

Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps
Sermon # 51 – “Colossians”
April 19, 2009

Colossians: Some Background Information

The Audience: Paul was writing to the church at Colosse. Colosse was a populous city located about 100 miles east of Ephesus in Asia Minor. Epaphras had founded the church (1:7; 4:12-13), not Paul (2:1). Apparently Paul had never visited Colosse. The church there was made up mostly of Gentiles who were being influenced by a “hollow and deceptive philosophy” that was a forerunner of Gnosticism (2:8).

The Date of the Letter: This letter—like Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon—is one of Paul’s “Prison Epistles”, written during the time of his first incarceration in Rome (Acts 28). Thus, it was composed about A.D. 60-62.

The Purposes of the Letter: Paul wrote this epistle: (1) To show forth the deity and supremacy of Christ; (2) To counter the Gnostic-like heresy influencing the church; (3) To lead the Colossian believers toward spiritual maturity, instructing them about their new life in Christ; and (4) To inform the Colossians about his own personal state of affairs.

The Theme of the Letter: The preeminence (or Lordship) of Jesus Christ.

The Tone of the Letter: In Colossians, Paul is refuting and correcting false teaching, as he did in his letter to the Galatians. In Colossians, however, the tone is far less intense. This can be attributed to the fact that (a) the issues being addressed in each epistle were not quite the same and (b) Paul did not personally know the Colossians as well as he knew the Galatians.

The Letter’s Relationship to Other Epistles: Strong parallels exist between Colossians and Ephesians, with the two letters covering much of the same material. There is one notable difference, however. Whereas in Ephesians Christ is depicted as the Lord of the church, in Colossians He is shown as Lord over the entire cosmos.

Colossians: An Outline

1. The Person and Work of Christ: Christ is our Lord. Colossians 1:1-2:23

- He is Lord of creation. 1:15-17
- He is Lord of the church. 1:18-23

- He is Lord of our ministry. 1:24-2:5
- He is Lord of our walk. 2:6-8
- He is Lord of our salvation. 2:9-15
- He is Lord of our spiritual growth. 2:16-23

2. The Peace and Presence of Christ: Christ is our Life. Colossians 3:1-17

- He is Lord of our mind. 3:1-4
- He is Lord of our body. 3:5-11
- He is Lord of our attitude. 3:12-16
- He is Lord of our actions. 3:17

3. The Provision of Christ: Christ is our Love. Colossians 3:18-4:18

- He is Lord over our family relationships. 3:18-21
- He is Lord over our working relationships. 3:22-4:1
- He is Lord over our relationships with those outside the faith. 4:2-6
- He is Lord over our relationships with fellow church members. 4:7-18