

***“In Him you
have been made
complete.”***

Col 2:10



**Textual Studies
From Paul's
Letter To The
Colossians**

Prepared By Jeff Smith

“In Him you have been made complete.”

Textual Studies From Paul’s Letter To The Colossians

Lesson 1 – General Introduction

Overview

Sometimes when someone buys a product requiring assembling, a manufacturer will include the necessary “tool” to put it together. If the “tool” does the task of a screwdriver, it most likely won’t be the quality of one you find at the hardware store. However, it will be adequate to get the job done. If you were to read the instructions of such a purchase, you would find something like this phrase → *“All you need is included.”*

The statement *“You have all you need...”* might cause you to appreciate the manufacturer of a particular product you have purchased. More importantly, you’ll have the theme to one of the apostle Paul’s N.T. epistles → the letter to the **Colossians**.

When studying the N.T. epistles, one must remember he is reading someone else’s mail. Correspondence to others has a definite theme and purpose...why else does one write? Similarly, even though N.T. epistles are inspired from the mind of God, they are still letters. There is a “structure” or outline to them that must be grasped & seen. Most of Paul’s letters can be traced back to his journeys recorded in **Acts**. Having a familiarity of those places he visited & labored also helps us better understand the letters he wrote.

Even though we are separated by thousands of years and live in a culture unknown to 1st century people, studying any N.T. epistle is always good because the Scripture is *always* relevant. Those people had to do what we have done to obey the gospel. Like us, they struggled with temptation, sin, worldliness, religious error, etc. They needed encouragement or rebuke just like saints today. Whatever doctrine the Holy Spirit revealed to Paul to share with those Christians would also need to be used by the Lord’s disciples today to battle the same problems.

When an apostle or other inspired writer wrote to a local church of Christ, what most likely happened was the saints assembled together for a public reading after the courier arrived with the letter. This epistle confirms such a practice (**4:16**). This same verse also contains something not found in any other letter... local churches shared letters. Citing an unknown letter coming from the saints in Laodicea, their letter was to be read in Colossae while the Colossian epistle was to be read to the Laodicean Christians.

Colossians constantly hammers home the theme that whatever Christians need to serve God, it can be found in Christ...not only for this life, but also as they prepare for eternity. Nothing else is needed, and no one else can provide what only Jesus Christ can supply (**Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12**).

- ◆ He is the One who delivered us from Satan’s domain (**1:13; Heb. 2:14-15**)
- ◆ He is the image of the invisible God (**1:15; Jn. 14:9**)
- ◆ He is the One who created everything & holds it all together (**1:16-17; Jn. 1:3; Gen. 1-2**)
- ◆ He is the Head of the spiritual body, the church (**1:18; Mt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23**)
- ◆ He is the One who has reconciled lost man to God (**1:22; Rom. 5:1, 11**)

COLOSSIANS: Complete In Christ

Lesson 1

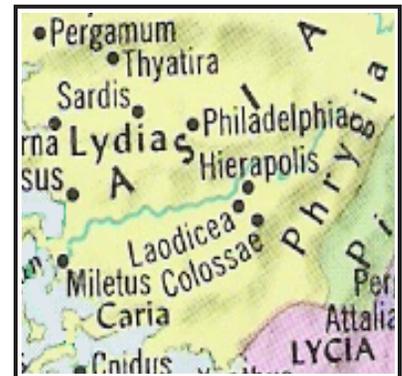
It is only “in Him” that certain blessings can be enjoyed, or certain truths can be realized.

- ◆ Only in Him can man be presented complete (1:28)
- ◆ Only in Him can the treasures of true wisdom & knowledge be found (2:3)
- ◆ Only in Him can man be protected from the emptiness of human wisdom (2:8)
- ◆ Only in Him does the fullness of Deity (*the Godhead*) dwell in bodily form (2:9)
- ◆ Only in Him does man have all he needs (2:10) [THEME VERSE]
- ◆ Only in Him can man reap the benefits of N.T. circumcision...baptism (2:11-12; Gal. 3:27)
- ◆ Only in Him is man free from being judged according to worldly standards (2:16-19)

Still today, man constantly searches the world over for the latest “new age religion” that will free his spirit and enlighten his understanding. If he doesn’t find what he is looking for, he usually invents his own. Man needs to stop his searching and come to the realization the answer he really needs has been here for 2,000 years. The answer is found in the simple N.T. religion of Jesus Christ.

