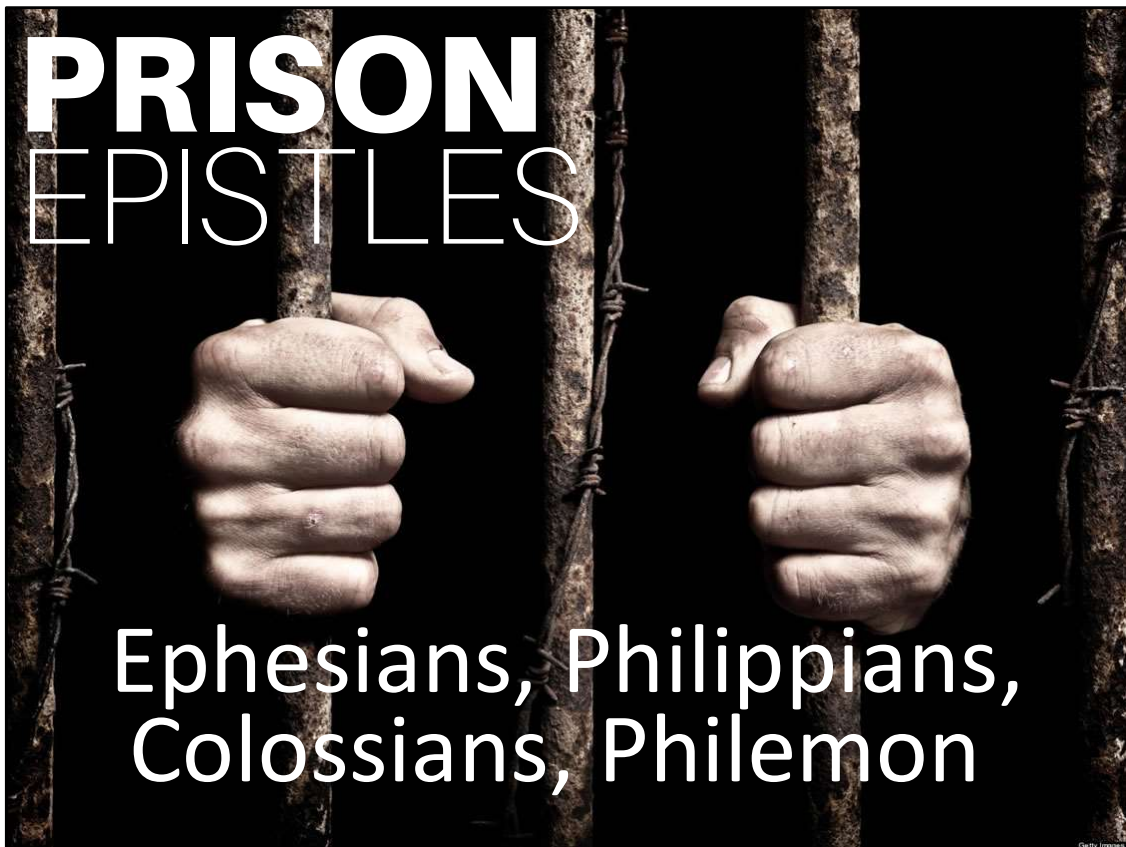
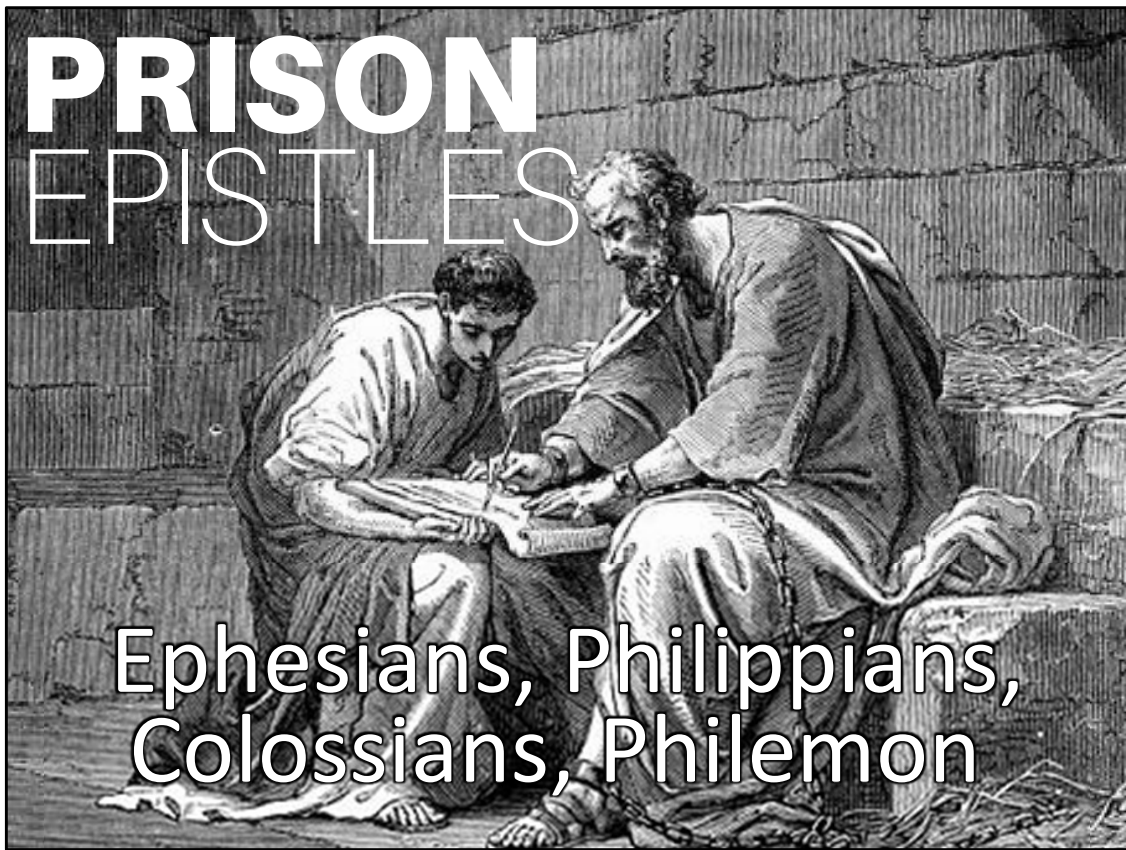


Bishop Lightfoot states in his classic commentary that “Without doubt Colossae was the least important church to which any epistle of St. Paul is addressed.” Centuries earlier, Colossae had been “a great city of Phrygia” but it was in the twilight of its influence and importance when Paul wrote to Philemon and Apphia’s house-church there. And yet the message to Colossae with Paul’s highest Christology, has become amazingly relevant in the twenty-first century. With modern scientific studies probing everything from subatomic particles to deepest space, Christians are called to relate Jesus Christ to the ultimate frontiers. This 2,000 year-old letter, which presents Christ as the architect and sustainer of the universe and the reconciler of all things, both earthly and heavenly, provides the answers. Suddenly this letter to a little flock in a declining city has become perhaps the most contemporary book in the New Testament.



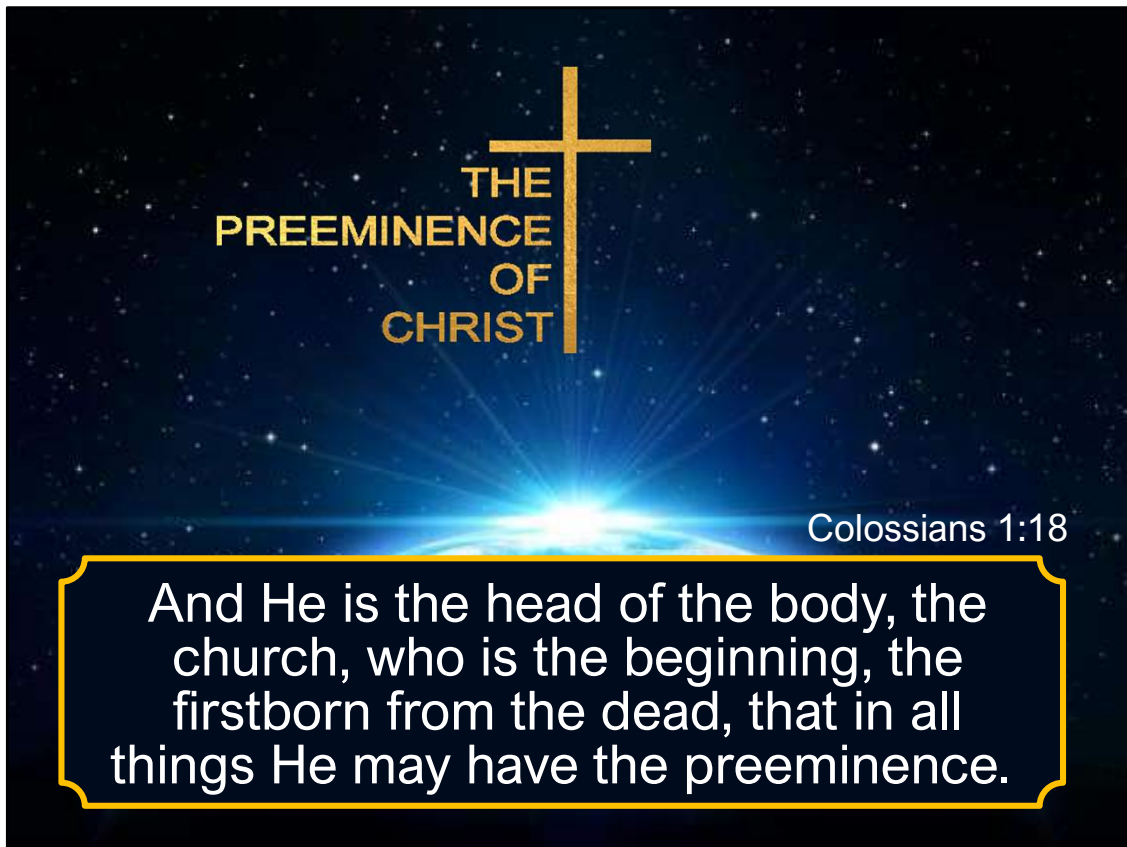
The apostle Paul wrote four of the 27 New Testament letters during his time under house arrest in Rome between approximately 60—62 AD. Each letter — Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon — is addressed to a specific church or, in the case of Philemon, an individual. While each epistle addresses the specific needs of first-century Christians, the message of each is still relevant today. For example, there are many parallels between Ephesians and Colossians, but the emphasis in Ephesians is on the church, the body of Christ, but the emphasis in Colossians is on Christ, the Head of the body.



Epaphroditus visited Paul in Rome with concerning news about the Colossian ekklesia. In the five years of its existence, false teaching and heresy had taken root there, which involved a combination of Greek speculation, Oriental mysticism, and Jewish legalism, all of which devalued Jesus Christ as the ultimate authority in matters of faith. Paul wrote to the Colossians to refute this heresy and encourage believers to continue in their faith grounded in Christ alone.

In this letter, Paul actually used the vocabulary of the false teachers, but he did not use their definitions. He used these words in their true Christian meaning. As we study Colossians, we will find words such as fullness, perfect, and complete, all of which were used by the gnostic heretics. He also wrote about wisdom, which was a key term in the gnostic vocabulary; and he had a great deal to say about angels and spirit powers too.

Tychicus and Onesimus carried Paul's letters to Ephesus, Colossae, and Philemon to their destinations, while Epaphroditus delivered the letter to Philippi.



