

Colossians

Summary

The book of Colossians is a letter sent by the apostle Paul to the church in Colossae, in the Roman Province of Asia (modern-day Turkey), just inland from Ephesus. Unlike many of the churches that Paul wrote to, he did not plant the church in Colossae. This church was planted by Epaphras from Colossae, who most likely came into contact with the teachings of Paul in Ephesus and brought it home to Colossae. This letter is written to the small community of believers in Colossae who were being challenged in their beliefs from an unknown source, most likely a Jewish sect. They were facing opposition on issues of philosophy and spiritualism, as well as a continuation of Old Testament customs and laws. Paul is in prison as he writes this letter; he uses it to remind them to stay unified in the teachings of Christ, to oppose the teachings of the world, and to embrace the new life they have because of Christ's sacrifice.

Author

The authorship of the letter to the church in Colossae is attributed to the apostle Paul. It is probable that he was using Timothy as an amanuensis (secretary) to write his letter because although the authors are mentioned as Paul and Timothy in Colossians 1:1, the first person singular is used throughout the letter.

Date

The date given by most scholars for the letter to the Colossians is typically dated around A.D. 62, written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

Primary Characters

Paul (Colossians 1-4)

Epaphras (Colossians 1, 4)

Timothy (Colossians 1)

Historical Moments

Paul Writes His Letter to the Philippians (Colossians 1-4)

Epaphras Starts the Church in Colossae (Colossians 1)

Major Theological Themes

Christ Is Preeminent - Just as the author of Hebrew writes about the supremacy of Christ, Paul writes about the preeminence of Christ. He says that through Christ all things were created and that all things are held together through Him, showing that He truly was God Incarnate. Paul reminds the church at Colossae that any teachings that cheapen the power or sacrifice of Jesus Christ are not true teachings at all.

There Is No Other Gospel - Paul is very emphatic that anyone who preaches a different gospel other than Jesus Christ is not within the will of God. He believes that anyone who attempts to add spiritual and syncretic elements to Christianity, as well as those who try to drag it down with Jewish ritual, take away from the true message of Jesus Christ. Paul felt very strongly that he must address anyone who tried to add restrictions or qualifications outside of faith through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Lessons Learned from Colossians

Know What You Believe - Paul knew that when some of the early believers are new in their faith, they could be swayed by false or nuanced teachings. Paul reminded the people in Colossae about what Christ had done for them and why they did not have to have any hesitation to declare the supremacy of Christ. Thankfully, we have not just one, but also many other letters of Paul, as well as the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. We can be encouraged by all of these writings to stay strong in our faith. We should count ourselves blessed that we can look at all those who have gone before us and have the compiled Word of God.

Beware of False Teaching - Oftentimes, we can see people changing their theological views due to culture, custom, or just personal viewpoint. One of Paul's strengths in his teaching is his ability to take a step back and analyze whether something actually falls in line with Christ or if it is a compromise to the gospel message. In the book of Colossians, he challenges spiritualists in Colossians 2:8-15 and those who still clung to Old Testament rituals in Colossians 2:16-23. Though we do not need to be combative in our opposition, we do need to challenge false teaching when we see it and protect our fellow Christians from philosophies and teachings that are opposed to the Bible.