

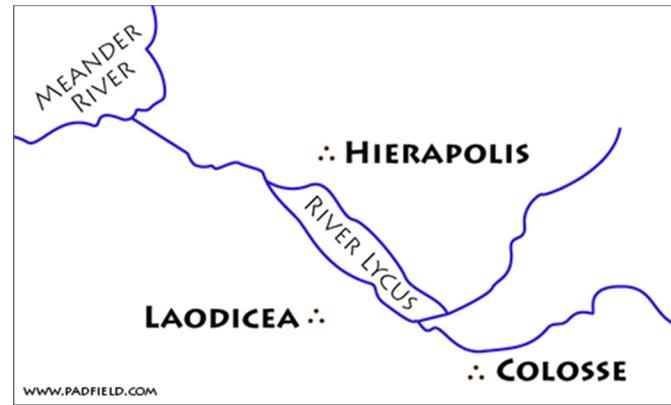
I. Introduction to the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians

A. Writer - Paul

1. Names himself three times - 1:1, 23; 4:18 (Hand Written Salutation)
2. Names himself as
 - a. Apostle - 1:1
 - b. A Minister - 1:23, 25
3. He names his associates
 - a. Timothy - 1:1; Onesimus - 4:9; Aristarchus, Mark - 4:10; Justus - 4:11; Epaphras - 4:12; Luke, Demas - 4:14
 - b. These are also mentioned in Philemon
4. In both books he addresses Archippus - Col 4:17; Phi 2
5. These not only argue for a singular writer, but also that both letters were written at the same time.
6. Arguments against Paul
 - a. Different literary style and vocabulary - the nature of the subject often determines these.
 - b. The topic of Gnosticism too advanced for the 6th or 7th decade - the letter refutes a conceptual heresy not a mature expression of it.

B. The City of Colosse

1. Located on a rocky ridge overlooking the valley of the Lycus river,



2. 100 miles east of Ephesus
3. 5th century BC was very important city with Hieropolis and Laodicia
4. As Hieropolis and Laodicia became more important, Colosse, declined.
5. In NT times, her importance was for glossey black wool

C. The Establishment of the Church - Acts 16:13-40

1. The evangelization of Colosse is not directly mentioned in the book of Acts

2. Luke does mention that during Paul's 3 year stay at Ephesus, that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. - Acts 19:10

3. Two possible options

a. Paul's associates traveled to the cities and evangelized.

b. Some of the Colossians came to Ephesus where they heard the Gospel

i. Paul mentions many by name

ii. Paul had never met many of them - 1:4,8

4. Membership of the church - probably almost all gentiles

D. The Nature of the Heresy

1. A merger of Jewish Legalism and Greek Gnostic Philosophy and some Oriental Mysticism

2. Some thought that there were three heresies - the way Paul deals with it in Colossians, it is obviously one heresy

3. Hard to say if the teachers were Gentile or Jewish

4. Lots of Jews in the area, because of dispersion under Antiochus III, probably strayed from the orthodoxy and bought into Greek philosophy.

5. Though Paul warned of attacks from within as well as from outside Acts 20:29-30, from his approach on the subject, these attacks seem to be from outside.

6. The heresy's teaching

a. Spiritual Knowledge was only available to those with superior intellects,

i. thus creating a spiritual caste system.

ii. Salvation was received through knowledge

iii. Some could understand divine mysteries unknown to typical Christians

b. Matter was innately evil, the soul was intrinsically good

i. Thus God couldn't have created matter

- The Xerox or clone effect

The more copies that you make of copies, the more distorted they become

- God created an angel, who created another angel, who in turn created another angel, ad infinitum

- The last angel (or the most distorted) created the world

- Since God didn't create it, He was not intimately involved with it.

- Rules out prayer, miracles

- leads to worship of angels

ii. God couldn't become flesh, thus Christ is a creature, no trinity

iii. Thus a repudiation of Christ humanity, death, and resurrection

iv. Practically, leads to asceticism and legalism

- the body is evil,

- to destroy its desires, a rigid code of behavior is enacted

E. Time and Place

1. The Colossians sent Epaphras to Rome to consult with Paul about the heresy
2. Epaphras was possibly the pastor of the church and Archippus took over when he went to Rome
3. He informed Paul of
 - a. their faith - 1:4-5
 - b. their love for God - 1:8
 - c. the heretical threat
4. Paul wrote from Prison and sent the letter by Tychicus and Onesimus - 4:7-9
Apparently Epaphras was also imprisoned - Phi 23
5. Epaphras was busy laboring fervently in prayers, that they would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. - 4:12
6. Written within 8 years of the inception of the church to warn them of the errors of the heresy.

F. Purpose

1. the Spiritual Development of the Colossians believers - 1:1-12
2. to set forth the sovereign headship of Jesus Christ - 1:13-29
3. to warn them against the moral and doctrinal errors of the heresy - 2:1-23
4. to exhort them to a life of holiness - 3:1-4:6
5. to explain the mission of Tychicus and Onesimus - 4:7-9
6. to send greetings - 4:10-15
7. to have them send the letter to the Laodocian Church - 4:16-18

G. Distinct features

1. There is a close resemblance to Ephesians in content and vocabulary
2. Again, similar content and language indicates the writing simultaneously with Ephesians
3. Contains a section on the preeminence of Jesus Christ - 1:14-22
4. Contains the most severe warning against unguided human intellect or non-Biblical philosophy - 2:3,8