

Workbook On Colossians



“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. 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.” (*Colossians 2:8–10*)

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The Scripture text used in this workbook is The New King James Version.
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Introduction To Colossians

Colossians is perhaps the most Christ-centered book in the Bible. In it Paul stresses the preeminence of the Person of Christ and the completeness of the salvation He provides.

Date

Paul wrote this epistle from prison, as he did Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. Although Caesarea and Ephesus have been suggested as possible locations of authorship, the bulk of evidence suggests that Paul wrote it in A.D. 60 or 61 during his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:16–31) and sent it with Tychicus and the converted slave Onesimus to Colosse (4:7–9; cf. Eph 6:21; Philem. 10–12).

Colosse was a minor city about one hundred miles east of Ephesus in the region of the seven Asian churches of Revelation 1—3. Located in the fertile Lycus Valley on the road from Ephesus to the east, Colosse had previously been a populous center of commerce, but by the time of Paul it had been eclipsed in importance by the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Apart from this letter, Colosse exerted almost no influence on early church history.

The precise character of the Colossian heresy has been a matter of debate. The nature of this heresy can only be deduced from Paul's incidental references to it in his refutation in 2:8–23. It was apparently a religious system that combined elements from Hellenistic Greek speculation (2:4, 8–10), Jewish legalism (2:11–17), and Oriental mysticism (2:18–23). It involved a low view of the body (2:20–23) and probably of nature as a whole. With its stress upon the importance of circumcision, dietary regulations, and ritual observances, together with its worship of angels and preoccupation with mystical experiences, the Colossian heresy denied the sufficiency of Christ, and any attempt to fit Christ into such a system would undermine His Person and redemptive work.

Themes and Literary Structure

The resounding theme in Colossians is the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ in all things. The believer is complete in Him alone and lacks nothing because “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9). The first part of the epistle is an exposition of Christ's supremacy (chs. 1—2); the second part explains the implications of Christ's supremacy in terms of the believer's submission to Christ the Lord (chs. 3—4).

Particularly in the second half of the epistle, Paul explores the implications of the believer's union with Christ. The believer's union with Christ in His death, resurrection and exaltation is the foundation upon which earthly life must be built (3:1–4). Because of their death with Christ, Christians must regard themselves as dead to the old way of sin (3:5–11); because of their resurrection with Christ, believers must regard themselves as alive to Him in righteousness and must put on the new qualities that are prompted by Christian love (3:12–17).

The new life in Christ is to be manifested in the personal relationships of the Christian. Paul provides specific instructions for husbands and wives, children, servants, and masters (3:18–4:1).

Ephesians and Colossians Compared

Though written at approximately the same time and reflecting similar themes, the books of Ephesians and Colossians have their own distinctive emphases. If the book of Ephesians can be labeled the epistle portraying the “Church of Christ,” then the focus of Colossians must surely be the “Christ of the Church.”

Christ Above All

The apostle does not directly argue with the Colossians about their false doctrines. Rather, beginning in the first chapter, he builds a positive case for Christian truth by showing the preeminence of Christ in everything.

Focusing on Christ

The first two chapters of Colossians constitute one of the great Christological passages in Scripture. In stressing the role of the Son as Creator and Redeemer, and in his recognition that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9), Paul affirms the full deity of Christ.

A Singing Faith

As is evident in the Old Testament, the Hebrew faith emphasized the joy of singing to the Lord, but Christianity is even more profoundly a singing faith. Singing can help to make teaching and preaching even more useful. The Colossians were to emphasize the ministry of teaching and admonition by the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. (*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps And Charts*, pp. 416–418)