The theme of Colossians is that Jesus Christ is preeminent. The gospel message heralds the supremacy, headship, and the sole sufficiency of Christ to the church, which is His body. This little book shows Paul's "full-length portrait of Christ." There is no need to worry about angelic mediators or spiritual emanations. God has sent His Son to die for us! Every person who believes on Jesus Christ is saved and is a part of His body, the church, of which He is the Head. Believers are united to Christ in a wonderful living relationship! Furthermore, nothing need be added to this relationship, because each believer is "complete in him." All of God's fullness dwells in Christ, and each believer shares that fullness!

Charles Wesley wrote from it: *Thou, O Christ, art all I want, More than all in Thee I find.*

[CLICK] The Key verse is Colossians 1:18 "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 preeminence."

Outline

Doctrine: Christ's Preeminence Declared (Colossians 1)

- A. In the gospel message—1:1-12
- B. In redemption—1:13-14
- C. In creation—1:15-17
- D. In the church—1:18-23
- E. In Paul's ministry—1:24-29

Danger: Christ's Preeminence Defended (Colossians 2)

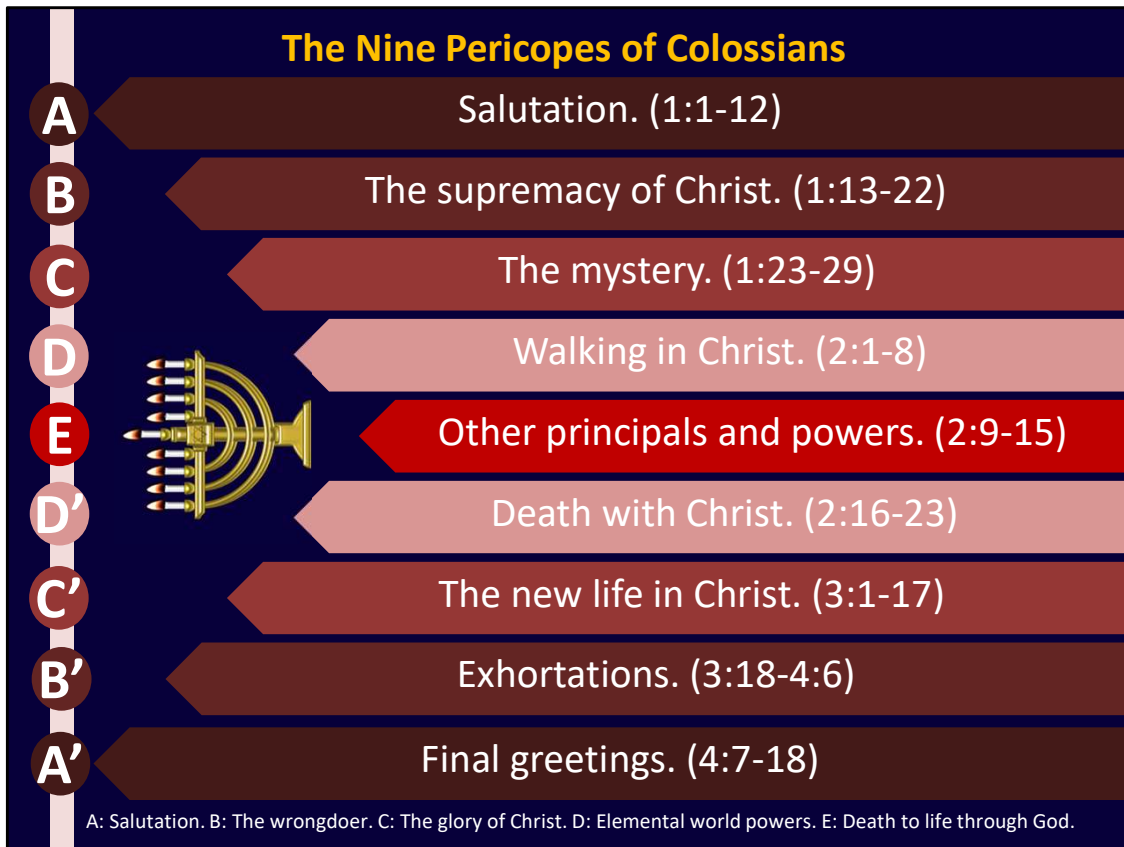
- A. Beware of empty philosophies—(2:1-10)
- B. Beware of religious legalism (2:11-17)
- C. Beware of man-made disciplines (1:18-23)

Duty: Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated (Colossians 3-4)

- A. In person purity—3:1-11
- B. In Christian fellowship—13:12-17
- C. In the home—3:18-21
- D. In daily work—3:22-4:1
- E. In Christian witness—4:2-6
- F. In Christian service—4:7-18

This relatively brief letter has a three-fold message:

- In the first doctrinal portion, Paul declares Christ's preeminence. **[CLICK]** Paul did not begin by attacking the false teachers and their doctrines. Chapter 1 exalts Jesus Christ and showing His preeminence in five areas: the gospel message, redemption, creation, the church, and Paul's own ministry.
- **[CLICK]** He then addresses the danger that has arisen in Colossae and defends Christ's preeminence. **[CLICK]** Paul attacks the heretics on their own ground, exposing the false origin of their teachings and showing how their teachings contradict everything Paul taught about Jesus Christ. The believer who masters this chapter is not likely to be led astray by some alluring and enticing "new-and-improved brand of Christianity."
- **[CLICK]** Finally, Chapters 3 and 4 applies the preeminence of Christ to the daily affairs of life. **[CLICK]** The greatest antidote to false teaching is a godly life, but what we believe determines how we behave. Wrong doctrine **always** leads to wrong living, so right doctrine should lead to right living.



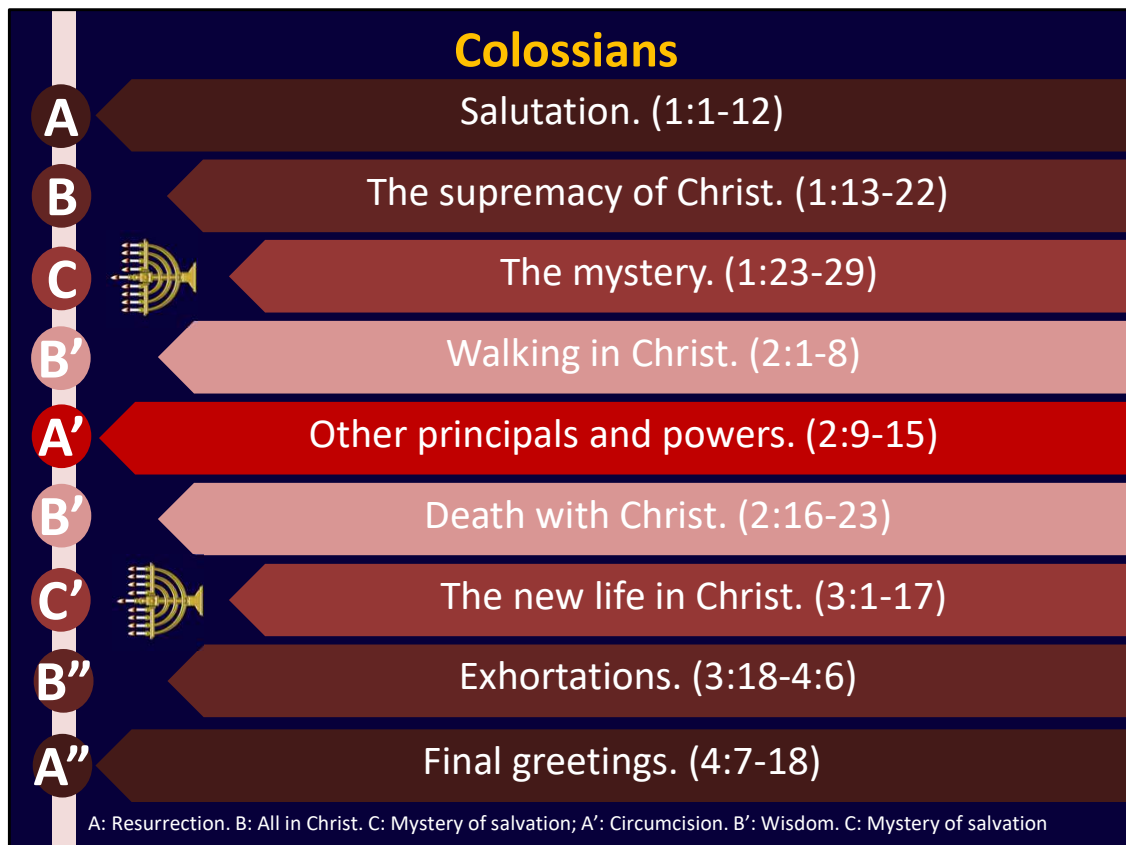
The letter consists of nine pericopes, or thought bubbles, which form a balanced chiasm, or menorah literary structure.

The Nine Pericopes of Colossians

Former half	Relation	Latter half
Salutation (1:1-12) grace to you and peace from God our Father. (1:2)	Salutation	Final greetings (4:7-18) Grace be with you. (4:18)
The supremacy of Christ (1:13-22) And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind because of evil deeds (1:21)	The wrongdoer	Exhortations (3:18-4:6) For the wrongdoer will receive recompense for the wrong he committed, and there is no partiality. (3:25)
The mystery (1:23-29) to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. (1:27)	The glory of Christ	The new life in Christ (3:1-17) When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. (3:4)
Walking in Christ (2:1-8) See to it that no one captivate you with an empty, seductive philosophy according to human tradition, according to the elemental powers of the world and not according to Christ. (2:8)	The elemental powers of the world	Death with Christ (2:16-23) If you died with Christ to the elemental powers of the world, why do you submit to regulations as if you were still living in the world? (2:20)
Other Principalities and Powers (2:9-15) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (2:9-10)		

This is another way to show the chiasmic structure. It adds a little bit more information by selecting the most relevant verse(s) from the pericope to summarise its main thought. As you can see, both salutation and final greetings focus on grace, a concept near and dear to Paul who knew that he could only be saved by God's grace.

