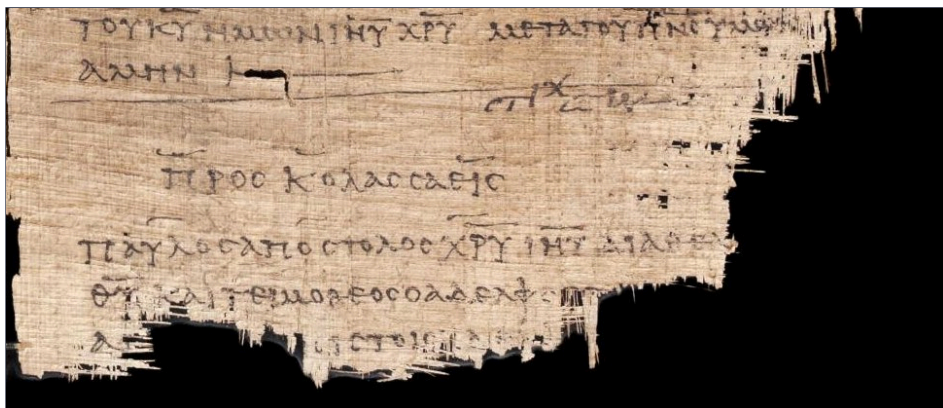


COLOSSIANS

Jesus Is Enough

AUTHOR	Paul, with Timothy, 1:1. Paul signs it in his own hand, 4:18. Some scholars think a follower wrote it later, because the style is different.
WRITTEN FROM	Prison, 4:3 and 4:18. Most say Rome, the same stay as Philemon and Ephesians. Some say Ephesus instead.
DATE WRITTEN	About AD 60 to 62. If it was Ephesus, about AD 54 to 55.
WRITTEN TO	The believers in Colossae, a small town in the Lycus valley of Turkey, 1:2. Paul had never visited them, 2:1.
CHURCH STARTED BY	Epaphras, a man from Colossae who learned the gospel from Paul, 1:7 and 4:12.
DELIVERED BY	Tychicus, with Onesimus, 4:7 to 9. They likely carried Philemon and Ephesians on the same trip.
WHY HE WROTE	Teachers were adding philosophy, food rules, holy days and angel worship to Jesus, 2:8 to 23. Paul says Jesus is enough.
KEY VERSE	Colossians 2:9 to 10. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form. And you have been made complete in Christ.



THE OLDEST COPY OF COLOSSIANS

Part of a page of Papyrus 46, Paul's letters copied in Egypt about AD 200, now in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. At the top is the end of Philippians and the word Amen. Under the short line is the title PROS KOLASSAEIS, To the Colossians, and the first words of the letter: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God.

THE OTHER SIDE. The back of this leaf holds Colossians 1:5 to 13. See the whole page in Philippians, p. 3.

WHY IT MATTERS. Copied only about 140 years after Paul wrote, it says what our Bibles say today.

Historical Setting

Colossae sat in the Lycus river valley in western Turkey, next to two bigger cities, Laodicea about 10 miles away and Hierapolis about 13 miles away. Five hundred years before Paul,

the Greek writer Herodotus called it a great city. By Paul's day it was a small town, known for wool dyed a deep purple red. Paul never went there. A local man named Epaphras heard the gospel from Paul, probably in Ephesus, and took it home. Later he visited Paul in prison with good news and bad news. The church was growing, but some teachers were selling a Jesus plus package.

What Colossae Was Up Against

- SMART SOUNDING TALK.** Teachers used fine words and philosophy to pull people away from Christ, 2:4 and 2:8.
- RULE KEEPING.** Food and drink rules, festivals, New Moons and Sabbaths were being used to judge people, 2:16 and 2:21.
- ANGEL WORSHIP.** Some claimed special visions and worshiped angels, 2:18.
- OLD HABITS.** Anger, lies, greed and sexual sin still needed to be put to death, 3:5 to 9.

The Idiot Proof Summary

Colossians is a short letter with a big Jesus. The church in Colossae was young, and slick teachers were telling them they needed more: more secret knowledge, more rules, more visions. Paul answers with one of the greatest songs about Jesus ever written. He made the universe, He holds it together, and all the fullness of God lives in Him. Have Jesus, and you are not missing anything.