The City Of Colossae

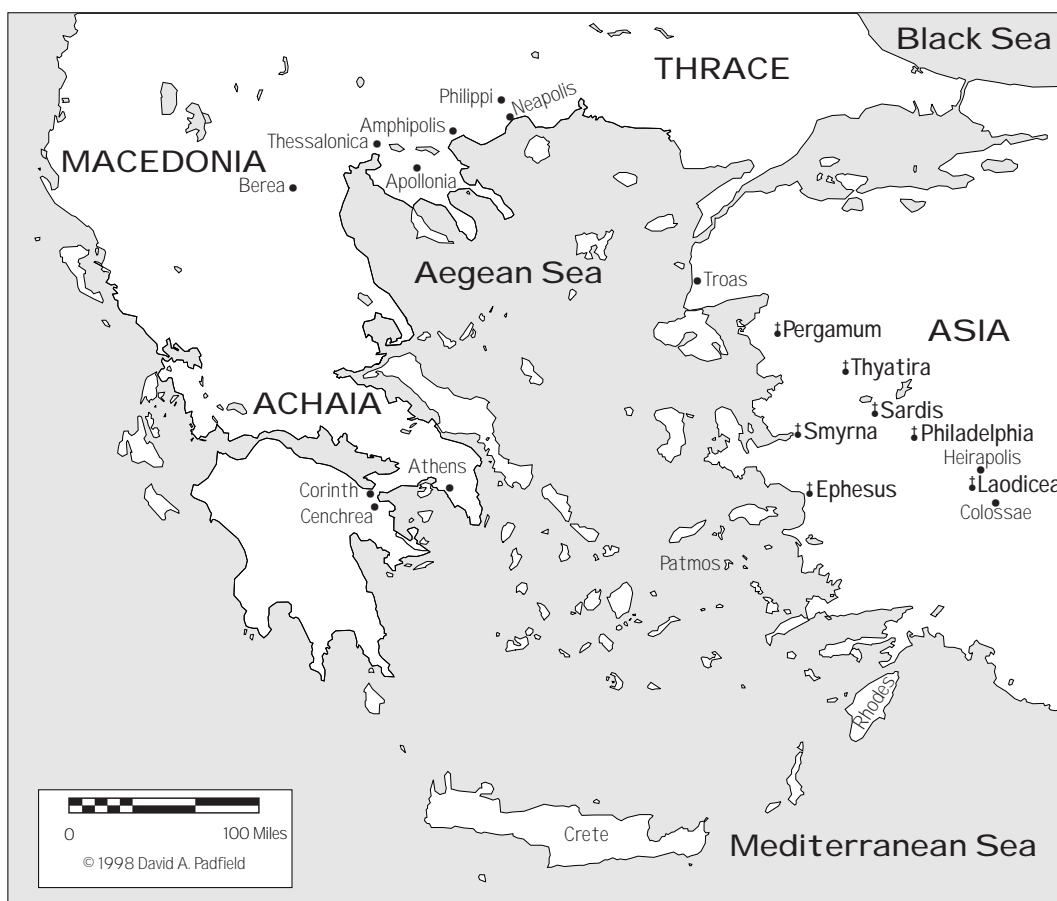
Colossae lies about a mile below the present village of Honaz on the north slope of Honaz Dagı and about 18 km east of Denizli. Of the sites described in this book it is one of the least rewarding to a casual tourist, but a walk from Honaz to it might give a hint of rural Anatolia as Paul experienced it. Its place in Christian history is because of a 1st century AD letter addressed to it that was included in the New Testament.

In the 5th century BC Colossae was a major commercial center on the trade route from Sardis to Konya. It lost its importance by the 1st century BC when Laodicea was founded. It, along with Laodicea and Hierapolis, was destroyed in the earthquake of AD 60. The cities of the area declined in the 7th and 8th centuries AD under the pressure of Arab invaders. Later the Byzantines and Selçuks fought over it. The remains of a theater are still discernible, along with a few other buildings; but the site has not been excavated and is rarely visited. Colossae was famous for the dark red wool cloth that carried its name, *colossinum*.