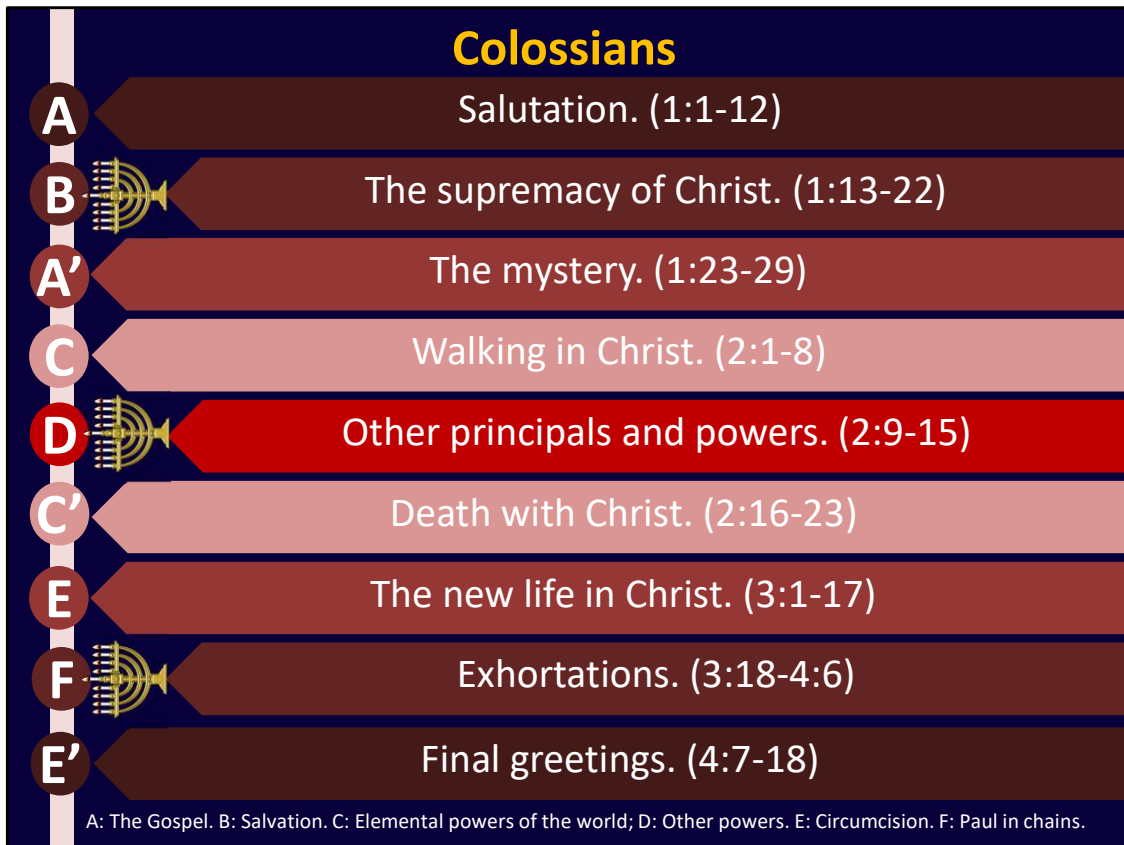
Because Colossians is written to remind the local believers what they were initially taught about Christ's preeminence, and because the Colossian heresy apparently attacks that very concept, the centrepiece of the book confirms that Christ is preeminent over all principalities and powers.



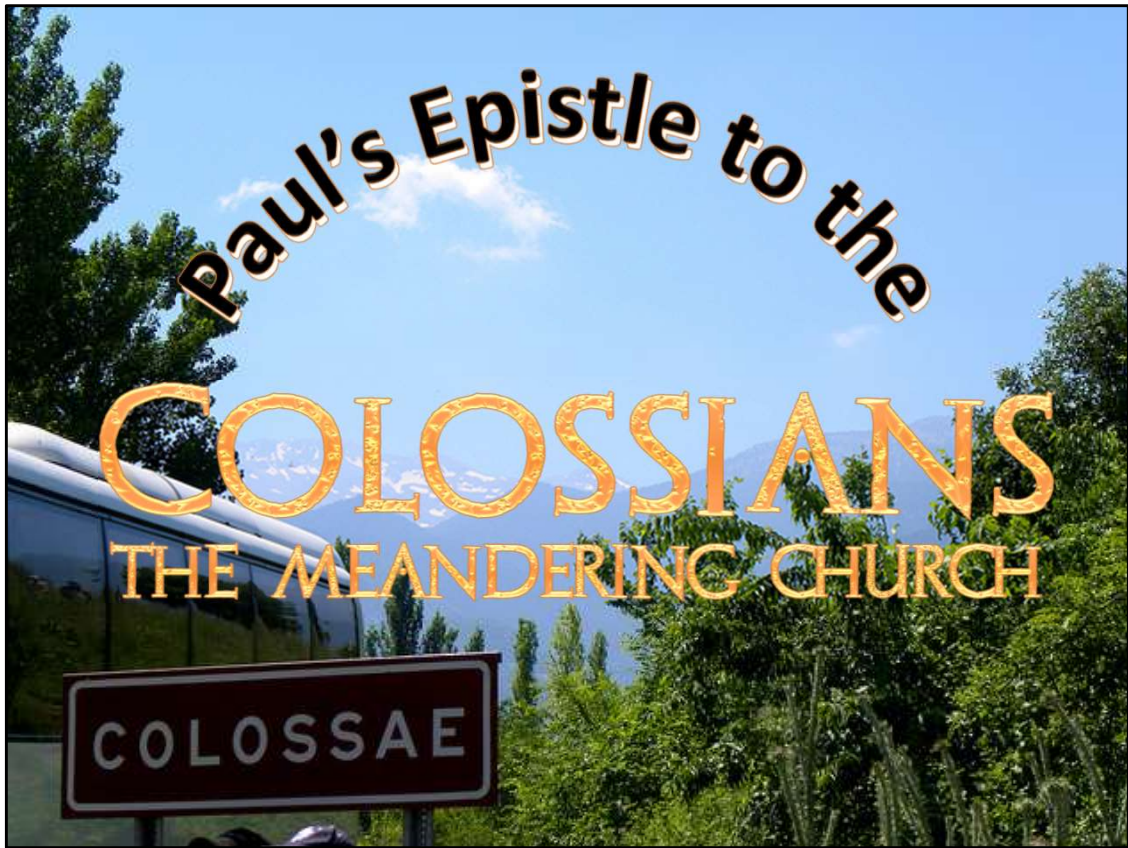
As you've seen with other books as well, the book can be structurally divided in half, with each half forming a balanced concentric structure. The first half of Paul's letter to the Colossians can be summarized in nine words:

- Jesus made it all.
- Then Jesus paid it all.

In fact, each pericope has an internal literary structure. That will be demonstrated later with the three pericopes that make up Chapter 1.



As nine is divisible by three, no one should be surprised that each of the three parts forms its own balanced literary structure.



So let's return to Paul, and see how he uses these artistic and literary devices.

Who wrote Colossians?

- The Apostle Paul wrote the letter in Rome while under house arrest (Acts 28:30) in around AD 60.
- Colossians is one of the four **Prison Epistles**, letters Paul wrote from his two year stay under house arrest in Rome.
 - 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.



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To whom was Colossians written?

- The Epistle is addressed "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossae."
- Colossae was situated on the river Lycus, a tributary of the Maeander. Laodocia is 8 mi (13 km) to the west and Hierapolis, 13 mi (21.5 km) to the northwest.
- Colossae 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 in 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 the only N.T. city yet to be start formal excavation.

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Why was Colossians written?

- Paul heard that a Colossian heresy was undermining the brethren, probably an early stage of gnosticism.
- Some taught Christ is neither central nor supreme.
- 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 with Judeo-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!

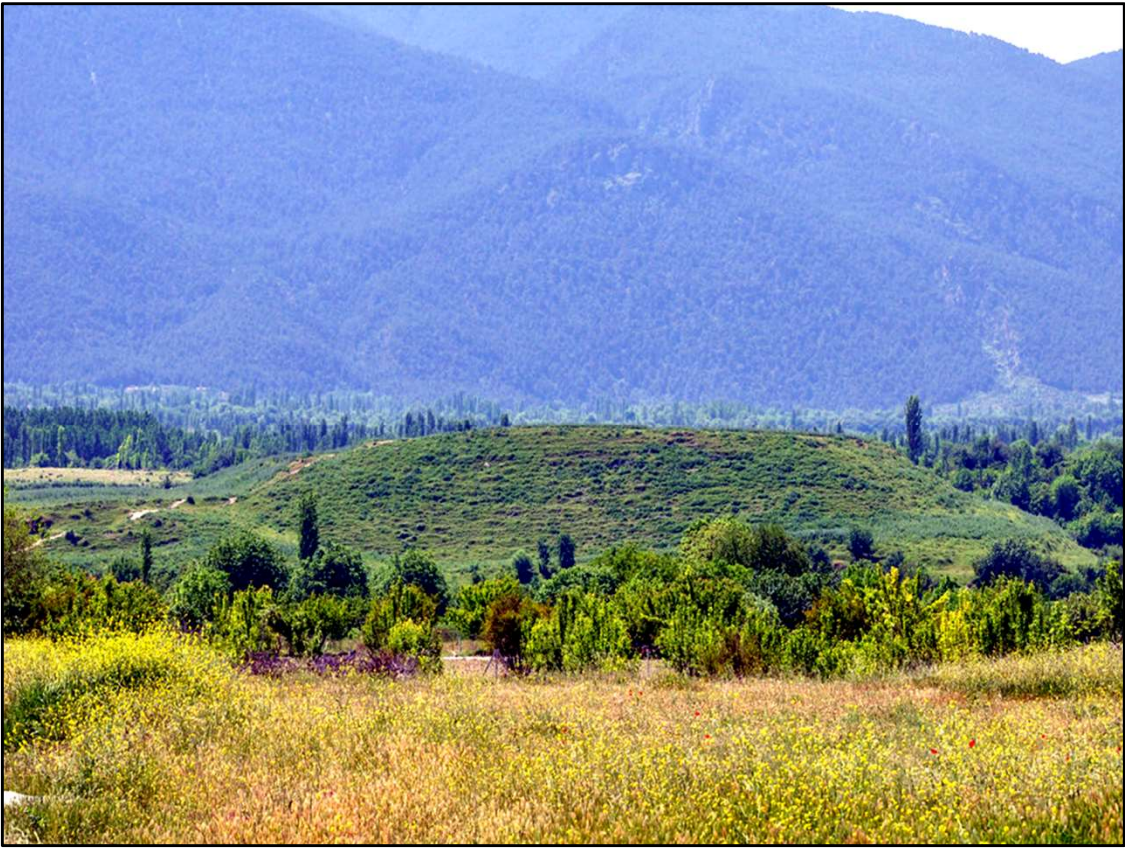
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- Syncretism turns Christianity into a religion!
- In such a mixture, Christ loses His preeminence.
- In a religion, faith can be reduced to following rules. **To legalism!**

Colossae Now

- Paul wrote two letters to Colossae.
- Formerly one of the most celebrated cities in Asia Minor, Colossae is the only N.T. city yet to be systematically excavated.
- This may soon change, as the Colossae Archaeological Research Project began a survey of the site in the summer of 2021.
- Pottery collected from the site reveals settlements from the Late Chalcolithic (Copper) Age (c. 3700–3400 BC).





But for now, this is what remains of the once fabulous city of Colossae... on the surface, anyway.



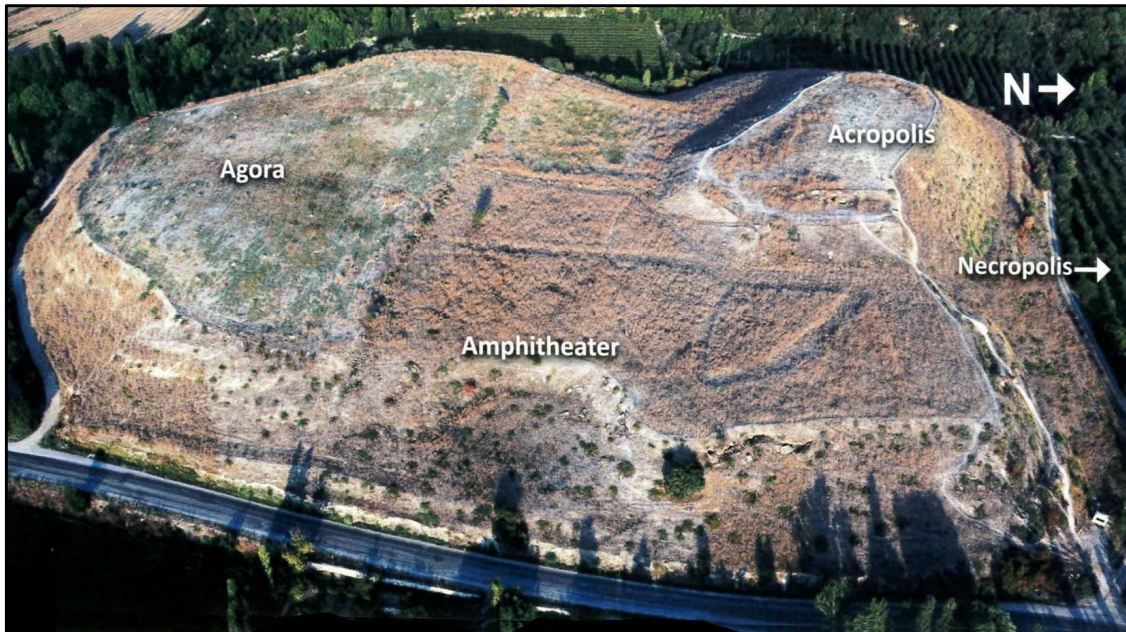
Approaching the tell, huyuk in Turkish, of Colossae's acropolis, the outline of a large amphitheatre can be seen carved into the hillside.



