



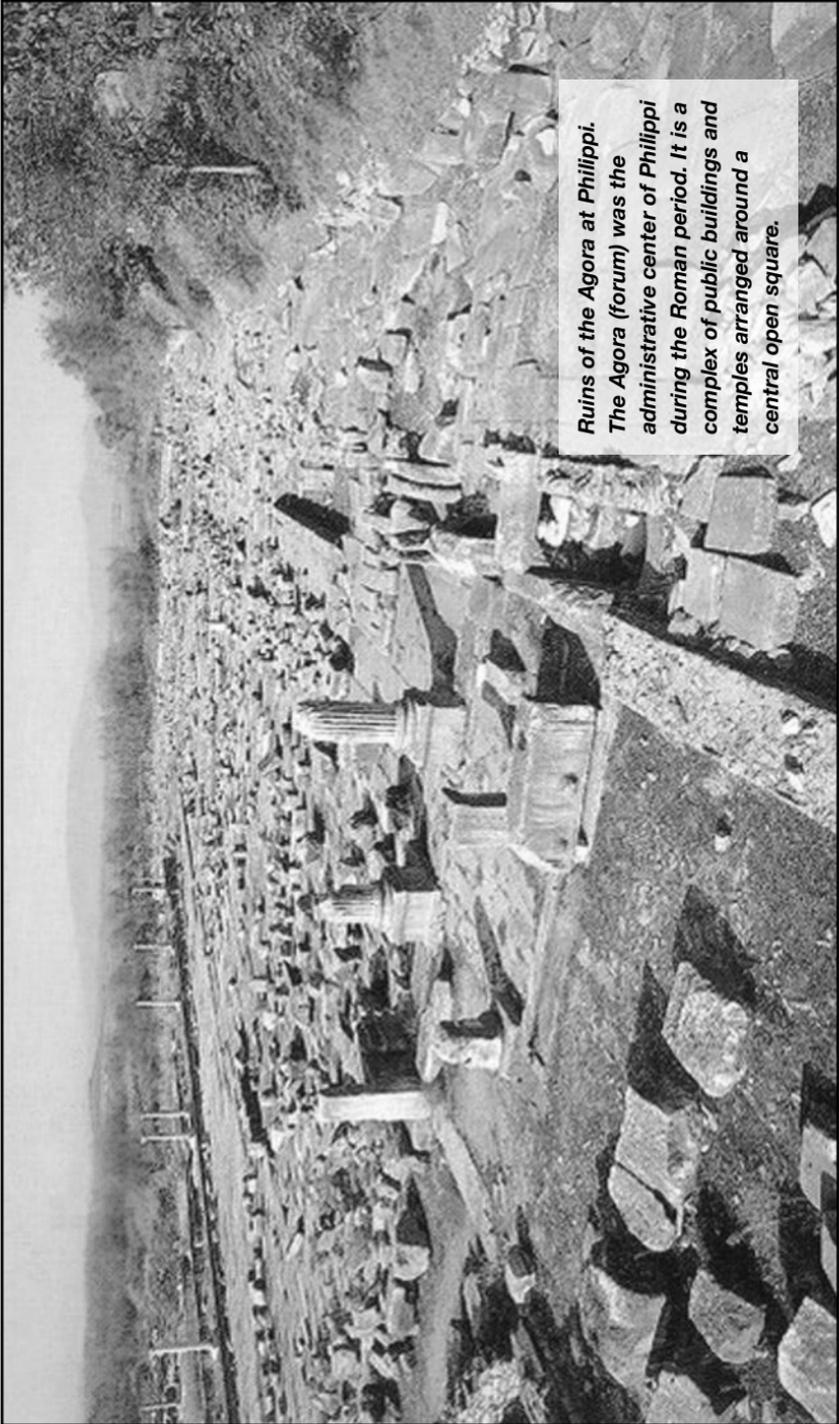
CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**PHILIPPIANS
& COLOSSIANS**

Week 3



Ruins of the Agora at Philippi. The Agora (forum) was the administrative center of Philippi during the Roman period. It is a complex of public buildings and temples arranged around a central open square.

