



Colossians

Paul was in Ephesus 53-56 AD when Colossae church began. Paul wrote the letter to Colossae from Rome in 61 AD while imprisoned there from 60-62 AD (Paul was in prison 1:24; 4:3, 10, 18; Philemon 1, 9, 10, 13, 23)

False teachers were taking Christians away from the knowledge of the truth and leading them to practices and doctrines of Pagan religions

Focus of the book is the person and work of Christ. Which leads Paul to discuss Christian living and his ministry.

Colossae may be the least important of the cities Paul wrote to

City of Colossae

1. Herodotus calls it a “great city of Phrygia in 480 BC during the days of Xerxes. Colosse is mentioned in Xerxes and Cyrus the Younger’s itineraries of military marches.
2. Colosse was located on the main road that ran from Ephesus into the East.
3. Colosse had the resources of the Lycus River Valley provided for agriculture, ranching and industry. There were

fertile pastures for grazing sheep. Wool was a major industry. River deposits of chalk were used for dyeing cloth.

4. Earthquakes were common in the Lycus Valley. An earthquake in the Lycus Valley damaged Laodicea and Hierapolis in 61 AD according to Tacitus. Laodicea built themselves back (thus the boast of Rev. 3), but Colossae never recovered.

5. Around 20 AD Strabo (a Greek geographer, philosopher and historian) calls Colossae a “small town” because Laodicea and Hierapolis had prospered and outgrown Colossae. In 190 BC Romans made Asia a province and named Laodicea as the capital of the district of 25 other towns. The Romans had also altered the road system to accommodate their choice of Laodicea. Laodicea prospered and received the economic growth. Hierapolis because of the hot springs, was a place of luxury and a vacation resort.

6. Around 190 BC Antiochus III (the Great) brought 2,000 Jewish families to the area Lydia and Phrygia from Babylon.



Phillip's tomb in Hierapolis was discovered in July 2011

Paul's Authorship

1. Paul was accepted as the author until the 1800's.

2. Authorship of Paul is challenged because of the very unique vocabulary in the Colossian letter. But, the unique words and expressions are used by Paul in the arguments against the false teaching/philosophies. There is a high number of words which appear only here in the NT (*hapax legomena*). 48 words appear in Colossians that are found nowhere else in Paul's writings and 33 those words do not occur anywhere else in the New Testament.

Reasons to support Paul's authorship:

1. Timothy wrote this letter with Paul and possibly wrote it for Paul. See Colossians 4:18
2. Paul's presentation of a theology that includes the cosmic significance of Christ in Colossians matches statements of his elsewhere (Rom.8:38; 1 Cor.2:6-8; Phil.2:10)
3. Paul does not specifically identify the false teaching, but is counting on his original readers understanding his references to their situation.
4. Scholars say the Colossian letter matches the characteristic Asiatic rhetoric.
5. If Colossians was written by a pseudo-Paul or one of his "students" attempting to imitate him after his death why would they fake a letter to the city of Colossae that lay in ruins after 61 AD?

It is interesting to note that Luke mentions Aristarchus traveling with Paul and Luke to Rome in Acts 27:2. So, it is a nice fit that when Paul writes Colossians and Philemon from Rome he mentions Aristarchus in both letters: Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24.

Problem:

2:4 – "arguments" (as in doctrinal points in a debate)

2:8 – "empty and deceitful philosophy"

2:18 – religious/cultic practices/rituals

Problem with Jewish tendencies:

2:11 – circumcised

2:16 – food, drink, festival, new moo, Sabbaths

2:20-21 – do not handle, do not taste, do not touch regulations

Problems that go beyond Judaism:

2:15 – disarmed rulers and authorities, made a spectacle of them

2:18 – self-humiliation, worship of angels, entering into these things he has seen

2:23 – rules have no value, though they appear to have wisdom, self-imposed worship, self-humiliation, harsh treatment of the body.

Contrasts:

2:8 – teaching based on human traditions vs. teaching "according to Christ"

2:17 – "a shadow of things to come" vs. "the substance belongs to Christ"

Answer:

1:15-20 – begin with the exalted status of Christ

2:20 and 2:12 – Colossian believers have already died with Christ

3:1 and 2:12 – Colossian believers are already raised with Christ (and, that is OVER the rulers and authorities)

3:11 – Christ is all and in all

3:17 – Do everything in the name of Christ

The Colossian heresy taught that the fullness of God could only be appreciated by mystical experiences for which ascetic preparation was necessary.

Paul says fullness is found in Christ.