

## OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE COLOSSIANS

December 5, 2018

### Answers to Lesson 34 – Philippians

*Events Leading to Founding of the Church* – the conversion of Lydia, the expulsion of a demon from a girl who was making a fortune (for her owners) by predicting the future, and the earthquake which caused the doors of the jail to be opened for Paul and Silas. It led to the conversion of the jailer and his family.

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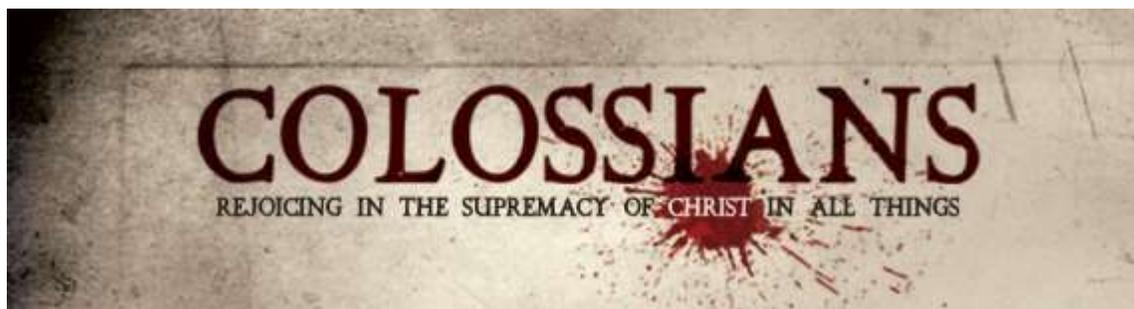
*Kind of Life to Lead* – Paul wanted for them spiritual growth and development. The people were to be blameless and pure. He encouraged them to live godly lives. They were to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. They were to place the interests of others above themselves and have the attitude of Christ.

*Perspective on His Imprisonment* – What was intended to hinder the spread of the gospel actually gave it added impetus. Others were encouraged by his example. Paul did not lament over the circumstances of his life. He saw the hand of God at work in spite of his sufferings. He knew he was being used in unexpected ways to advance the gospel message.

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*Meaning of Life for Paul* – All meaning in life was found in Christ. His most precious gift was his relationship with Christ. It dictated his every action and decision in life. To live is Christ. There was nothing else vying for his affections and allegiance. Identifying with Christ and partaking of his righteousness was the ultimate source of his joy.

*What Paul Knew About God* – God does not leave us to struggle on our own. God is faithful and God completes what God has begun. Paul believes that the promises of God are true, secure and reliable. God will lift our burdens and give us peace when we commit all of our cares to God in prayer.



## **Relationship of the Prison Epistles**

There are 4 letters in the New Testament claimed to have some relationship with Paul in prison. Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon

It is likely that Philippians and Philemon are authentic letters of Paul.

It appears they were written from prison in Ephesus or Caesarea.

Colossians represents a later stage in the development of a Pauline tradition.

It preserves his memory and adapts his views in a later generation of the church's life.

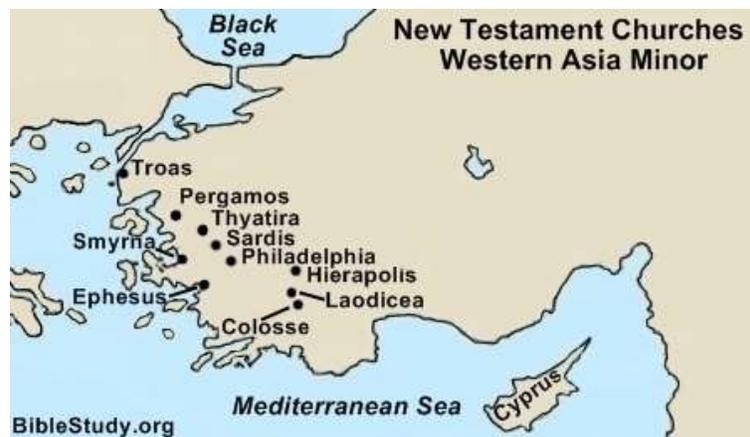
It also seems to follow his martyrdom (64-67 AD).

To write under the assumed name of a historical person was one way to honor Paul.

His disciples undertook to convey it and interpret it based on their current situation.

As we noted before the entire structure of Ephesians corresponds with that of Colossians.

One exception is that the personal greetings and instructions are missing from Ephesians.



## **Colossae**

It was located in the western Asia Minor region named Phrygia.

City was located on a Roman road that connected it to other destinations in the province.

It was blessed with rich mineral deposits.

Chief export (for which it was famous) was a purple wool cloth.

At one time it was prominent but by the time of Paul it had lost much of its importance.

General area around Colossae was prone to frequent earthquakes.

During the latter part of Emperor Nero's reign (68) an earthquake struck and destroyed the cities.

Assumed the epistle was written around 61 to 63 AD.

We have no account that Paul ever visited the city.

Church was likely started by Epaphras (Colossians 1:7) or Timothy (Colossians 1:1).

## **Purpose**

It seems a particular heresy arose in the church that later became known as Gnosticism:

It stressed the need for observing Old Testament laws and traditions.

Emphasis was placed on some special or deeper knowledge.

It involved the worship of angels as mediators to God.

It was exclusive and stressed the special privilege and perfection of a select few.