Most of the surface stones were hauled away centuries ago as building materials.



But remnants still lay scattered about as evidence of the once-great city that may lie just underneath the surface.



This aerial view of Colossae shows mounds and depressions awaiting excavation. The Acropolis was an elevated area with a fortress, religious centre, and government offices. Agoras were gathering places for forums and markets. The straight lines around the peripheries are remnants of the ancient city walls. Necropolis is the local graveyard.

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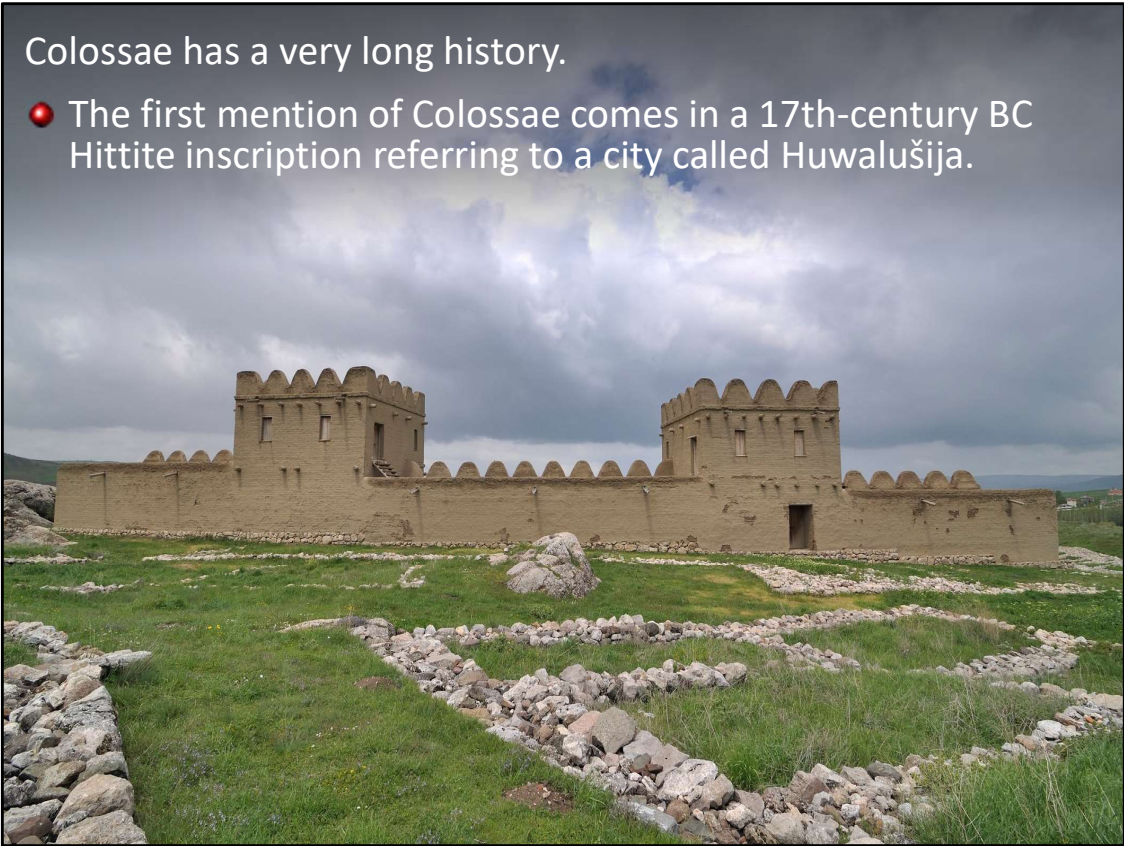
The Australian Catholic University, Charles Sturt University and Flinders University are vying to be included on the team of the



Clean, fresh water runs down from the snow-capped Cadmus Mountain Range over 8,000 feet above sea-level. Their name means “Father of Mountains”. The water contributed heavily to the city’s long history.

Colossae has a very long history.

- The first mention of Colossae comes in a 17th-century BC Hittite inscription referring to a city called Huwalušija.



They are repeatedly mentioned throughout the Old Testament as the adversaries of the Israelites and their god, where Genesis notes that they were the descendants of Heth, son of Canaan, son of Ham, born of Noah.

(wedge-shaped pictograms and phonograms in clay) scripts.

Colossae has a very long history.

- The first mention of Colossae comes in a 17th-century BC Hittite inscription referring to a city called Huwalušija.
- Around the time of Queen Esther^[1], Herodotus (464-425 BC) mentions Colossae by name as a "great city in Phrygia," which accommodated the Persian King Xerxes I in 480 BC while enroute to wage war against the Greeks.
- While accompanying Cyrus the Younger in his 401-399 BC campaign^[2] against Tissaphernes, Persian Satrap of Ionia, Xenophon stayed in Colossae for over a week and called it "a populous city, wealthy and of considerable magnitude".
- In 395 BC, the perfidious Tissaphernes was lured to Persian General Ariaeus' Colossae home and assassinated by an agent of Persian Queen Parysatis (Xerxes I's grand daughter) to avenge the death of her favourite son, Cyrus the Younger.

[1] Bride/consort of Xerxes I

[2] Cyrus was reluctant to tell his army he was really planning to attack his brother Artaxerxes in Babylon.



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- Phrygia became part of the Kingdom of Pergamum by the 188 BC Treaty of Apamea; Laodicea had become very wealthy.
- In 133 BC, homosexual king Attalus III died without issue and bequeathed the kingdom to Rome. By 126 BC Rome made Laodicea the district capital and Colossae's decline continued.
- Rome's improved commercial road bypassed Colossae.
- Famous for its wool trade, Strabo (64 BC – 24 AD) noted that Colossae drew great revenue from the flocks, and that the wool of Colossae gave its name to colour *colossinus*.
- Colossae 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), and Judaism (away from its roots it becomes less moral and more intellectual).

Religious practices in Colossae

- For theology scholars, ancient Colossae is an extremely important site because Paul's letter to the Colossians addresses local Phrygian-Jewish-Pagan syncretistic practices adopted by many 'Christians' from the latter 1st century. They speculate that excavation of Colossae may reveal some of the religious practices Paul faced.
- **The most noteworthy are the “self-imposed piety” and ascetically rigorous practices adopted by the Colossians and their worship of angels [Colossians 2:18].**
- Colossae sprang back into Christian importance upon Laodicea's abandonment after the 602 AD earthquake.
- Colossae became the primary pilgrimage destination in the Byzantine Empire.

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- **The most noteworthy are the “self-imposed piety” and ascetically rigorous practices adopted by the Colossians and their worship of angels [Colossians 2:18]. We'll examine the Colossians religious practices, the Colossian Heresy, in more detail when we study Chapter 2.**
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- It had one of the largest Byzantine cathedrals in the Middle East, which was dedicated to St. Michael.
- The saint's cult was especially revered at Colossae and his most famous miracle saved the Colossae church.



The most famous of miracle of Michael's is the salvation of the church at Colossae. A number of pagans tried to destroy the church by diverting the flow of two rivers directly into its path. The Archangel appeared among the waters and carrying a cross. He channeled the rivers underground so the church would not be destroyed. The spring which came forth after this event is said to have special healing powers.

Colossae's famous church was destroyed in 1192/3 during the Byzantine civil wars. The site was abandoned as the population shifted to the protection of the nearby mountains where there was a hillside fortress for protection.

[Hagia Eirene](#) (photo between 1888 and 1910). The current building dates from 532.

The legend goes something like this:

- The Monk Archippus built a chapel near a healing spring and treated the sick, converting many.
- Pagans besieged Colossae. They dammed up two tributaries of the Lycus River, the Lykokastros (Lico) and Kouphos Rivers, to flood and destroy Colossae and the little chapel. Then they loosed the waters. Archippus sought divine intervention.
- The Archangel Michael appeared among the waters carrying a cross. He intervened and drove his spear into the earth ahead of the rushing waters, which diverted the waters underground saving the city, the chapel, and the people.
- The waters re-emerged as a spring a kilometer away and joined the Lycus River.



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The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church states, “The phenomenon can be seen to this day. The rivers pour into a funnel in the rock which lay above the church, toward the bema (pulpit).” The people renamed Colossae Chonae, a Greek word signifying the funneling of the rivers in that place. The waters run in a deep gorge and disappear from view near Colossae. About a kilometer away, on the north side of Colossae, the river appears again through the opening in a cave, as shown here. Eventually the waters join the Lycus River which flows into the Meander River further to the west.

- St Michael answered the prayers of the monk Archippus, saving the church and town of Chonae (Colossae) from a flood by striking the rock to create a chasm and directing all the water into it.



Yvonne Anne Hajdu-Cronin at work on the Byzantine-style icon "Miracle of St. Michael at Chonae" (2015).



So, as this modern icon done in the original Byzantine style shows, Saint Michael answered the prayers of the monk Archippus, saving the church and town of Colossae from a flood by striking the rock to create a chasm and directing all the water into it. This story became a popular iconographic theme throughout Asia Minor and the Middle East. The legend explains several unusual topographical features of the landscape around Colossae, including the movement of the water underground, its emergence as a spring, its healing properties, the meaning of the new name given to Chonos/Honaz (meaning "plunging" or "funnels"), Colossae's alleged relocation to a hillside fortress, and construction of the largest church building in Asia Minor named after St. Michael.



Water channels are also noticeable at Colossae. These were hewn out of rock with a complex of sluice gates and pipes that allowed water to be diverted from the rivers for irrigation, washing, and industrial purposes.



The holiness of Colossae's waters and its healing qualities, first associated with Michael in the Byzantine period, continue today at the Göz (Guz) picnic ground, a couple of miles west of Colossae. The grounds surround a pool into which waters from the Lycus River pour. Local Turks consider these waters therapeutic. An early-second-century C.E. inscription on a marble statue base honors the repairer of Colossae's baths, attesting to these pools as one of the city's important institutions.

- Colossae was mentioned at the second council of Nicaea in 787 AD.



- The First Council of Nicea of AD 325 issued statements on the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. The Second Nicean Council in AD 787 was called to definitively settle the contentious issue of the use of images in worship. The Colossians and others who worshiped images claimed that they weren't worshipping the images themselves, but rather the personages that the images represented. Ultimately, the Council identified two types of worship: worship in relation to God was called latria (adoration and glorification) and a weaker worship related to man called proskynesis ("bowing before and venerating") was for images and human authorities. Rome labelled the worship of the saints as dulia, a form of piety but not adoration. Ultimately, the Catholic dogma of intercessory prayer to saints was made doctrine in 1851 by the Council of Trent (Session 25).
- Alas, this has caused no end of problems, icon-wise.



