

## Colossians

### Author

1. Paul is the author of this marvelous epistle.
2. His name is found three times in this letter. (Col. 1:1, 23; 4:8).

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

COL 1:23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, **Paul**, was made a minister.

COL 4:18 I, **Paul**, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

### Colossae

1. Colossae was a city of Phrygia in Asia Minor, and was about 100 miles east of Ephesus. Phrygia was an inland province of Asia Minor
  - a. It was a city of commercial importance.
  - b. Laodicea ad Hierapolis, nearby cities, gradually replaced some of the importance of Colossae as commercial centers.
2. Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea were geographically close to one another.
  - a. These churches are mentioned in the fourth chapter of this book. (Col. 4:13).

COL 4:13 For I bear him witness that he [Epaphras] has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

- b. Jesus Himself later dictated a letter to the church at Laodicea. (Rev. 3:14-22).
  - c. We do not know anything about the church at Laodicea at this early date other than Epaphras had worked hard for them and for the church at Colossae and Hierapolis. Literally the Greek has “much distress” that the NASB interprets to mean “a deep concern” and the NIV has “he is working hard.”
3. Paul did not establish the church at Colossae (Col. 2:1), but this church was an outgrowth of Paul’s ministry at Ephesus during the 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey. (Acts 19:10).

COL 2:1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,

ACT 19:10 And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

4. It appears the church at Colossae may have been established by Epaphras. (Col. 1:7).

COL 1:7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf,

- a. It is also possible to understand that Epaphras was a preacher there who had had much influence on the church.
  - b. He had been very instrumental in teaching them the truth.
  - c. Some believe Paul and his colleagues had evangelized the entire province of Asia from Ephesus. (Acts 19:10). See Acts 19:1-20:1.
  - d. The church had been founded there during the time of Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey. The 3<sup>rd</sup> journey is dated 53 to 57 A.D. and this church seems to have been established in the latter part of this 3<sup>rd</sup> journey.
  - e. It is about 5 or 6 years later that word about the Colossae church came to Paul through Epaphras.
  - f. We cannot be absolutely sure who established the church there.
5. Paul most likely learned of the present condition of the church there through Epaphras. (Col. 4:12).

COL 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

- a. He was with Paul in Rome. (Acts 28:30, 31).
- b. It appears that Epaphras too was a prisoner from the book of Philemon that was written about the same time from Rome. (Phile. 1:23).

PHM 1:23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,

- c. It is interesting that the runaway slave Onesimus is mentioned, by Paul, in this letter and was now "the faithful and beloved brother. (Col. 4:9).
- d. Onesimus was from Colossae. (Col. 4:9). Lit. "who is of you"

### **Purpose Of Epistle**

1. Paul wished to warn the brothers about the false and dangerous teaching that was beginning to be taught at Colossae.
2. Paul proclaimed to them the all-sufficiency of Christ as Savior.
3. He warned against the false doctrine of perfection through human wisdom, asceticism and ritual.
4. This epistle has a lot of similarity with the book of Ephesians, but there are things discussed in this epistle not covered by book of Ephesians.

### **Date of Epistle**

1. This epistle was written about 60 to 62 A.D. during the time of Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Roman imprisonment.
2. He mentioned this imprisonment 3 times in chapter 4 of this epistle. (Col. 4:3, 10, 16).

COL 4:3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak

forth the mystery of Christ, **for which I have also been imprisoned;**

COL 4:10 **Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner**, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him);

COL 4:18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. **Remember my imprisonment.** Grace be with you.

### **Prison Epistle**

1. This is one of four epistles Paul wrote during his 1<sup>st</sup> Roman imprisonment.
2. He also penned Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon during this imprisonment at Rome.

### **Place Of Writing**

1. Paul was in prison at Rome.
2. This first imprisonment is recorded in Acts 28. (Acts 28:16, 17, 30, 31).

### **Salutation**

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

1. "Paul" - "Paul" is a transliteration of his Greek or Latin name "Paulos."
  - a. His Greek or Latin name means "small" or "little."
  - b. His Hebrew name was "Saul" meaning "to ask or make request."
  - c. He was known by both the names "Saul" and "Paul" (Acts 13:9), but only calls himself "Paul" in his epistles.
  - d. "Paul" is called "Saul" only in the book of Acts.
2. "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God"
  - a. He makes it very clear he was "an apostle of Jesus Christ."
  - b. It was not of his choosing, but it was by "the will of God."
  - c. The Lord had appeared to him on the road to Damascus. (Acts 19:1-6).
3. "and Timothy our brother" - Lit. "Timothy the brother"
  - a. Timothy was a very loyal minister and evangelist of the gospel. (2 Tim. 4:5).
  - b. Paul had the highest respect for him, and penned two epistles to him. See 1 & 2 Timothy.
  - c. He is a man who had been trained by his mother and grandmother, and had been greatly influenced by Paul. (2 Tim. 1:5).
  - d. Paul is one who had had great influence on Timothy, and calls him "my true child in the faith" and "my beloved and faithful child in the Lord." (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2).

