

A Tour Through the Divine Library
(Colossians)

-Colossae , a prominent city of the Lycus valley (4:13), predominantly Gentile (1:27), never visited by Paul, planted by Epaphras (1:7; 2:1) who was converted during Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 19:10; 20:31), carried the gospel to Colossae (1:7), and later visited Paul in prison in Rome (4:12, 13)

I. General Introduction to Colossians

-Title and Recipients: "To the Colossians" (1:2)

-Author and Date: the apostle Paul and Timothy the brother (1:1); written ~AD 61 during Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28); confirmed by overlapping themes and personal names in Eph. 6:21, 22; Col. 4:8-17; Philem. 2, 10, 23, 24

-Occasion and Purpose: combat the "Colossian heresy" [a combination of philosophy (2:4, 8-10); legalism (2:11-17); mysticism (2:18, 19); asceticism (2:20-23)] and urge the Colossians to continue in the faith (1:22, 23) by showing the supremacy and preeminence of Christ in everything (1:15-20; 2:9, 10)

-Structure:

- I. Introduction (1:1-14)
- II. Supremacy of Christ (1:15-2:23)
- III. Submission to Christ (3:1-4:6)
- IV. Conclusion (4:7-18)

II. General Overview of Colossians

-Similarity/Parallel to Ephesians (Eph. 1:7 with Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:10 with Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:1 with Col. 2:13; Eph. 3:2-6 with Col. 1:25-27; Eph. 4:22-24 with Col. 3:9, 10; Eph. 5:19, 20 with Col. 3:16, 17; Eph. 5:22, 25 with Col. 3:18, 19; Eph. 6:1-9 with Col. 3:20-4:1)

-Introduction: Greeting (1:1, 2); Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:3-14)

-Preeminence of Christ: described (1:15-2:7); warning against heresy and false teaching (2:8-23)

-Submission to Christ: holiness rooted in union with Christ (3:1-11); holiness in the church (3:12-17), the home (3:18-4:1), prayer (4:2-4), concern for outsiders (4:5, 6)

-Conclusion: information about Tychicus and Onesimus (4:7-9), greetings (4:10-15); instruction (4:16, 17); farewell (4:18)

III. Prominent People and Themes in Colossians

-People: Paul (1:1), Timothy (1:1); Tychicus (2:7-9): sent by Paul to the church with the letter and a report; Onesimus (4:9; Philem. 10): slave who was converted during Paul's first Roman imprisonment before returning with Tychicus to Colossae to reconcile with Philemon, his former master; Epaphras: founded the church (1:7), visited Paul in his imprisonment (4:12, 13); Aristarchus: Paul's traveling companion (Col. 4:10; Philem. 24); Archippus: minister in the church (Col. 4:17; Philem. 2)

-Themes: The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ (1:5, 11, 14-16, 17, 19-23, 27; 2:9-15; 3:1-5); Union with Christ (1:14, 27, 28; 2:7, 10-14, 19; 3:1, 3); Practical Christian Living (3:5, 8, 9, 12-4:6)

IV. Christ in Colossians

-Christ is the preeminent, preexistent Lord of Creation, Providence, and Redemption; Creator, Sustainer, Reconciler of all things; Head of the church; Embodiment of all fullness.

V. Practical Lessons in Colossians

- 1) The antidote to heresy and false teaching is a proper view of Christ.
- 2) Beware of allowing anything to displace or replace Christ (philosophy, legalism, mysticism, asceticism).
- 3) Aim for an increasing grasp of the fullness there is in Christ.