

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

LESSON TEN = *The Church in Colosse*
Bible Class Series by Ray Reynolds (3/9/11)

Introduction: Each of the congregations in the New Testament had unique features and characteristics. They all had qualities we can learn from and use to better our own congregations today. In this lesson we are going to consider the church in Colosse. Let's study together

Discussion:

I. The Geography of Colosse

The city of Colosse was located in the southwest region of Phrygia.

* It was in the Lycus Valley next to the Lycus River.

The city is about three miles from Mt. Cadmus which stood at around 8,013 feet high.

The city was in the middle of an important trade and military route from east to west.

The neighboring cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea were important in Biblical times.

* Colosse was 13 miles from Hierapolis and 10 miles from Laodicea.

II. The History of Colosse

The name "Colosse" (Kolossai or Colossae) means "punishment."

* It was the birthplace of the Byzantine Greek writers Nicetas and Michael Choniates.

It's history is associated with two other ancient cities (Hierapolis and Laodicea).

* This area was the location of some important events and battles throughout history.

* There was a diverse culture of religious people in this area.

Josephus wrote that Antiochus the Great transported 2,000 Jewish families to this region.

* The district of Laodicea was very large and had a high Jewish population.

These Jewish men would have been heavily influenced by the pagan culture and environment.

* The people in the tri-cities practiced the worship of angels.

The city continued to face trouble for several centuries, living up to its name.

* During the 7th and 8th centuries the city was overrun by the Saracens.

* In the 12th century the church was destroyed by the Turks and then virtually disappeared.

* The town was abandoned and probably hit by an earthquake (Chonae; now called Chonas).

In Paul's day the city was well-known for its "colossinus" wool.

III. The Beginning of the Church in Colosse

The congregation has little historical/biblical precedent before Paul's letter.

Paul may never have even visited this church in person (**Colossians 1:1-4, 2:1**).

The work was well established before Paul wrote to them (**Colossians 4:12-13, Revelation 1:11, 3:14**)

We are unsure as to who may have planted the church in Colosse.

* The church may have been established by Timothy (**Colossians 1:1**).

* The church may have been established by Epaphras (**Colossians 1:7, 4:12-13**).

* Phrygians were present on Pentecost and may have come back with the gospel (**Acts 2:10**).

We know that this was the home congregation of Philemon and Epaphras.

Paul sent Tychicus and Onesimus to visit the brethren (**Colossians 4:7-9**).

IV. The Work of the Church in Colosse

The church was led by a Gentile preacher.

* The fact that the evangelist was a Gentile must have effected its outreach.

* Colossians Jews were not as conservative as those in Jerusalem, nor as liberal as Samaritans.

The congregation would have struggled with the Jew vs. Gentile issue as a church and community.

* Jewish proselytes would have also been an issue in this day.

The letter from Paul is very intriguing and challenging to all who read it.

* The letter deals with a lot of heretical teaching that influenced the church there.

Many scholars are fascinated by the Colossian heresy that effected the work in this city.

Paul commands them to read the letter to the Laodiceans (**Colossians 4:15-16**).

V. The Letter to the Church in Colosse

The following outline could be used for Colossians:

I. THE SUPREME CHRIST (1:1-29)

- A. *The Followers of the Supreme Christ (1:1-8)*
- B. *The Church of the Supreme Christ (1:9-18)*
- C. *The Reconciliation of the Supreme Christ (1:19-23)*
- D. *The Preaching of the Supreme Christ (1:24-29)*

II. THE SUPREME GOSPEL (2:1-23)

- A. *Be United in the Gospel (2:1-5)*
- B. *Be Watchful in the Gospel (2:6-9)*
- C. *Be Free in the Gospel (2:11-17)*
- D. *Be Firm in the Gospel (2:18-23)*

III. THE SUPREME LIFE (3:1-4:1)

- A. *A Life of Seeking Things Above (3:1-4)*
- B. *A Life of Putting Things Off (3:5-11)*
- C. *A Life of Putting Things On (3:12-17)*
- D. *A Life of Right Relationships (3:18-4:1)*

IV. THE SUPREME FELLOWSHIP (4:2-18)

- A. *The Fellowship of Prayer (4:2-4)*
- B. *The Fellowship of Life (4:5-6)*
- C. *The Fellowship of Service (4:7-14)*
- D. *The Fellowship of Teaching (4:15-18)*

Anyone have a favorite verse from Colossians they want to share?

VI. The Dilemmas of the Church in Colosse

The influence of false teaching and false teachers (**Colossians 2:6-7**).

The elements of the Colossian heresy included:

* The wisdom or philosophy of men that was supposed to be superior (**Colossians 2:8-10**).

* The binding of religious practices (**Colossians 2:11-15**).

* The observance of religious feasts and festivals (**Colossians 2:16-17**).

* The practice of food and drink restrictions (**Colossians 2:16, 18, 21-23**).

* The influence of angel worship (**Colossians 2:18**).

* The belief in visions and supernatural experiences (**Colossians 2:18**).

Paul encourages the church to be faithful.

VII. The Maturity of the Church in Colosse

The church was educated on who the real "mature ones" were (**Colossians 1:28**).

The church understood the power of God's plan of redemption (**Colossians 1:20-24**).

The church could rightly distinguish the wisdom of God (**Colossians 4:2-6**).

The church accepted their new law and new life (**Colossians 2:14-15, 3:1-17**).

The church matured under good spiritual leadership (**Colossians 4:12-14**).

Conclusion: God clearly blessed the church in Colosse. We can see that history shows the wisdom and providence of God throughout the New Testament. We should trust Him to provide direction for the church today. It is my prayer that by studying about these wonderful congregations of the Lord's people that we will see our place in the kingdom. Next week we will begin our study of Ephesus.