**COL 1:2 to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our**

## **Father.**

1. “to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ”
  - a. “Saints” is from “hagios” [**hah** gee ahs] meaning “holy” or “saints” in the plural.
  - b. It is not a designation for a special class or group of Christians, but is a word applied to all Christians who have been cleansed of their sins by the blood of Christ and set apart to live holy lives.
  - c. The word “saint” is used often in reference to the children of God. (Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25,26, 31; 16:2, 15; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:1,2; 14:33; 16:1, 15; 2 Cor. 1:1; 8:4; 9:11,12; 13:13; Eph. 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 1:1; 4:22; Col. 1:2, 4, 12, 26; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:10; Phile 1:5, 7; Heb. 6:10; 13:24; Jud. 1:3; Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9).
2. “who are at Colossae” - The word “saint” is applied to the Christians there.
3. “Grace to you and peace from God our Father”
  - a. He stated “from God our Father.”
  - b. God was Paul’s spiritual Father by virtue of the new birth and the spiritual Father of all who receive Christ through faith and baptism. (Gal. 3:26, 27).

## **COL 1:3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,**

1. “We give thanks to God” - Paul was a very thankful man and thankfulness was the attitude of those with Paul.
2. “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”
  - a. God is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
  - b. Jesus called God His “Father.” (Matt. 6:9; 10:32,33; Jn. 17:1).
  - c. The word “Father” does not mean “God the Father” was before Jesus, but the words “Father” and “Son” denote the close relationship between them.
  - d. This epistle makes it clear that Jesus is before all created things and is co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. (Jn. 17:5). See Col. 1:15-17.
3. “praying always for you” - The church at Colossae was in the prayers of Paul and other brethren. It is important that we pray for other Christians and congregations.

## **COL 1:4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;**

1. “since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus” - This is intended to be a compliment to these faithful brethren.
2. “and the love which you have for all the saints” - The word “all” is significant and indicates they were not partial in their love.
  - a. We are to love “all” those in our congregation.
  - b. We are to “love the brotherhood.” (1 Pet. 2:17).

- 1) Christians everywhere are our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 2) The New Testament reveals Christians were concerned for brethren everywhere - not just the local congregation.

**COL 1:5 because of the hope laid [stored] up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel,**

1. “because of the hope laid up for you in heaven” - Heaven is their and our home.
  - a. “Hope” stands for the great blessings God has prepared for His children.
  - b. These blessings will be enjoyed in heaven.
2. “of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel”
  - a. The word “gospel” means “glad tidings, good news.” The heart of the gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. (1 Cor. 15:3, 4).
  - b. It is defined here as “the word of truth.” The gospel is more than the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. All the teachings of Christ are a part of the gospel and must be taught and obeyed.

**COL 1:6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;**

1. “which has come to you” - The gospel had been preached at Colossae and many converts to Christ had been made.
2. “just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing”
  - a. The word of God is powerful and it will change those who receive it.
  - b. It had been very extensively preached. See Col. 1:23
3. “even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth”
  - a. The powerful word of God had produced much fruit at Colossae. See Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:21.
  - b. God’s grace had produced this change in their hearts and lives.

**COL 1:7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant [slave], who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf,**

1. “just as you learned it from Epaphras” - They had been taught by Epaphras, but not necessarily Epaphras alone.
  - a. “Epaphras” may be a contraction of Epaphroditus. (Phil. 2:25; 4:18).
    - 1) It is possible that “Epaphras” and “Epaphroditus” are the same person, but this is by no means certain.
    - 2) Epaphroditus is associated with the church at Philippi, and was the bearer of the epistle to the church there.
    - 3) The Bible indicates Epaphras was in prison (Phile. 1:23), but no mention is made of Epaphroditus being in prison. This seems to point to the fact we are dealing with two different people who had the same name.

- b. Paul describes him as a “beloved fellow bond-servant.” (Col. 1:7; 4:12).
- c. Some believe that he was the founder of the Colossian church based on the words “as you learned from Epaphras.”
- d. In Colossians 4:12 he is called “one of your number.”

COL 4:12 Epaphras, who is **one of your number**, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. Lit. “the” [one] of you.”

- e. The words seem to identify Epaphras as a fellow townsman of the Colossians.
- f. He was at this time with Paul in Rome and later mentioned in the letter to Philemon. (Phil. 1:23).

PHM 1:23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,

- 1) He was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment.
  - 2) Paul calls him “my fellow prisoner.” We do not know how long he had been a prisoner, or how long he had been away from Colossae.
  - g. There is no evidence he was the first bishop at Colossae or that he was a bishop [elder, shepherd] at Colossae.
- 2. “our beloved fellow bond-servant” - Paul has a great love for this great servant of God.
  - 3. “who is a faithful servant [minister] of Christ on our behalf”
    - a. The word “servant” comes from “diakonos” [dee **ah** kah nahs] meaning “minister, servant.”
    - b. He is described as a “faithful servant,” that is, one who faithfully served Christ for the benefit of others.
    - c. As a faithful minister of the gospel, he preached Christ and worked hard to strengthen the church.

**COL 1:8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.**

- 1. “and he also informed us of your love” - Epaphras had spoke of the love the brethren had for God and one another.
- 2. “in the Spirit” - Lit “in spirit”
  - a. Most understand the word “Spirit” here to refer to the Holy Spirit.
  - b. Words were not capitalized in the original, but capitalization is based on the use of a word in context.
  - c. “Love” is “the fruit of the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:22).
  - d. It is evidence or badge of discipleship. (Jn. 13:33,34).

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