

Colossians – Session One

Background

- Written by Paul from prison in Rome
- Written to address heresy (false teachings) coming into the church
- Colossae was in Asia Minor (Turkey) one hundred miles east of Ephesus
- Church was planted from Ephesus – Epaphras and Philemon were founders
- Epaphras brought the news to Paul in prison
- Paul wrote three letters: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon
- Church was primarily gentile
- Onesimus and Tychicus carried the letters back to the church
- Epaphras remained with Paul in Rome

The Problem – Gnosticism

Gnosis – to know

- Secret knowledge for and from the elite super spiritual aristocracy in the church
- A type of “new age” movement
- Mixture of eastern mysticism and Jewish legalism
- Fabricated traditions
- Matter was evil
- Astrology and angelic beings connected to heavenly bodies impacting life on earth (horoscope)
- Legalistic OT rules of dietary laws, works for approval, circumcision, etc.
- Teachings and ceremonial rituals brought one to spiritual perfection

These false teachers were:

- Denying the divinity of Christ
- Denying His finished work on the cross
- Denying His preeminence
- Attacked the person of Christ
- Denied the incarnation – come in the flesh
- Denied He was the Son of God
- Taught He was a great teacher but not Gods
- Denied that we have everything we ever would in “CHRIST ALONE”
- Taught we needed extra insight and special knowledge in addition to Christ

Gnostic Characteristics

- Embraced Jewish ceremonial laws in addition to grace
- Worship of angelic beings
- Bondage to traditions of men

- Exclusive knowledge that only they had – the privileged and the elect
- Syncretism – combination of eastern mysticism, Jewish law, pagan astrology, asceticism (matter or body was evil) combined with some Christianity.

Gnostics said Jesus was prominent not preeminent

Paul's Response – Letter to Colossians

- Jesus is sufficient
- Everything we need has already been provided by Jesus
- The Gospel message – 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
- Our Redemption – His blood on the cross
- Through creation – all made by Him, and for Him – Col 1:16-17
- Through the church

Chapter One – Christ's preeminence is DECLARED

- a. Gospel message
- b. Redemption
- c. Creation
- d. The Church

Chapter Two – Christ's preeminence is DEFENDED

- a. Beware of empty philosophies
- b. Beware of religious legalism
- c. Beware of fabricated traditions

Chapter Three and Four – Christ's preeminence is DEMONSTRATED – how we walk/live

- a. Personal purity
- b. Christian fellowship
- c. In the home
- d. In daily work
- e. In Christian witness
- f. In Christian service

Christology

- Visible form of the invisible God
- Prior head of all creation
- Universe created by Him
- Universe held together by Him
- Head of the church
- First born from the dead

Read Colossians 1:16-17

Read Colossians 1: 18-19

Gnostics want to DETHRONE Jesus and rob Him of His rightful preeminence.

Colossians 1: 1-14

V 1 to the saints

V 2 Praying for those he never met

V3 Giving thanks and praying

V 4 Faith in Jesus Christ – the key is faith in a person, not a system or knowledge

V 5 Hope for treasure laid up for you in heaven – based on gospel of truth – not secret knowledge

- Faith – past – looking upward toward God – Heb 11:6
- Love – present – looking outward toward others – 1 Corinthians 13:13
- Hope – future – looking forward to the future – Romans 5:5

V 6 Gospel which you heard is bearing fruit

V 7 Came through Epaphras

V 8 Love is the evidence of salvation

V 9 Knowledge, wisdom and understanding – gnostic words used against their heresy

- God's knowledge – given by the Holy Spirit - opposing secret knowledge
- God's wisdom – given by the Holy Spirit – opposing secret wisdom
- God's understanding – given by the Holy Spirit – opposing secret understanding

V 10 Waling the walk that pleases God

- Pleasing God
- Bearing fruit in good works
- Growing in the love and knowledge of God

V 11 You have everything you need already – power of Holy Spirit in us

- Patience
- Longsuffering (endurance)
- Joyfulness

V 12 We have an inheritance

V 13 We have deliverance from the dominion of darkness; translated into kingdom of Jesus

V 14 Redemption and forgiveness of sins in Him