

Author - STEVEN R. DOUGLAS 2017

THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

NEW TESTAMENT

BOOK 51

COLOSSIANS



Saint Paul The Apostle by Claude Vignon

SUMMARY

Before Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Colossae, he had never been to their city. This helps explain the personal greetings he included at the end of the letter, a practice he usually reserved for letters to churches he had not visited.

Paul sought to develop personal connections with the people he hoped to teach and serve, rather than just going around from city to city asserting his apostolic authority.

The more personal tone at the close of this letter would have been especially significant in creating a connection with the Colossian believers, given the fact that part of Paul's reason for writing involved calling out the heretical teachers who had infiltrated the Colossian church.

In AD 60–61, during his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul penned this letter to the Colossian church after he had received a report that they were struggling with a Christological heresy.

The report came from Epaphras, likely the leader of the church at Colossae and a convert of Paul's from his more than two-year ministry in Ephesus. Epaphras had come to Rome in part to serve Paul during his imprisonment but also to confide in him regarding the dangerous teachings the Colossians were hearing.

So Paul sent this letter, along with the letters to Philemon and to the Ephesians, with Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus. Tychicus was a coworker of Paul who would have been able to help the Colossian believers understand and apply the apostle's teachings in the letter.

The church at Colossae was under attack from false teachers who were denigrating the deity of Jesus; they were teaching that He was not actually God. Though Paul had never been to the church itself, he addressed these issues head-on.

The nature of Jesus Christ as Creator and Redeemer was nonnegotiable, so Paul wrote to them that he might bring his wisdom to bear on this difficult and trying situation. It was critical to him that this church know God in His greatness and glory, rather than in the deficient view given them by the false teachers.

In this book, the apostle Paul described Jesus with some of the loftiest language in all the New Testament, focusing on Christ's preeminence and sufficiency in all things.

Paul presented Christ as the center of the universe, not only as the active Creator but also as the recipient of creation—in His taking on of human flesh. Christ was and is the visible image of the invisible God, containing within Himself the fullness of Deity.

Because of His divine nature, Jesus is sovereign, above all things with an authority given Him by the Father. As such, Jesus is also Head over the church. He has reconciled all things to Himself through His death on the cross, making believers alive to God and setting them on the path to right living.

This proper view of Christ served as the antidote for the Colossian heresy as well as a building block for Christian life and doctrine both then and now.

SUMMARY Continued

Your view of Jesus Christ will impact every area of your life. Many today want only practical instruction and helps for living, eschewing esoteric topics such as doctrine and theology because they seem to be out of touch with their day-to-day reality.

Paul's view was different. He saw that the Christological problems in the Colossian church had practical importance as well. Believers have died with Christ; therefore, we need to die to our sins.

We have also been raised with Christ; therefore, we must live well in Him and put on qualities that are motivated by Christian love. And because He is Lord over all, the life of the Christian is a life of submission to Jesus.

Are you following after Jesus as you should? Our faith in Jesus Christ should transform the relationships we have in every area of our lives—in our homes, our churches, and our world.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 1:10** that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;
- 1:11** strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;
- 1:12** giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.
- 1:13** He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,
- 1:14** in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.
- 2:2** that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,
- 2:3** in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- 3:2** Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
- 3:3** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
- 3:4** When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.
- 3:5** Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
- 3:6** Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,
- 3:7** in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.
- 3:8** But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.
- 3:9** Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,
- 3:10** and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- 3:12** Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

NKJV SCRIPTURE Continued

- 3:13** bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.
- 3:14** But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.
- 3:15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.
- 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
- 3:17** And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
- 3:23** And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,
- 3:24** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.
- 3:25** But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.
- 4:2** Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

BIBLE TIMELINE

62 AD

Paul Writes to the Colossians

Colossians 1 - 4

CHARACTER Definitions

ARCHIPPUS - Archippus is mentioned in Colossians 4:17 and Philemon 1:2. In his letter to Philemon, Paul refers to Archippus as a fellow soldier. In Colossians 4:17, Paul requests his readers to tell Archippus:

See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord. Apparently, then, Archippus was a young man from Colossae tasked with some sort of ministry in the church. Many believe Archippus to have been the son of Philemon and Apphia, close friends of Paul's.