- All who believe the New Testament accept Mary as the mother of Jesus.
- **[CLICK]** But since 431 when the Council of Ephesus declared Mary the Theotokos, Mother of God, the Catholic Church has struggled with where she fits in worship-wise, and icons were affected. Because church fathers couldn't reconcile how a human woman could in the flesh beget God, Mary became ever-virgin in 1603, immaculately conceived in 1712 (reaffirmed 1854), and bodily assumed into heaven in 1869 (made dogma 1850, affirmed 1950). This icon shows Mary as the pure Holy receptacle who bears the Holy God.



- When Mary became mediatrix of salvation (1854) and co-redemptrix in 1918 (affirmed in 1974), she became co-equal in these roles with Jesus and icons changed.
- Because a Holy Mary could not be unclean in any way, even her umbilical cord with her own mother Anne had to be holy, and therefore her mother Anne had to be holy herself. **[CLICK]**
- These are just a few of the changes as Mariology developed that put pressure on the worship of images since worship of Mary was neither God, which under latria would be heresy, nor just a saint, which as dulia would be insufficient for her status. So another category of worship was developed for Mary alone, hyperdulia.



-
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When the Byzantine Emperor

Theophilus died, his 3-year old son Michael III was enthroned with his mom Queen Theodora and her brother Bardas* as co-regents. As an aside, Theodora was an iconodule and fired an iconoclastic patriarch in 843. But Bardas left his wife for his widowed daughter-in-law, which outraged the Queen and Patriarch Ignatius so much that he was denied communion. He fumed until Michael came of age, married, and had an affair with Ingerina, daughter of his Viking captain of the guard; then the Queen and patriarch fumed. Ingerina was married off in name only to Michael's conniving groom Basil, who was given one of Michael's sisters as

compensation. Bardas convinced Michael to get rid of their critics, aided by the royal secretary Photius. Michael sent his mom and sisters to a convent in 857, but Ignatius refused to budge so charges were trumped up charges and he was banished.



- Bardas was rewarded by being named Caesar and Photius patriarch, and priests gave him a rush 8-day course to prepare him to become pope. Being in a weak position with only two plotters in support, Photius appointed friends as metropolitans, and his buddy Samuel became the archbishop of Colossae where he was heavily involved in politics, carrying a letter to Pope Nicholas I in Rome seeking blessings for Michael and Photius. No fool, Nicholas I smelled a rat, so he dispatched 2 papal legates to Constantinople with letters to Michael III and Photius refusing to play ball, so they imprisoned the legates until they took bribes and changed sides. They then legitimated the consecration of Photius and returned to tell Pope Nicholas all was copasetic but were excommunicated. Letters flew back and forth and the sides excommunicated each other for the next four years. Michael had his corrupt Armenian groom Basil murder Bardas and named Basil to

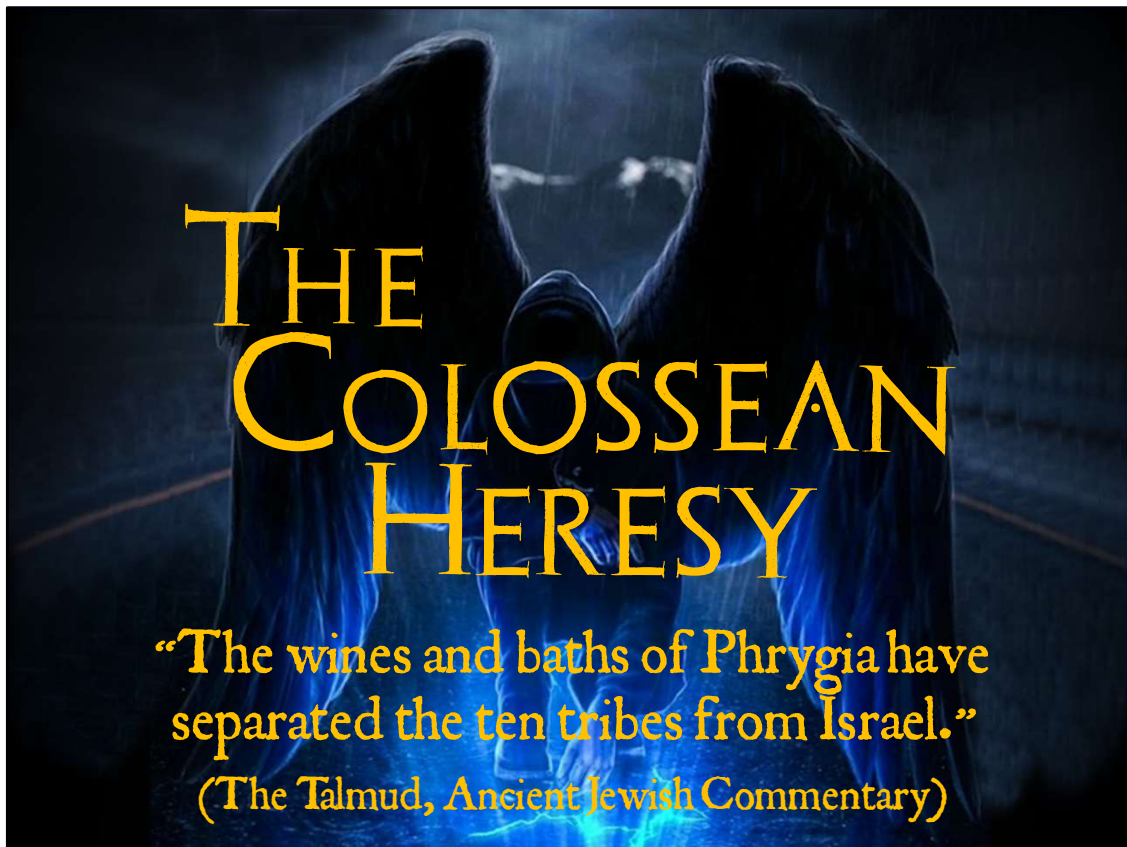
the vacant caesar post, promptly crowned by Photius. The schism ended when Basil murdered Michael III and exiled Photius. Emperor Basil I's "son" and successor Leo VI and Patriarch Stephen I were actually Michael's two sons with Ingerina, Basil's Swedish pretend wife.



- In this icon, Empress Theodora holds the infant Michael III amidst the admiration of her deceased 29 year old husband and eldest son Constantine on the left and Patriarch Ignatius and her advisors, brother and co-regent Bardas, the eunuch Theoktistos (assassinated by Bardas to create a regency vacancy), and Sergios (left behind to die by Theoktistos after a defeat on Crete). Theodora's other brother Petronas avoided much of the intrigue by becoming a successful Byzantine general.
- Emperor Michael III is known in history as "Michael the Drunkard," although this is probably because the history was written by his successor Emperor Basil I, his uncouth and murderous groom who rose from a peasant to become a competent Byzantine Emperor. He restored relations with Rome and brought Ignatius back from exile to replace Photius as the Byzantine Patriarch. He became very

conventionally religious.

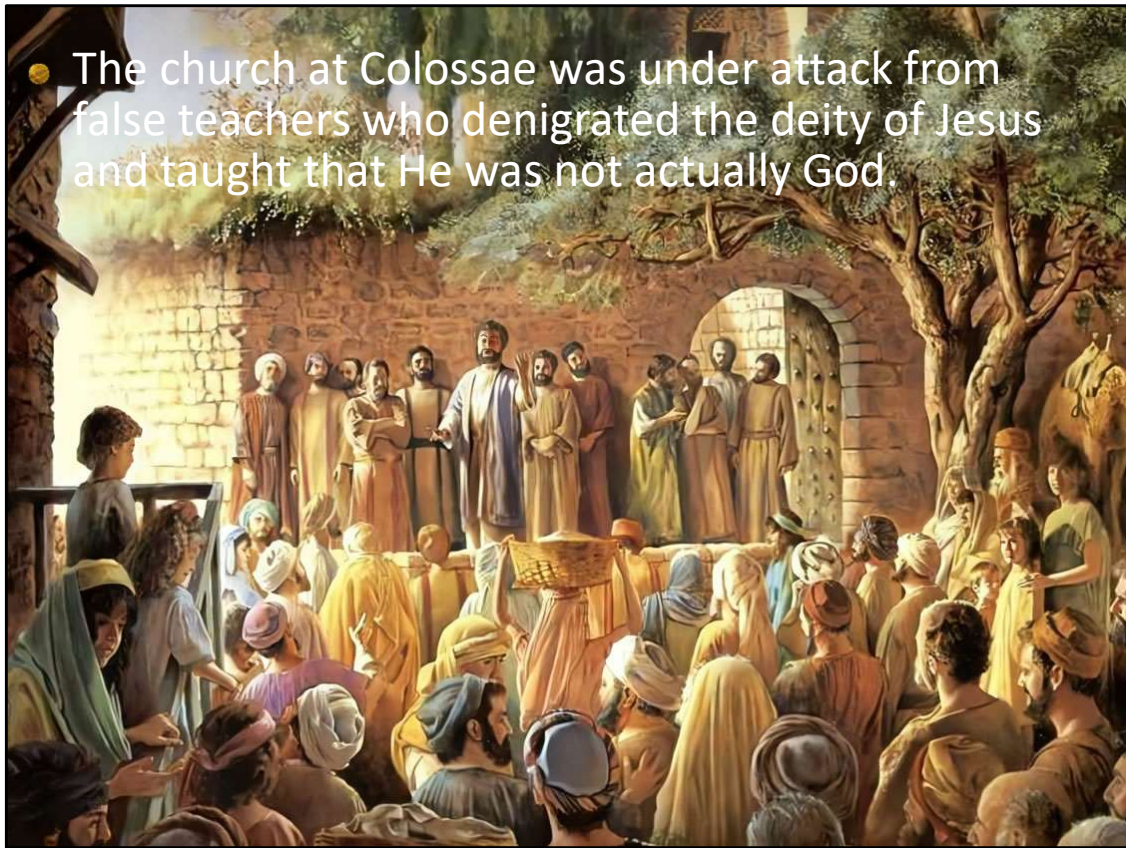
- Nevertheless, Michael III's reign stabilized the economy, led a renaissance in visual arts by ending iconoclasm for good, made considerable advances in internal organisation and religious cohesion, and more than held its own against the Abbasid Caliphate, and added Bulgaria as a religious and cultural satellite of Byzantium.



This all brings us to the actual heresy in Colossae that Paul was concerned about. We'll discuss the details in Chapter 2. But for now we can sketch out its dimensions from Paul's text in his epistle to the Colossians. The Lycus River Valley Jews seemed to enjoy the gay life of the Roman Empire as much as anyone. **[CLICK]** The Talmud, the ancient Jewish commentary on the Old Testament, states, **"The wines and baths of Phrygia have separated the ten tribes from Israel."**

The Phrygian Jews were impressed by Greco-Roman philosophy, which was very different from Hebrew thought. While Western philosophers elevated **"gnosis"** "knowledge", an intellectual understanding of things, to the highest pedestal, the Eastern Hebrew mindset valued "wisdom", the application and use of knowledge to the glory of God. No wonder the Phrygians, many of whom not long before had been known as barbarians, were confused and gullible. Gnosticism wasn't a separate religion; rather, it was a fusion of religious influences that suggested secret ways to get closer to God.

Colosse was known for a religious philosophy that blended Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, and pagan influences into an angel cult.



- The church at Colossae was under attack from false teachers who denigrated the deity of Jesus and taught that He was not actually God.

The false teachers at Colossae denigrated the deity of Jesus; who they taught was not actually God. So in response in this letter, Paul describes Jesus the Son of God with some of the loftiest language in all the New Testament.

