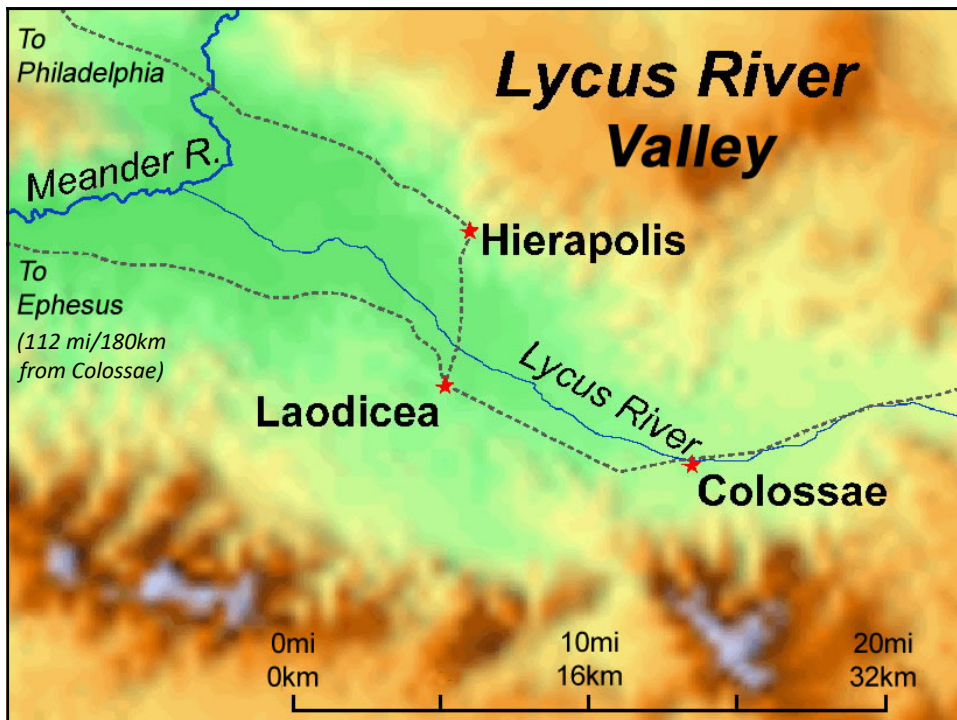
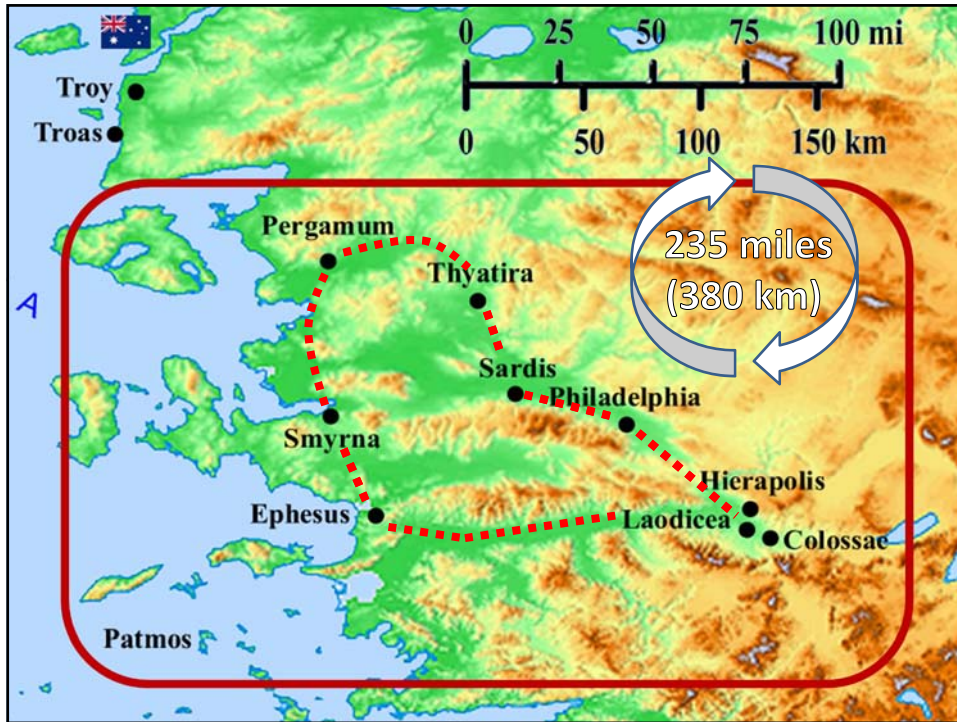


