Word, we began to see that what God wants to dispense to the Church is exactly the river that came out of Eden. When man sinned and transgressed the Word of God and was expelled from the garden of Eden, access to the tree of life and to God Himself was closed, but God gave us a second chance, which is in Genesis 2:10: the river of grace. The phrase we see in this verse, "a river came out", means going out for a purpose, for a goal. **This river has the purpose of reaching man and giving him a second chance to access the riches of God.** That second chance was given when the Lord Jesus became a man. He brought the river to earth, being the source of living waters. He was the flow of that river. Only, as long as He lived in the flesh, He would be limited to the flesh. He then died and rose again, and in His glorification God made Him the Spirit, which would flow out of everyone who believed in Him. Therefore, brethren, this flow is in the Church,

for upon her God has poured out spiritual and heavenly blessing. We are privileged to receive what was forbidden to man in Eden. The river is man's alternative access to God. Jesus became the life-giving Spirit, and everyone who believes in Him receives that Spirit. And that Spirit, within him who believed, becomes rivers of living water (John 7:37-39). Chapter 4 of the Gospel of John also shows us this. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that if she drank from the water of Jacob's well, from the water that the world could give her, she would be thirsty again, but if she drank from the water that He gave her, for He was the very source that brought the river of the water of life, she would never be thirsty again, on the contrary, she would have a fountain flowing into eternal life within her. Today that river flows on earth from the Church. There is a river whose channels make glad the city of God. That river is flowing through the Church. But who is the Church? You are a member of the body of Christ! If you are a member, you cannot stop the flow of the River, for God has placed the Spirit within you like a gushing fountain. Do not lock this source. God wants to make you a channel, not a dead sea, that only receives and does not pour out grace to other people. We let that river flow when we preach the Gospel, do colporting work, save and rescue people from the bondage of corruption. **Therefore, we are the continuation of the flow of this river.** That's why we feel good when we go out into the streets to preach the Gospel and rescue people, functioning as channels of Grace. It makes us grow.

3. In Ephesians 1, we see that God has blessed us, by the flowing river of grace, with every spiritual blessing. But what does God want with this flow? He wants to head up all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth. He wants to head up even angelic beings and all existing things on earth. But how is He going to do this? That Christ might be the head of all things, He was given to the Church, which has the responsibility of carrying out the work of headship. In the 2nd chapter of Ephesians we see that by grace we have been brought out of death. We were dead in our sins and trespasses. We had no life. We were a bunch of dry bones, but by grace we were saved. **And out of us, the old creation, God will produce a masterpiece, a dwelling place for God in the spirit.** Through reconciliation and the cross, Christ also gave us peace. The Jewish peoples and the Gentiles and those of different nations do not get along, but on the cross, Christ broke down the wall of enmity and made peace between all peoples, reconciling them to Himself. In the end, He wants to produce, out of us, a body in God, the body of Christ. By the flow of grace, He also made us the family of God. We are no longer pilgrims, but citizens of the Kingdom. We have the Kingdom passport and are being built up into a spiritual house for God to finally find His rest in the universe.

4. Ephesians chapter 3 shows us how God works. We have seen that in every age God has a dispenser, a mouth that He uses. At the time of the book of Ephesians, He chose the apostle Paul for this, which makes it clear that he was chosen by God to be the steward, the one who takes care of the pantry. You at home must have a pantry that stores your groceries. The steward takes care of the pantry and distributes the groceries according the need of the family members. I have also used another term for this function, which is dispenser, one who supplies or distributes. Both words can be used even if they have a slight difference in meaning. The dispenser collects and distributes the riches. Paul was the dispenser of God's grace. But he didn't want to be the only dispenser. In his day he was the originator of the prophetic Word, but he wanted to produce many dispensers, making all the members of the body of Christ channels for dispensing the riches of the river of grace. So, brethren, in Ephesians chapters 3 and 4, the Church is built up. Only in this way can we understand, together with all the saints, what the greatness of Christ is: His love, breadth, length, height, depth and His infinite and spiritual dimension. By dispensing and practicing we get a sense of what the Christ dimension is, and we are filled with all the fullness of God. God wants to fill all the voids and voids that are still in us and in His Church. In chapter 4, God provides gifts and functions to the members of the Body. Each member has a role, but we have only one ministry, which is the building up of the Body of Christ. You and I work night and day for the building up of the Body of Christ, which is the work of each member's ministry (Eph. 4:11,12).