As a historical note: some modern scholars claim that the Gnostic movement did not develop until much later. That underpins their supposition that the New Testament wasn't written until the 2nd to 4th centuries or even later, when Gnostic heresies were full-blown. But this is readily disproved by incipient features of Gnosticism present even in pre-Christian movements. The idea of two worlds, that all matter (including the flesh) was evil and only the pure spirit (intellect) was good, is deeply woven into both Jewish and Greek thought. So although the systematization of Gnosticism came later, there is nothing in Colossians which cannot be explained by longstanding Gnostic tendencies in ancient thought which appeared in many forms.

Namely that while God (spirit, mind) is holy, matter is corrupt. Between the two is a huge gulf. God created mankind in the gap.

Therefore, the way for people to get closer to God is by the regulated behaviour of religious rules and rituals, like self-denial.

Chief gnostic issues

1. A claim to have a special, secret knowledge of the truth that is superior to faith. Uninitiated people didn't know this;
2. The separation of spirit (holy) from matter (corrupt);
3. A divine Jesus couldn't be human or suffer on the Cross;
4. A perfect God couldn't create a sinful world; so a third party called a **demiurge**, between God and the world, did. This dude was the Jewish Jehovah of the Old Testament.
5. Angels were mediators to a remote Supreme God;
6. Asceticism is the means to spiritual communion with God, but, on the other hand, nothing really matters;
7. More or less misunderstood Jewish and Christian doctrines were syncretistically combined with other philosophies.

Here are some of the common characteristics of most varieties of Gnosticism.

1. A claim to have a special, secret knowledge of the truth that is superior to faith. Uninitiated people didn't know this;
2. The separation of spirit (holy) from matter (corrupt);
3. A divine Jesus couldn't be human or suffer on the Cross;
4. A perfect God couldn't create a sinful world; so a third party called a **demiurge (di-me-ahge)**, between God and the world, did. Gnostics thought that this dude was the Jewish Jehovah of the Old Testament.
5. Angels were mediators to a remote Supreme God;
6. Asceticism is the means to spiritual communion with God, but, on the other hand, nothing really matters;
7. More or less misunderstood Jewish and Christian doctrines were syncretistically combined with other philosophies.

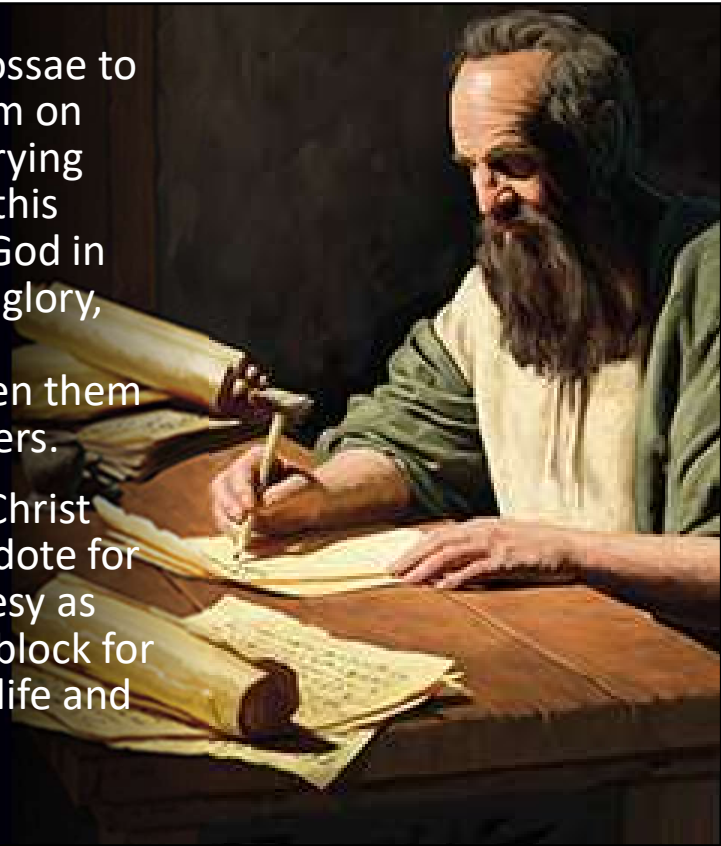
Paul addressed these heresies head-on:

- Christ is **preeminent** and **sufficient** in all things.
- He is **Creator** and **Redeemer** and the centre of the universe, not only as the active Creator but also as the **recipient of creation**—in His taking on of human flesh.
- Christ was and is the **visible image of the invisible God**, containing within Himself the **fullness of Deity**.
- Because of His divine nature, Jesus is **sovereign**, above all things with an **authority given Him by the Father**. He is also Head over the church.
- He has **reconciled all things** to Himself through His death on the cross, making believers alive to God and setting them on the **path to right living**.

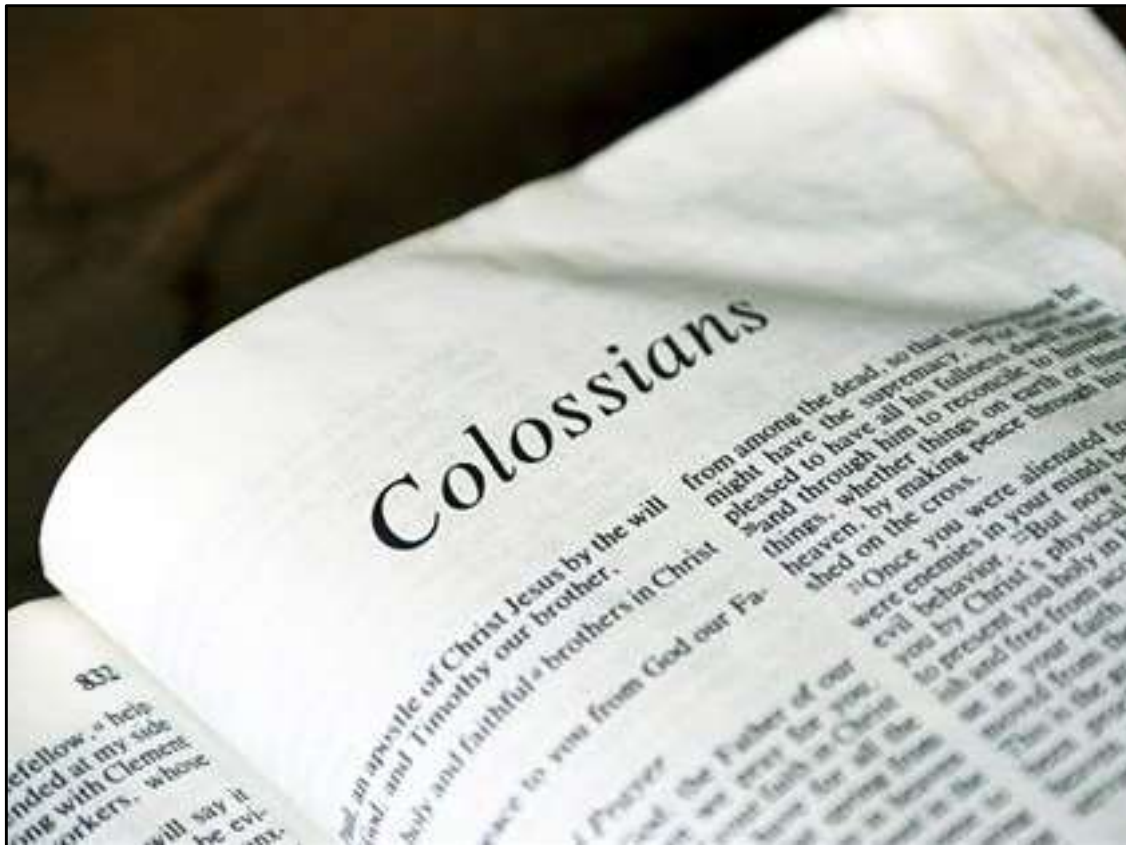
Paul addressed these issues head-on describing Jesus with some of the loftiest language in all the New Testament. His messages include:

- Christ is preeminent and sufficient in all things.
- He is Creator and Redeemer and the centre of the universe, not only as the active Creator but also as the recipient of creation—in His taking on of human flesh.
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- Paul wrote to Colossae to provide his wisdom on this difficult and trying topic. He wanted this ekklesia to know God in His greatness and glory, rather than in the deficient view given them by the false teachers.
- A proper view of Christ would be the antidote for the Colossian heresy as well as a building block for a sound Christian life and doctrine.



- Paul wrote to Colossae to provide his wisdom on this difficult and trying topic. He wanted this ekklesia to know God in His greatness and glory, rather than in the deficient view given them by the false teachers.
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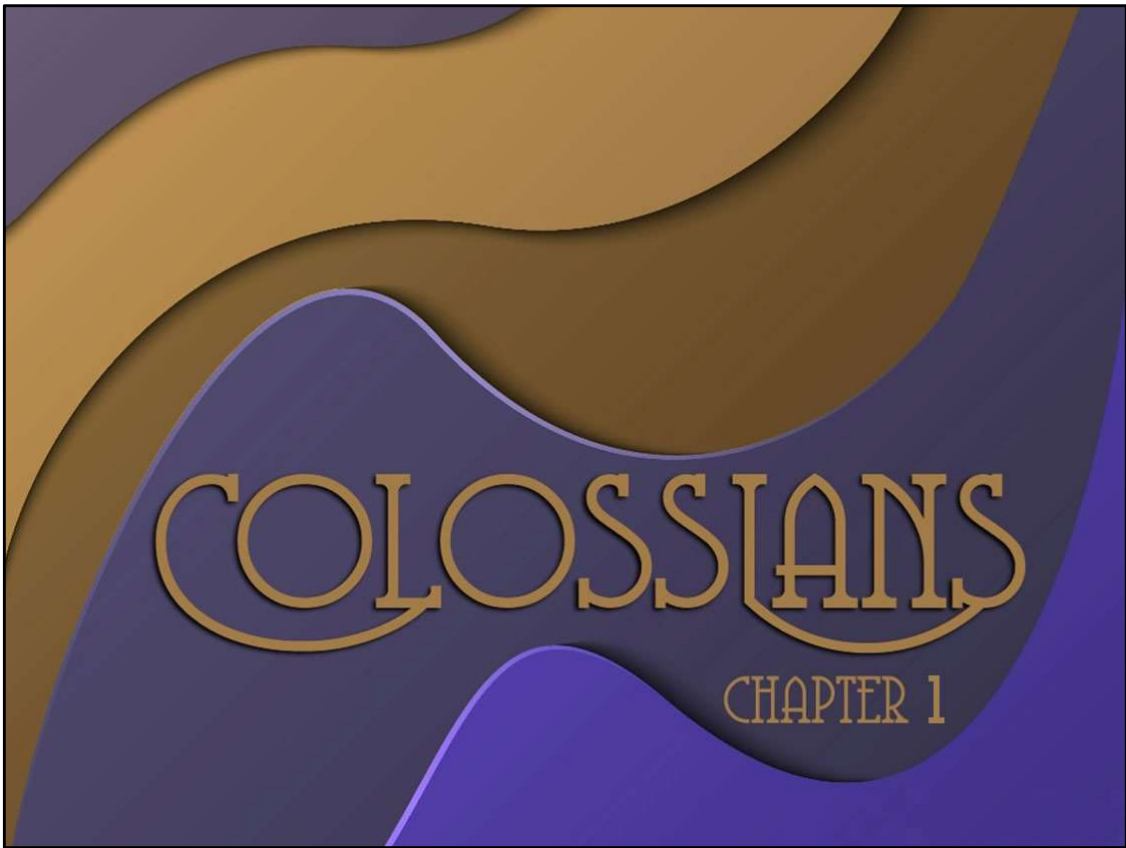
Christ is preeminent. Colossians 1:18 will state “He is the head (the lifesource and leader) of the body, the church, and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.” So what is pre-eminence? Preeminence is:

- The quality of being superior
- It's a high status or distinction given to anything considered to be the best at something
- To be in front of or have priority over
- To be foremost in time, place, order or importance
- To Hold first place in Rank and Influence.