It denied the deity of Christ which made this letter one of the greatest declarations about Christ.  
Author wanted to show the supremacy of Christ.  
He wanted to lead the believers into a spiritual maturity.  
He wanted to inform them about his personal situation and to ask for their prayers.



### **Colossians 1:1-23**

Letter begins with the usual format of an introductory address and greetings.  
Declaration is made of Paul's apostleship to give him the authority to speak.  
Paul is seen as an authorized representative of Christ when he was commissioned by the same.  
Other letters are addressed *to the church* but here *to the saints and faithful brothers and sisters*.  
It offers a more intimate and personal note.

There is an extended thanksgiving section in verses 3-23.  
The author only has the goodwill of the people in mind and his deep appreciation for them.  
It also signals some of the themes on which he will elaborate later.

Hope is mentioned and will be further developed.  
He will reinforce the gospel as the word of truth coming from an apostolic representative.  
Knowledge of the grace of God is also mentioned.

Again and again the letter will stress the true source of wisdom and knowledge.  
In the Old Testament wisdom involved practical knowledge and here it has an ethical dimension.  
It is meant to enable the people to walk in a manner consistent with their confession of Christ.  
It is through their relationship with Christ that believers experience redemption.  
Part of the extended thanksgiving is a citation of hymn material in praise of Christ (1:15-20).

Christ is the one who makes the invisible God ... visible.  
Twice it is asserted that all things were created in or through him.  
It further asserts that the creation of all things was for Christ and to enhance his glory.  
The body imagery moves from the cosmic to the church.

### **Colossians 1:24-2:5**

Here the author takes on the persona of the imprisoned apostle.  
He establishes his credentials in the Pauline tradition and strengthens his bond with the people.  
It will help them be ready to accept the extensive encouragements that follow.  
It will also arouse in the people an admiration and sympathy for him.  
Section also continues to stress the knowledge and wisdom available to the people.

### **Colossians 2:6-3:4**

Live in accordance with the tradition about Christ.  
Do not be held captive by human tradition.  
Do not be judged by the codes of a different teaching.  
Seek the things that are above.

### **Colossians 3:5-4:1**

Put to death anything that is not of God.  
Put on love and the peace of Christ ... and be thankful.  
Let Christ shape our relationships within our houses.

## Household Codes

- Household codes do not occur in the OT or Jewish writings until Judaism engages the Greek worldview.
- Because Greco-Roman culture was so steeped in the household code, no religious or moral philosophy could fail to address it.
- Both Peter and Paul included household codes in their letters when addressing people with a Greco-Roman worldview.



The New Testament Household Codes are known as *Haustafeln*.  
They consist of instructions to pair Christian people in different domestic / civil structures.  
Codes were developed to urge the first century Christians to comply with Roman law.  
Christians were conscious of criticisms of subverting the social order.  
Need arose to adjust their living as Christians in the Greco-Roman world.  
They were not to disrupt the status quo.  
Compare Ephesians 5:22-6:9 and Colossians 3:18-4:1

Public life of women in Jesus' time was far more restricted than in the Old Testament times.  
At the time of these letters, Roman law vested enormous power in the rule of the fathers.  
Husbands were to rule over their *families* which included wives, children, slaves and freedmen.  
Power was considered absolute which meant it included the power of life and death.  
For example a father could acknowledge, banish, kill or disown a child.  
A first-century jurist recorded the story of a man who beat his wife to death for drinking wine.

### **Colossians 4:2-6**

Concluding exhortation is to pray, live wisely, and to speak graciously.  
Stress on prayer and thanksgiving reminds us of the extended thanksgiving in Chapter 1.  
Reminder of Paul's imprisonment points back to his suffering for the gospel also in Chapter 1.  
Also repeated are the need to walk wisely and the need for holy living.

*Let your conversation  
be always full of grace, seasoned with salt  
that you may know how to give  
a fitting answer* Colossians 4:6

### **Colossians 4:7-9**

In the previous section people were asked to pray for the proclamation of the mystery of Christ. They were also reminded of Paul's imprisonment.

Now what follows is how Tychius is being sent to provide them with information about Paul.

Tychius is known as one of the leading representatives of the Pauline mission.

He has a proven record of reliable ministry and allegiance to Christ.

Tychius will be accompanied by Onesimus, another faithful and beloved brother.

He has a special link with those who live in Colossae as he is described as *one of you*.

### **Colossians 4:10-18**

Letter closes with a series of greetings from those said to be with Paul and from Paul himself.

Instructions are included about an exchange of letters with the church at Laodicea.

There is a message to Archippus, Paul's autograph, a final plea to remember his imprisonment.

4:18 is almost an exact duplicate of 1 Corinthians 16:21.

Author employs this feature to authenticate his letter as being in the Pauline tradition.

In this letter the author has treated the church as the body of Christ.

He has dealt with the cosmic scope of Christ's work and its implications for believers.

Ending provides a reminder that this same church is made up of particular individuals.

Body of Christ fulfills its cosmic role in the midst of concrete, everyday relationships.

Team work, loyalty, praying for one another, and sheer hard work are necessary in the church.

People need the reassurance of being greeted and made welcome.

They need words of approval and assurance for what they have done.

They need reminders about tasks that still need to be completed.

A right relationship with the exalted Christ shows itself in and through human relationships.

### **Assignment for January 2**

Complete the Exercises from Lesson 35 on Pages 185-188

Read *1 Thessalonians* or the portions outlined on Page 188