

BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

1. This is also one of four Prison Epistles written by Paul. The other three are Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon.
2. There are lots of similarities between the epistles of Colossians and Ephesians and they were written at about the same time. Some writings are repeated because they are important precepts. For example,
 - a) The book of Ephesians mentions the body of Christ and so does the book of Colossians because “koinonia” is needed (Koinonia means partnership for support).
 - b) The Christians in the Ephesian church were singing all the time and they were full of expressive faith, not just contemplative faith!
 - c) Ephesians “put off/on” the old and new habits.
 - d) The book of Ephesians emphasises the family which is often neglected. Many people are “unchristian at home and only look Christian in church” and their children will see their hypocrisy and then they do not want to be Christians! Family is where we live out and express our faith most! It is our main ministry; if you cannot rule your household, what good is your ministry?
3. Paul had never met the Colossians; he neither visited nor founded the church.
 - a) The Colossian church was started by Paul’s disciple, Epaphras, who visited Paul in prison and shared the problems of the Colossian church. Therefore, the letter was written by Paul to address those problems.
 - b) The letter was carried by Tychicus (in Colossians 4:7) from the prison to the church. The church was located in Turkey. Tychicus also carried the letters to Philemon and Philippians. Philemon came from this church too. Tychicus may also have carried the letter to the Ephesians. So Tychicus could be the person who carried all 4 Prison Epistles written by Paul to the recipients.
4. The Colossian church was in the western part of Turkey, close to Europe. It was also along the trade route into Europe. Therefore, it was under both Asian and European influences. The city Colossae was multi-cultural which includes the Jewish culture. The city therefore had no dominant religion unlike Philippi which was mainly Roman in characteristics and upheld that “Caesar is King”.
5. Colossae was like any modern City. It was very much like Singapore, which is now influenced by the “New Age” religion. This “New Age” religion brings in anything that is good but with no doctrine e.g. Mother Earth movement! Therefore, Colossae was influenced by many religions.

Why are today’s Christians stuck in “New Age” religion like the Colossians?

1. Everyone knows that God is high up there, that God is transcendent. But people have difficulty understanding the presence or imminence of God! We think we need a lot of intermediaries to fill the gap, for example priest craft, angels, mystical formula such as religion, legalism (which includes fasting, observing certain festivals etc. to avoid uncleanness).
2. In his address, Paul pointed out that while God is high (transcendent), yet we Christians have Christ who is God and His Spirit lives in us! Therefore we do not need

intermediaries or New Age concepts. Christ is ALL we need! This word “ALL” appears more than 30 times in the book of Colossians.

Chapter 1 – Key Central Message!

1. Colossians 1:9. Paul’s prayer for them was that they be filled with knowledge of His will in ALL wisdom and spiritual understanding. If you do not have spiritual wisdom and understanding, you will end up wanting to fill the gaps with whatever people say is needed (e.g. New Age religion).
2. Colossians 1:11. It was also Paul’s prayer that they be strengthened with ALL might for ALL patience (endurance) according to His glorious power. People think it is the miracles (i.e. the showy things) that are needed to fill the gap, like religious craft. This might is given to Christians for ALL endurance, and not for show! It is given to forbear suffering (not for self-glorification) and faithfully teaching others just like Jesus did, going from city to city, preaching and teaching! Jesus did not hold any big evangelistic event or showy event.
3. Colossians 1:15-20 is the central message of the book of Colossians; it will take us a lifetime to understand.
 - a) By Him ALL things are created, ALL things were created through Him, He is before ALL things, and in Him, ALL things consist.
 - b) The Colossians were told that “Christ is ALL you need” in order to have union with God and be satisfied.
 - c) We do not need the latest preacher in town, special seminars or speakers. It is unfortunate that many Christians look to everyone except Christ!
 - d) Focus on Christ. Remember that He lives in you and ask God to help you to live out Christ in you!
4. Colossians 1:15 says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. To know what God is like, just look at Christ’s life.
5. Colossians 1:16. Everything is created by Christ! People find it hard to imagine a carpenter’s son is the Creator of the world!
6. Colossians 1:17 says that Jesus is before ALL things and in Him ALL things hold together! The atomic bomb is released when the “glue” holding it is released! That is atomic power. Therefore, if you know how to release it, the power is amazing!
7. Colossians 1:19. In Jesus, ALL the fullness should dwell. Jesus emptied Himself of privileges, but He is always God with all the fullness in Him.
8. Colossians 1:20. By Him, ALL things are reconciled to Himself. Paul was telling us that the Colossians had a very low view of Christ just like the Jehovah witnesses who think that Christ is one of the gods and not the God with transcendence and presence (imminence). Christ reconciled us to God as in Galatians 2:20.
9. Colossians 1:27 speaks about the mystery of “Christ in you”.
 - a) God is in heaven and that is not a mystery to us! We have no issue accepting that God is big and high.
 - b) “Mystery” here means you cannot know until God reveals it to you! (See Acts 26:18). The Almighty God lives in you through His Holy Spirit as in Galatians