Share in Evangelism

DAY 15

Philippians 4:14-23

How can one share in ministry today? By giving (a) time, (b) talents, (c) treasure.

1. How did the Philippians share in Paul's distress (vs. 14-16)?

2. How did their giving bring profit to these Philippians (vs. 17-20)? Consider Paul's quote of Jesus in Acts 20:35.

3. How would God satisfy their needs (Php 3:19-20)? What is more important—glory or wealth?

1. Do you financially support ministries?

2. When you support a ministry, what is your purpose in doing so? (a) helping introduce Christ to those who do not know him, (b) laying up treasure in heaven, (c) a fragrant offering to God, (d) a painful duty

*Paul ends this book of encouragement with **greetings from the saints** with him to saints in Philippi (Php 4:21-22). Unlike the common idea that views Christians as saints only after death, Paul viewed earthbound Christians as sanctified by God and called them saints.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Introduction to Colossians

Authorship: Although there is some debate about Paul's authorship of this epistle, the early church fathers were unanimous in saying that Paul wrote it. The letter itself begins by asserting it is from Paul.

Date: Paul most likely wrote this epistle during his imprisonment in his home in Rome, probably between A.D. 60-62.

Setting and purpose: Colosse was a city in Asia Minor, about 100 miles east of Ephesus. Although it was predominantly a gentile city, Antiochus the Great had moved 2,000 Jews into the region and others migrated to join them.

Colosse lay in the upper valley of the Maeander River, near the cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea. Colosse was the oldest of the three. As the other two grew, it diminished and grew smaller. Laodicea became a political center of the district and a financial headquarters. Hierapolis was a great trade center and had a notable spa. Colosse, by A.D. 60, was a small town.

Paul was writing from prison to a predominantly gentile audience (2:13). Paul had not yet visited them (1:4, 2:1). The probable founder of the church there was Epaphras, who was now in Rome informing Paul about troubles affecting members in Colosse.

Paul's purpose in writing was to counter intrusions from other teachers who questioned the effectiveness of the sacrifice of Jesus by requiring the addition of pagan philosophies, legalism, mysticism and asceticism (ch. 2). The source of these erroneous teachings may lie both in first century Jewish beliefs and in the early development of the Gnostic philosophies. Regardless, Paul opposes additional requirements to the reality of Jesus Christ (2:16-18).

Paul first expounds the work of God in the person of Jesus Christ (1:1-2:3). Next he counters false teachings by exposing them to the light of the cross of Christ (2:4-23). Then he relates practical concepts for Christian life in response to the precious gift of grace (ch. 3-4).

Outline:

I. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS, 1:1-12

- A. Faith, Hope and Charity, 1:1-8
- B. Faith in Christ Jesus, 1:9-14

II. DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION ON CHRIST, 1:15–2:23

- A. Exalted Above All, 1:15-23
- B. Sharing Christ's Suffering, 1:24-29
- C. Vain Philosophy, 2:1-10
- D. Vain Legalism, 2:11-17
- E. Vain Mysticism, 2:18-19
- F. Vain Asceticism, 2:20-23

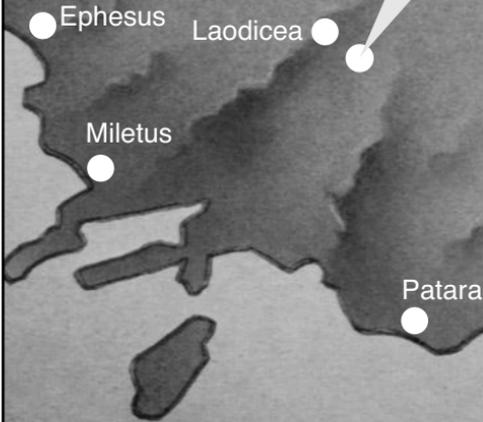
III. THE NEW LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN, 3:1-4:6

- A. Up, Up and Away! 3:1-4
- B. The New Walk With Christ, 3:5-11
- C. Chosen for Peace, 3:12-17
- D. The Christian Home, 3:18-21
- E. Christian Work, 3:22–4:1
- F. Dedicated to the One I Love, 4:2-6

IV. CONCLUSION, 4:7-18

- A. With a Little Help From My Friends, 4:7-18

Colosse



Colosse:

- A Roman city in Asia Minor, in the Lycus River valley, east of Ephesus.
- A prosperous industrial center famous for its textiles, in competition with Laodicea.
- Judaism, Platonism and local mystery cults were blended into strange religious practices.
- The home of two of Paul's associates, Archippus and Epaphras.

