

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST - Lesson 1

Text: Colossians 1:1-2

This Week: Introduction to the book of Colossians

Human Author

Colossians 1:1 attributes authorship of this epistle to the Apostle Paul. There is no historical evidence that Pauline authorship of Colossians was ever suspect in the early church.

Date and Place of Writing

Paul wrote this epistle in about A.D. 61-62 during his two-year period of house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16, 30). At which time he also wrote Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. Together these four letters are often called "The Prison Epistles." Paul sent Colossians and the epistle to Philemon in the hands of Tychicus and Onesimus (Col. 4:7-9).

The City of Colossae

The word Colossae is taken from the word *Colossus* which means large or huge. This is ironic because Colossae is the least important city and church to which any of Paul's epistles were addressed.

The city is located at the base of Mt. Cadmus (8,000') in the Lycus River valley. Colossae, along with Laodicea and Hierapolis are referred to as the tri-cities of the Lycus valley. Colossae's primary commerce was wool dyed a dark red (almost purple) color.

The Origin of the Colossian Church

The church at Colossae was not founded by Paul. Paul had never even personally visited the city at the time he wrote this epistle (Col. 1:4, 9; 2:1). The church was most likely founded by Epaphras during Paul's three-year Ephesian ministry on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:10; Col. 1:7; 4:12-13).

The Occasion of the Epistle

The occasion for this epistle can probably be traced to the arrival of Epaphras in Rome with news of a new teaching in the Lycus River valley that had infiltrated the churches in Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea (2:1; 4:12-13, 16). Judaizers dogged Paul's footsteps throughout Asia Minor seeking to get pagan converts to Christianity to keep the Jewish law.

Purpose

Colossians was written to instruct the believers that spiritual maturity comes through understanding and appropriating the all-sufficient work of Christ, not through keeping the Jewish law (1:28; 2:6-7).

Outline of Colossians

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Doctrinal: The Person and Work of Christ (1:3-2:3)
- III. Polemical: The Position of the Body in Christ (2:4-3:4)
- IV. Practical: The Practice of the Life of Christ (3:5-4:6)
- V. Personal: The Personal Affairs of Paul and Greetings from His Companions (4:7-18)

NEXT WEEK: Colossians 1:3-8

Observing the Text

Monday: Spend time reading the text 3 or 4 times. Make observations, writing them down in a journal, or here:

1) Going back to verse 1 thru 8, how are the Colossian believers described?

2) What about the gospel, what does Paul reveal about the gospel in these verses?

Interpreting the Text

Wednesday: Dig a little deeper into your study by unpacking the meaning of some words and doctrines within the text.

3) Verse 4 uses the term “faith”, *pistos* in the Greek, which means to be persuaded that something is true and to trust in it. How does this differ from the way many use the term faith?

4) Elsewhere in the Scriptures we learn that saving faith produces fruit. How are those ideas connected in our text (Faith bearing fruit)?

Applying the Text

Friday: Take some time thinking through how this applies to your life and faith journey.

5) The Colossians church learned or heard the gospel from Epaphras. Who taught it to you? And with whom are you sharing it?

6) Paul speaks of the faith of the Colossians bearing fruit. What are some of the most vivid evidences of life change that God’s Spirit has produced in you since trusting Christ?

What else?
