

# Welcome to the Study of Colossians

Paul's Letter to the Colossians is one of the four so-called Prison Letters (Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, & Philippians), all of which were written while the apostle was in prison. Although the location is debated, my contention is that Philm., Colossians, and Ephesians were written while Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea Philippi on the Mediterranean coast of Judea. Philippians was produced after Paul arrived in Rome to appear before Emperor Nero. This means that the first three letters were written in the late 50s of the first century with the help of Paul's associates who were attending to his needs during his imprisonment. The original destination of both Colossians and Philemon was the ancient city of Colossae in the Roman province of Asia, as indicated on the map below.



low. Ephesians was a cover letter for the other two, and thus all three letters first were read at Ephesus before being carried on to Colossae and beyond.

The letter to the Colossians addressed a number of house church groups in the city who were not having major problems, apart from some misunderstandings about the nature of the Christian life under God's grace, rather than also under the Jewish Torah. The spiritual insight into living as a Christian is profound in the letter, and places a lot of emphasis on the deeper cosmic dimensions of spiritual reality.

The nine study series of probes into this document should provide us with a much richer understanding of how to live pleasingly before our God. I think you will benefit greatly from being a part of this study. We begin the study on January 8, 2012.

## Outline of Colossians

### Praescriptio

Introduction: 1:1-2  
Superscriptio: 1:1  
Adscriptio: 1:2a  
Salutatio: 1:2b

### Proem

Thankfulness: 1:3-8

### Body

Intercession: 1:9-12  
Christus Hymnus: 1:13-20  
Reconciliation: 1:21-23

Paul's Ministry 1: 1:24-29  
Paul's Ministry 2: 2:1-5

Christian Living 1: 2:6-15  
Christian Living 2: 2:16-19

Christian Legalism: 2:20-23  
Seeking the Heavenly Things: 3:1-4  
Christian Behavior: 3:5-11  
Getting Dressed: 3:12-17

Haustafeln: 3:18-4:1  
Husband/Wife: 3:18-19  
Father/Children: 3:20-21  
Master/Slaves: 3:22-4:1

Admonitions and Requests: 4:2-6

### Conclusio

Tychicus: 4:7-9  
Greetings: 4:10-17  
Closing: 4:18  
Letter Validation: 4:18a  
Prayer Request: 4:18b  
Benedictio: 4:19c

The impetus for doing these studies comes mainly from a long overdue assignment with Smyth-Helwys Publishers in the USA. I have a writing contract with them to produce a 175 page commentary on Colossians as a part of their Bible Commentary series. This series of studies is providing me more time to complete that manuscript, hopefully by late spring of 2012. And then to finally be relieved of this heavy assignment.

My personal study of Colossians goes back many years to my profes-

sor days at Gardner-Webb University with the teaching of an advanced Greek exegesis course on this document to both graduate and undergraduate students. Each time I go through the book new understandings and insights emerge, as I am certain they will with this study.

The initial set of studies was produced in Germany during 2009 for the Wednesday evening Bible study group at the International Baptist Church of Cologne, and also for the Friday evening Bible study group at the Evangelisch-freikirchliche Gemeinde in Bonn. These studies are being revised and expanded as the basis for the new set of studies for the Serendipity Bible Class at the International Baptist Church of San José, Costa Rica.

My prayer is that through the study of this important document of the New Testament your Christian walk with Christ will be strengthened and that your understanding of spiritual reality will be greatly deepened.

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