

Introducing Colossae and the Colossians

- In the 1st century Colossae was a relatively small town in the south west of Asia Minor (Turkey). Less important than its neighbours Hierapolis and Laodicea.
- Its population & culture was predominantly Gentile (Greek). Like many cities it had a Jewish population and this influence is seen in Paul's letter.
- Colossae was a cosmopolitan and culturally diverse city with an array of religious beliefs and practices.
- The Christians in Colossae were a small part of this community.
- The church was founded in the early to mid 50s AD but not by Paul. In fact he had never been there (1:3&4; 2:1).
- Established by Epaphras (1:7), a native of Colossae. Epaphras was with Paul at time of writing (4:12).



The letter and its purpose

- Where was Paul writing from? See Ch 4:3, 10, 18. Most likely from Rome circa. 60-61AD.
- Paul was concerned about false teaching and its effects and seeks to provide assurance and encouragement to the Colossians to continue in Christ-centred faith.

A Colossian 'heresy'? and Paul's response

- Was the church already under the influence of false teachers or is Paul's warning pre-emptive? What was the nature of the so-called heresy or false teaching which threatened the Colossian church?
- Opinion is divided on these questions. We can only gather clues from the text by mirror-reading. See for example: 2:4, 8, 16-23. It seems to have had some Jewish characteristics with Greek tendencies!
- Whatever the exact nature of the 'heresy', Paul's concern is that it will lead the Colossian believers to doubt the sufficiency of Christ so that some might even believe they were incomplete Christians, somehow lacking in something.
- Paul's response is to assure the Colossians that they lack nothing whatsoever in Christ. In Christ they are complete, already seated with Christ in heaven, sharing in the blessings of heaven. Such things as true knowledge, spiritual wisdom & understanding, and power.
- Paul's answer to the Colossian 'heresy' is simply to urge the Colossians to stand firm on the foundation of Christ (1:23; 2:5, 6-7; 4:12) which, after all, is the gospel they first received via Epaphras.