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**Investigating the Word of God**

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# Colossians



*The Tell at Colosse - Looking from the South*

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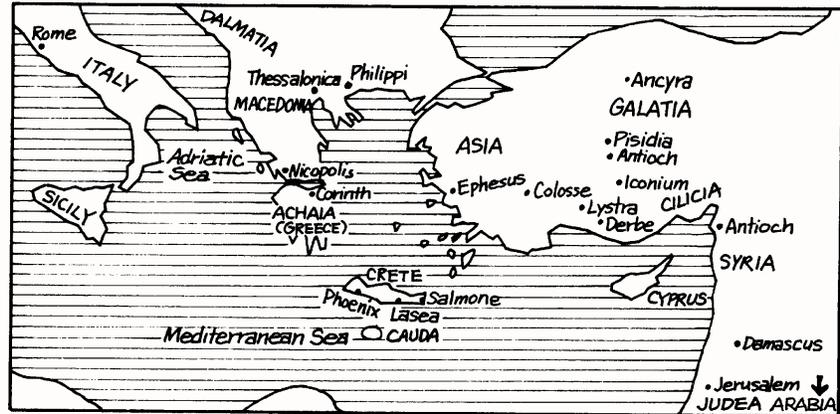
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# An Introduction to Colossians

## The City of Colosse

The city of Colosse was located about 100 miles east of the city of Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia about 12 miles up the Lycus River from the city of Laodecia. The province of Asia is now a part of the country of Turkey.

In times past Colosse had been a rather large and wealthy city but by the time the apostle Paul wrote this book it had fallen into rapid decline. Not long afterward it was virtually destroyed in a violent earthquake.



## The Church in Colosse

As far as we know, the apostle Paul never visited Colosse. This is indicated by the fact that he had only “heard” about the faith and love of the Christians there (1:3-4; 2:1). So we must ask, “How and by whom was the church there begun?”

The apostle Paul had spent three years in Ephesus, the main city of the province of Asia. Acts 19:10 says that while he was there, “...that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” The “all” of Asia would certainly include the people of Colosse.

The main teacher of the Colossians had been Epaphras (1:7). He may have been a native of the city (4:12-13). Presumably he had heard Paul in Ephesus, was converted, and then returned to his home to preach, laboring with three churches in the Lycus River valley (4:13). Paul had nothing but praise for him and gratefully endorsed his teaching and labors (4:12-13).

The church may have begun meeting in the house of Philemon for it was to the city of Colosse that Paul returned Philemon’s runaway slave, Onesimus (4:9; Philemon 2).

## Author, Date and Place of Writing, and Messenger

The apostle Paul is the author of this book. It is entirely possible that he wrote the letters of Ephesians and Colossians about the same time. The books contain some striking similarities. Both of the letters were delivered by the same individual, Tychicus. Both were written while Paul was in prison in Rome somewhere around 61 to 63 A.D. The greetings in each are similar. The structures of the books are remarkably similar. One commentator noted that 78 out of the 95 verses in Colossians have a marked resemblance to verses in Ephesians.

Epaphras had traveled to Rome to visit Paul in his imprisonment (Acts 28:30-31). Although he brought a good report, in general, with warm assurance of love (1:8), he had to confess that there

were certain false teachers who with great eloquence and influence had endangered the brethren with deceptively attractive false doctrine. Paul at once writes a reply to the Colossians and sends it by the hand of Tychicus who was already making preparations to leave for Ephesus with the letter to the Ephesians (4:7).

### **Why This Book Was Written**

There was chaos in Colosse. A dangerous doctrine—that Jesus is neither central nor supreme—was undermining the brethren. This is why this letter was written.

The teachings of the “Colossian Cult” was a strange doctrine that combined certain elements of the Jewish religion and the teachings of the Oriental mystics. Those who taught this deceptive doctrine had changed the simplicity of the Gospel into a mind-boggling philosophy which only they could decipher. While on one hand these false teachers advocated holiness by way of self-abuse, on the other hand their teaching was “of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (2:23).

### **The Theme of the Book**

The brief Colossian letter contains the apostle Paul’s strongest defense of the divinity and authority of Jesus Christ. While the book of Ephesians portrays the “CHURCH of Christ,” Colossians portrays the “church of CHRIST.” In other words, Ephesians emphasizes the church, the body of Christ, while Colossians emphasizes its head, Jesus Christ.