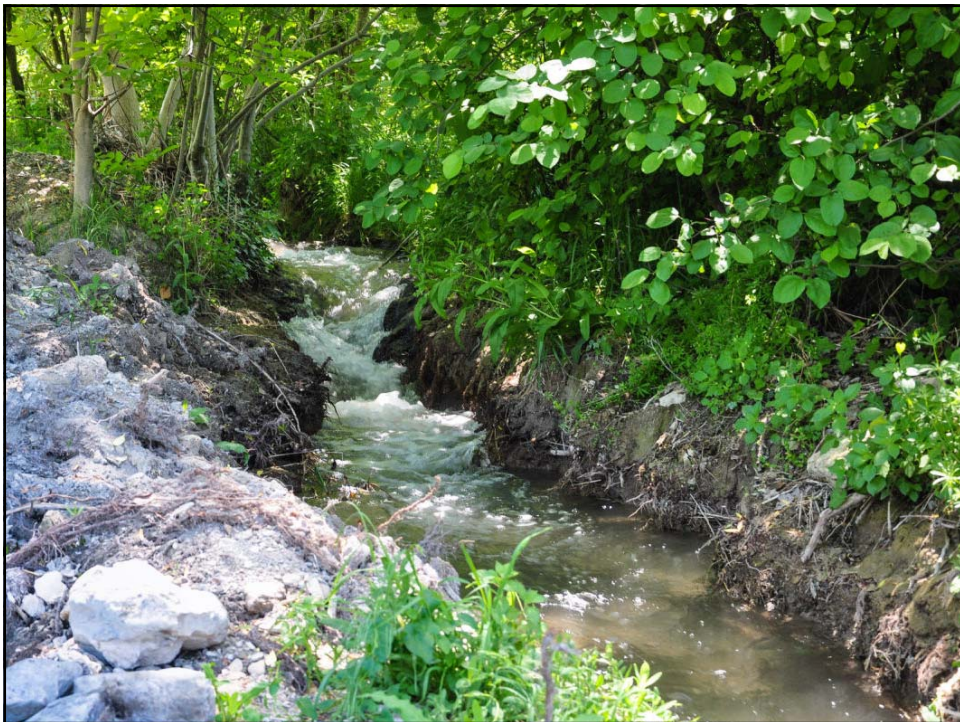
Colosse / Colossae

- Paul wrote two letters to Colosse, Colossians and Philemon.
- A large city in the 5th century B.C., it had lost some of its importance by the first century A.D. Possibly it was bypassed by Laodicea.
- It was an international town on the Royal Road – a pluralist town with many different religions: animism (worship of natural spirits), astrology (from Persia), Greek and Roman idols, mystery religions (gnostic religions), Judaism (away from its roots it becomes less moral and more intellectual).
- Paul evidently never visited the city (Col 1:9; 2:1), but his colleague Epaphras brought the gospel message to the three cities of the Lycus Valley: Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis.
- Paul hoped to visit Colosse, for he requested Philemon to prepare a lodging for him in anticipation of a visit (Phil 1:23).









