

# **Walk Through The New Testament**

## **St. Matthew's Parish**

### **Shirley and Church Streets**

#### **New Providence,**

#### **Bahamas**

**29<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

## **Introduction to The Epistle to the Colossians**

### **Introduction**

Colossae **was** a city in the Roman Province of Asia Minor. It was located near to the cities of Laodicea and Miletus. Under the Persian Kings it had been a prosperous city of great influence but by Paul's day, that influence had been greatly diminished. The inhabitants of Colossae were Phrygians who had been strongly influenced by Greek Culture, and as a result they were concerned with mystical illusions and ascetic rules. There was a large Jewish population in the area which had been deported there from Mesopotamia by Antiochus IV. However, the church at Colossae appeared to be predominately gentile. The church in this city was not founded by St. Paul, but by one of his fellow workers by the name of Epaphras. There was a massive earthquake shortly after this letter was written and sent to the church at Colossae; the earthquake destroyed Colossae and many of its neighbouring cities. The city is now buried in ruins and the area is sparsely inhabited.

The epistle was written by Paul to:

- (1) encourage the Christians in this region;
- (2) to warn them against the Judaisers who pushed for the necessity of certain ceremonial laws;
- (3) to fortify the church against certain Gentile philosophy; and
- (4) to encourage the young Christian community to remain steadfast and faithful to their faith and journey in grace.

Some scholars have argued that the terminology and the Greek are too advanced to be St. Paul's. Therefore they have dismissed it as being one of his epistles. Other scholars, however, have accepted the epistle as written by St. Paul around the same time as the epistles to the Philippians and the Ephesians, while Paul may have been a prisoner in Rome. Even in prison, Paul's concern was for the church throughout the region.

Paul saw the dangers of not only the Judaizers, but also those who believe that they were practicing a new gentile philosophy. **The new doctrine being presented by some in the community of faith created difficulties because:**

- a. It appeared to be a new philosophy (2:3, 4, 8)
- b. Even the Judaizers were pushing its ideas (2:11, 14, 16, 17)
- c. It worshipped angels (2:10, 15, 18, 19)
- d. It included asceticism based on the Law of Moses (2:20-23)
- e. The whole system limited the authority and power of Christ (2:8-10, 17, 19)
- f. It gave people the impression that their new form of Christianity was higher than what had been received (1:23, 28; 2:3-10, 16-18; 3:1,14, 15)
- g. People were being invited to a "higher spiritual ground."

Like the epistle to the Romans, the Epistle to the Colossians was written to people Paul had never met. **What do we know about the Church at Colossae???**

1. The Church was not established by Paul and his companions.
2. The Church was a flourishing community whose faith had become known to the others in the region.
3. God used the ministry of another to bring the existence of this church into being.
4. Paul treated them no more differently than the other churches; they were just as dear to him as the others.
5. There was a need for them to be vigilant when it came to their faith.

### **Outline of the Epistle**

1. Introduction to the Epistle 1:1-14

2. The nature of Jesus Lordship 1:15-23
3. Proclaiming the Lordship of Christ 1:24-2:5
4. False Philosophy and True Faith 2:6-3:4
5. Practical Living 3:5-4:6
6. Conclusion 4:7-18

The church, while definitely growing, faced challenges to its faith.

**1. Colossians 1:1-29 The Lordship of Christ**

- a. 1-8 Paul begins his epistle with the usual introduction. Paul is encouraged by the news that has reached him about their faith in Jesus Christ. Their faith is growing and well-known throughout the world. Paul acknowledges the work of Epaphras who was the one that started them on their faith journey. He has also been the one informing Paul of their journey in love in the Spirit.
- b. 9-14 Paul indicates that he was in constant prayer for the church in Colossae so that they may discern the will of God for their life. His main concern is for them to lead lives worthy of their calling bearing the necessary fruit. He prays for strength that comes from God, for endurance, for their ability to exercise patience, while giving joyful thanks to God who has enabled them to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. By the atoning work of Christ they have been rescued from the power of darkness and have been transferred onto the Kingdom of His Beloved Son. In Christ, they have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.
- c. 15-20 Christ is the image of the invisible God; He is the new Adam that we find in Genesis 1:26. By His incarnation, Jesus restores the Image of God in humanity. Through Jesus everything came into being. Everything was created through Him and FOR Him. He holds all things together. In Jesus ALL OF THE FULNESS OF GOD WAS PLEASED TO DWELL. Through Jesus, the whole creation is reconciled to God through His blood.

- d. 21-23 God was pleased to reconcile fallen human beings and make them Holy and blameless before their God. Despite what God has done, Paul encourages them to remain steadfast in their faith that he has preached to every creature.
  
- e. 24-29 Paul tells his readers that by his suffering he has joined in the redemptive work of Christ for His Church. God chose Paul to make know the mystery of this message which was hidden in ages past and revealed to Paul. The richness of the gospel is that by grace Christ is in them, and he is the hope of glory. Their growth, their maturity, has been the source of Paul's inspiration.

**2. Colossians 2:1-23 In Christ we Lack Nothing!!!!**

- a. 1-7 Paul begins his defense of the faith delivered to the believers at Colossae. There is a study of Philosophy that leads people into an ever deepening faith in God; but there is also a false philosophy that suits men, and makes them comfortable that leads them away from God. Paul is concerned that whatever knowledge that the Colossians do receive, that it may deepen their connection to Christ. As they have received Christ, Paul expected them to live in him and not be led away with new philosophies.
  
- b. 8-15 In Christ, the whole fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell; therefore there is nothing lacking in Him!!! By faith, they have come to the fullness of Him. In Christ they have had the circumcision of the heart. The believer has been buried with Christ in Baptism so that they might be raised to life in Him. God made them alive through Jesus. Jesus washed away the record of their wrong-doings with all its legal demands and triumph over all authorities-both human and divine.

- c. 16-19 The believer need not worry about condemnation by those who hold to special dietary laws, or special festivals, or in keeping the Sabbath. These things were a shadow of what was to come-Christ is the REAL THING!!! Again Paul reminds the believers at Colossae not to allow others to lead them astray, but they are to hold fast to The One who is the Head from whom the whole body derives growth from God.
  
- d. 20-23 In the closing verses of this chapter, Paul questions why the believers at Colossae would subject themselves to any teaching or philosophy that would put them once again into bondage. He warns them not to let false teachers lead them back into something which Christ has set them free.