

INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

- I.** Authorship.
- A.** A Pauline authorship is mostly uncontested. Cf.Col.1:1,23; 4:18
 - B.** It is estimated that one-fourth of Colossians is found in Ephesians that is adequately and most easily explained as the –conscious or unconscious— working of the mind of the Apostle himself as he writes on similar themes.
 - C.** This view does not rule out the possibility of utilizing a transcriber (Timothy? Cf. Col.1:1) and validating its authenticity by including a salutation using his own penmanship (Col.4:18).
 - D.** That another penned his words itself accounts for any grammatical constructions otherwise not common in his own handwriting, yet maintains the integrity of oration.
 - E.** Other formal features of Colossians show similarities with other Pauline letters i.e., its structure of introduction (Col.1-2), conclusion (Col.4:18) and thanksgiving prayer (Col.1:3-8).
 - F.** Many grammatical expressions used in the letter show decidedly Pauline peculiarities of style:
 - a.** The superfluous use of καί (and) after διὰ τοῦτο (therefore) in 1:9 cf. 1The.2:13; 3:5; Rom.13:6, etc.
 - b.** In phrases like τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ (his saints) in 1:26 cf. 1The.3:13; 2The.1:10.
 - c.** Particular words such as the verb χαρίζομαι (forgive) in 2:13; 3:13 cf. 2Cor.2:7,10; 12:13.
 - d.** Similar theological terminology common in his writings such as the expressions “in Christ” (1:2,4,28), “in the Lord” (3:18,20; 4:7,17) or “with Christ” (2:12,20; 3:1,3).
 - G.** There is a direct connection between Colossians and Paul’s epistle Philemon as seen in the greetings being sent from essentially the same people. Col.1:1,7; 4:12-19 cp.Phil.1,23-24
- II.** Origin, date of writing and canonicity.
- A.** Colossians has been recognized as one of Paul’s prison epistles: Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians.
 - B.** Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians form a group by themselves.
 - C.** Col.4:7,8 and Eph.6:21,22 speak of Tychicus as a bearer of the two letters addressed to the local churches at Colossae and Ephesus.
 - D.** Tychicus had with him Onesimus as his companion on the journey to Colossae, the same slave Onesimus mentioned in the note to Philemon in Phm.10-12. cp.Col.4:9.
 - E.** Clearly Colossians and Philemon are designed to stand together in the group of four (above).
 - F.** Only the most negative reject the authenticity of Philemon as Pauline and canonical.

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- G.** The place of Archippus confirms the tie between the 2 letters as he is addressed in Col.4:17 to “fulfill his ministry” and appears in the letter to Philemon (Phm.2) as a member of Philemon’s household.
 - H.** The mass of early tradition fixes its origin in Rome (c.61-63 A.D) during his 1st imprisonment in Act.28:16ff.
 - I.** Its canonicity stands on good grounds.
 - J.** The later Church fathers accepted it: Irenaeus (c.120-170 A.D.), Tertullian (c.155-220 A.D.) and Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215 A.D.).
 - K.** There was no dispute over its authenticity in the first decades and appears to have been used as early as Justin Martyr (c.100-165 A.D.) and is included in the Marcion canonical list (c.144 A.D.) and Muratorian canon (c.170 A.D. listing 22 of the 27 NT books).
- III.** Background for the local church at Colossae and occasion for writing.
- A.** Colossae was a city of Phrygia on the Lycus River, one of the branches of the Meander. *See map of Colossae*
 - B.** It was 3 miles from Mt. Cadmus (8,013 ft.) standing at the head of a gorge where the two streams unite on the great highway traversing the country from Ephesus to the Euphrates Valley.
 - C.** It was overshadowed in importance by neighboring Hierapolis and Laodicea 13 and 10 miles away respectively.
 - D.** Paul never visited this church. Col.1:4; 2:1
 - E.** Epaphras, probably converting to Christianity under Paul at Ephesus (Act.19:10), was instrumental in evangelizing and organizing this local church (Col.1:7; 4:12).
 - F.** The church fell under Paul’s apostolic canon as he assumes a position of authority over them. Cp.Rom.11:13; 15:15-16
 - G.** Paul acknowledges that the church has been well instructed in doctrine (Col.2:6,7) and has every confidence in Epaphras as a faithful minister (Col.1:7).
 - H.** Epaphras had traveled to Rome and was willing to share Paul’s imprisonment for a time (Phm.23).
 - I.** This to update Paul with the progress of Christianity in the Lycus Valley and to solicit his counsel about a dangerous heresy that had arisen in Colossae.
 - J.** During Epaphras’ absence, Archippus was left in charge of the work at Colossae as mentioned in Col.4:17 and as it would apply to Philemon per Phm.2.
- IV.** The categories of heresy.
- A.** It’s attack against Christology.
 - a.** It is clear that false teaching in some way was detracting from the person of Christ as Paul places great emphasis on His preeminence. Col.1:15-19

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recorded in Hippolytus' Refutation of All Heresies (2nd century) and Epiphanius c.4th century

- f. The Essene's were largely known for their ascetic lifestyle and mysticism: Healers by means of herbs and incantations; above all servants of God; avoid sacrifice but intellectual to preserve the sanctity of life; contentment and frugality are the great riches in life; peaceniks; still observe the Sabbath; etc.
 - g. The heresy in question seems closer to Essenism than to a developed 2nd century Gnosticism, though parallels of esoteric philosophy exist.
 - h. Exclusivism seems to be the tendency of the false teachers, versus Paul's emphasis on the all-inclusiveness of Christianity.
- V. General outline:
- A. Introduction. 1:1-2
 - B. The nature of Christ's Person. 1:3-2:7
 - a. Thanksgiving prayer. 1:3-8
 - b. Intercessory prayer. 1:9-14
 - c. Christ as God the Son. 1:15-19
 - d. Christ as Reconciler. 1:20-23
 - e. Paul as Christ's minister of reconciliation. 1:24-29
 - f. Paul's concern for the Lycus Valley believers. 2:1-7
 - C. Christ's preeminence and the false teaching at Colossae. 2:8-3:4
 - a. Christ as sole sufficient. 2:8-15
 - b. The false practice as denial of Christ's Lordship. 2:16-19
 - c. The Colossian's misapplications as a contradiction to the CWL in Christ. 2:20-3:4
 - D. The correct Christian experience. 3:5-4:6
 - a. Spirituality vs. carnality (necessity of isolation of the STA). 3:5-17
 - b. Exhortation to wives, children, fathers and slaves. 3:18-25
 - c. Exhortation to masters; as to prayer and witness. 4:1-6
 - E. Conclusion. 4:7-18
 - a. Commendation of Messengers. 4:7-9
 - b. Paul's associates sent greetings. 4:10-14
 - c. Request to extend greeting to other local churches on his behalf and to exchange doctrinal letters. 4:15-16
 - d. Exhorting Archippus to stay the course in ministry. 4:17
 - e. Paul's personal handwriting validating the epistle. 4:18

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