

# The Book of Colossians

## Introduction

This letter of Paul to the Colossians is probably one of the most relevant to us today. This is one of Paul's four letters to the churches that he wrote from his prison cell in Rome during his first imprisonment there. The other three are his letters to the Ephesians, Philippians and to Philemon. This letter to the believers in Colossae was written somewhere around A.D. 61-62.

The church at Colossae is one that it appears Paul, at least at the time of his writing to them, had never visited. It was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus and was one of three cities located in the Lycus Valley that formed a trade route. The other two cities were Hierapolis and Laodicea. It was only 10 miles from Laodicea and 13 miles from Hierapolis. It had been a large and populous city at one time, but at the time of Paul's letter, it had become rather small in comparison to the other two neighboring cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea.

There are several different opinions about the founding of the church. Some scholars believe it was founded by Epaphras, mentioned several times throughout the letter, and that Epaphras had been in Ephesus while Paul was preaching there. Those who hold this view believe that after listening to Paul preach, Epaphras became a Christian and took the Gospel message back to his home town in Colossae. Others insist, because of the close proximity to Laodicea, that Paul must have either gone through Colossae as well, or that the church in Laodicea (mentioned at the close of the letter) brought the Gospel to Colossae, where a church was then formed. In any case, it is apparent that Epaphras had a strong role in the growth of the church and in the teaching of Paul's doctrine.

Paul's letter to the Colossians is in response to news that Epaphras had brought to Paul concerning false doctrine that has seeped into the church. Epaphras goes to visit Paul in prison in Rome and tells him all that is happening there. Paul responds by writing this letter to the church. He sends the letter back, not with Epaphras, but with two others; a fellow worker named Tychicus and Onesimus, the runaway slave of his friend, Philemon, who became a Christian in Rome through Paul. It appears that Epaphras, while visiting Paul in Rome, is also arrested and imprisoned. Paul refers to him as his fellow prisoner in Philemon 1:23.

The heresies Paul addresses in this letter to the Colossians are all too familiar with the heresies we see creeping into the church today. Paul's arguments against these heresies through the stated facts in God's Word make this letter invaluable to us as believers, contending for the faith against the myriad of false teachers trying to

pollute, distort, add to, and take away from the Gospel of Christ and from the person of Jesus Christ, Himself.

I have chosen the title for this study, “**Complete in Christ**” from Colossians 2:10, which states, “*And you are complete in Him, Who is the head of all principality and power.*” The Colossian church was being deceived into believing that Christ alone was not enough, and they were being led into all kinds of false teaching concerning WHO Christ is and about His FINISHED work on the cross that purchased for us our salvation.

I pray that as we dig into this powerful letter of Paul to these Colossian believers that you will come away with a more firmly anchored faith in the ONE who is **above all, before all** and **over all**; and that you will have a greater realization and appreciation that in HIM you are COMPLETE.

Unless otherwise noted, I have mainly used the New King James translation throughout this study. I do encourage you to look at several different translations as you dig into each lesson, as it always helps to broaden our understanding of the text and gives us a clearer picture that helps us to more accurately apply these truths to our lives.

**Please have the first lesson completed when you come to the first study.** We strongly encourage you to complete your lesson each week. Don't try to do it all in one sitting but spread it out throughout the week. That will give you more time to glean all that the Lord has for you and to come prepared to share your thoughts in our discussion time.

If for some reason you were not able to complete your study, **we want you to come anyway.** I know that you will receive much from the overview and discussion each week and you can always go back to complete the lesson later.

Take a few moments before you begin your time of study in God's Word to ask Him to quiet your mind from all other distractions and open your heart to the things He wants to show you. Take notes as you read, jotting down those things the Lord impresses on your heart.

Cathy and I are looking forward to digging into the powerful truths of this powerful letter Paul has written to the Colossian church. And we look forward to sharing with one another the insights and encouragements the Lord speaks to our hearts each week as we go over our lesson.

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