5. As we function as channels of grace, we grow in life and are built up. This river of grace supplies us not only with grace but also with truth. He fills us with reality. We are no longer those who say one thing and do another, but are being filled with the truth and reality of God. God, who is the essence of love and light, entered us. We thus begin to live a life of love and light. We no longer have a selfish life, but live a life of giving to others, as an offering pleasing to God. **We no longer live in the shadow of sin, but in the light. I do not say that we no longer sin, but we are sensitive and deal with all the shadows of the works of darkness, for we live in the light. 1 Jn. 1:9 - By confessing our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Do not say that you have no more sins. You may, by chance, be overcome by sin, but because we live in the light, we deal with sins immediately and the works of darkness do not flourish in us.** Thus, we are ready to put on the armour of God and fight the fight of the two kingdoms, the kingdom of God against the kingdom of darkness. We are in the middle of this war and we need to conquer territories for the Lord. Why do we go to the streets and different continents? To conquer the earth for the Lord. This is the fight of the kingdoms. Satan will not easily hand over his territories to us and will plague us with persecution, lies, tribulations and suffering, but we will stand firm. We don't need to ascend to heaven, for our fight is not against blood and flesh. The principalities, powers and rulers of this dark world are behind all the problems caused by men who fight against the Gospel. **God did not command us to take to the air and fight angelic beings, fallen angels and demons. The Lord's order is that we stand firm and steadfast. Our refuge is the Lord. God is our strength and a very present help in our troubles. It is up to us, brothers, to continue flowing the river of grace.** In 2 Chronicles 20:17 we see that all we have to do is stand firm, take a stand, stand still and see what the Lord will do. The Lord will do and is already defeating all enemies, because this fight is His! But we also have an offensive weapon, which is the Word. For this reason, we go out into the streets and carry out colporting work, which is the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. When we leave the books with people, we use the sword to defeat the enemy and bring them out of slavery and into the realm of light. This is our fight in the streets: on the one hand we stand firm and on the other hand we use the prophetic word. Immersion has helped colporteurs. When they don't know what else to do and feel directionless, they do the immersion and gain light and direction and use the Word as a sword. Thus, the fight in the streets is won. Thank the Lord, we were carried by Him that way until the end of the book of Ephesians.

6. **The flow of grace continues and now takes us to the book of Colossians. But how are we going to get into it? We need to open our eyes and see that Christ is important, vital and crucial in God's work.** More than we think! Everything that concerns God's work and us is nothing without Christ. He is vital and we need to value Him more. We will continue in this same flow, but giving even more emphasis to Christ. How do we exist as a creature? Who created us? We will see that all this has to do with Christ. You're sitting here today before God by the blood. But who did this work and died for you? **Christ!** You, today, have the living Spirit within you. Who gave you this Spirit? **Christ! Without Christ, everything that happens in your life is nothing.** I'm still touching on the superficial, but that will be our emphasis: Christ.

7. Now I will begin to introduce the background of the letter to the Colossians. The 4 letters of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon were written during his first imprisonment in Rome. There, he was free to rent a house. When I was in Italy, I was able to visit this house. According to the updated King James Version, this arrest took place in AD 60. Already, according to the restoration version, in the year 64dc. According to Acts 28:30, Paul, in that house, preached the Gospel of God and with boldness taught the things pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ. Even in prison, Paul did not stop preaching the Gospel and the Word of God, our sword! The Word does God's work and conquers land here on earth. **The contents of these 4 letters, plus the book of Galatians, make up what we call "the heart of the Bible". They are the most important letters, for they reveal God's economy, His plan to carry out His will.** These books are crucial

to that understanding. For that reason, Colossians is fully related to the book of Ephesians, as a continuation or a complement.

