

Introduction to Colossians December 4, 2011

Introduction

As we come closer to Christmas, we begin to think about the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through whom we have salvation. We begin to marvel about the mystery of the Incarnation, how God became man for our sake and how He grew and suffered as we did and then died on the cross without sin to be sin for us. As we, the Church, marvel on these things, there are other forces in the world—namely Satan and his demons—that try to pollute the truth of the gospel. They would try to confuse us in thinking that Jesus alone is not the answer, but that we need to do something else to be saved or to solve our problems.

This is exactly the letter that Paul writes that is applicable for today. It is a letter that Paul writes to help us defend against such lies and how to grow in the knowledge of Him. My prayer is that as we go through the study of Colossians, that we will appreciate Christmas all the more...not in the holiday itself, but in the fact that Jesus came to earth to be the sacrifice for us and that through Him alone that we have salvation and deliverance from all our sins.

I. Reasons for Studying Colossians

- Defense against philosophies
 - Science
 - Experiential knowledge

Note: People are searching for answers to the mysteries of life: they explore those answers through experience in either our five senses or through something beyond us as in a mystical knowledge. Paul reminds the Christians at Colossae that Christ is the final answer to any question of life. It is through the gospel (that he had received from Jesus Christ Himself) that Paul preached that provides the answer.

Colossians 1:13-16 *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, (14) in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. (15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (16) For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*

- Defense against religions coming together
 - “Equality” of religions

Note: People try to equate all religions as equals. They often claim that they are all the same God, just different approaches to Him. Paul disabuses that notion quickly when he writes:

Colossians 1:18 *And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

Note: It is only in Jesus Christ that we have true religion. He is the Head. All the false religions in the world try to be a body without the head.

- Defense against those who deny Christ as God

Note: This is a serious attack on the gospel...denying that Jesus is God is no gospel...it's another religion that is false and damning.

Colossians 2:9 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. (NIV)*

- Defense against hatred and unforgiving attitudes (**3:18-4:1**)

Note: Philemon connection.

II. Colossian Background

- Author
 - Paul

Colossians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.*

Colossians 4:18 *This salutation by my own hand--Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.*

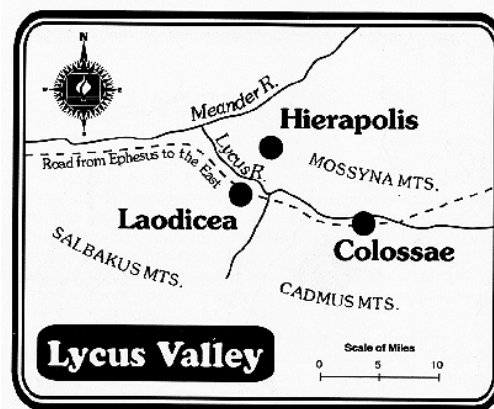
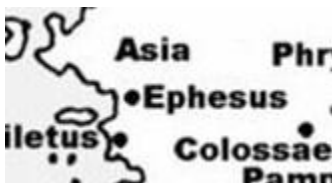
- When was it Written
 - During Paul's Imprisonment in Rome

Colossians 4:3 *meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains.*

Acts 28:16, 30-31 *Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.... (30) Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, (31) preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.*

Colossians 4:14 *Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.*

- City of Colossae
 - In Turkey



- 120 miles east of Ephesus
- Small city compared to Laodicea and Hierapolis
- Wealth from making dye from the limestone chalk in region

- Many Jews in the area
- Paul has never met them
- Epaphras is the one who started the Colossian church

Colossians 1:6-8 *which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; (7) as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, (8) who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.*

Transition: It is from Epaphras that Paul gets the information that there is some things not right in the church...especially some heretical teachings going on.

- Colossian heresy
 - Ritualism

Colossians 2:16 *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths*

- Mysticism

Colossians 2:18 *Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,*

Note: Apparently, the heresy was a combination of Jewish rituals and pagan folklore mysticism of that region. There was some person that was trying to convince the church that he had better spiritual experience by forbidding many things and creating some rituals that they must follow.

Transition: To combat error, Paul presents 5 themes in the letter of Colossians to help Christians stand strong in their faith.

III. Themes of Colossians

- Sufficiency in Christ alone (**Colossians 2:9-14; 3:1-4**)

Note: Paul wanted the church to understand that it is Jesus Christ alone that did all the work on the cross...all the sins forgiven, all grace been given. He wanted them to understand that there was nothing to add to their saving faith. In other words, Paul wants them to understand that what they were doing to the flesh does nothing. It is Christ's atoning work that cleanse us.

- Christ, Lord of all (**Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9-10**)

Note: He created everything and all things are subject to Him—even Satan and his demons.

- Christ, the Savior (**Colossians 1:13-14, 20-22**)

Note: Paul talks about how through the death of Christ we are reconciled to Him.

- Christ, the Victor (**Colossians 2:10-15**)

Note: What an awesome statement Paul makes here...all the requirements for death has been nailed to the cross...all our sins and its requirement for us has been taken care of. Such staggering statement and it permeates throughout the whole of Colossians.

- Christians to be like Christ (**Colossians 1:10-12, 28; 3:1-4:6**)

Note: When Paul talks about Christ, he then points us to His character and how we should walk in His way...notice his frequent use of the word “submit”. Notice also the character Paul tells us...ceaseless prayers, continual thanksgiving, walking in wisdom, speaking with grace...all those Christ portrayed perfectly...we also ought to do.

Conclusion

In this short letter, Paul’s message is urgent and his struggles intense. He knows that the fastest way to destroy the gospel of truth is to mix it with error. He provides us with an antidote to all the false religions and false philosophies to sharpen our focus on Christ and His work.