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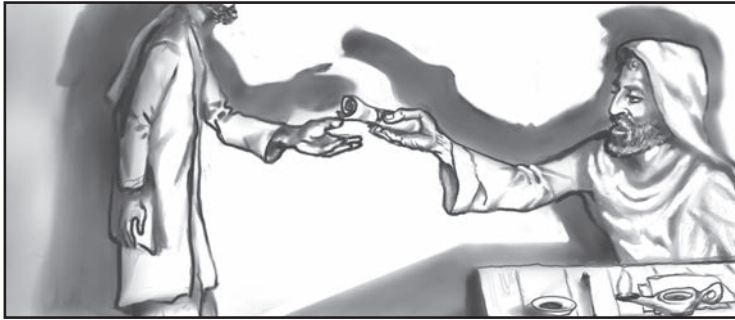
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Connecting Heaven and Earth: Learn About Jesus in Philippians and Colossians

Think about the hardest job you did. What made the job so hard? Did people expect more from you than you could give? Did you have enough time to do the job? Did you dislike the task? Did you not get along with the people who worked with you? Or maybe you thought you would not succeed?

Think about God's plan to save sinners. This plan will unite or join together all people in heaven and on earth. Is that possible? As humans, we can't do that job. But God can. Just before Jesus went back to heaven, He gave His followers a very hard task: " 'So go and make followers of all people in the world [on the earth]. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have told you to do. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of time' " (Matthew 28:19, 20, ERV).

Jesus sent Paul to the non-Jews to teach them about God. Jesus said to Paul, " 'You will help them [the non-Jews] to understand what is really true. They are like [the same as] people who live in the dark. Teach them what is true about me. Then they will be like people who live in the light [Bible truth]. Now Satan has power over them. Lead them from there [the dark; sin] into God's kingdom. Then God will forgive them for the wrong things that they have done. Because they believe in me, God will accept them as his own people' " (Acts 26:18, EASY).

Some people may give up quickly if they must teach other people about Jesus. But we should remember the promises of Jesus. To His followers, Jesus promised, " 'You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will be with you until the end of time' " (Matthew 28:20, EASY). And to Paul, Jesus said, " 'I have chosen you to be my servant. That is why I have appeared to you today. You must tell other people about what you have seen. After that, I will show you other things that you must tell people' " (Acts 26:16, EASY).

In short, Jesus gives us work that no human can do. That is because He wants us to depend on Him to get the work done. But Jesus doesn't give us this job without giving us the strength and power to do it. "When we work with God, He will give us His power. God

is all-powerful. Whatever God commands us to do, we may do in His strength. All God's commands are promises."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 333, adapted.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians, every person on earth already heard about the Good News (Colossians 1:23). Of course, not everyone accepted it. But look carefully at Jesus' commands to His followers (Matthew 28:18–20) and to Paul. We see that Jesus didn't promise that everyone would become His follower. Jesus also didn't promise that everyone would become a Christian. Jesus said, " 'This good news of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world [earth]. It [the Good News] will **be a witness** to all nations [people groups]. Then the end will come' " (Matthew 24:14, NIV, boldface added). How will the Good News "be a witness"? How exactly will this work be done?

This quarter we will seek to answer those questions. We will study Paul's letters to the Philippians and to the Colossians. Both letters are alike in many ways. Both letters show us Jesus. Only Jesus can unite or join together the people in heaven and on earth. In a dream, Jacob saw a ladder that stretched from the earth to heaven (Genesis 28:12; compare John 1:51). The ladder is a symbol for Jesus. As the Son of Man, Jesus saves us from sin. As the Son of God, Jesus goes to God to get help for us over sin.

Paul did everything he could to help the church become close to God and to each other.

As we study Paul's letters, we will see Jesus as our Savior and our Helper. We will look at what Paul says about Jesus as God. We will learn what Jesus gave up so that He could come to this earth to save us. We'll see Paul in prison trying to solve problems in one church that he started (the church in Philippi). Then we will see him try to solve problems in another church that he never visited (the church in Colossae). Paul made many connections in the worldwide church of his time. These connections helped Paul, even from a Roman jail, to solve problems in the church. Paul knew his time was short. So, he did everything he could to help the church become close to God and to each other. Paul shows us how God's church today can unite or join with heaven. Then together with God, we can do the work He gave us in Revelation 14: to preach the Three Angels' Messages.

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