

Colossians is considered by some to be the most exalted picture of Christ in all the New Testament.

Every epistle was written to answer or deal with issues or questions, & the question that Colossians had was, “***Is Christ enough, or do we need more?***”

So everything Paul writes is going to address that question with a resounding YES! – With a special emphasis on the vital role the apostles have in bringing them to a complete understanding of Christ

1. Where is Colosse, & how did this church begin?

A city of Phrygia in Asia Minor, 100 miles east of Ephesus.

Colosse, Heirapolis, Laodicea were close in proximity to one another.

Located on a main highway from Ephesus to the Euphrates valley.

(Acts 19:1-10)

We know at least two people converted by Paul in Ephesus who lived in Colosse: Philemon & Epaphrus. It was probably Epaphrus who established the church in Colosse, & maybe even in the cities of Laodicea & Heirapolis.

Did Paul know this church personally?

No (Col 2:1)

2. The church at Colosse was Jewish, Gentile or both (Col 2:8, 11-14, 16)?

What do you see in each of the following passages?

Col 2:8 (Greek philosophy & myth) – “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy & empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, & not according to Christ.”

Col 2:16 (Jewish legalism, see also 11-14) – “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths”

Col 2:18 (Cultic heresy) – “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility & worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind”

3. Who wrote this epistle & what were his circumstances (1:1; 4:10)?

Paul was imprisoned in Rome between 60-62 A.D.

a. What have we learned to expect from Paul (2:1)?

The word “conflict” comes from a word that means contest, effort, & anxiety.

Paul had a great concern for brethren he had never met face to face.

These babes in Christ would take comfort in Paul sincere interest in them.

b. Who does Paul identify as his “fellow servant” (1:7)?

Epaphrus

Epaphrus isn't in Colosse he's in Rome. Apparently he had come up against some ideas that were threatening the development of this young church. So, he goes all the way to Rome where he could talk with Paul who is in prison in Rome.

Paul writes & sends them this letter by the hand of two young men, Tychicus & Onesimus.

c. What else do the following verses reveal about this man (2:7; 4:12)?

He was a minister of Christ on their behalf.

He reported their growth to Paul.

He labored fervently in prayer for them.

He had the same concern for them that Paul had for them.

d. What obligation did Paul enjoin on the churches of Colosse & Laodicea (4:16)?

Exchange epistles sent from Paul

4. What is the purpose of the book (2:16-19)?

To warn them & to prepare them against the false teaching – Gnostic heresy:

1) Perfection through human wisdom, asceticism (denying fleshly appetites because the flesh was evil)

2) Salvation through special enlightenment is possible for those of higher intellectual skill; these are able to truly understand the divine mysteries

To counter these ideas Paul wrote, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; & you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality & power (Col 2:9-10).

Popular philosophy in Colosse taught that all matter is evil; that’s how they explained evil & suffering in the world.

But how did creation get here if God is good & holy?

Philosophy: God produced these beings (emanations) & the further away they went from God, the more evil they became. One of those beings created the world, & that is why there is evil in the world. God had nothing to do with it!

[Mormonism has a hint of this idea of Jehovah as a created being.]

The Bible says, “God came in the flesh” (2:9).

So the philosophers are going to say, “Jesus was a good spirit (emanation from God), but there are others like Him. And if you’ll listen to us, we know how to get past the evil spirits & contact the wisdom of the good spirits in order to draw nearer to God.”

Now, if you’ve been listening to the philosophy of our day, you hear the same old heresy. You’ll hear people say things like,

“**Jesus** is one of many ways to approach God.” “**Jesus** is humanity at it’s very best.” “**You know**, I’ve got a lot of gurus, advisors, counselors, helping me in my spirituality, & Jesus is one of my favorites.” (Oprah)

Read 1 Jn 5:11-13; Col 2:13-14, 15; 1:28; 3:11 – “Christ is all & in all”. There are no have-nots in Christ, as the philosophers would have them to believe.

5. What facts are established in Paul's greeting (1:1)?

Col 1:1 – “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, & Timothy our brother”

6. What relationship did the Colossians have to Christ (1:2)?

Col 1:2 – “To the saints & faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you & peace from God our Father & the Lord Jesus Christ”

7. How did Paul show his thoughtfulness toward them (1:3)?

Col 1:3 – “We give thanks to the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you”

8. What had Paul heard about this church (1:4)?

Col 1:4 – “since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus & of your love for all the saints”

a. What served to motivate them (1:5)?

Col 1:5 – “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”

b. How did they learn of this hope (1:5)?

“In the word of the truth of the gospel”

9. Men’s aspirations in this life are: popularity, financial security, secular accomplishment, good health, pleasure & happiness.

a. How deeply are we committed to achieving the things above?

May I dare say these are our primary goals?

b. And how does this compare to our commitment to “faith”, “love”, & “hope”?

1 Cor 13:13 – “And now abide ***faith, hope, love***, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Col 1:6-8 – “which [**the gospel**] has come to you, as it has also in all the world, & is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard & 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.”

Is our faith in Christ Jesus “abounding” (**2 Pet 1:5-8**)?

Is our love for all the saints apparent enough that someone could declare it or report it to someone?

Is our hope of heaven so fixed that it crowds out less important plans?