The Letter to the Colossians, attributed to Paul,

was probably written about AD 60 or 65. The grammar and the vocabulary of the letter have called into question Paul's authorship. However, it could be that he asked one of his companions to put his thoughts into words and then gave his mark of approval by adding a note at the end in his own hand. From various references in the letter, it would appear that some of the Christians in Colossae were Jews (Col. 2:11, 16, 21); and that Paul had not visited the city (Col. 1:4; 2:3). Rather, he had heard about the group from Epaphras and from Onesimus who apparently was from Colossae (Col. 4:9). Paul was in prison at the time (Col. 4:3), possibly in Rome. It also appears that Paul had become reconciled with John Mark (Col. 4:10) after their disagreement in Perge some years before. Others mentioned in this letter include Timothy (whom Paul had met in Lystra), Luke (thought to be the author of Acts which details many of Paul's journeys), Aristarchus who was in prison with him, and Tychicus whom Paul had asked to carry the letter. Paul also made reference in the letter to the Christian community in Laodicea.

(Anna Edmonds, *Turkey's Religious Sites*, pp. 134–135)





1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; 7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

Introduction

1. Who is Timothy? Why is he mentioned in this letter?
2. What makes one a “faithful” brother in Christ?
3. Why did Paul give thanks to God for the brethren at Colosse?
4. How do we express our “love for all the saints”?
5. What is our “hope which is laid up” in heaven? Is it more than heaven itself? Please explain.
6. By the time Paul wrote this epistle, how far had the gospel gone outside of the city of Jerusalem? Why is this so incredible?
7. What is the difference between hearing and knowing the grace of God?
8. Who is Epaphras? What do we know about him?

“All true Christians are brethren one to another. Faithfulness runs through every character and relation of the Christian life. Faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces in the Christian life, and proper matter for prayer and thanksgiving. The more we fix our hopes on the reward in the other world, the more free shall we be in doing good with our earthly treasure. It was treasured up for them, no enemy could deprive them of it. The gospel is the word of truth, and we may safely venture our souls upon it. And all who hear the word of the gospel, ought to bring forth the fruit of the gospel, obey it, and have their principles and lives formed according to it. Worldly love arises, either from views of interest or from likeness in manners; carnal love, from the appetite for pleasure. To these, something corrupt, selfish, and base always cleaves. But Christian love arises from the Holy Spirit, and is full of holiness.” (Matthew Henry)



9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 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.



The Preeminence Of Christ

1. Why did Paul continually pray for the brethren in Colosse? What was he asking God for?
2. What does it mean to “walk worthy of the Lord”?
3. Explain the phrase, “longsuffering with joy.”
4. How has God “qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light”?
5. What is the “power of darkness”?
6. In this context, what is “the kingdom of the Son of His love”?
7. What is “redemption”? Why is this word so fitting to describe our salvation from past sins?
8. How is Christ “the image of the invisible God”?
9. Who created the universe? Is this in harmony with the book of Genesis?
10. How is Christ to have preeminence in all things?



19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. 24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

Reconciliation And Service

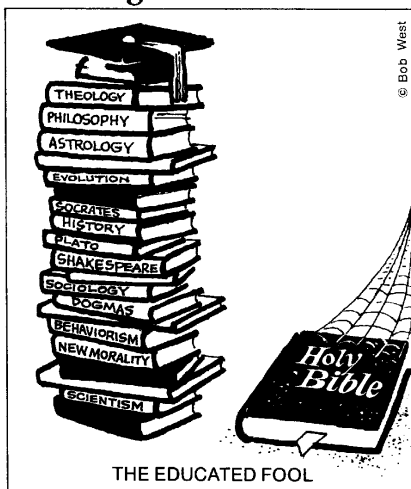
1. How does “all the fullness” dwell in Christ? Please explain.
2. How did God “reconcile all things to Himself” through Christ?
3. According to Colossians 1:22, *why* were we reconciled to God?
4. How can we “continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast”?
5. Why did Paul rejoice? What was “lacking in the afflictions of Christ”?
6. How did Paul receive a “stewardship from God”?
7. What is “the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints”?
8. How is Christ “in” us? Does He dwell within us personally?
9. Why did Paul “warn” and “preach” to every man?
10. How did Christ work in Paul “mightily”?

