

Colossians Overview

Historical context

Date

Written by Paul between A.D. 60-62

Place

Colossae was a small town in the Roman province of Phrygia, upriver from Ephesus in the Lycus Valley, in what is now east central Turkey. As such it was prone to influences from the Greek, Roman, Jewish and Central Asian worlds.

Content

Who were the original hearers?

i) Young Christians

- Recently founded church, c. AD 55/7, by Epaphras – **1:7, 4:12**
- Under pressure from inside and outside – **2:8**

ii) Seeking maturity

- Wanting, and managing, to be fruitful – **1:3-6b, 2:5, 3:7**
- But therefore susceptible – **2:1-5**

Main Aims

1. To show the unique *supremacy* and *sufficiency* of Christ – **1:15-23**
2. To show that to believe in Christ is to *participate in* him completely, and so to share in his fullness – **2:9-14, 3:1-4**
3. To convince them that *true spiritual maturity* lies in persevering with Christ, and not turning aside to any other teaching – **1:21-23, 2:6-7, 2:20-23**
4. To show them that the *new self* in Christ will involve radical, ongoing change, both individually and corporately – **3:1-4:6**

Key Themes- to work through the letter yourself

The supremacy of Jesus Christ

God has worked through the death of Christ to reconcile to himself all who believe in his Son

The participation of all who have been reconciled in Christ

The excellence of faith in Christ as opposed to all other forms of practice and belief

Due to this participation in Jesus' death and resurrection, believers have new lives, which are to be lived to God and Christ, *not* to the world

Structure

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|-------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| I. | 1:1-8 | Greeting and Thanksgiving | |
| II. | 1:9-14 | Paul's prayer for the Colossians | |
| III. | 1:15-20 | Unique supremacy of Christ | } |
| IV. | 1:21-23 | Colossian's reconciliation to God | |
| V. | 1:24-2:5 | Paul's ministry | |
| VI. | 2:6-23 | Warnings against false teaching | |
| VII. | 3:1-4:6 | Exhortation to right living | → |
| VIII. | 4:7-18 | Final greetings | |