8. Colossae was a city located in the valley of the river Lycus, in the ancient Phrygian region, today, Turkey. Considering the map of that time, we had the region of Israel, Jerusalem and, further north, in the region of Syria, Antioch. Advancing further north and west was the region of Cilicia, Paul's homeland. Farther on lay Phrygia and Galatia. Colossae was located in Phrygia, 20 km from Laodicea and Hierapolis and about 160 km from Ephesus. To the north of Colossae was Laodicea and Hierapolis, which was a resort town with hot springs. The Romans built large summer resort structures there, mainly bathhouses. Laodicea was just below. The hot waters that came out of Hierapolis flowed to Laodicea, but on the way, this water cooled down and arrived lukewarm in Laodicea. Hence the prophecy in Revelation, which says that Laodicea is lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, on the point of being spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Paul was in Ephesus and, for two years, led a GPC there. He spent three months arguing with the Jews in the synagogue, but he saw that their hearts were hardened. **He realized that the Lord's way was for him to remain for two years in the school Tyrannus, as a GPC for the improvement of workers and coworkers.** There one of his perfected workers was Epaphras, who raised up the Church at Colossae. As far as I know, Paul never went to Colossae, Laodicea or Hierapolis, but through Epaphras the Church was raised up in these 3 cities. See the importance of GPC and PAC, which improves leaders, workers, coworkers. Colossae was a volcanic region, subject to the incidence of severe earthquakes, but the land was very fertile, as was all land near volcanic regions. There were pastures and beautiful livestock there. Due to its chemical qualities, Colossae water was used for dyeing wool. At the time of the Greek empire, it was a prosperous city. But by Paul's time, its commercial importance was already in decline. The population of Colossae was made up of Phrygians, Greeks and Jews, who arrived in the region 2 centuries before Christ. This mixture of peoples, religions and cultures ended up creating an atmosphere of syncretism. Syncretism is the mixture of different doctrines to form a new doctrine, whether philosophical, religious or cultural. This ended up having repercussions on the Church life

9. The Church in Colossae was generated at the time of Paul's 3rd missionary journey. He remained in Ephesus for a total of 3 years (Acts 20:31). Acts 19:8-10 shows us how these three years were divided. Probably the School of Tyrannus was a space used by Greek philosophers to present their philosophical theses to the people, who judged, criticized and gave a verdict on whether they accepted them or not. Probably Paul rented this space to minister the Word. **This is how the first GPC, PAC, improvement of workers and coworkers took place. One of the perfected workers was Epaphras, who was from Colossae and built up the Church there (Col. 1:7).** He was a faithful minister of Christ to the Church. Col 4:12,13. The book of Colossians is all about Epaphras. He cared for Laodicea and Hierapolis and it was likely that such cities under his care would have a church life of about 5 or 6 years. Also in Colossae lived Philemon and his slave Onesimus, who fled and defrauded his master by going to Rome. It was perfected by Paul there and sent back to its lord, with the letter bearer Tychism. Col 4:7-9; Phm. 1:1,8-20. Everything we read about in these passages took place in Colossae.

10. The Epistle to the Colossians makes it clear that there were deviations in the Church life there, caused by the mixture of Greek cultures, religions and philosophies with old Judaism. The embryo of Gnosticism already acted, as a false philosophy that defended the strong antithesis between the material and spiritual world. The creators of this thesis claimed to have secret knowledge. This mixture of religions, cultures and philosophies was addressed by Paul at several points in the epistle. Gnosticism, in fact, was consolidated in the second century, but the Colossians were already affected by its embryo, which appeared in the region. All Greek philosophy seeks to understand the things and the cause of human suffering. Greek mythology believed that there were many gods and demigods who controlled the natural and supernatural world, and should be worshiped by man to appease their wrath. There was, for the Greeks, the god of thunder, floods,

earthquakes, among others. In order not to be punished, man had to worship this diversity of gods and demigods. So, for example, if they worshiped the supposed gods, a farmer would have rain at the right time and the sick person would be healed. Men were very afraid of suffering and things beyond their control. Greek philosophers then wanted to understand the reason for suffering, but some of them did not believe in mythology and sought to unravel this mystery through other theories. Gnosticism, in its flowering, preached that the material world was an imperfect emanation of God. Therefore, in the material world, man suffers. Matter and flesh were essentially evil and man should take refuge in the spirit. The concept of Gnostics in the Greek classics means one who knows and understands. The material universe is imperfect, as is the human flesh and body. Such imperfection implies suffering. Man's freedom would come through gnosis, that is, through intuitive knowledge of the spirit and the nature of reality. This knowledge is not rational, but intuitive and spiritual. In theory, few people would reach this level of knowledge. Those who supposedly achieved prided themselves on being able to free themselves from the suffering of the flesh and on having a level of knowledge above others. Such people were considered enlightened. Thus arose Gnosticism. It was believed that God is like a sun, which has rays of light. Such rays would be spiritual entities. Angels were such entities and Jesus was just another such emanation. That is why the Epistle to the Colossians attacks the adoration and worship of angels, until then adored and placed on the same level as Jesus. In Col. 2:2-4 Paul says that the mystery of God is Christ, not the emanations or the different angels. **If the Colossians considered that some had high knowledge, they must have known that in Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hidden. Therefore, if they wanted knowledge of the Truth, they should seek Christ!** The reasoning of the Gnostics could seem logical and different, but it was still a fallacy. Judaism contributed to this confusion by bringing the ceremony of worship into it. This mixture resulted in asceticism, which is the chastisement of the flesh for deliverance from sin. This also began to creep into the Church. In Col. 2:16 Paul cites some elements of Jewish ceremonialism. In verse 17 Paul shows that all the Jewish ceremonies were but a shadow of the real thing, Christ. In verse 18, the worship of angels is mentioned, and in verse 19, Paul states that the head of the body is Christ. In verses 20 to 23 we see the ordinances which came from Judaism and asceticism. Recently, even among us, someone has been preaching about fasting, as deprivation of the body that would prevent sin, **but only Christ conquers sin, not deprivation of the body!**