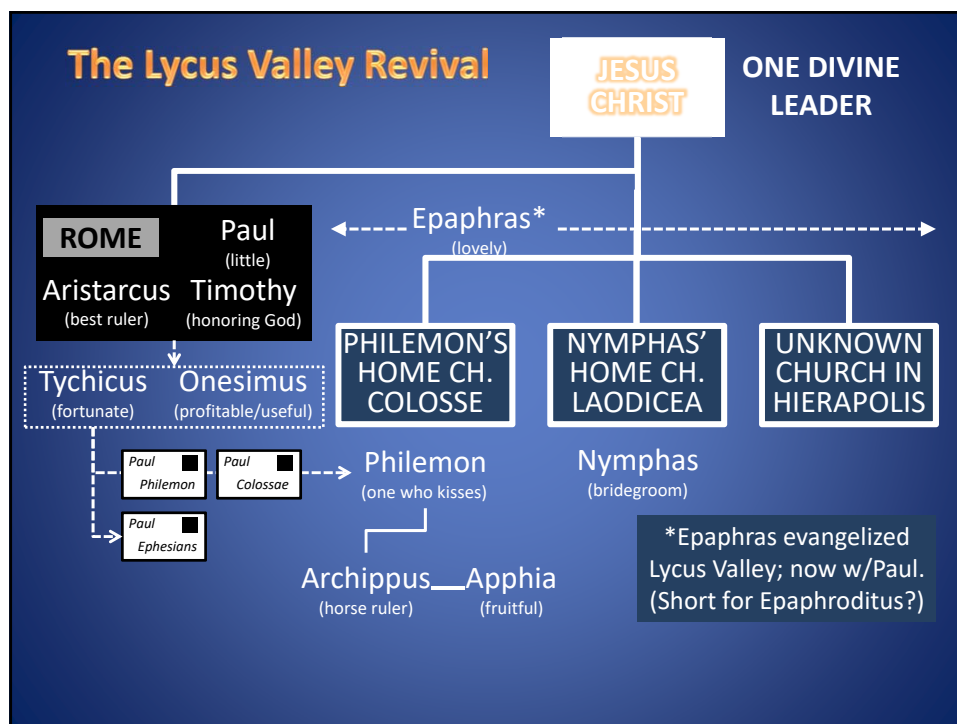
Who wrote Colossians?

- The Apostle Paul wrote the letter in Rome while under house arrest (Acts 28:30) in around AD60.
- Colossians is one of the four **Prison Epistles**, letters Paul wrote from his two year stay under house arrest in Rome. They are:
 - Colossians,
 - Ephesians,
 - Philippians, and
 - Philemon.
- During a second Roman incarceration which ended with his execution, Paul wrote the **Pastoral Epistles**: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.



To whom was Colossians written?

- The Epistle is addressed "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse."
- Colosse was situated on the river Lycus, a tributary of the Maeander. Laodicea is 8 mi (13 km) to the west and Hierapolis, 13 mi (21.5 km) to the northwest.
- Colosse was never so large or wealthy as either of the other cities, but was spoken favourably by:
 - Herodotus notes it as a resting place for Xerxes' army.
 - Xenophon his account of the expedition of Cyrus the Younger.
- Later its two neighbours overshadowed it and it fell into decline. Its ruins were only recently identified.
- It is one of two biblical cities yet to be excavated.



Why was Colossians written?

- Some taught Christ is neither central nor supreme.
- The Colossian heresy undermining the brethren, was probably an early stage of gnosticism.
- Experts can't agree on what specific error had got in. It was apparently what we call "New Age" today, not a specific religion or organisation *per se*, but a mood, a mixture of outside faiths into Christianity.

When you mix outside faiths with Christianity, it is no longer Christianity. All kinds of things creep in.

Syncretism turns Christianity into a religion!

- In such a mixture, Christ loses His pre-eminence.
- In religion, belief is reduced.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT MEANT
TO BE A RELIGION

(Man's way to get closer to God)

JESUS DIDN'T COME TO START A
RELIGION. HE CAME TO OFFER A
PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.

(God's way to get closer to Man)