In Colossians, the apostle Paul shows that Christ is preeminent—first and foremost in all things. In 3:11 he states that, “Christ is all and in all.” This fact comprises the theme of the book.

Paul presents several thoughts pertinent to the problem at Colosse which show the fullness of Christ. Most of this book, from beginning to end, is devoted to the divine supremacy and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

If you were to outline the book, it would divide evenly into two parts: doctrinal (chapters one and two) and practical (chapters three and four). Both of these parts are set forth in verses nine and ten of chapter one. Both of these parts emphasize the preeminence of Jesus.

# Colossians Chapter One

## Keys to This Chapter

### Key Passage: Verse 18

“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

### Key People

Paul

Timothy

Epaphras

### Key Places

Colosse

### Key Words

Redemption

Dominions

Principalities

Powers

Firstborn

Consist

Reconcile

Alienated

Reproach

Stewardship

Mystery

### Key Lesson

## Questions on the Text

1. Who is the author of the book? How does he identify himself?
2. What had the author heard concerning the Colossians that had prompted him to pray with thanksgiving to God?
3. How is Epaphras described?
4. What requests did the author make for the Colossians in his prayers?
5. Out of what are Christians delivered? Into what are they conveyed?
6. Who is “the image of the invisible God” and “the firstborn over all creation?”
7. Who is the head of all things to the church?
8. According to verse 23, where had the gospel been preached by the time this book was written?
9. What is the body of Christ?
10. According to verses 26 and 27, what is the “mystery which has been hidden for ages?”

## Matching

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| _____ 1. Paul       | A. The firstborn over all creation.  |
| _____ 2. Timothy    | B. Dear fellow servant.  |
| _____ 3. Epaphras   | C. Qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. |
| _____ 4. The Father | D. Our brother.  |
| _____ 5. Jesus      | E. An apostle of Jesus Christ.   |

## True - False

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 1. Christians are delivered into the power of darkness. |
| T | F | 2. Forgiveness of sins is through the blood of Christ.  |
| T | F | 3. Nothing was created by Jesus Christ.                 |
| T | F | 4. All things consist in Jesus.                         |
| T | F | 5. All the fullness dwells in Jesus.                    |

## Discussion Question

How can every person be presented “perfect” in Christ Jesus?

# Colossians Chapter Two

## Keys to This Chapter

### Key Passage: Verse 8

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

### Key Places

Laodicea

### Key Words

Persuasive

Steadfastness

Philosophy

Deceit

Circumcision

Trespasses

Indulgence

### Key Lesson

## Questions on the Text

1. From verse one, what indicates that the apostle Paul most likely had not started the church at Colosse?
2. What was the apostle’s desire for the saints at both Colosse and Laodicea?
3. What caused Paul to rejoice concerning the Christians at Colosse?
4. According to the text, what two things are necessary for one to walk in Christ?
5. In whom did the fullness of the Godhead “dwell bodily?”
6. How is baptism a burial?
7. According to verse 13, why had these people been “dead?” What had made them “alive?”
8. What did Jesus do with the “handwriting of requirements” that was against them?
9. In regards to what were the Colossians not to be judged?
10. What is to be the Christian’s attitude toward the “basic principles of the world?”

## Matching

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge | A. Made a public spectacle by Jesus. |
| ___ 2. Persuasive words                          | B. The Christian is dead to them.    |
| ___ 3. Philosophy and empty deceit               | C. Hidden in Christ.                 |
| ___ 4. Principalities and powers                 | D. Can be cheated by.                |
| ___ 5. Basic principles of the world             | E. Can be deceived by.               |

## True - False

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 1. Paul had visited the city of Colosse.  |
| T | F | 2. Those who receive Christ Jesus are to walk in Him.   |
| T | F | 3. Jesus is the head of all principality and power.   |
| T | F | 4. We are judged today in regards to food and drink, festivals, new moons and sabbaths.                               |
| T | F | 5. Self-imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. |

## Discussion Question

What does being “buried with Him (Christ) in baptism” accomplish for the one who is baptized?

