

## 51 – Colossians: Jesus is Everything!

- Another of Paul’s “prison” letters, this book was written to the church at Colosse while he was imprisoned in Rome, probably about 60-62 AD. Most think Colossians was written before Philippians.
- **Colosse was a great fortress city located about 100 miles east of Ephesus** in Asia Minor, about 12 miles from Laodicea. This area was subject to many earthquakes. It is unsure whether the name of this town is from the huge statue Colossus of Rhodes, or the other way around (this region was known for huge rock outcroppings). Paul’s writing indicates he had probably not visited this town, and did not personally know the people in this church (unlike those in Ephesus or Philippi). However, he was still its founder, as he was the church at Rome, due to his extensive missionary journeys, new converts and spreading the Gospel in many regions. He carried some responsibility for them.
- Paul heard that a **false teaching had risen in this area**, a heresy that became known in the 2nd century as Gnosticism. It apparently had Jewish roots because it stressed the need to observe Old Testament laws and rituals. It was also very philosophical, placing emphasis on obtaining “deeper knowledge” (gnosis is the Greek word for knowledge). It also involved the worship of angels, was very exclusive and suggested one could attain special privileges and “perfection” as the elite. They also denied the deity of Jesus. Paul wrote to address this growing heresy, and made some of the strongest declarations of Jesus’ deity anywhere in scripture (1:15-16; 2:9).
- Paul’s prison letters (*Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon*) are often called “**the anatomy of Christianity**” or the “**anatomy of the church.**” All of them together discuss the aspects of our Christian faith.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Colossians 3:1-4

- ❖ **Ephesians** talks about the group of believers called the Body of Christ, of which Jesus is the head.
- ❖ **Philippians** reveals that this church walks and serves on earth, and covers Christian living. The Christian theological term “kenosis” is presented in Philippians. This is how believers “empty” themselves of self, and become completely subject and overruled by Jesus.
- ❖ In this book of **Colossians**, Paul takes a closer look at the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. The body of Christ (the church) is secondary here. He is the top, He is everything. Our lives revolve around Him. Paul introduces what has been called the “*pleroma*” of Christ. That is a Greek word used in 2:9: “**For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily...**” Pleroma means fullness, completeness, in total. Paul is indicating that Jesus is fully God. This term today is yet another Greek word used to describe a theological concept (*in this case, the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ.*)
- ❖ In the book of **Philemon** Paul addressed Christianity in action. Taken together, these four books form the backbone and the structure of the living Body of Christ.

## Highlights

Ch 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greetings (1:1-2)</li> <li>▪ Thanks for their faith in Christ (1:3-8)</li> <li>▪ Prayers for them to have wisdom and understanding, walk worthy with Him (1:4-12)</li> <li>▪ Delivered from darkness, into His Kingdom, through redemption (1:13-14)</li> <li>▪ Pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, image of invisible God; all things were created and exist in Him (1:15-18)</li> <li>▪ All fullness in Him, all things reconciled to Him, peace “through the blood of His cross” (1:19-20)</li> <li>▪ We, as former enemies now reconciled in Him, holy and blameless, if we continue in the faith (1:21-23)</li> <li>▪ Mystery of the Church revealed in the saints, Christ in us, the hope of glory (1:24-27)</li> <li>▪ We preach, warn and teach, to present everyone perfect in Jesus (1:28-29)</li> </ul>
Ch	▪ Concern for Colossians and Laodiceans who have not met Paul, to be encouraged, unified, have