Colossae The City

Though the city was in the Phrygian province, Rome recognized it as part of Asia. Modern-day Turkey now occupies what was once this small city. It was approximately 10 miles SE of Laodicea and 11 miles S of Hierapolis. These three cities formed a triangle facing westward toward the larger section of Asia Minor. They are mentioned together as Paul brings the epistle to a close (4:13).



Its prosperity mainly came from its wool & weaving activities. However, it was not as prominent as Laodicea or Hierapolis. It certainly paled in comparison to Ephesus, the coastal metropolis of Asia Minor. As time went on, her importance declined because the roads & trade routes shifted in a westward direction.

The saints in Colossae were different from most other churches to whom Paul wrote revealed epistles. Most are found directly or indirectly in Luke’s record in **Acts**...Colossae is the only one not mentioned. Judging from Paul’s words at **1:4** & **2:1**, we conclude he had not personally visited the city. While it is possible some of the first converts could have brought the gospel back from Jerusalem (**Acts 2:10**), it is almost certain that Epaphras should be credited with founding the church in Colossae (**1:7**). It would have been very easy for him to have gone there because of Paul’s efforts in Ephesus (**Acts 19:10**). He also appears to have labored with the churches in Laodicea & Hierapolis (**4:13**).

Occasion For The Epistle

Along with **Philippians**, **Ephesians**, & **Philemon**, **Colossians** is one of the “*Four Prison Epistles*” written by Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (**Acts 28:30-31**). Three times in the letter Paul refers to himself as a “prisoner” (**4:3**, **10**, **18**). With help from secular history re: dates when certain Caesars ruled, it is accepted that Paul’s 1st imprisonment was in the Winter of A.D. 62 or the Spring of A.D. 63.

COLOSSIANS: Complete In Christ

Lesson 1

The following bullet points help form the scenario prompting Paul to write the letter:

- ◆ Epaphras visits Paul in Rome, bringing information on the Colossian saints **(1:8)**
 - Perhaps the information Epaphras brought centered on the truths emphasized in the letter
 - Had someone come to Colossae with perverted man-made doctrines?
 - If so, the bullet points on the previous pages reflect Paul's efforts to encourage the Colossian Christians to stay true to Christ...they didn't anyone or anything else
 - Paul's letter would help the Colossians with overcoming such struggles
- ◆ For some unknown reason, Epaphras is himself imprisoned **(4:12; Phlm. 23)**
 - Usually, the one who brought news to Paul would carry an epistle back
 - Epaphras' imprisonment would prevent him from serving as courier to the Colossians
- ◆ The letter was carried back to Colossae by Tychicus & Onesimus **(4:7-9)**
 - They were also carrying the letter to the church at Ephesus **(Eph. 6:21-22)**
 - Onesimus, the runaway slave who was from Colossae, was carrying the personal letter Paul had written to his master Philemon

Other Noteworthy Features

Some information found in **Colossians** is not revealed anywhere else in the N.T.

- ◆ Mark is identified as Barnabas' cousin **(4:10; cp. Acts 13:5, 13; 15:37-39)**
- ◆ Luke is identified as a physician **(4:14)**
- ◆ Aristarchus is identified as Paul's "fellow prisoner" **(4:10)**
 - He had journeyed with Paul to Rome **(Acts 27:2)**
- ◆ Demas is faithful and is with Paul in Rome **(4:14; cp. Phlm. 24)**
 - He would later forsake Paul and return to the world **(2 Tim. 4:10)**
- ◆ Onesimus is identified as a Colossian **(4:9)**
 - This provides insight into the letter Paul wrote to Philemon **(Phlm. 8-18)**

Basic Outline

- A) Opening greetings and admonitions **(1:1-12)**
- B) Description of the Christ in Whom every man can be made "complete" **(1:13 – 2:23)**
- C) Instructions on how those who are "complete in Christ" should live **(3:1 – 4:6)**
- D) Closing personal remarks & final exhortations **(4:7-18)**