The paradox of Christianity

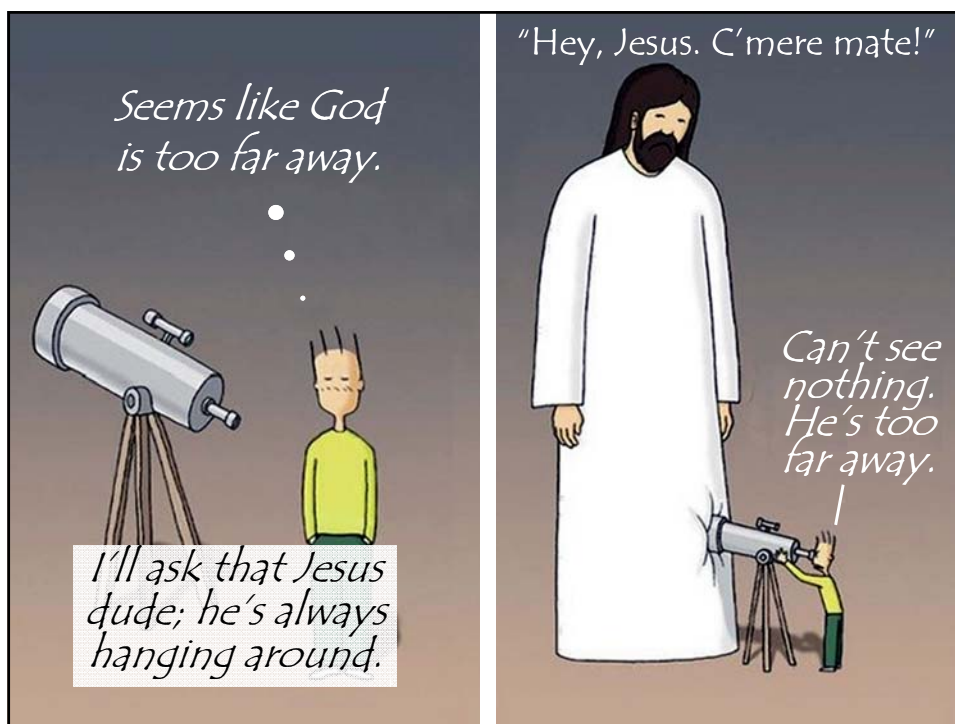
● God is transcendent

He is far above us and far from us.
Greater than the universe; beyond all possible limits.

● God is immanent

He is near to us (nearer than breathing).
Existing or operating within; indwelling.

To forget either side is to lose
the Christian belief in God.



A problem in Colosse – reduced belief

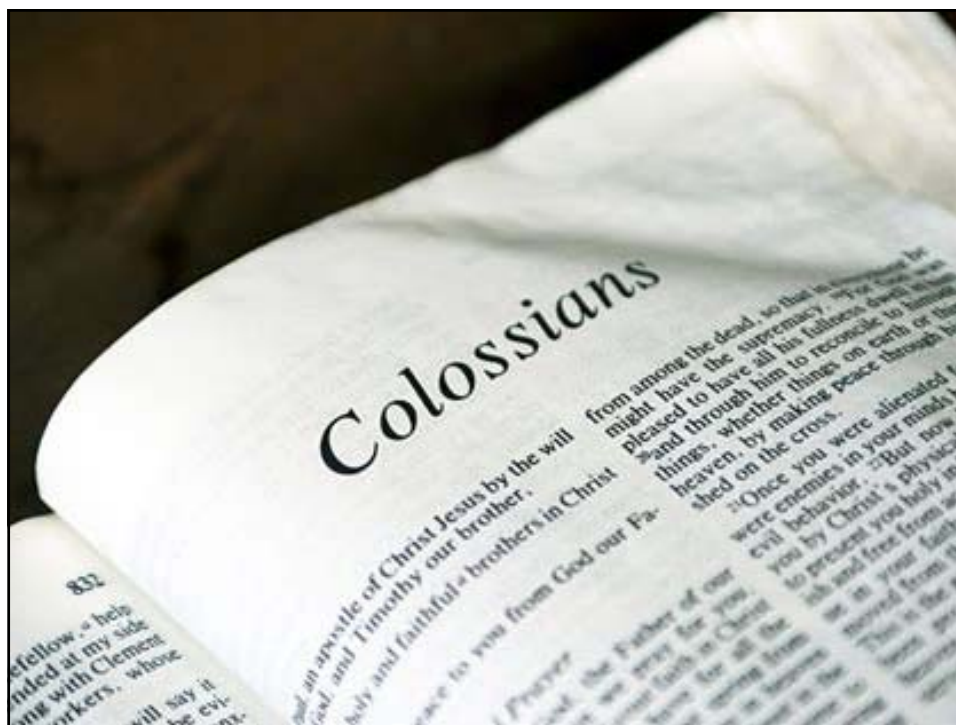
- They focused on the transcendence of God so much that they lost the pre-eminence of Christ, and He started being seen as a creature, not the Creator.
- Without a preeminent Christ at close at hand, the transcendent God seemed a long ways off...
- ... their sense of God being with them was being lost...
- ... so **they filled the space** with bits and pieces from other religions. And each new bit had **rules**.
- The result was a new, customised religion that only had a resemblance to Christianity.