11. It is this background that gave Paul the opportunity to bring to light such crucial revelations of Christ's pre-eminence over all things. There is nothing superior to Christ. Nothing compares to Him. All we enjoy is Christ and through Christ. Christ is the point of connection between God and the creature. Only He can be that point. Lucifer wanted to be that connection point and made a proposal to God: "I am a creature and you, being God, do not understand the creature. I was created in a perfect way and am above all creatures, so you have no choice but to place me as an adjunct king for creature affairs." **But God did not accept this proposal, because He had a much better plan: God Himself would become a man!** He sent His Own Son to earth, who emptied Himself, humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant, humbly coming in human form. He was born of the virgin Mary as a man, being truly God. Christ is the only one who has these two "nationalities": He is God and He is man, being the only one who can connect the Creator with creation. On the other hand, He is the only one who can connect all of creation. **Christ is the center of God's economy and work. He is the unifying center that unites and connects all creation and keeps all things in constant stability and productivity for the execution of God's irrevocable will (Col. 1:16,17).** For God to create all things, a starting point was needed, which is Christ. Using a small illustration, if we want to draw a circle, we need a compass to know where the center of the figure is, the starting point. The center is the reference for drawing a circle. **Christ is the starting point.** He is before all things. In it everything subsists. That word subsist is *sunistao*, an aggregating center that unites all points into a whole. This whole is united by Christ, uniting all. God unites everyone to become one whole. Christ is everything. **The centrality and universality of Christ are demonstrated in the book of Colossians. Christ is the unifying center that unites and connects all creation.**

12. And more: He not only unites, but holds all things in constant stability. Today we depend on Christ for the stability of creation. **Without Christ, everything is destabilized.** We are here thanks to Christ, who is the point of stability. **He not only maintains stability, but also productivity. Christ produces the will of God.** Things are moving forward to produce what God wants. **The headship of Christ over all things and the building up of the Church are the production of Christ.** He carries out the irrevocable will of God. That's why Ephesians 1 speaks of the good pleasure of His will. No one can change God's will. For the carrying out of God's purpose, Christ is also the beginning, the first among the dead. In the old creation, Christ is everything, the origin. All created things are for Him. It is the unifying center, the connector that links and holds all things together in stability and productivity. But this is still at the level of the old creation. God wants to produce, in another dimension and sphere, the new creation. **In this other dimension, Christ is also everything (Col. 1:18).** The body, the church, already belongs to another dimension, to the sphere of resurrection. Christ also has the primacy. We see in verse 19 that God wants all the fullness to reside in Christ, both in the old creation and in the new creation. The Church, then, will be the fullness of Him who fills all, in all things. In Ephesians 1:22, 23 we see that God gave Christ to the Church. Therefore, He had to accomplish redemption. If Christ has the primacy in the new creation, we need to be transferred into the new creation. Col. 1:20 shows us that with Satan's rebellion and the fall of man, many things happened that promoted rupture and enmity with God and among creation. Christ, then, made peace by the blood of His cross, and reconciled all things to Himself. He Himself had to do a work, coming to the cross, dying not only for us, but also to reconcile all things to Himself. This is wonderful. All things, whether on earth or in heaven, have been reconciled! Col. 1:21,22 speaks of us. Christ raised us to the resurrection level of the new creation. V.23 - The Gospel must be preached to every creature, for Christ wants to reconcile all things through His work on the Cross and shed blood and be the head over all things, having primacy, not only at the level of creation, but also at the new creation level.

This message 1 will accompany a logo we made. You might not understand this logo (which is under review, so not added to these notes). I'll leave it still on hold and I'll comment on it in the first message of the international conference at Estancia. Next week there will be the youth conference message and the next week I will be in Peru and we will have the second message. Then there will be two more Sundays before the conference at Estância and I will be in São Paulo releasing messages 3 and 4. At the International Conference we will have message 5 and there I will explain about the logo. Jesus is the Lord!