<b>2</b>	<p>understanding and knowledge from God, not man. (2:1-3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You have received Christ, now walk in Him, built up in Him, established in faith (2:4-7)</li> <li>▪ Don't let anyone deceive you with worldly and empty philosophy, which is not of Jesus (2:5-8)</li> <li>▪ In Him is all fullness, you are complete in Him, the head of everything (2:8-10)</li> <li>▪ Circumcision of the heart, buried with Him in baptism, raised with Him by faith, made alive together with Him, forgiven, our sins nailed to the cross (by which he disarmed principalities and powers, triumphing over them) (2:11-15)</li> <li>▪ Don't come under judgment about feasts/festivals (a shadow of things to come), or legalism (2:16-17)</li> <li>▪ Don't be cheated of your reward by falling for the heresies of false humility, angel worship, mysticism, worldly wisdom, or letting go of Jesus, who is the Head of the body (2:16-19)</li> <li>▪ If you are in Christ, why go back to the world's ways and regulations? These are about man's wisdom (false humility, neglect of body, indulgence) and of no value (2:20-23)</li> </ul>
<b>Ch 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If you were raised with Christ, seek the things above, set your mind on things above, not on earth (our lives hidden with Christ in God); when He appears, we will appear with Him in glory (3:1-4)</li> <li>▪ Get rid of all earthly sins (list); put off old man, put on new man (3:5-10)</li> <li>▪ No differences in the church, Jesus is all and in all (3:11)</li> <li>▪ Character of the new man (list), love at the top of list, let peace rule, be thankful (3:12-15)</li> <li>▪ Let God's Word dwell in you, make you wise; teach and admonish each other singing with grace in our hearts; do everything in Jesus Name, giving thanks to God through Him (3:16-17)</li> <li>▪ Everyone love, respect, submit, obey each other as God has ordained; do everything heartily as to the Lord, from Him we receive our inheritance; we serve Jesus, not man. No partiality in God. (3:18-25; 4:1)</li> </ul>
<b>Ch 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pray earnestly, give thanks, pray for us, walk in wisdom, redeem the time, speak with grace, seasoned with salt, know how to answer others (4:2-6)</li> <li>▪ Tychicus and Onesimus (faithful, beloved brothers/servants) will bring news of me, comfort you (4:7-9)</li> <li>▪ Greetings from Aristarchus (fellow prisoner), Mark, and Jesus (called Justus, not the Christ); fellow Jews working for the kingdom of God, a comfort to me (Paul). Also from Epaphras who prays for you to remain in the will of God, and from Luke and Demas. Greet brothers in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church who meets in his house (4:10-15)</li> <li>▪ Pass this letter to Laodiceans, read the one to them. Encourage Archippus to fulfill his ministry (4:16-17)</li> <li>▪ I write this letter myself, remember me in prison, and grace be with you (4:18)</li> </ul>

- A branch of this growing heresy (later to be called Gnosticism) was a group found in Colosse, called the **Essenes**, who embraced any number of Greek philosophies. Among other false doctrines, the Essenes had a mistaken view of the creation of the universe, and taught that God did not create it directly, but it came into being through many "subcreations." This concept is what we call pantheism. Paul refuted this in 1:15-19, and 2:18.
- The Essenes **also thought of themselves exclusively**. They believed they alone had exclusive knowledge, thought of themselves as being over and better than others. They thought they had obtained "perfection." Paul refutes this in 1:28. The way to perfection for everyone is through Jesus, and only Jesus. And ALL may find this perfection through Him, not just a select few.
- Another Essene belief and practice was **unrestrained licentiousness**. This is decadence and extravagance as a way of life. The Greeks had all sorts of philosophical thoughts on life, including stoicism (logic and virtue over emotion), asceticism (denial of any worldly pleasures) and epicureanism (seeking pleasure but not overindulgence, also believed the "gods" did not interfere in human lives) and hedonism (self pleasure is the only thing in life of value). The Essenes were very influenced by these Greek philosophies, and the heresies that had snuck in at Colosse caused all sorts of division and false teachings including legalism and mysticism, still rampant today. Once again, Paul refutes this in 2:16, 2:23 and 3:5-9. Paul helps all Christians find the balance, the "narrow way" between tight ritual and unrestrained living. There is only one way to walk this narrow path without falling into one of the world many "isms." His name is Jesus.
- **The dominant thought in Colossians is this:**

**Jesus is everything. He is all. He is all we need or want.  
Don't be deceived, or robbed, by anything or anyone else.**