The connection between Archippus and Philemon seems clear in Philemon 1:2-2, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker—also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home.

Paul is writing to a household. Philemon; his wife, Apphia; and his son, Archippus comprise the family unit. The church of Colossae met in their home. Some believe Paul's words to Archippus to complete the ministry are a gentle rebuke for having neglected certain of his duties.

But a majority see Paul's admonition to Archippus as simple encouragement, similar to Paul's exhortations in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. One tradition holds that Archippus was a leader in Laodicea, a city about 12 miles away from Colossae.

It seems strange to send an admonition to Archippus through leaders of another church, but Paul's intent was that the letter to the Colossians should be read in Laodicea, too: After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans. In any case, Archippus would receive the message.

CHARACTERS Continued

Ultimately, we do not know much about Archippus other than he was a Christian in the early church who was granted a ministry from the Lord and who soldiered for the faith. Paul's encouragement to Archippus and his family should encourage all of us to also complete the ministry God has given us.

COLOSSAE - Colossae was an ancient city in the Lycus River valley, about 100 miles east of the great, cosmopolitan capital city of Ephesus, located in the Roman province of Asia, in present-day Turkey.

Colossae was the smallest of three cities in the Lycus Valley -- along with Laodicea (12 miles west) and Hierapolis (15 miles northwest). Each of these cities had Christian churches.

Though these cities were far from the big city, they weren't isolated, since they were situated near the great Persian Royal Road that ran from Ephesus and Sardis in the West to the Euphrates and on to Persia in the East.

At one point in the fourth or third centuries BC, Colossae had been the most important of the three cities, known for its flourishing textile industry and high-quality dark red wool, known as Colossian wool.

But after the north-south road was moved west to pass through Laodicea, Colossae began to decline. Roman historian Tacitus mentions an earthquake that destroyed Laodicea in 60-61 AD. Laodicea was rebuilt quickly.

We don't know how long it took to rebuild Colossae. Today, however, nothing remains of Colossae above ground. The tell (acropolis or mound) of the city has not been excavated, though the contour of an outdoor amphitheater is discernable on the site.

The population of Colossae was probably quite diverse -- especially in light of the nearby highway. We know that Antiochus III had settled about 2,000 Jewish families in the general area in 213 BC.

The area still had a strong Jewish minority presence in Paul's day, a fact which probably relates directly to Paul's letter. Proximity to the nearby highways ensured that the Colossians were exposed to the latest ideas, which then mixed together with other ideas.

Thus the Christian church was subject to syncretism with other religious movements. Colossians is apparently written primarily to Gentile Christians. We observe: Paul's description of their conversion in terms more appropriate to Gentiles, rather than to Jews.

He mentions the mystery revealed among the Gentiles. The sins mentioned are more typical of Gentiles, than of Jews. He includes neither Old Testament quotations nor any explicit reference to the law.

Though he writes primarily to Gentile Christians, the heresy that Paul was fighting seems to have Jewish roots, as is discussed below.

CHARACTERS Continued

While Paul had probably passed through Colossae on his second missionary journey, he didn't find the church at Colossae -- directly. Rather, it was founded by Epaphras, whom Paul mentions in this letter.

Paul had been preaching in the big city of Ephesus, about 100 miles west of Colossae from 53 to 55 AD. His ministry was quite effective, first in the synagogue and later in the rented lecture hall of Tyrannus.

This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. Paul didn't travel through the province of Asia, but people came to him to learn about Jesus, and then took the message of the gospel to their own hometowns. Epaphras was undoubtedly one of these.

MAP REFERENCES

