



Overview for Colossians

Purpose: To warn the believers at Colosse about false doctrines that were impacting them, and to show the believers that they had everything they needed in Christ.

Author: Paul

Date Written: About A.D. 60-62, during Paul's imprisonment in Rome

Setting: Colosse was a city of Phrygia that was situated between Laodicea and Hierapolis, about one hundred miles east of Ephesus, in a region that is now modern Turkey. Colosse has been extinct for well over eighteen hundred years; it is believed that an earthquake destroyed Colosse, and also Laodicea and Hierapolis. The city that was raised in the place of Colosse was called Konos, a name it bears today.

The church at Colosse was probably started during Paul's third missionary journey. It is not known whether or not Paul ever personally visited the church. He spent about three years teaching the Word of God in Ephesus, so the Christians from Colosse may have visited the church in Ephesus during Paul's stay.

Summary: While imprisoned in Rome, Paul heard that false doctrines were being introduced in the Colossian church. There was confusion among the believers, so Paul wrote this letter of authoritative instruction to refute the errors being brought to these first century Christians, and to establish them in the faith. Interestingly, he instructed the saints there to exchange letters (Colossians 4:16) with the church in Laodicea (the document now lost), each after having read it to their respective congregations.

The problem Paul was combating in the Colossian church was the early stages of Gnosticism, a heresy

that attacked Christianity in several basic ways.

Gnostics taught that:

- Christ was a created being, greater than man but less than God, thus stripping Him of His deity, which negated His propitiatory work at Calvary;
- Salvation was obtained through knowledge; and
- The body was evil.

In response to these heresies, Paul opens the epistle with the thought of establishing in the minds of the Colossians that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. With the deity of Christ firmly established, he attacks false philosophies that would threaten to undermine his opening theme. He speaks to them as if they were his children, reminding them to be "steadfast" and to take care "lest any man spoil [ruin] you," the words of a caring father figure.

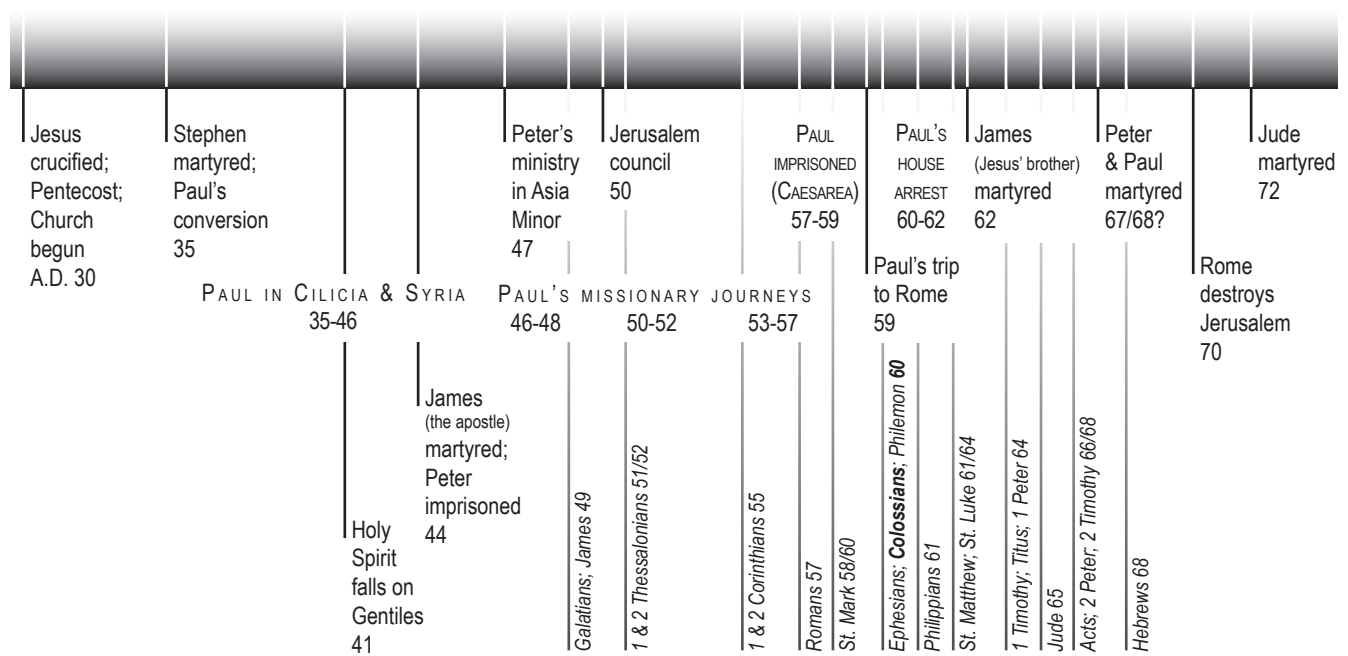
The Book of Colossians concludes with practical instructions on how people in various stages of their lives should behave toward another. Nearly everyone can find themselves in one of the groups of people mentioned in chapters 3 and 4.

Because the Book of Ephesians was written about the same time as Colossians, there are parallels between the two epistles. However, the emphasis in Ephesians is the Body (the Church) while the emphasis in Colossians is the Head of the Body (Jesus Christ). Ephesians focuses on the Church's oneness with Christ; Colossians considers the Church's completeness in Christ.

The message in the Book of Colossians was then, and still remains, one of the most loved among individuals and groups who desire to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.



Outline

Hannah's Bible Outlines used by permission per WORDsearch.
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1-14)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
 - C. Supplication (1:9-14)
- II. Doctrinal: the doctrine of those in Christ (1:15—2:3)
 - A. The person of Christ (1:15-18)
 - B. The work of Christ (1:19-2:3)
- III. Polemical: the defense of those in Christ (2:4—3:4)
 - A. Admonition of the believers (2:4-8)
 - B. Instruction for the believers (2:9-15)
 - C. Exhortation of the believers (2:16—3:4)
- IV. Ethical: the duties of those in Christ (3:5—4:6)
 - A. In the personal life (3:5-17)
 - B. In family life (3:18—4:1)
 - C. In prayer life (4:2-4)
 - D. In public life (4:5-6)
- V. Conclusion (4:7-18)
 - A. The commendation of Tychicus (4:7-9)
 - B. The greetings of friends (4:10-14)
 - C. The instructions of Paul (4:15-18)