# Colossians Chapter Three

## Keys to This Chapter

**Key Passage:** Verse 11b  
“...but Christ is all and in all.”

### Key Words

Wrath

Disobedience

Elect

Bond

Provoke

Eyeservice

Partiality

### Key Lesson

## Questions on the Text

1. Name two things the Christian must do since he is risen with Christ.
2. Where is the life of the Christian “hidden?”
3. List those things the Christian is to “put to death” and “put off.”
4. Upon whom is the wrath of God coming?
5. What is the old man?
6. How is the new man renewed?
7. List those things “the elect of God” are to put on.
8. What is the “bond of perfection?”
9. What is to rule in the hearts of Christians?
10. What is to be done “in the name of the Lord?”

## Matching

- |                       |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Wives        | A. Do not provoke your children.    |
| _____ 2. Children     | B. Obey your masters in all things. |
| _____ 3. Husbands     | C. Obey your parents in all things. |
| _____ 4. Fathers      | D. Submit to your own husbands.     |
| _____ 5. Bondservants | E. Love your wives.                 |

## True - False

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 1. If you were raised together with Christ, seek those things that are beneath. |
| T | F | 2. Lie to one another since you have put off the old man and his deeds.         |
| T | F | 3. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.                                  |
| T | F | 4. Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.              |
| T | F | 5. He who does wrong will not be punished for what he has done.                 |

## Discussion Question

Who are the elect of God? How and when does this election take place?

# Colossians Chapter Four

## Keys to This Chapter

### Key Passage: Verse 5

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.”

### Key People

Tychicus

Onesimus

Aristarchus

Mark

Barnabas

Jesus called Justus

Luke

Demas

Nymphas

Archippus

### Key Places

Hierapolis

### Key Words

Wisdom

Redeeming

Grace

Circumstances

Salutation

### Key Lesson

## Questions on the Text

1. How are masters to treat their servants? Why?
2. How are Christians instructed to pray?
3. For what things did Paul want these Christians to pray with regard to him and his work?
4. According to verse five, how is the Christian to walk?
5. What is meant by the expression “redeeming the time?”
6. How should a Christian speak?
7. According to the latter part of verse six, what is the Christian to know?
8. Why was Tychicus being sent to Colosse?
9. Why did Epaphras send greetings to the Colossians? What was his prayer for them?
10. What other church did Paul want to read this letter?

## Matching

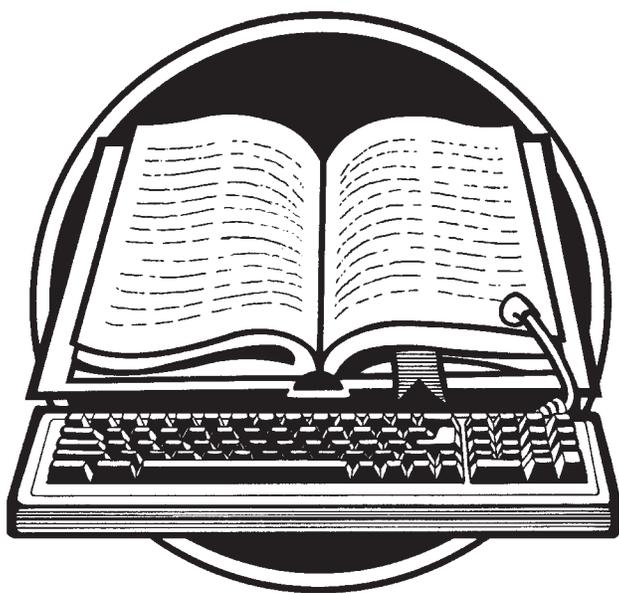
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|--------------------|--|
| ___ 1. Aristarchus | A. Had a church in his house.                        |
| ___ 2. Mark        | B. A fellow prisoner of Paul.                        |
| ___ 3. Luke        | C. A faithful and beloved brother who is one of you. |
| ___ 4. Nymphas     | D. The cousin of Barnabas.                           |
| ___ 5. Onesimus    | E. Beloved physician.                                |

## True - False

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 1. Masters can give their bondservants whatever they want to.     |
| T | F | 2. Paul was in chains for speaking the mystery of Christ.         |
| T | F | 3. One’s speech is to always be with grease seasoned with pepper. |
| T | F | 4. The Colossians were to tell Archippus nothing.                 |
| T | F | 5. Paul personally wrote the final salutation of this letter.     |

## Discussion Question

Who are those who “are outside?” Why should Christians walk in wisdom toward them?



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