2:20. Therefore, you have the hope of glory and you will want to live a life that glorifies God. This is possible because Christ lives in you!

10. Colossians 1:29. Paul was saying that, "I toil but it is His energy working in me!" Paul toiled by putting off his old habits, so that the Christ in Him can shine!
11. This means the Colossians should not be looking for supermen in stadiums! Just focus in Christ! Today's Christians should also learn this message well.

Chapter 2

1. Colossians 2:3. In Jesus, ALL treasure of wisdom and knowledge are hidden! This means Christ is waiting to work in you! Christ is waiting to work out the patience and endurance in you to reach out and give sacrificial love to help others especially the poor!
2. Colossians 2:8. Don't let the philosophy of the world take us in with traditions! For example, to some, church service must be on Sunday and cannot be on any other day. To them, it is not about daily living out Christ!
3. Colossians 2:9. In Christ is God! Christ is sufficient! We are complete in Him alone.
4. Colossians 2:11 speaks about the circumcision of Christ!
 - a) Jews are circumcised by hand but ours is a spiritual circumcision.
 - b) Spiritual circumcision means to remove the old nature of bondage under the power of sin.
 - c) In the past, we have no desire to put away the old self. But now, we have the desire as well as the power to overcome sin and our old nature!
5. Colossians 2:16-19. We do not need all these things like special religious dates for God to come closer to us e.g. Christmas! God is already in us! How close can He get? There are people who are always talking about godly man with visions! Thinking of getting near to such "spiritual man" to feel their power, just like people trying to get near to Paul or walking in the holy land, etc.!
6. Colossians 2:19. All of us are nourished by Christ!
7. Colossians 2:21 warns about commandments and doctrines of man which are self-made religions! These people cannot stop the indulgence of the flesh! They only have the appearance of wisdom! To overcome sin, we just need to focus on Christ; all else have no value!

Chapter 3

This chapter is very similar to that in the book of Ephesians:

1. Colossians 3:1. Christ is God and we are reminded of the Trinity, and that Christ is already seated at the right hand of God.
2. Colossians 3:5-17. Similar to the instructions in the book of Ephesians to "put off and put on". We are to put off our selfish ways, self-indulgent ways and put on Christ's giving (not showy), gentle, and patient ways.
3. Colossians 3:18 - 4:1. This is about the family, the Christian Home! The key is to focus on Christ at home, not just how you look on Sundays! e.g. Submit to husband, etc. with endurance every day, 24 x 7. It is easy to put on an act on Sunday or on a mission trip but not so at home.

Chapter 4

1. Colossians 4:3-4. Paul requested for prayers for him to share the Gospel clearly with those people who visit him in prison. Many preachers are not prayed for by their church so they are not clear in their preaching! Some preachers have so much cloudiness and ignorance! Pray for your pastors to know Christ and not just plagiarise other preachers' speeches.
2. Colossians 4:9. Onesimus was the same person mentioned in the book of Philemon. He was a runaway slave from Colossae and he heard the Gospel from Paul and was converted. Paul wanted him to go back his master, Philemon, and be reconciled with him as brethren in Christ.

What is this book of Colossians about?

1. It is about us.
2. Many of us have head knowledge but cannot grasp and reconcile the precept of the transcendent God indwelling in us!
3. Christ wants to live through us in the person of the Holy Spirit. We are to be ambassadors for Him, to bring Christ into the world. We are to let the transcendent God be seen in us that the world may experience Him!
4. Therefore, love this amazing God!