**Area of
detail**

An inset map showing a larger view of the Mediterranean region. A black rectangular box highlights the area shown in the main map above. The text 'Mediterranean Sea' is visible below the box.

Mediterranean
Sea

Faith, Hope and Charity

DAY 16

Colossians 1:1-8

Do you know anyone named after these biblical terms? (a) faith, (b) hope, (c) charity, (d) grace, (e) joy.

1. Which qualities of the believers at Colosse did Paul commend (vs. 3-4)?
2. How does verse 5 parallel Paul's insight in 1 Corinthians 13:13?
3. How is the gospel a vital, living entity (vs. 6-8)?

1. How do the three elements of Christianity in verse 5 live in you? Which is strongest? Which is weakest?

2. Today, consider doing as Epaphras—be thankful and pass along the message about another's love.

Epaphras is mentioned in Colossians 1:7 and 4:12 as the man who evangelized and founded the church in Colosse. As a faithful minister, he brought news of their love as an encouragement to Paul, imprisoned in his own home in Rome. In his letter to Philemon, a member at Colosse, Paul says Epaphras was a fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus (Phm 23).

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Faith in Christ Jesus

Colossians 1:9-14

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever worked hard, preparing to qualify for an opportunity or job, only to be told your best wasn't good enough? Has anyone ever done the work necessary for you—so you were qualified by someone else?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How does Paul balance the need to increase knowledge with the importance of wisdom from God (vs. 9-10)?
2. Where does strength come from (vs. 11-12)? Remember your memory verse of Philippians 4:13?
3. In what three ways has the Father changed our lives by the acts of the Son (Col 1:13-14)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How do you seek knowledge and wisdom?
2. Has the Father qualified you to share his eternal inheritance (v. 12)?
3. How thankful are you for your rescue from death (vs. 13-14)?

WINDOW
on the Word

In the Greek, Colossians 1:9-14 is phrased as one sentence in order to link these Christian concepts together. Paul speaks of Christ-followers walking in a worthy manner, bearing fruit and being thankful they have been qualified by the Father for the inheritance he freely gives.

*“For he has rescued
us from the dominion
of darkness and
brought us into the
kingdom of the Son
he loves.”*

Colossians 1:13



Artwork by Andrew Berwood-Hoy

Exalted Above All

Colossians 1:15-23

OPENING
up to the Word

Whom might you list as your enemies? (a) fans of opposing sports teams, (b) legal adversaries, (c) pagan religions, (d) oppressive governmental agencies (e) members of other denominations.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Now Paul turns to the work of Christ (vs. 15-20). As Creator and Redeemer, how does Christ act on our behalf? How is Christ “before all things” (v. 17)? Consider 2 Corinthians 8:9 and John 1:1-18.

2. Christ is the image of God (Col 1:15), the firstborn over all creation. How does this last title reflect his rights in his prominent position over and above all creation?

