

Introduction to Colossians

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I. The City Colossae

- Located in the Roman province of Asia, which is now Turkey, about 120 miles east of Ephesus
- Three cities in the Lycus River Valley, Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis, all had churches (4:13)
- Significant city in 5th century BC, but no longer a significant city in Paul's day.
- Colossae is not in existence today, and has not been excavated by archaeologists.

II. The Church

- Planted during the Ephesian mission—A.D. 52-55 (Acts 19:10)
- Paul had not been to the city (1:4; 2:1)
- Evangelized by Epaphras (1:7) a Colossian (4:12), now a fellow prisoner with Paul (Phile.23)
- Primarily composed of Gentile converts (2:13)
- Seemed to hold meetings in homes (4:15; Philem.2)
- A young church at time of writing, showing positive signs of spiritual health (1:3-8; 2:5)
- Seems to have been vulnerable to some specific false teaching (2:4, 8-23; see below)

III. The Letter

- Theme: The preeminence of Christ (1:18)
- Authorship: 1:1, 23; 4:18bh
- Carried by: Tychichus and Onesimus (cf. Eph.6:21) (Tychichus to confirm letter to Philemon?)
- One of the “Prison Epistles”(4:10, 18—but which imprisonment? (2 Cor.11:23)
 - A. *Rome?* A.D. 60-62 (Acts 28:30-31)
 - B. *Caesarea?* A.D. 58-59 (Acts 24:27)
 - C. *Ephesus?* A.D. 52-55 (comp.2 Cor.1:8; 1 Cr.15:32; Rom.16:3-4)
 - Where did Philemon encounter Paul?
 - Between which points did Epaphras and Tychicus make so many trips?
 - Aristarchus' imprisonment? (4:10; Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2)
 - Paul hoped to soon visit Colossae (Philem.22)
- Affinities with Ephesians and Philemon:
 - Estimates of shared material with Ephesians range from 54 to 78 verses.
 - Ephesians emphasizes the Church as body of Christ; Colossians emphasizes Christ as the Head to the church, and of all creation
 - Timothy, Aristarchus, Archippus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, Onesimus, Demas also in Philemon
- Occasion: Epaphras brought news to Paul of heresy (4:12-13)

IV. The “Colossian Heresy”

- Once thought to be *Gnosticism*, but a greater familiarity with that heresy has led most to abandon this
- F.F. Bruce suggests Jewish mysticism like that of *merkabah*
- N.T. Wright thinks it is merely Judaism being advocated as a counter to Christianity
- Most think the “Colossian Heresy” is a syncretistic mix of Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, and mystery religions (asceticism, worship of angels)

Basic Outline of Colossians

I. Theological (chapters one and two)

A. Preliminary Matters

1. Greetings, Thanksgiving and Affirmation (1:1-8)
2. Paul's Prayer for the church (1:9-12)
3. Who Christ is to us (1:13-14)
4. Who Christ is more broadly (1:15-20)
5. Christians have been reconciled and must persevere (1:21-23)
6. How Paul relates to this church (1:24—2:5)

B. The Concerns at Hand

1. Stick with Jesus and the original plan (2:6-7)
2. Beware of those who want to distract from Christ Himself (2:8-19)
3. You have died to your former dependency on empty religious practices (2:20-23)
4. Keep your sights on Christ, heavenly realities and ultimate destiny (3:1-4)

II. Practical

A. Abandoning the Old Man's ways, embracing the New Man's ways (3:5-17)

1. Put to death the deeds of the Old Man, whom you have "put off" (vv.5-9)
2. Put on the behaviors of the New Man, whom you have "put-on" (vv.10-17)

B. Household holiness (3:18—4:1)

1. Wives and husbands (vv.18-19)
2. Children and fathers (vv.20-21)
3. Servants and masters (3:22—4:1)

C. Miscellaneous final exhortations (4:2-6)

D. Introductions and greetings (4:7-15)

E. Closing requests (4:16-18)

Pleroma 1:19; 2:9 “Fullness” (John 1:16)

Stoicheia 2:8, 20 (Gal.4:3, 9; Heb.5:12) “ABCs” or “elemental spirits”?

Principalities and powers 1:16; 2:10, 15; Titus 3:1; Eph.3:10; 6:12

Translated into the kingdom (1:13)

Deity of Christ (1:15-17; 2:9)

Gospel has been preach to every creature (1:6, 23)

“If you continue” (1:23)

Filling up the easure of the suffering of Christ (1:24)

Christ in you, the hope of glory (1:27)

Every man perfect in Christ (1:28)

Faith prior to regeneration (2:12-13)

Shadows versus substance (2:16-17)

Old man Vs. New Man (3:5-17)

Love the bond of perfection (3:14)

Peace of God ruling in the heart (3:15)

The Word of Christ dwelling in you richly (3:16)

All in the name of Jesus (3:17)

Husbands and wives (3:18-19)

Kids and fathers (3:20-21)

Slavery (3:22—4:1)

Do every thing heartily as to the Lord (3:23)

Vigilant in prayer (4:2)

Walk in wisdom toward unbelievers (4:5)

Redeem the time (4:5)

Speech with grace, seasoned with salt (4:6)

Onesimus (4:9)

Mark, cousin of Barnabas (4:10)

Workers for the kingdom of God (4:11)

Luke the Gentile, and the physician (4:11, 14)

Demas (4:14)

Nymphas’ house church (4:15)

The epistle from Laodicea (4:16)

Charge to Archippus (4:17)