Typical Gnostic belief

- God is holy.
- Matter is evil.
- Between spirit and matter is a huge gulf.
- Since a truly holy God can't span the gap, He created a bunch of intermediate beings.
- So where does Christ fit, if at all?????

Another problem – regulated behaviour

- **Ritualistic:** observed a church calendar (non-Christian, church calendars, liturgies, etc. today are largely of pagan origin)
- **Ascetic:** preached abstinence of body
- **Mystic:** Jewish ritualism +Eastern mysticism.
- **Moralism** – being a “good” person (individual or corporate)
 - [Get to heaven]
 - [Be respected]
 - [Get promoted]
- **Self-interest**—do good in order to... [Feel good], etc.
- **Comparison** – the heart of religious “worth”



The epistle to the Colossians (NKJV)

Greeting

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ²To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Their Faith in Christ

³ We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; ⁷ as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸ who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

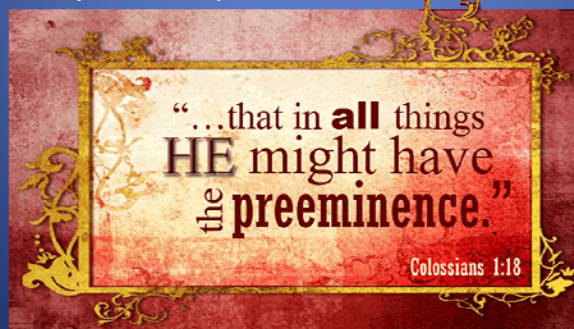
Preeminence of Christ

⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

1 ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

2 CREATOR

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.



Reconciled in Christ (who conquered death)

3 X D E A T H

¹⁹ For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace **through the blood of His cross**.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

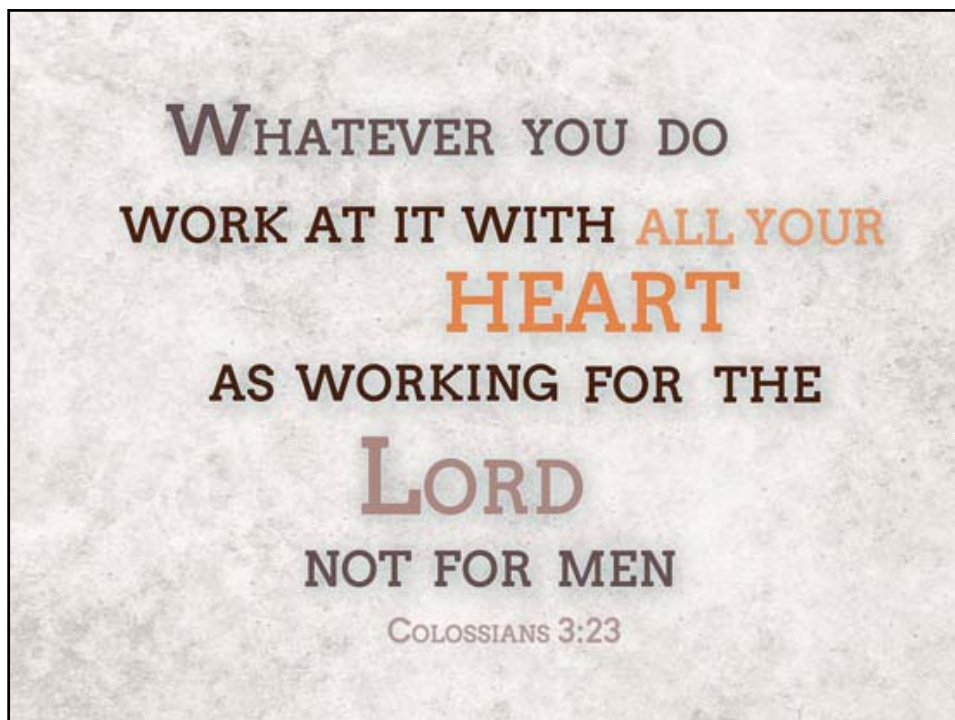
²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Sacrificial Service (Christ controls the church)

4 C H U R C H

²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.