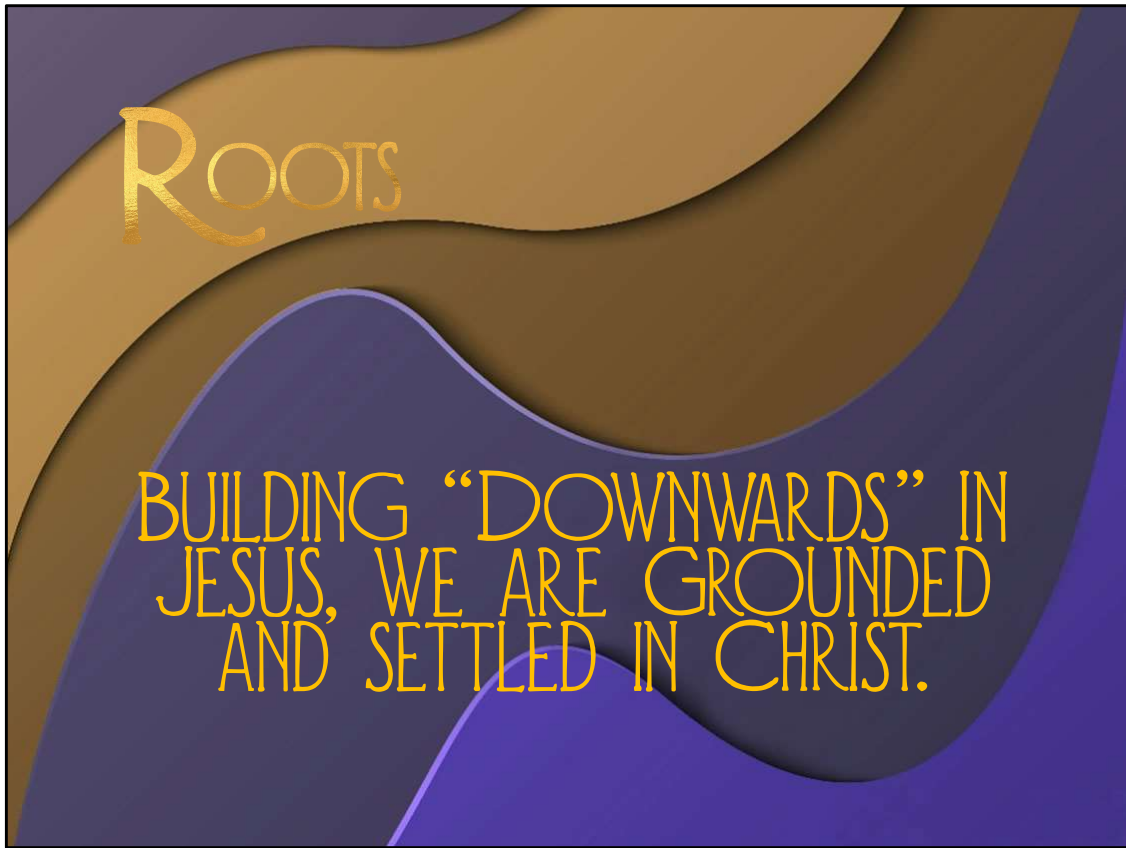
The Bible is the blueprint for building our lives and finishing strong. Colossians presents 4 building blocks for our lives, that help us to give Jesus preeminence:

- Chapter 1 the focus is “Downwards” on building Christian roots
- Chapter 2 builds “Upwards” building up our “RELATIONSHIP” with Him
- Chapter 3 looks “Inward” and stresses our “RESPONSIBILITY” in Him
- And Chapter 4 Builds “Outward” as we walk and run in wisdom in the world.

So as we LET HIM have “first place in Rank and Influence” in our lives WE ARE LIFTED UP. Think of an area of your life, right now that is “Struggling” begin to be intentional about giving Him preeminence there, He will LIFT YOU UP! Through Colossians we discover 4 building blocks for our lives, that help us to give Jesus preeminence, each chapter represents one of these blocks:



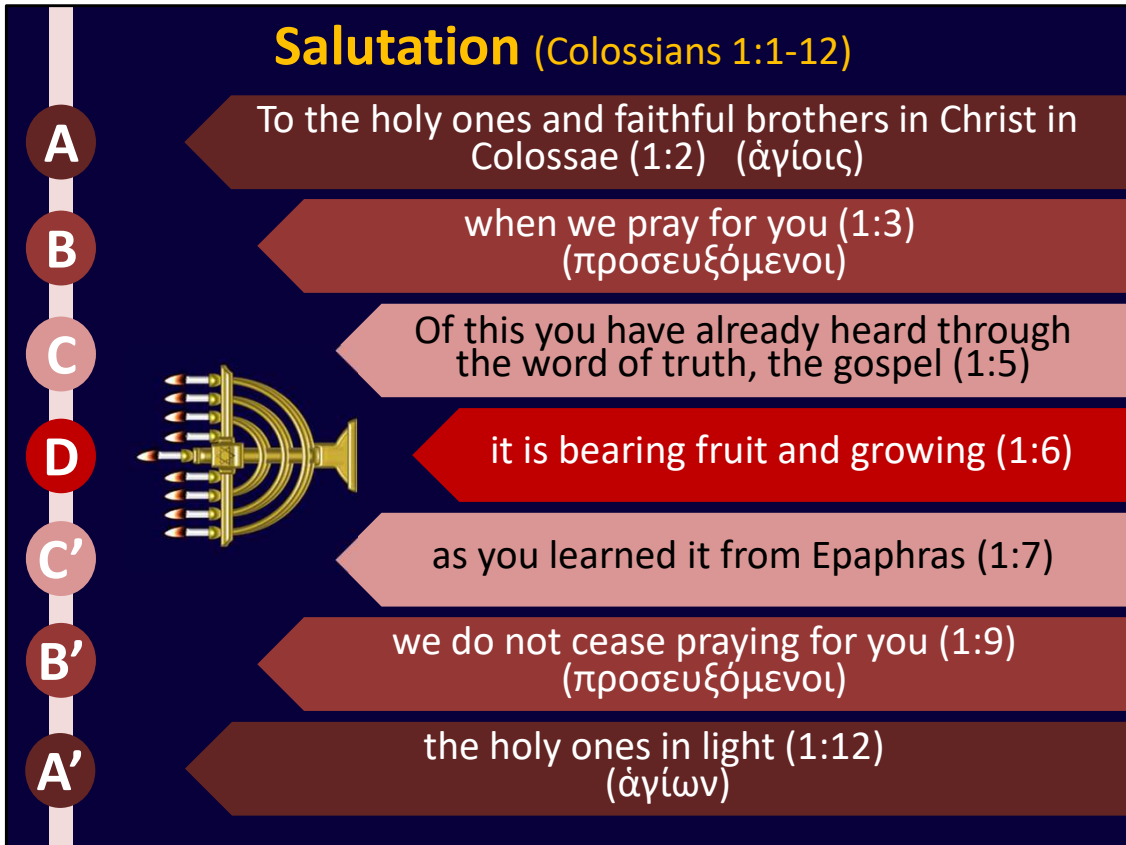
Chapter 1.



Chapter One is about our ROOTS in Christ. By Building "Downwards" In Jesus, we are Grounded and settled in Christ. (1:23)

Building downwards speaks about digging foundations, going deeper, allowing the roots of our lives to be settled in Christ.

Note that Paul builds this foundation through prayer. Paul and Jesus both model prayer for us. Both gave thanks to the Father for all He has done for us.



A: The holy ones. B: Prayer. C: Hearing Gospel. D: Bearing fruits.



Greeting

- ¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
- ² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colossae:

*Grace to you
and peace from
God our Father and
the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colossae: Paul begins by stressing that his authority as an apostle “or sent one” of Jesus Christ came from God the Father. This overrides any possible objection that his authority comes from a simple man. And, as we saw in Byzantine history last week, to dishonor the king’s ambassador is to dishonor the king. It’s worthy of note that Peter also authenticates Paul in 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Some see a distinction between saints (those heeding a divine call) and faithful brethren (those who through free will respond to the message). Some religions make a theology of this, but without splitting hairs a straight-forward reading of Scripture is that all true believers are saints. **[CLICK] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

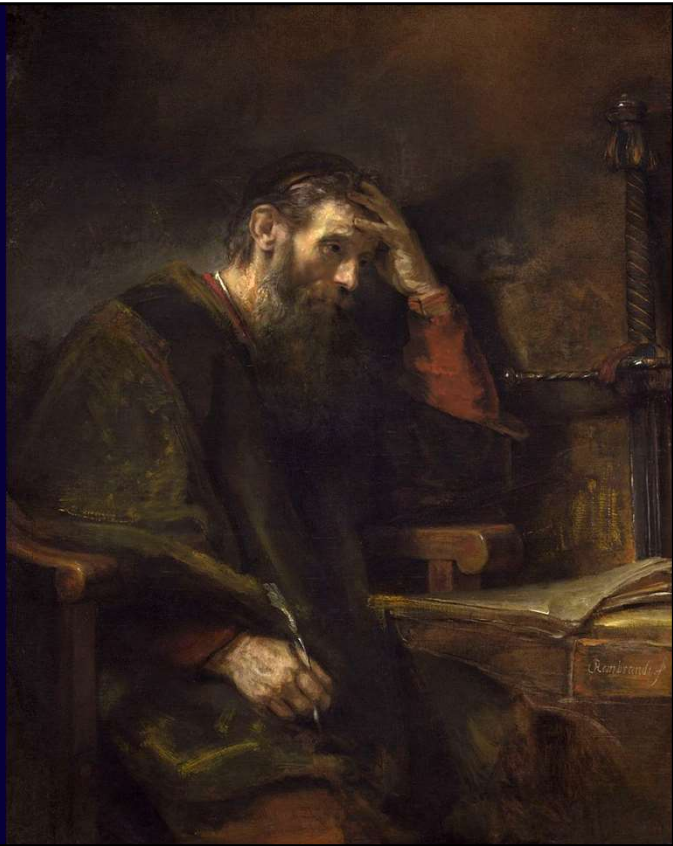
Paul mentions **grace** first, and then peace, for good reason—because peace flows from grace. We receive well-being and wholeness after having received grace from God. This

peace is a profound gift from God. Jesus said: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.

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;

"Apostle Paul" by Rembrandt, 1657.



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;

As we discussed when examining Philemon, Paul apparently maintained an active prayer list which he regularly “religiously” prayed for. After the initial thanksgiving, Paul begins a petition that merges into thanksgiving as the prayer moves into an anthem of praise to the exalted Christ. Faith means total reliance on someone or something. Notice how Paul clearly states “...your faith in Christ Jesus.” Faith to Paul is not abstract, it is faith in the person Jesus Christ, not in a “system,” or doctrine, or philosophy, or denomination.

