

STUDY PACK 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

“Historians tell us that Colosse was a celebrated city of _____, in _____, ‘a city _____, and _____.’ The historian Pliny tells us that Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were at the same time overwhelmed and destroyed by a great earthquake in the latter part of the reign of Nero, not long after this Epistle was written. Colosse recovered and was rebuilt. The ancient town is now extinct, but its site is occupied by a village called Chonas-or, as some spell it Khonas. The village is picturesque and beautifully situated in the valley near Mount Cadmus.

The village now situated where Colosse once stood is approached through beautiful country, rugged and wild. In the immediate neighborhood are several small communities, and among them can be found the ruins of arches, vaults, and giant squared stones. The ground is literally strewn with broken pottery which is often found near and around the ruins of these old Bible cities. Arches, vaults and pieces of broken pottery are all that now remains of the city of Colosse where the church was established, and to which Paul directed the Colossian Epistle.”

~~ Oliver B. Greene ~~

I. COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

The similarity between the two books has been commented on by many! Harry Ironside writes:

“No one familiar with the Pauline letters can fail to see that the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians are intimately linked. The apostle was anxious that both should be read by the same people. It is very likely that the letter “from Laodicea” referred to in Colossians 4:16 is really our Epistle to the Ephesians.

Some people who do not accept the inspiration of the New Testament have supposed that Colossians was a crude attempt to re-write Ephesians from memory, but a careful examination of both letters shows that the one is the correlative of the other.

Ephesians declares the great truth that was revealed to Paul and through him to all nations--the truth that he emphatically called the “mystery.” In that letter the apostle presented the church _____, just as in 1 Corinthians he set forth the responsibilities of the body down here on the earth. Ephesians of course does not overlook the importance of our responsibility on earth to fulfill our calling and demonstrate the unity of the Spirit. Doctrinally, however, the theme of that Epistle seems to be the body as the aggregate of believers from Pentecost to the rapture, all united to a risen Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Colossians, on the other hand, has to do with Christ as the Head of the body. This

Epistle seeks to fix the hearts of the saints on Him as risen and glorified, known no longer after the flesh but in resurrection as the Head of a new order. And the letter seeks to impress on believers their responsibility in this world to acknowledge Him as the Head of the body. So we might say _____ is the theme of Colossians.”

II. AUTHOR

The author is clearly Paul the apostle. The book was written while Paul was _____, as was Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. This makes the date around _____. Epaphras was bringing the epistle to the church at Colosse.

III. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE EPISTLE

J. Vernon McGee writes:

“A great civilization and a great population were in that area. It was more or less _____, to the East; it was called the gates of Phrygia. Here the east and the West met. Here is where the Roman Empire attempted to tame the East and to bring it under Roman subjugation.

Colosse was a great fortress city as were Laodicea, Philadelphia, Sardis, Thyatira, and Pergamum. All of these had been great cities of defense against invasion from the East. But by the time of Paul the apostle the danger had been relieved because the Roman Empire was pretty much in charge of the world by then. As a result, _____ and gross immorality at the time of Paul. And Colosse was typical of the great cities of that day.

As far as the record is concerned, Paul _____. After I visited the Bible lands, I could understand many things in Scripture that I had not understood before. Why didn't Paul visit Colosse? It seems that he did not come in through the gates of Phrygia, but instead he came in to the north of Colosse over at Sardis. Apparently, he took that Roman road to Ephesus and by-passed Colosse.

Even though Paul was never in the city of Colosse, he was the founder of the church there. Epaphras was the leader of the church, and he may have been the *direct* founder, but Paul founded the church at Colosse. He was the founder in very much the same way as he was the founder of the church at Rome: he touched multitudes of people in the Roman Empire who later gravitated to Rome and formed the church there. Paul may have visited Laodicea (although I doubt that very seriously), and believers may have come from there to Colosse. But _____ very definitely could have come to Colosse to form the nucleus of that church. Colosse is located just seventy-five to one hundred miles east of Ephesus.

Paul spent three years of ministry in Ephesus, two of them teaching in the school of Tyrannus. There was a tremendous civilization in that area-- _____

_____ was centered there. It was no longer centered in Greece which had pretty much deteriorated along with her philosophy and culture. But the Greek culture was virile in Asia Minor, the area known as Turkey today. It was in this area that Paul did his greatest work along with his co-workers. There were with him _____, _____, _____, _____, and apparently some of the other apostles. We know that the apostle John became the pastor at Ephesus later on.

Asia Minor was a great cultural center, but it was also a center for heathenism, paganism, and the mystery religions. There was already abroad that which is known as Gnosticism, the first heresy of the church.”

IV. INTERESTING NOTES

- A. Paul never _____.
- B. There a number of _____ and _____ words used in Greek in Colossians--often _____ words.
- C. Colossians is a “_____” a refutation of heresy. Christ is presented as _____.

V. WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST by JOHN NEWTON

“What think ye of Christ?” is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly _____:
As Jesus appears in your view--
As He is beloved or not,
So God is disposed to you,
And mercy or wrath is your lot.

Some take Him a creature to be--
A man, or an angel at most;
But they have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost.
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I durst not confide in His blood,
Nor on His protection rely,
Unless I were sure He is God.

Some call Him a Saviour, in word,
But mix their own works with His plan;
And hope He His help will afford,
When they have done all that they can:
If doing things prove rather too light
(A little they own they may fail),

They purpose to make up full wright,
By casting His name in the scale.

Some style Him “the pearl of great price,”
And say, He’s the fountain of joys;
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys.
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
And while they salute Him, betray:
Oh! What will profession like this
Avail in His terrible day?

If asked what of Jesus *I* think,
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, He’s my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store;
My Shepherd, my trust, and my Friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
My Hope from beginning to end,
My Portion, my Lord and my All.”