

## Paul's Letter to the Colossians

### 1. Introduction (1:1-2)

One year at Cub Scout camp, when I was a youngster, I remember making a model of our solar system out of Styrofoam balls. In the center of my model was the largest sphere, painted yellow, to represent the sun. After this, I painted each of the nine planets in different colors, and positioned them in their proper place. Mercury was red because it is closest to the sun, and has temperatures too intense to support life. The little blue ball, third from the sun, represented earth, our home. My model was held together with wooden dowel rods, string, and a little glue. Though it was no masterpiece, I was exceedingly satisfied with my workmanship!

Looking back, this reminds me of the force that truly holds our universe together...the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:17 tells us, *"He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."* If it were not for God's creative power, we wouldn't be here today. The universe would have never come into being. And if He let go, our world would instantly fly apart into oblivion.

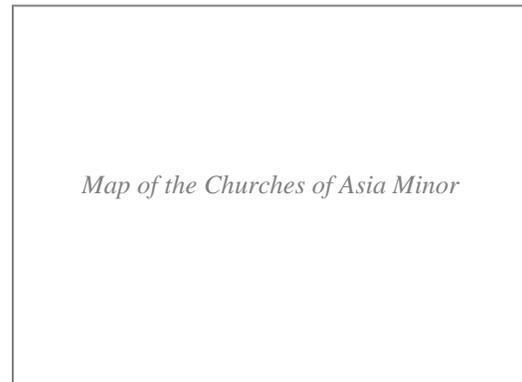
The supremacy of Christ is one of the main themes of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Apparently, false teaching had begun to infiltrate the church in that city, calling into question the deity of Christ. The apostle responded by instructing them in correct doctrine (chapters 1-2), and then giving practical instruction as to how believers ought to live (chapters 3-4). Jesus Christ is the center of our faith, our worship, and our life!

### I. Background of the City of Colossae:

- Colossae was a city in the R\_\_\_\_\_ province of Asia (Asia Minor or modern day Turkey), about 100 miles southeast of Ephesus. It was situated along a major highway running east and west through the region. Neighboring cities include Laodicea and Hierapolis.

- While Colossae had once been a great city during the era of the G\_\_\_\_\_, empire, it was no longer a large or prominent city in the period of the New Testament.

- The inhabitants of Colossae were of d\_\_\_\_\_ ethnicity. Along with the native Phrygians, there were also Greeks, Romans, and Jews living in the city.



### II. Background of the Letter:

- Along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon, Colossians is one of Paul's P\_\_\_\_\_ Epistles. It was written while Paul was in chains as a prisoner of Rome (between 60-63 A.D.).

- Most likely, the church came about as a result of Paul's ministry in E\_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 19:8-10) although Paul had never visited this group of Christians in Colossae in person (Colossians 2:1).

- One of Paul’s fellow missionaries, a man named E\_\_\_\_\_ who was a native of this region, brought the gospel to the city of Colossae and the congregation was founded as a result (Colossians 1:6-7; 4:12).
- The main r\_\_\_\_\_ for the letter is to deal with false teaching that threatened to lead believers astray. Paul wrote to the church to expose the dangers of this heresy, and to encourage them to continue in the faith. One author writes, “*To a large extent the entire Epistle may be seen as an apostolic antidote to popular but erroneous opinions that threaten the purity of Christian doctrine and the integrity of Christian practice at Colossae.*” (*Encountering the New Testament*, p.318)
- While we do not know the precise nature of the false teaching, it seems to have elevated the position of a\_\_\_\_\_ to a higher place than Christ (2:18), it emphasized outward observances and rituals as a path to becoming more s\_\_\_\_\_ (2:16), and it claimed to offer a higher p\_\_\_\_\_ or knowledge to its followers (2:8).
- Colossians is very relevant to our lives today, because there are so many competing philosophies and religious beliefs that threaten to take one’s f\_\_\_\_\_ away from Christ. We need to continually have our eyes fixed on the one and only Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. Outline of Colossians:

#### ----- Part One: The Supremacy of Christ -----

- I. Introduction (1:1-14)
- II. The Preeminence of Christ... (1:15-2:3)
  - A. ...in creation (1:15-18)
  - B. ...in redemption (1:19-23)
  - C. ...in the Church (1:24-2:3)
- III. Freedom in Christ... (2:4-23)
  - A. ...from enticing words (2:4-7)
  - B. ...from vain philosophy (2:8-10)
  - C. ...from the judgment of men (2:11-17)
  - D. ...from improper worship (2:18-19)
  - E. ...from the doctrine of men (2:20-23)

#### ----- Part Two: Submission to Christ -----

- IV. The Position of the Believer (3:1-4)
- V. The Practice of the Believer (3:5-4:6)
- VI. Conclusion (4:7-18)

#### Bibliography:

- Elwell, Walter A. and Yarbrough, Robert W. *Encountering the New Testament*, Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI 1998 (p.316-320)
- Guthrie, Donald *New Testament Introduction*, Intervarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL 1990 (p.545-562)
- Nelson’s *Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1996 (p.416-423)
- Tidball, Derek *The Illustrated Survey of the Bible*, Bethany House Publishers: Minneapolis, MN 2001 (p.220-223)