

**Subject: *Know Your Bible – Part 23***

**Scripture: *Colossians 1:1-8***

**Time, Place, and Purpose of Colossians**

1. Paul wrote this epistle to the church in Colosse, a city in Asia Minor located about 100 miles east of Ephesus in the region of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 1—3. Paul wanted this epistle to be read in the church at Laodicea (Col. 4:16) and he wanted an epistle sent to Laodicea to be read to the church at Colosse. In his usual greeting, Paul referred to their spiritual position (in Christ) as well as their physical location (at Colosse)

2. This epistle was written around 60-61 A.D. Paul had never visited this church, but it was founded by Epaphras (1:4-8; 2:1). During his third missionary journey, Paul ministered for three years in Asia Minor from his base in Ephesus and Epaphras was probably converted at this time (Acts 19:10; 20:31). Paul sent the letter by Tychicus and the converted slave Onesimus (Col. 4:7-9; Philem. 10-12).

3. This is the third of Paul's four prison epistles (with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). All of these letters refer to his imprisonment in Rome (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13-14; Col. 4:3, 10, 18; Philemon 9-10, 13, 23). During this time Paul was guarded by soldiers, was permitted to receive visitors, and had the opportunity to preach the gospel.

4. This is also one of Paul's nine church epistles (Romans through 2 Thessalonians). The remaining four epistles were written to individuals (1 Timothy through Philemon).

5. The letters of Ephesians and Colossians have some similarities. Both were written in prison and delivered by Tychichus. Both contain similar passages and teachings. Both refer to the image of Christ and his body (the church). Both stress the topics of wisdom, knowledge, fullness, and mystery. The first half of both letters is doctrinal and the second half is practical.

6. The letters of Ephesians and Colossians have unique differences. Ephesians focuses on the church as the body of Christ. Colossians focuses on Christ as the head of the body. Ephesians is more general and universal, whereas Colossians is more specific and local.

7. Colossians was written to combat false teaching in the church. This was an early form of Gnosticism which held that matter was evil and spirit was good, and therefore Christ was neither fully God nor fully man. Christ was understood to be only as an intermediate being between God and man and Gnosticism (from Greek *gnosis*, knowledge) was a system of inside knowledge available only to select people. This false religious system combined elements from Greek speculation, Jewish legalism, and Oriental mysticism. It included an emphasis on circumcision, dietary regulations, and ritual observances. It also included asceticism (extreme self-denial), worship of angels as intermediaries, and mystical experiences as an approach to the spirit realm. The effort to fit Christ into this kind of system undermined His unique person and work in redemption.

8. The antidote to the Colossian heresy was a proper view of Christ. Paul's theme is the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ. Believers are complete in Him alone. There is no need for speculation, mystical visions, or ritualistic regulations. Paul also stressed the practical importance of correct doctrine. Since Christ is supreme, believers must submit to Him in every area of life (Col. 3—4).

9. Colossians contains a rich vocabulary. Paul used 55 Greek words that do not appear in his other epistles.

10. Colossians is one of the most Christ-centered books in the Bible. It presents the supremacy of the person of Christ and completeness of His work in salvation. Christ is the Creator, Sustainer, and the head of the church. The believer's union with Christ in His death, resurrection, and exaltation is the foundation of Christian living. Relationships inside and outside the home should demonstrate the believer's transformation by Christ.

### **Christ in Colossians**

- A. The basis of the believer's hope (1:5, 23, 27)
- B. The source of the believer's power for a new life (1:11, 29)
- C. The believer's Redeemer and Reconciler (1:14, 20-22; 2:11-15)
- D. The embodiment of full deity (1:15, 19; 2:9)
- E. The Lord of creation (1:16-17)
- F. The Creator and Sustainer of all things (1:16-17)
- G. The Head of the church (1:18)
- H. The resurrected God-Man (1:18; 3:1)
- I. The Author of reconciliation (1:20-22; 2:13-15)
- J. The all-sufficient Savior (1:28; 2:3, 10; 3:1-4)
- K. The head of all principality and power (2:10)

### **Outline of Colossians**

- 1. Introduction and Thanksgiving (1:1-8)
- 2. Preeminence of Christ (1:9-29)
  - A. Paul's prayer (1:9-14)
  - B. The person of Christ (1:15-20)
  - C. The work of Christ (1:21-29)
- 3. Warning about False Teaching (2:1-23)
  - A. The concern of Paul (2:1-5)
  - B. Safeguard against the false teaching (2:6-15)
  - C. Description of false teaching (2:16-23)
- 4. Practice of True Christian Living (3:1—4:6)
  - A. The foundation for Christian living (3:1-4)
  - B. The principles for Christian living (3:5-17)
  - C. The application of Christian living (3:18—4:6)
    - 1) Wives (3:18)
    - 2) Husbands (3:19)
    - 3) Children (3:20)
    - 4) Parents (3:21)
    - 5) Servants (3:22-25)
    - 6) Masters (4:1)
    - 7) All believers (4:2-6)
- 5. Conclusion (4:7-18)

# Know Your Bible – Part 23

## Book of Colossians

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