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;



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;

- What is this “hope” that Paul refers to? The Blessed Hope is the Second Coming of Christ! No one fully appreciates a Gospel that leaves out this “blessed hope.” Our hope is “laid up”—reserved, set aside, for us this very second in heaven. The verb tense indicates that this hope has once and for all been reserved so that nothing can take it from us. We are being “guarded” for glory.
- The Colossians had heard this message BEFORE the false teachers came on the scene. They don’t take their message to the world; they go where the Gospel already is and try to lead believers astray. Their message has no good news for lost sinners. Satan is a liar!
- **[CLICK]** Note how Paul has linked together one of his favourite devices, the trilogy of faith, hope, and love.



This trilogy of virtue—faith, love, and hope—is used by both Paul and Peter. Faith is the soul looking upward to God; Love looks outward to others; Hope looks ahead to the future. Faith rests on the **past** work of Christ; Love works in the **present**; and Hope anticipates the **future**. Even though “without faith it is impossible to please God” and “hope does not disappoint us”, nevertheless, “the greatest of these is love.”

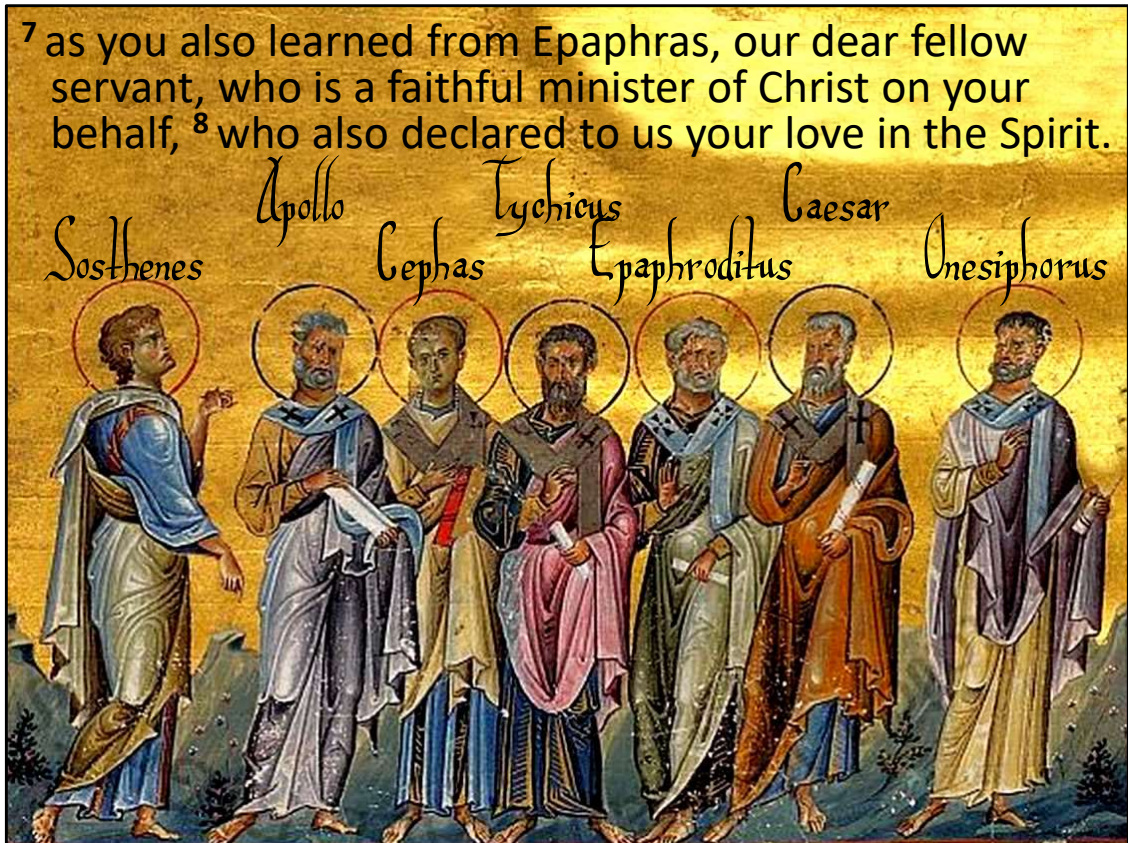
These three items define God’s paradigm of GRACE... they are how He shows His unmerited favor.

- Faith relies on historical facts, carefully laid out in Scripture and supported by modern science.
- Love is the emblem of our earthly calling. We show it through prayer for others and other means.
- Our hope is in the future – in the Second Coming of Christ.

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;

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;

This verse could be used to establish that even in Paul's day the Gospel had been carried to the ends of the earth.



as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, So they learned of God’s Grace by the example of their local pastor, Epaphras, who was presently in Rome with Paul and called in Philemon verse 23 “Paul’s fellow prisoner.” We’ll learn in Colossians 4:12 that the outstanding characteristic of Epaphras was fervency in prayer. Regarding the two names, Epaphras was a shortened version of Epaphroditus.

Were these two the same or different people? We don’t know, but their overlap with each other in Paul’s writings seems to support a single person. This 10th century prayer calendar of Emperor Basil II of Paul’s helpers only shows Epaphroditus. We just don’t know.

⁸ who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

Love is the evidence of salvation. Doctrinal correctness will never atone for lack of love. This is the only verse in Colossians that mentions the Holy Spirit explicitly and it is in connection with love as evidence of salvation. For a treatise on Christology, Paul stays well away from esoteric concepts that the supernaturally focused false teachers might seize upon to twist.

Paul's Prayer List

⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you,

Paul shares his prayer life:

- vv. 9-11 lists certain blessings for which he prays;
- vv. 12-14 lists those for which he gives thanks.

and to ask that you may be filled with the **knowledge** of His will in all **wisdom** and spiritual **understanding**;

'Saint Paul' by Bartolomeo Montagna, c. 1500.



For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, [CLICK]

No one besides Jesus has given us as helpful an insight for our own prayer life as Paul does in these few verses:

- vv. 9-11 sets forth certain blessings for which Paul prays
- vv.12-14 lists things for which he gives thanks.

They each are different...some are nonforfeitable; some are blessings for which need to pray daily.

[CLICK]

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 [*epignosis*] of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Paul strongly attacks the Colossian heresy with a few subtle easily overlooked statements. For example, he uses the vocabulary of the false teachers, but with their true meanings. We find such words as fullness, perfect, complete, wisdom, etc. Over 30X the word all is used.

Paul's Prayer List

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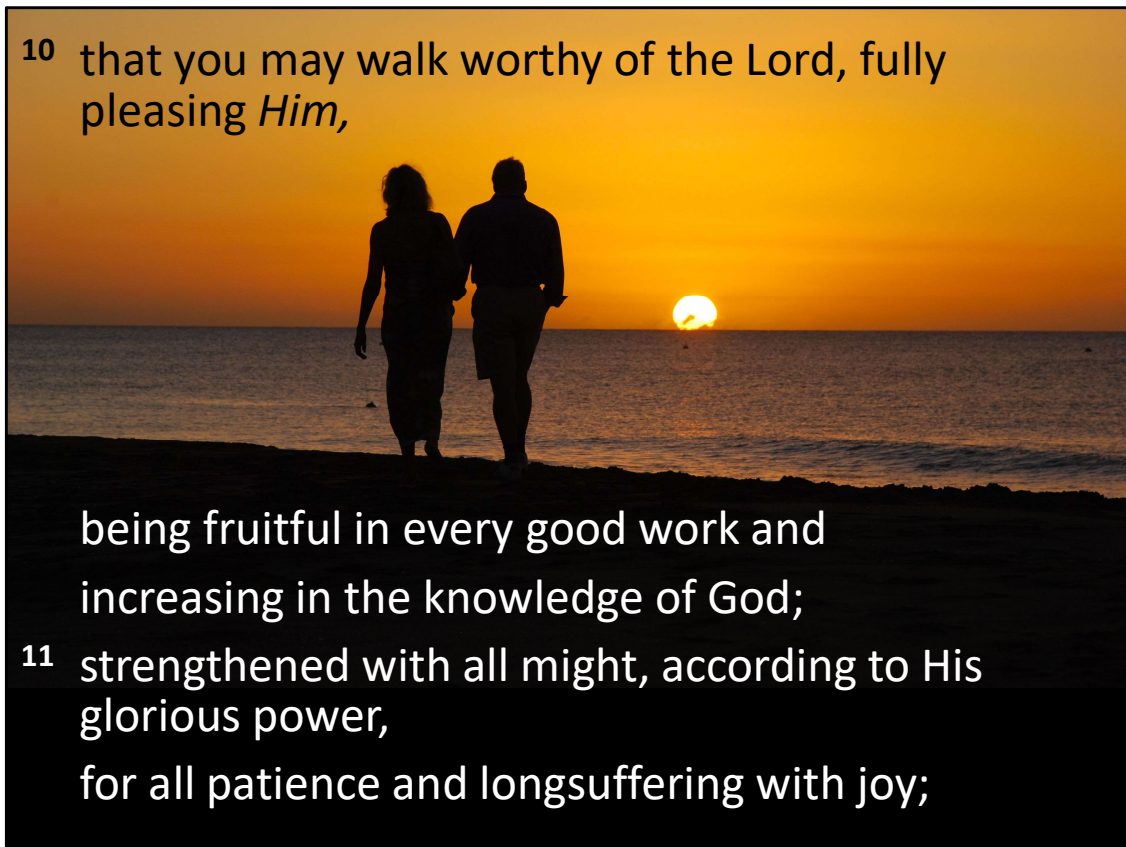
CONCEPT	PAUL'S WORD	MEANING	GNOSTIC USAGE	MEANING
KNOWLEDGE (9 words)	ἐπίγνωσις <i>epignōsis</i> ("epi"=full)	precise and correct knowledge	γνῶσις <i>gnosis</i>	knowledge, science
WISDOM (2 words)	σοφία <i>sophia</i>	the wisdom of God	φρόνησις <i>phronēsis</i>	appearance of wisdom
UNDERSTANDING (6 words)	σύνεσις <i>synesis</i>	the mind so far as it can understand	νοῦς <i>noûs</i>	intellectual faculty, understanding

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;

Paul prays that God will fill them with knowledge, that they may be fruitful in every good work. In verses 9 and 10, the word "knowledge" comes from the Greek word **epignosis**. Of this word, Kenneth S. Wuest writes: "The word is an advance upon *gnosis* (knowledge) in that it denotes a larger and more thorough knowledge. It is a knowledge which grasps and penetrates into an object. It was a favorite word of the Gnostics who used it to designate the superior knowledge which they claimed as their exclusive possession. Paul prays that all the saints might become possessors of this knowledge, indicating that it was open for all to appropriate, not a secret mystery into which only a favored few could be initiated."

Paul uses **epignosis** to emphasize the true and full knowledge of God that he wanted the Colossians to attain. The implication is that the knowledge of the Gnostics was neither true nor full.

And we have the same thing with wisdom and understanding.



- **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*,**

Walking worthy is doing, not thinking about doing. Paul uses this term in Ephesians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians.

“Pleasing” is not found elsewhere in the NT. The Greek meaning was putting His will ahead of yours.

- **being fruitful in every good work and**

Everything in a believer’s life is sacred. There is no secular.

- **increasing in the knowledge of God;**
- **¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power,**
- **for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**

The same spiritual power that raised Christ from the dead operates in us: the Holy Spirit.

Endurance and patience are often associated. The power of God gives patience,

fortitude, and endurance, but unlike the stoics, the believers wait with joyfulness.

This is the Christian distinctive!



12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Paul now begins to list things for which he is thankful. All our prayers should be filled with thanksgiving.

"...inheritance" is an old word used to mean that we have a share of the lot. First a pebble or piece of wood was used in casting lots to determine the allotted portion or inheritance. Paul addresses inheritance in Chapter 3.



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