Colossians 2:1-10



1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. 5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. 6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 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. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Our Religious World



Cheated By Philosophy

1. What concern did Paul have for those in Laodicea? How far away from Colosse was the city of Laodicea? What else do we know about the church in the city of Laodicea?
2. How can our hearts be “knit together in love”?
3. What is “hidden” in Christ? Please explain.
4. How are some people deceived with “persuasive words”?
5. What does it mean to “walk” in Christ?
6. How can we be “rooted and built up in Him”?
7. How can we abound in thanksgiving? Why is this so lacking among many so-called Christians?
8. How could someone “cheat” us through philosophy?
9. How could someone “cheat” us through the traditions of men?
10. How does “all the fullness of the Godhead” dwell in Christ “bodily”?



11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. 18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. 20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21 “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” 22 which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Cheated By Legalism

1. What is the “circumcision made without hands”?
2. Why is it so fitting to speak of baptism as a “burial”?
3. What is the “handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us”?
4. Explain the phrase, “nailed to the cross.”
5. How did Christ make “a public spectacle” of principalities and powers?
6. How could one judge you in regard to food, drink, a festival, a new moon or a sabbath?
7. How does the body of Christ grow?
8. What “regulation” had some submitted themselves to?
9. What things had “an appearance of wisdom”?
10. What is “self-imposed religion” and “false humility”?

Colossians 3:1-11



1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. 5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.



Raised With Christ

1. How were we “raised with Christ”?
2. Why is Christ “sitting at the right hand of God”?
3. How do we set our minds on things above?
4. How do we put to death our “members” on the earth?
5. Why is covetousness referred to as “idolatry”?
6. Who are the “sons of disobedience”?
7. List the things we are to “put off” from our life.
8. What are we to “put on” in Christ?
9. How is the new man to be “renewed”?
10. Who are the Scythians? Why are they mentioned here?

Colossians 3:12-17



12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.



The New Man In Christ

1. How are we “the elect of God”?
2. What characteristics are we to “put on” in Christ?
3. In what manner are we to forgive one another?
4. How is love the “bond of perfection”?
5. How can the “peace of God rule in your hearts”?
6. What is the “one body” spoken of in Colossians 3:15?
7. How can “the word of Christ dwell” in us?
8. What is the difference between songs, hymns and spiritual songs?
9. How can we “do all in the name of the Lord”?
10. How do we “give thanks to God the Father through” Christ?



18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. 20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. 22 Bond-servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. 1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. 2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. 5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.



Proper Roles

1. In what way are wives to submit to their husbands?
2. In what way are husbands to love their wives?
3. Are there any limits to how children must obey their parents?
4. How can fathers “provoke” their children?
5. How are servants to work for their masters?
6. How are masters to treat their servants?
7. How can God “open to us a door for the word”?
8. How do we “walk in wisdom toward those who are outside”?
9. How can we redeem the time? Can we buy back time we have wasted?
10. Why is our speech to be “with grace, seasoned with salt”?

Colossians 4:7–18



7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, 9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here. 10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. 14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. 16 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. 17 And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” 18 This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. **Amen.**



Greetings And Exhortations

1. Who is Tychicus? What was he going to do for the brethren?
2. Who is Onesimus? What do we know about him?
3. Who is Aristarchus? What do we know about him?
4. What do we know about Mark, the cousin of Barnabas?
5. What is said about Epaphras?
6. Where is Hierapolis? How close is it to Laodicea and Colosse?
7. How is Luke described in this passage?
8. What were the Colossians to do with the letter Paul sent them?
9. What were the brethren to tell Archippus?
10. What were the brethren to remember about Paul?