

**The history**

- 500 BC Colossae was a prosperous city the centre of the local wool trade
- c200 BC Antiochus the Great settled c 2000 Jews from Mesopotamia & Babylonia to bring stability
- 133 BC Kingdom of Pergamum (inc. Colossae) given to Roman Senate and became a Roman State. Laodicea was capital – it increased, Colossae decreased and faded in significance  
(There has been no contemporary archaeological dig of the area)
- c30 AD Jews had travelled to Jerusalem for the harvest festival of Pentecost; in the crowd listening to Peter when the Holy Spirit inspired the first believers were some from Phrygia- region around Colossae (Acts 2:10).
- c60 AD Paul's letter to the church in Colossae

**The church**

The place seems insignificant. The planter would seem to have been Epaphras (1:7; 4:12, 13) who remained as overseer for the region. Paul lived for two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:10) yet never visited it. Nonetheless, amongst the many letters Paul wrote, this one is the Word of God

**The Occasion**

Paul wrote Colossians 'in chains' (4:18) but it is not certain where. It seems most likely he sent it with the letter to Philemon about Onesimus (4:9), plus Ephesians (Col 4:7-8 and Ephesians 6:21-22 have 32 identical Gk words). If written from Rome, it was about AD 60? Paul writes to a young church, mainly Gentile (non-Jew) (cf 1:21, 27; 3:5).

**The religious situation**

Despite the generally positive state of this church there was a challenge. No specific false teachers are mentioned. Scholars have 44 theories about what the problem was or might have been! This has led some to suggest that there was no one particular heresy. (Given that Scripture is God's Word, if it were important to know the particular heresy, you might expect it to be clear?!) If this is the case, it may have been that this young church was surrounded by all manner of spiritual views and teachings.

Contemporary religious life was a 'mishmash'. In this declining, unfashionable backwater of perhaps c 100,000 people, there were different strands. There was

- 1) The cult of the emperor. This demanded that any worship was permissible if it included that of the emperor
- 2) Local religions. Some of these had practices confusingly like the early church – the cult of Mithras had an initiation ceremony like baptism. Both Mithras were referred to as 'the Logos'. In fact Christians regarded it 'as a mockery of their own faith' (Henry Neil)
- 3) Jewish observance. There were probably a few thousand Jews locally. But, following hundreds of years of Jewish exile, local practice was very confused – a contemporary Jewish lady was an honorary ruler of the synagogue and a priestess of the imperial cult.

4) Greek philosophy. Many Greeks thought God was spirit, and good, while anything material, like the world and the human body, were to be shunned as evil. Both would have found the Incarnation, God becoming man, very puzzling!

### **The message ‘...Christ in you the hope of Glory’ (1:27)**

Paul’s desire is to ground the church in Jesus, stressing three things:

- a) **Jesus is God**  
The mystery, the fullness of the Godhead lived in him (1:19)
  
- b) **Jesus is sufficient**  
No religious discipline can bring you nearer to God (2:20-23)
  
- c) **Jesus is the authority for a Christian’s life (3:17)**  
Our whole lives are lived in Him and for Him

### **The subject - ‘Jesus’!**

- 1:1 - 14      Servants of **Jesus**
- 1:15 - 20    The Supremacy of **Jesus**
- 1:21 – 2:5    Suffering for/with **Jesus**
- 2:6 - 24     Dying with **Jesus**
- 3:1 - 4      Raised with **Jesus**
- 3:5 - 11     Life (- ve) in **Jesus**
- 3:12 -16     Life (+ve) in **Jesus**
- 3:17 - 4:1   Submitting to **Jesus**
- 4:2 - 6      Depending on **Jesus**
- 4:7-18      For followers of **Jesus**

### **Summary of (1:1-14)**

From an apostle of Jesus to the family of believers in Colossae bringing the grace of Jesus in the peace of Jesus (1, 2)

We are thankful to God for the love you have for fellow believers who share your hope of heaven having believed God’s Truth (3-5)

This is happening all over the world just as it did to you when you heard what Epaphras preached and he told us of the evidence of God’s love in you (6-8)

So, we constantly ask the Spirit to teach you so that you may be a credit to the Lord, growing in knowledge about God, in demonstrating the power of His glory, and in sharing His attributes of endurance, patience and joy as you thank him for enabling you to be part in His Kingdom. (9-12)

For He has rescued us for His kingdom by forgiving our sins (13,14)

**Main Point** Because of your evident faith in Jesus and love for His people we pray to God that you will know how to live and what He has done for you

**Key Verse** ‘For this reason .... We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His Will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding’ (9)

### **About God?**

- a) His nature and character?
  - 1      God’s will is supreme

