

## **Synopsis of the Book of Colossians** (NIV based)

AUTHOR: Apostle Paul, with Timothy (v.1:1)

DATE OF WRITING: circa A.D. 60

AUTHOR'S SITUATION: apparently, Paul was imprisoned (vv.4:10,18)

AUDIENCE: to the believers in Colosse (v.1:2)

### WRITER'S CONNECTION TO HIS AUDIENCE:

- - Paul had not visited Colosse (v.2:1). Epaphras, a fellow Colossian believer, had been ministering to the Colossians, probably started the church there (vv.1:7-9a; 4:12), and was with Paul (v.4:12). Onesimus, a fellow Colossian believer, was with Paul and was returning to Colosse (v.4:9).
  - - Paul and Timothy have received good reports about the Colossian believers from Epaphras, and as a result have committed to continue to pray for them. (vv.1:7-9)
  - - Paul is delighted at their progress in spiritual growth. (v.2:5)
- 

### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

#### Major problem and its cause:

Apparently, the church at Colosse had been listening to or perhaps lead astray by "fine-sounding arguments" that promote "hollow and deceptive philosophy", which is based on "human tradition and basic principles of this world" (vv.2:4,8). The Colossians were in danger of being deceived and "taken captive" by the "fine-sounding arguments" of this philosophy (vv.2:4,8). From characteristic implications within the book of Colossians, this philosophy seems to be an early form of Gnosticism (Scofield p.1249). Other false doctrines that are specifically cited and addressed in the Book of Colossians are in regard to the practice of regulations of the Old Testament Law (example: v.2:16), false humility (v.2:18), the worship of angels (v.2:18), and physical religious cleanliness regulations (vv.2:20-21).

#### The approach that is used in dealing with the problem:

The theme of the remedy and correction for the believers at Colosse seems to be centered on establishing a firm understanding of the nature and functions of Christ. Thereby, admonishing and teaching about Christ is provided to increase their doctrinal understanding (vv.1:28,2:2) in regard to such aspects as: the role of the gospel message (example: v.1:6); characteristics of salvation (example: v.1:12-14); the functions of Christ (example: vv.1:15-18); the supremacy of Christ (example: v.1:18); the nature of Christ (example: vv.2:9-10); the believer's position in Christ (example: vv.2:10-13); the authority of the Old Testament Law (example: v.2:14); proper Christian conduct (example: v.3:12), and etc.

In addition to admonishing and teaching to increase their doctrinal understanding, Paul encourages the Colossian believers (example: v.2:2) and focuses their attention on looking at their lives from an eternal perspective (vv.3:1-2). He warns (example: vv.3:5-6), exhorts (example: v.2:6), praises (example: v.1:4), and reminds the Colossian believers of their spiritual past (example: v.1:21). Paul prays for them (v.1:3) and informs them that Epaphras (their minister (v.1:7)) is also praying in their behalf (v.4:12). In taking distinct

action, Paul sends Tychicus and Onesimus to their church at Colosse, presumably to help straighten out their problems (vv.4:7-9).

---

#### GENERAL THEME:

- - 'The Supremacy of Christ' (example: v.1:18), or 'The Pre-eminence of Christ' ['preeminence' - (AHD) "Superior to or notable above all others; outstanding; A state or position of outstanding power or importance; distinction"; prominent standing; "to be first (in rank or influence)" (v.1:18, Strong's #4409)]

#### KEY VERSES:

- - verse 1:18 - supremacy of Christ;
- - verse 2:9 - all the fullness of Deity is in Christ;
- - verse 2:10 - believers now possess this fullness in Christ.

#### MAIN POINT IN THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS:

- - verse 2:8 - "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."

#### MAIN REASON WHY THIS BOOK IS IMPORTANT:

- - "Growing in the knowledge of God" in order to "live a life worthy of the Lord" and "bear fruit in every good work" (v.1:10) will be severely hindered or even nullified (v.2:19) if believers hold to false doctrines, regulations of the Old Testament Law, worldly religious principles, or human religious traditions, teachings, or philosophies (vv.2:8,13,20,22).

#### DISTINCT CONNECTIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT:

- - verses 1:16-17 Jesus is the Creator, Jehovah God - as described in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, for example;
- - verse 1:27 'the mystery of Christ in you' - as foretold in Ezekiel 36:26-27, for example;
- - verse 2:2 the mystery of Christ - as foretold in Isaiah chapter 53, for example;
- - verse 2:14 the Old Testament Law - as established in the Book of Leviticus, for example;
- - verse 2:16 cited regulations of the Old Testament Law - as established in Numbers 10:10, for example.

#### PRACTICAL CONCERNS FOR OUR MODERN TIMES:

- - Believers can have difficulty in identifying worldly cultural teachings that threaten to invade and corrupt the purity of our doctrines.
  - - Some people in churches are open to and looking for new doctrines, looking for new ways to improve their spiritual experience and their relationship with God.
  - - Believers need to realize and heed the danger that false religious beliefs and false religious practices can have in derailing their faith. (example: vv.2:18-19)
- 

#### CONTENTS:

##### Chapter 1:

- - the opening address and greetings - vv.1:1-2;
- - a good report about the Colossian believers - vv.1:3-8;

- the commitment of Paul and Timothy to continue to pray for the Colossian believers and for their spiritual growth - vv.1:9-12;
- the work, the nature, and the identity of the Son - vv.1:13-19;
- reconciliation to God - vv.1:20-23;
- the mystery of the church, and its glorious riches of 'Christ in you' - vv.1:24-27;
- teaching everyone - vv.1:28-29.

#### Chapter 2:

- Paul struggling for the spiritual growth of the Colossian believers - vv.2:1-3;
- resisting the persuasive arguments for false doctrines and deceptive philosophies - vv.2:4-8;
- empowering by God to be successful in resisting false teachings - vv.2:9-12;
- authorization by God to terminate following the regulations of the Old Testament Law - vv.2:13-23.

#### Chapter 3:

- establishing an eternal perspective - vv.3:1-4;
- implementing personal consecration - vv.3:5-11;
- how to treat other believers - vv.3:12-17;
- how to treat family members - vv.3:18-21;
- how to treat an employer and employee (master, slave) - vv.3:22-4:1.

#### Chapter 4:

- commit to pray - vv.4:2-4;
- how to interact with unbelievers - vv.4:5-6;
- information about and greetings from ministry associates of Paul - vv.4:7-15;
- closing instructions from Paul - vv.4:16-18.

---

#### Works Cited:

*The American Heritage Dictionary (AHD)*. 3rd ed., ver. 3.6a (CD-ROM). Cambridge, MA: SoftKey International Inc., 1994.

Bible. *New Scofield Study Bible*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

---

#### Copyrights:

Scriptures taken from Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®  
 Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc®  
 Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright © 2018 Mel W. Coddington, and permission is hereby granted that this document may be used, copied, and distributed non-commercially to non-profit organizations, individuals, churches, ministries, and schools worldwide, provided the copies are distributed at no charge and retain this sources documentation as supplied herein. This document is not for sale, resale, or for use as a gift or premium to be offered in connection with solicitations or contributions.

---

File name: ColossiansSynopsis.\_\_\_\_ (.htm, .rtf, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

Source: www.BelieverAssist.com