3. How is Jesus Christ the firstborn from among the dead (v. 18)? What is reconciled through him (vs. 19-22)?

LIVING
out the Word

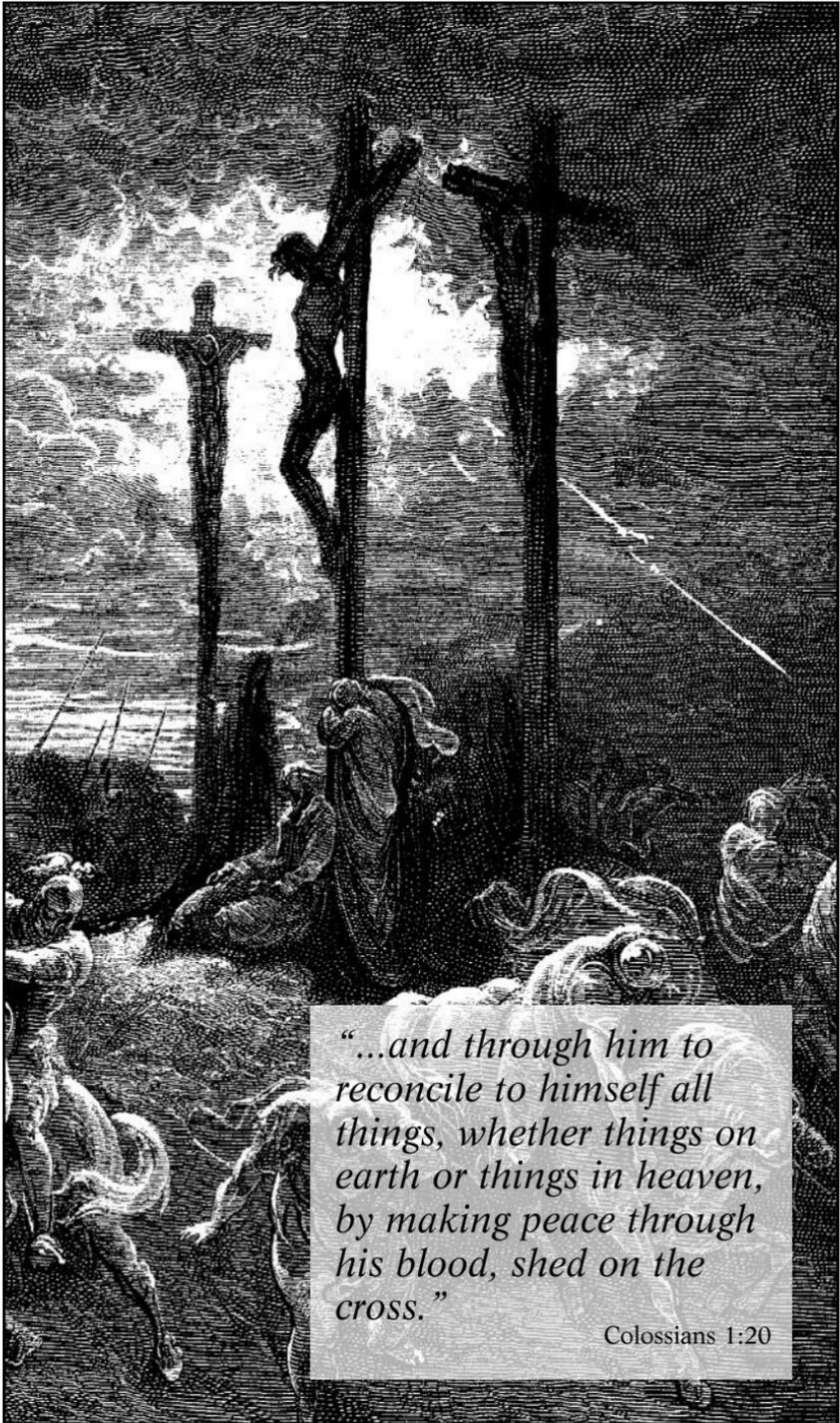
1. Read again about the accomplishments of Jesus, God the Son (vs. 15-20). Where do you fit as the object of his love?

2. Compare verses 21-23 with 12-14. How has the Father reconciled you through the Son? How did God transform you from enemy to one of his children?

3. Define your “hope” as a Christian. See 1:5, 23, 27.

WINDOW
on the Word

*Paul focuses on **Christ as the image of the invisible God** (v. 15). Human beings were created **in** the image of God so we can have a relationship with him (Ge 1:27). Although the fall of Adam and Eve and the entrance of sin has marred that creation, humans still reflect the image of God, albeit distorted (Jas 3:9). Christ, as **the** image of God (2 Co. 4:4), reveals to us the invisible God (Jn 1:18; 12:45; 14:9). Christians leave the old, distorted image to be transformed into the perfect image of God by the power of the Holy Spirit (2Co 3:18; Col 3:10). Eventually, we will be made into the perfected image of the heavenly Christ (1Co 15:49; Ro 8:29).*