Christ's Pre-eminence Defended

- In the Gospel message (Col. 1:1–12)
- In redemption (Col. 1:13–14)
- In Creation (Col. 1:15–17)
- In the church (Col. 1:18–29)

Colossians Chapter 2

Not Philosophy but Christ

1 T R U T H

¹ For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴ Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. ⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

2 E R R O R

⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ **For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;** ¹⁰ **and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**

¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

2 E R R O R

¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.

²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— ²¹ “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” ²² which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Christ's Pre-eminence Declared

Beware of:

- Empty philosophies (Col. 2:1–10)
- Religious legalism (Col. 2:11–17)
- Man-made disciplines (Col. 2:18–23)

Warnings

Lest any one beguile you (Col 2:4);

Lest any man spoil you (Col 2:8);

Let no one judge you (Col 2:16,17);

Let no one cheat you (Col 2:18,19);

Let no one enslave you (Col 2:20-23).

Paul condemned

- **Gnosticism**
 - Claimed philosophic deeper wisdom (knowledge = gnosis).
- **Legalism**
 - Salvation comes from living a holy life by following rules.
- **Mysticism** (visions, angels, astrology, chants, etc.)
 - Man can experience a higher level of spirituality; people who allegedly achieve it claim high status and even reverence.
- **Asceticism** (“voluntary humility”)
 - Salvation comes through self-abasement, self-denial, self-discipline
- **A fleshy mind** (religious pride)
 - Acted spiritual but lived carnally; factions; tolerant of error.

SO WHAT'S
THE
SOLUTION?

EMBRACE THE
SIMPLICITY OF
JESUS CHRIST!

Colossians Chapter 3

Not Carnality but Christ

¹ If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

Character of the New Man

¹² Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
 Colossians 3:17

The Christian Home

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.
²⁰ Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.
²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.
²² Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. ²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Colossians Chapter 4

¹ Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Christian Graces

² Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³ meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, ⁴ that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. ⁶ *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Final Greetings

⁷ Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.

⁸ I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, ⁹ with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

¹² Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. ¹⁵ Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house.

Closing Exhortations and Blessings



¹⁶ Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

¹⁷ And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

¹⁸ This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

Christ’s Pre-eminence Demonstrated

- In personal purity (Col. 3:1–11)
- In Christian fellowship (Col. 3:12–17)
- In the home (Col. 3:18–21)
- In daily work (Col. 3:22–4:1)
- In Christian witness (Col. 4:2–6)
- In Christian service (Col. 4:7–18)

RELIGION=RULES

JESUS=FREEDOM

Being then made free from sin,
ye became the servants of righteousness.

Romans 6:18

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith
Christ hath made us free, and be not
entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Galatians 5:1

“Religion” versus “The Way” (True Christianity)

Religion

- If I obey, I am accepted
- If I’m good, God will love me
- People are either good or bad
- The focus is what I do or don’t do
- Religion produces pride and despair
- Motivated by fear

The Way

- I am accepted so I obey
- I’m not good, but Jesus loves me anyway
- People are repentant or not repentant
- The focus is on Jesus and what He did/does/will do
- The Way produces humility and confidence
- Motivated by love

The solution: a relationship with Christ

- All divine fullness in the Eternal Christ

- a. **CREATOR** of the universe
- b. **CONQUEROR** of the powers
- c. **CONTROLLER** of the church

- All human focus on the Exalted Christ

- a. **PURITY** in the passions
 - b. **CHARITY (LOVE)** in the assembly
 - c. **HARMONY** in the home
- Wives/husbands
 - Children/parents
 - Slaves/masters