

Jesus + ?

A STUDY THROUGH COLOSSIANS

STUDY GUIDE
eastside CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

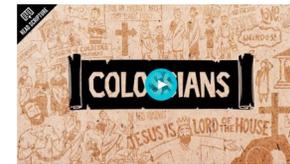
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STUDY
GUIDE

RESOURCES

Blue Letter Bible
www.blueletterbible.org

The Bible Project
Colossians Video



IVP New Testament Commentary / Robert W. Wall
Colossians and Ephesians (IVP Academic, 2010)

Tyndale New Testament Commentaries / N.T. Wright
Colossians and Philemon, Vol. 10
(Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986)

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ECF meets every **SUNDAY @ 10 AM** at Rose Hill Middle School in Redmond WA. Visit ecfconnect.org for more details about who we are and what we do!

Week #1– JESUS + ?

INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

May 5, 2019

“Slowly, deftly we begin believing in the doctrine of salvation by Jesus plus. Jesus plus good deeds. Jesus plus the right doctrine. Jesus plus the right Bible translation. Jesus plus the right charitable activities. Or in the case of the church in Colossae, Jesus plus the right religious feast, New Moon Festival, and Sabbath Day. To the Christians in Colossae, the right ritual was just as important as the right Savior. Paul would have none of this. He denounced the philosophy as heretical and stated in no uncertain terms that if we are saved it is because God rescued us and not because we learned to swim.”
- Max Lucado

CONTEXT & OVERVIEW

THE CHURCH AT COLOSSAE: The establishment of the church is uncertain. The issue is whether Paul himself had ever been there. Some suggest that Paul may have done some work there during his third journey, on the way to Ephesus (cf. Ac 18:23; 19:1). Others point out that Paul's comments imply that he had not personally been in Colossae (cf. Col 2:1). One possibility is that the church was established during Paul's extended stay at Ephesus, where the effect of his work spread throughout Asia Minor (cf. Ac 19:8-10). It may not have been Paul himself, but one of his co-workers who went out to Colossae. Paul's remarks in the epistle indicate that Epaphras was the one who preached the gospel there (Col 1:5-8) and in Hierapolis and Laodicea (Col 4:12-13). Though he was with Paul at the time the epistle was written, Epaphras is identified as "one of you" (Col 4:12), suggesting that he may have originally been from Colossae.

Other members of the church at Colossae included Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus, who may have been father, mother, and son. By comparing the epistle to the Colossians with that written to Philemon, it is reasonable to suppose that the church at Colossae met in their home (cf. Col 4:17 with Philemon 1-2, and the references to Archippus). If Philemon and his family were hosts of the church at Colossae, then Onesimus (Philemon's slave) would have also been a member there upon his return (cf. Col 4:7-9 with Phe 8-16).

TIME & PLACE OF WRITING

Colossians is one of Paul's four "prison epistles" (Col 4:18; cf. Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). The general consensus is that these epistles were written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome (cf. Ac 28:16,30-31). If such is truly the case, then Paul wrote Colossians around 61-63 A.D. from Rome. The indication is that the epistles to the Colossians, Philemon and the Ephesians were carried to their destination by Tychicus and Onesimus (cf. Col 4:7-9; Philemon 10-12; Ep 6:21-22).

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE

Paul had received a report of the situation at Colossae by way of Epaphras (Col 1:7-8). This report was for the most part favorable (Col 2:5). But the subject matter in the epistle strongly suggests that the church was facing a two-fold danger:

1. The danger of relapse into paganism with its gross immorality (cf. Col 1:21-23; 2:6; 3:5-11)
2. The danger of accepting what has become known as "The Colossian heresy". This heresy was a syncretism (blending or fusion) involving four elements of both pagan and Jewish origin:
 - I. **Philosophies of men** - which denied the all sufficiency and pre-eminence of Christ (Col 2:8)
 - II. **Judaistic ceremonialism** - which attached special significance to the rite of circumcision, food regulations, and observance of special days (Col 2:11,16-17)
 - III. **Angel worship** - which detracted from the uniqueness of Christ (Col 2:18)
 - IV. **Asceticism** - which called for harsh treatment of the body as the means to control its lusts (Col 2:20-23)

To guard these dangers, Paul writes to tell the Colossians to be on their guard and be aware of relapsing (Col 1:21-23) into what they may have believed before becoming a Christian. Paul warns this church to be aware of and not buy into any belief that denies the all-sufficiency of Christ (Col. 2:8-23). He points their attention back to Jesus the "all sufficient and Pre-Eminent Savior" who has reconciled them to God and has given them fullness in Christ.

THEME OF THE EPISTLE: Christ is Sufficient and in Him you are complete.

RESPONSE

We must be on guard against the plethora of teachings, philosophies and religions that challenge, discount or deny the supremacy or deity of Jesus Christ. Syncretism is just as prevalent today as it was then, though beliefs or philosophies may have changed. Sometimes it's good for us to take another deep dive into who Jesus is to remind us of what role he has played in our salvation story. Use your community group to ask questions and explore some of the heresy that have perhaps crept into your own beliefs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some examples of syncretism in our world today?
2. As we begin this series, we challenge you to highlight all the places in Colossians where the words, "in Christ", "in Him" and "with Christ" occur.
3. What was Paul's main point by using "in/with Christ" or "in Him" throughout this letter? Do you think of yourself as being "In Christ"?

