



Walking Thru The Bible

COLOSSIANS

Introduction

AUTHOR: This letter was written by the Apostle Paul about the same time as *Ephesians* and *Philemon*. Tradition says it was written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, recorded in Acts 28. Paul never visited Colossae himself (2:1), and we believe the church there was started with contact with Epaphras and possibly even Philemon while Paul was preaching for two years at Ephesus, 90 miles west of Colossae.

PURPOSE: The main purpose for writing this letter was to correct some wrong ideas about Christ that were being taught in the towns of Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (4:13). The teachers of these false doctrines were usually called "Gnostics." The word "gnostic" comes from a Greek word which means "to have a special knowledge of God."

FALSE DOCTRINE: The Gnostics believed that everything material was evil, and that a fixed gulf existed between matter and spirit. Because of this false idea, they also held that the true God did not create the universe. Some taught that Christ did not have a real physical body, but that it only seemed to be real. Their emphasis was on wisdom and knowledge and the abasement of the body.

To practice the Gnostics' teachings was supposed to give a person a special "full knowledge" not possessed by others. The Gnostics frequently used the word "fulness" in their teachings.

In *Colossians* Paul emphasizes Christ's pre-eminence. It is interesting to note how often he uses the words "fulness" "complete" and "filled."

KEY VERSE: The key verse is Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Another important verse is 2:9 "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

THEME: The Pre-eminence of Christ.

RELEVANCE: The message of this book is greatly needed today. In a time when Christ is scorned and his teaching rejected, we need to hold forth the grand truth of this inspired letter penned by the apostle Paul.

It was written when false teachers (the Gnostics) and Judaizers were attacking the gospel, and Christians themselves were not living up to principles it set forth.

Outline of Colossians

Theme: Christ is Preeminent

I. DOCTRINE -- Chapter 1

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DECLARED

1. In the Gospel message -- 1:1-12
2. In Redemption -- 1:13-14
3. In Creation -- 1:15-17
4. In the Church -- 1:18-23
5. In Paul's ministry -- 1:24-29

II. DANGER -- Chapter 2

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED

1. Beware of empty philosophies -- 2:1-10
2. Beware of religious legalism -- 2:11-17
3. Beware of man-made disciplines -- 2:18-23

III. DUTY -- Chapter 3 & 4

CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED

1. In personal purity -- 3:1-11
2. In Christian fellowship -- 3:12-17
3. In the home -- 3:18-21
4. In daily work -- 3:22 - 4:1
5. In Christian living -- 4:2-6
6. In Christian service -- 4:7-18

Who Is Jesus?

Colossians 1:15-20

1. The article "One Solitary Life" by George Peck.
2. This passage helps us to see "Who Jesus Is."
3. One of the greatest controversies to range in early church history occurred in the fourth century over this very passage. A man named Arius argued that Jesus was the very first thing that God created, and then Jesus created everything else. He reasoned that, after all, the obvious meaning of "first-born" is the one born first. That led to his conclusion that Jesus was not divine like the Father, but just a created being.
 - a. A brilliant young man named Athanasius soundly rejected that view and the "Arian" doctrine was branded as heresy. The historic view has been that Jesus, because He is the image of God, is eternal just as God the Father Himself is eternal. He is "very God" as Athanasius put it.
 - b. Thought is has been sixteen hundred years since Arius and Athanasius battled it out, the problem has not disappeared. Some religious groups today do not believe that Jesus is God or that He is eternal.
4. WHO IS JESUS?

I. JESUS IS THE IMAGE OF GOD (1:15)

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: (Colossians 1:15)

1. "He is the image of the invisible God" (1:15a)
One difficulty people have in believing God is that God cannot be seen. Even as great a man as Moses had the longing to see God. He pleaded with God to just give him a glimpse (See Exodus 33:17-23).
2. The Greek word translated "image" in v. 15 is "*eikon*."
 - a. Notice the meaning of that word in religious circles.
 - b. Notice how that word is used today in computer circles.
 - c. What do you have on your driver's license?
 - d. Passports in Paul's day had a section called "Dis-tinguishing Marks" that described something about the person that set him apart from everyone else. The Greek word "*eikon*" was used in that part of the passport.
3. TEV "*Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God.*"

II. JESUS IS THE FULLNESS OF GOD (1:15, 19)

19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

(Colossians 1:19)

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

(Colossians 2:9)

1. Jesus is not something "like" God, He is "everything" God IS!
2. Hebrews 1:3 *"He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature..."*
3. All of the attributes of divinity belong of Jesus, He IS God.

III. JESUS IS THE AGENT OF GOD (1:16)

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (Colossians 1:16)

1. The word "for" means is in the sense "because." By Him, Jesus, all things were created. HE was not created, He CREATED!
2. "Before Jesus the carpenter made stools, Jesus the Creator made stars." He fashioned plows, He fashioned planets. Before He made tables, He made trees from which those tables would be made.
3. He also made all the invisible things of our universe.

IV. JESUS IS THE HEAD OF GOD'S CHURCH (1:18-23)

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 might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18)

1. From Jesus comes all the guidance and direction for the church.
 - a. The "doctrine" is "His doctrine" (Heb. 6:1; 2 John 1:9)
 - b. He is not just "first" but the "Source."
2. Jesus was the first to rise never to die again.
3. **Over What** was He to have the preeminence? All things! Creation, powers, the church, death...
Why was he to have the preeminence? For in Him the sum total of the powers and attributes of God dwell.

V. JESUS IS THE PEACE-MAKER BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled (Col. 1:20-21).

