



# COLOSSIANS

Introduction

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# COLOSSIANS: BACKGROUND

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- Written by Paul when he was "in chains" (4:3, 18). Probably when in Rome, and perhaps just before the letter to Philemon and 2Timothy.
  - Paul sent the letter of Colossians to them by the hands of Tychicus and Onesimus (see Philemon 10, 12). [Note mention of Epaphras in both Philemon & Colossians. Also Demas is with Paul in Colossians & Philemon, but has gone in 2Timothy]
  - This places the letter in the middle of Nero's reign, probably around AD58.
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# COLOSSIANS: BACKGROUND

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- It is possible that Paul never actually visited Colossae (see 2:1; not mentioned in Acts, though see 16:6). Yet Paul knows some of them by name.
  - Possible (probable) that the church was started by Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12), who was with Paul at the time - probably imprisoned with him (Philemon 23). Acts 19:10 shows how the gospel spread under Paul's Ephesian ministry.
  - City was the prominent one of the region, until Laodicea was built (c. 250 BC). Note Col. 2:1; 4:13,15.
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- It was obviously Jewish in some respects
    - Like Judaism, based on traditions (2:8)
    - References to circumcision (2:11, 13)
    - Laws regarding food, drink, holy days, new moon observances, and sabbath days (2:16)
    - Angels (2:15, 18)
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- **Angelology in Jewish thought**
    - In Genesis, we are introduced to "the Angel of the LORD" - possibly a theophany.
    - Angels are "spirits", a "flame of fire", and greater than men (Psalm 104:4; Psalm 8:5)
    - There appears to be different types or classes of angels - e.g. cherubim, seraphim.
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- Angelology in Jewish thought
    - The appearance to Moses is the Angel of the LORD (Exodus 3:2,4; Acts 7:30) as a manifestation of God Himself.
    - Angels are mediators at the giving of the law to Moses (Deuteronomy 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:38; Gal. 3:19, Heb. 2:2; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15.5.3 - "we have learned from God... the most holy part of our law, by angels....")
    - In Daniel, angels appear to have "assignments" - (e.g. Daniel 10:1-13; 12:1) - as well as rank (cf. Rev. 12:7).
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- Angelology in Jewish thought
    - Between Malachi & the time of Jesus, there is much speculation regarding angels in Jewish writings.
    - *The Book of Jubilees* (c. 150 BC) mentions angels in charge of fire, water, wind, storms, darkness, valleys, mountains, the seasons, the dawn and sunset, etc.
    - *The Book of Enoch* (250 to 150 BC) mentions similar ideas.
    - As such, there was a tendency in later Jewish-apostate circles to worship or venerate angels.
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- It was obviously based on non-Jewish ideas as well
    - (2:8) - "philosophy"
    - (2:8) - "basic principles of the world" (Greek word is *stoicheia*. Word used by both Jewish and Gentile writers to refer to living according to the way the world works. For Jews, this was consistent with the Law. For Gentiles, this was based on physics. See also Galatians 4:3,9).
    - (2:3, 23) - "wisdom"
    - (2:2) - "the mystery of God" - common characteristic of Gentile religions
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- It apparently also claimed to be Christian
    - (2:6) - Paul encourages them to continue in Christ the same way they received Him.
    - (2:10) - Paul stresses their completion in Christ
    - (1:23 & 2:19) - Implies that these teachers were departing from what they had been taught.
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- **Results:**

- Christ was "demoted" - Paul spends most of chapter 1 (and other places) correcting this.
    - (1:13) - the kingdom is the Son's
    - (1:15) - He is the image of the invisible God
    - (1:15b) - "the firstborn of creation"
    - (1:16) - He is the Creator of the angels
    - (1:19 & 2:9) - "all the fulness dwells in Him"
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- **Results:**
    - **Evil is considered to be inherent in the thing. That is, some things are to be avoided just because they are evil *in themselves*.**
    - **See 2:20-23.**
    - **Cf. Matthew 15:18; Romans 14:14.**
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# COLOSSIANS: THE HERESY

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- **Results:**
    - **Salvation is not from sin, but from evil powers and things.**
    - **Holiness is measured in terms of how well one lives by the rules of the world and avoids those things that are inherently evil.**
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# COLOSSIANS: LESSONS

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- **Doctrinal errors are the worst errors of all.**
  - **Doctrinal errors usually arise within the church by those who, claiming to be Christian, nonetheless are influenced by non-Christian ideas.**
  - **The antidote to heresy is clear orthodoxy; i.e. not necessarily refutation, but clear teaching.**
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