“...and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

Colossians 1:20

Sharing Christ's Suffering

Colossians 1:24-29

OPENING
up to the Word

Who is your favorite mystery writer? (a) Agatha Christie, (b) Arthur Conan Doyle, (c) John Steinbeck, (d) Tom Clancey, (e) Stephen King.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How is Christ both the body (v. 17) and the head (vs. 18, 24)? What do these analogies teach us?
2. In what ways was Paul the servant of the body of Christ (vs. 24-26)?
3. What is the “mystery” that had been hidden for ages and generations but was “now revealed” (vs. 25-27)?
4. How motivated was Paul in his work (vs. 28-29)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. The “glorious riches” of the mystery Paul speaks of is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (v. 27). Do you feel Christ-followers can lose the focus of Jesus when their attention is directed to other topics—even by a pastor or priest?
2. In what ways are you being presented and prepared to be perfect in Christ (v. 28)? See also Ephesians 2:10.

WINDOW
on the Word

*In Colossians 1:28 Paul counters the teachings of early **Gnostics** who taught that special knowledge was vested in them for salvation. In response, Paul says, “We proclaim him...” The nature of the gospel lies in the truth (v. 25), to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers and to disciple and equip believers. The scope includes all humans—“everyone” (v. 28). The purpose of the gospel is to bring all to maturity in Christ.*

“We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.”

Colossians 1:28-29



Vain Philosophy

Colossians 2:1-10

OPENING
up to the Word

Which ancient Greek philosopher has contributed the most to Western culture? (a) Socrates, (b) Plato, (c) Aristotle, (d) Pythagoras, (e) Euclid.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How does Paul understand the ultimate treasure of wisdom and knowledge (vs. 1-3)? Consider 1:27.

2. Paul contrasts Christ's work with the "fine-sounding arguments" that were being presented in addition to the simple gospel message (vs. 4-10). What does it mean to live in him (vs. 4-7)?

3. How can human traditions and philosophies, when contrary to Christ, take one "captive" (v. 8)? Do you feel you have ever been taken "captive" by "hollow and deceptive" teachings?

4. Does Paul allow for the fullness of salvation to lie anywhere but in Christ (vs. 9-10)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How do you list your treasures (v. 2)? Where does spiritual wealth come from?

2. Are you deeply rooted in Christ (v. 7)? Do any vain philosophies tempt you toward legalism?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Paul is not denouncing **philosophy** in general. He focuses his theology in Christ rather than in philosophies founded in human traditions (v. 8). He used the perfect tense in verse 10 to emphasize that the Christian has been brought to fullness, to completion, in Jesus Christ.*

Colossians 2:11-17

What purposes do laws serve? (a) create bureaucracy, (b) create income from penalties paid, (c) protect society, (d) define crime, (e) determine those God loves and those he does not.

1. Does “fullness in Christ” (v. 10) come through the Old Testament requirement of circumcision (v. 11)? How does the physical rite point to spiritual circumcision?
2. How was baptism and faith viewed as an initiatory rite for the first century church (v. 12)?
3. How were the Colossians forgiven their sins and made alive in Christ (vs. 13-14)? By legal demands or by the cross? Does Christ stand supreme above all “authorities” and “powers”?
4. What legalistic requirements were being added to simple faith in Christ (vs. 16-17)? How are these only “shadows”?

1. Remember a time when you were “dead in your sins” (v. 13)? How were you forgiven?
2. Have judgmental attitudes of friends or coworkers upset you recently? What were their concerns? Were they legalistic or Christ-centered?
3. Are you living in the “shadows” or the “reality”?

*Paul had been raised the son of a Pharisee, committed to both the written law of Moses and the oral traditions of Judaism. Now, as a Christian, he understood that Christ, nailed to the cross, had removed his debts. The “**written code with its regulations**” (v. 14) may refer to an indictment drawn up against a prisoner, or something similar to an I.O.U. In any case, the written code is representative of the Mosaic law. The law from Mt. Sinai—the old covenant, including a dietary code, sacrificial rituals, days of worship and circumcision—was merely a **shadow** (v. 17) that was intended to point the way to the reality of salvation, Jesus Christ.*

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