

Colossians

AUTHOR: Paul

TIME WRITTEN A. D. 60 or 61 from Rome

POSITION IN THE BIBLE:

- 51st Book in the Bible
- 12th book in the New Testament
- 7th of 21 epistle books
- 8th of Paul's 13 books
- 50 have preceded it. 15 to follow it.

CHAPTERS: 4

VERSES: 95

WORDS: 1,998

KEY WORD: The Preeminence of Christ

TWO KEY PASSAGES:

1. **Colossians 2:9-10** - "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.
2. **Colossians 3:1** - "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

KEY CHAPTER: Colossians 3

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT COLOSSIANS

1. If Ephesians can be labeled the epistle portraying the "church of Christ," then Colossians must surely be the "Christ of the church."
 - a. Ephesians focuses on the Body.
 - b. Colossians focuses on the Head.
 - c. Like Ephesians, the book of Colossians divides itself neatly in half with:
 1. The first portion doctrinal. (1-2)
 2. The second portion practical. (3-4)
 - d. Paul's purpose is to show that Christ is preeminent—first and foremost in everything—and the Christian's life should reflect that priority.
 - e. Because Christians are rooted in Him, alive in Him, hidden in Him, and complete in Him, it is utterly inconsistent for them to live without Him.
 - f. Clothed in His love, with His peace ruling in their hearts, they are equipped to make Christ first in every area of life.
2. According to **Colossians 4:16**, Paul wanted the Colossian letter to be read in the neighboring congregation at Laodicea. "Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."
3. In its four chapters, Colossians uses fifty-five Greek words that do not appear in Paul's other epistles.
4. The City of Colosse.
 - a. Colosse was a minor city about one hundred miles east of Ephesus in the region of the Seven Churches of Asia (Revelation 2-3).
 - b. Colosse was located in the fertile Lycus valley by a mountain pass on the road from Ephesus to the East.
 - c. Colosse once was a populous center of commerce, famous for its glossy black wool.

- d. By the time Paul, it had been eclipsed by its neighboring cities, Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13) and was on the decline.
5. Apart for this letter, Colosse exerted almost no influence on early church history.
 - a. It is evident from 1:4-8 and 2:1 that Paul had never visited the church at Colosse, which was founded by Epaphras.
 - b. On his third missionary journey, Paul devoted almost three years to an Asian ministry centered in Ephesus (Acts 19:10 - 20:31).
 - c. Epaphras probably came to Christ during that time.
 - d. Epaphras carried the gospel to the cities in the Lycus Valley and years later came to visit Paul in his imprisonment (4:12-13; Philemon 23)
6. The Letter to Colosse.
 - a. Judging from the overlapping themes and personal names, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians were apparently written about the same time and under the same circumstances.
(Colossians 4:9-17; Philemon 2, 20, 23-34;)
 - b. Paul sent the letter to Colosse by Tychicus and the converted slave Onesimus. 4:7-9; Ephesians 6:21; Philemon 10-12
 - c. Epaphras's visit and report about the conditions in Colosse prompted this letter.
 - d. Although the Colossians had not succumbed (2:1-5), an encroaching heresy was threatening the predominantly Gentile congregation (1:21-27; 2:13).
 1. The nature of this heresy can only be deduced from Paul's incidental references to it in his refutation in 2:8-13.
 2. Apparent were:
 - a. A religious system that combined elements from:
 1. Greek speculation. 2:8-10
 2. Jewish legalism. 2:11-17
 3. Oriental mysticism. 2:18-23
 - b. A low view of the human body. 2:20-23
 - c. Probably a low view of nature as a whole.
 - d. Circumcision
 - e. Dietary regulations
 - f. Ritual observances
 - g. Asceticism
 - h. Worship of angels as intermediaries
 - i. Mystical experiences as an approach to the spiritual realm
 3. Any attempt to fit Christ into this system would undermine both His Person and His redemptive work.
7. Paul defends and sets forth Christ in a marvelous fashion.
 - a. 2:10 - "The head of all principality and power."
 - b. 1:16-17 - The Lord of creation.
 - c. 1:20-22; 2:13-15 - The Author of reconciliation.
 - d. 1:5, 23;27 - The basis for the Christian's hope.
 - e. 1:11 - The source of the Christian's power for a new life.
 - f. 1:14, 20-22; 2:11-15 - The Christian's Redeemer and Reconciler.
 - g. 1:15-19; 2:9 - The Creator and Sustainer of all things.
 - h. 1:18 - The Head of the Church.
 - i. 1:18: 3:1 - "The Resurrected God-Man.
 1. He is the Son of God.
 2. He is the Son of Man.

- j. 1:28; 2:3-10; 3:1-4 - The all-sufficient Savior.
- k. 2:9 - "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."
- l. 2:3 - He has "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

SUMMARY OF COLOSSIANS

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Colossians is perhaps the most Christ-centered book in the Bible.
 - 1. In order to combat a growing heresy that is threatening the church at Colosse, it Paul stresses two major things:
 - a. The preeminence of the Person of Christ.
 - b. The completeness of the salvation He provides.
 - 2. This heresy seeks to devalue Christ by elevating:
 - a. Speculation
 - b. Ritualism
 - c. Mysticism
 - d. Asceticism
 - 3. In spite of it all, Christ, the Lord of creation and Head of the Church, is completely sufficient for every spiritual and practical need of the Christian.
 - 4. The last half of the epistles explores the application of these principles to daily life because doctrinal truth (1 and 2) must bear fruit in practical conduct (3 and 4).
- B. There are two major sections in the book:
 - 1. Supremacy of Christ. (1-2)
 - 2. Submission to Christ. (3-4)

SUPREMACY OF CHRIST. (1-2)

- A. Paul's greeting (1:1-2) is followed by an unusually extended thanksgiving (1:3-8) and prayer (1:9-14) on behalf of the Christians at Colosse.
 - 1. Paul expresses his concern that the Colossians come to a deeper understanding of the Person and power of Christ.
 - 2. Early in the book Paul begins to develop His major theme of the Preeminence of Christ. A most potent statement of this theme is in 1:15-23.
 - a. He is supreme in creation. 1:15-18
 - b. He is supreme in redemption. 1:19-23
 - 3. Paul describes his own ministry of proclaiming the mystery of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1:27) to the Gentiles and assures his readers that although he has not personally met them, he strongly desires that they become deeply rooted in Christ alone, who is preeminent in the church (1:24 - 2:3).
 - 4. This is especially important in view of false teachers who would defraud them through:
 - a. Enticing rationalisms. 2:4-7
 - b. Vain philosophy. 2:8-10
 - c. Legalistic rituals. 2:11-17
 - d. Improper mysticism. 2:18-19
 - e. Useless asceticism. 2:20-23
 - 5. In each case, Paul contrasts the error with the corresponding truth about Christ.

SUBMISSION TO CHRIST. (3-4)

- A. The Christian's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and exaltation is the foundation upon which his earthly life must be built. 3:1-4
1. Because of his death with Christ, the Christian must regard himself as dead to the old sins and put them aside. (3:5-11)
 2. Because of his resurrection with Christ, the Christian must regard himself as alive in righteousness and put on the new qualities that are prompted by Christian love. 3:12-17
 3. Turning from the inward life (3:12-17) to the outward life (3:18 - 4:6), Paul outlines the transformation that faith in Christ should make in relationships inside and outside the home.
 4. The epistle concludes with a statement concerning its bearers (Tychicus and Onesimus), greetings and instructions and a farewell note (4:7-18).