Colossians at a Glance

- CH 1** **WHO JESUS IS**
He made all things, holds all things together and is first in everything.
- CH 2** **JESUS IS ENOUGH**
You are complete in Him. Do not let anyone sell you an upgrade.
- CH 3** **NEW CLOTHES**
Set your mind above. Take off the old self and put on love.
- CH 4** **FINAL WORDS**
Pray, speak with grace, and meet Paul's team.

Where Jesus Shows Up

- COLOSSIANS 1:15 AND 1:18** The firstborn over all creation and from among the dead. Fulfills Psalm 89:27 and Proverbs 8:23.
- COLOSSIANS 1:16 TO 17** All things were created through Him, and He is before all things. Fulfills Proverbs 8:23.
- COLOSSIANS 1:20** He made peace by the blood of His cross. Fulfills Isaiah 53:5.
- COLOSSIANS 2:3** In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Fulfills Isaiah 11:2.
- COLOSSIANS 2:11** The circumcision done by Christ, not by human hands. Fulfills Deuteronomy 30:6.
- COLOSSIANS 3:4** When Christ appears, you will appear with Him in glory. Still to come.

What to Watch for in Colossians

- MESSIANIC PROPHECIES** 1:15, 1:18, 1:20, 2:3, 2:11
- MESSIANIC FORESHADOW** 1:16-17
- END TIMES PROPHECIES** 3:4
- THE HEART** 3:15-16, 3:22

DEMONIC

2:15, 3:5

NOTABLE

2:13-14, 3:1-2, 3:23-24, 4:6

JESUS SPEAKING

Words in red are Jesus speaking, or God the Father speaking from heaven.

Cool Stuff Most People Miss

AN EARLY SONG

Many scholars think 1:15 to 20 was a song or poem about Jesus. In six verses it says He made everything, holds everything together and rules everything.

THE SAME MAILBAG

Tychicus and Onesimus carried this letter, 4:7 to 9. Philemon lived in Colossae, so the little letter to Philemon was likely in the same bag.

O OR A?

The town's coins spell it with an o. Many old copies of this letter, like Papyrus 46, spell it with an a. Both were used.

THE SECOND CHANCE

Mark, the young man Paul refused to take on a trip, Acts 15:37 to 39, is back on Paul's team, 4:10. Later Paul calls him useful, 2 Timothy 4:11.

Did Anybody Listen?

Yes. Colossians was copied with Paul's letters by about AD 200 and quoted by Irenaeus. In the 300s, Athanasius used its words, the image of the invisible God, to show Jesus is fully God. The town faded, but its letter still tells the world that Jesus is enough.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES | MESSIANIC FORESHADOW

1

CHAPTER 1 IN 30 SECONDS

Paul has never met these people, but he prays for them all the time. Then he breaks into a song about Jesus. He made everything, He holds everything together, He is head of the church, and He made peace by His blood. The big secret God kept for ages is out: Christ in you, the hope of glory.

GREETINGS FROM PAUL AND TIMOTHY // PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2; PHILEMON 1:1-3

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

²To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER // 1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9; PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,

⁴because we have heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints—⁵the faith and love proceeding from the hope stored up for you in heaven, of which you have already heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶that has come to you.

All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood the grace of God. ⁷You learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸and who also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have full endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹²giving thanks

■ **COL 1:2 [FIELD NOTES]** See the Colossae Field Notes page.

to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

¹³He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE SON // HEBREWS 1:1-14

¹⁵The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him.

¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He may have preeminence. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, ²⁰and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross.

■ **COL 1:14 [TEXT]** Many later manuscripts and the KJV add through His blood. The oldest copies do not have these words here. Ephesians 1:7 says it, and 1:20 says He made peace by the blood of His cross.

■ **COL 1:15 [FULFILLS]** He would be the Firstborn ← PS 89:27 • MEDIUM p.~

■ **COL 1:15 [FULFILLS]** Foreordained from everlasting ← PROV 8:23 • MEDIUM p.~

■ **COL 1:15 [NOTE] FIRSTBORN.** In the Bible, firstborn can mean first in rank, the heir, not the first one made. God says of David, a youngest son, I will indeed appoint him as My firstborn, Psalm 89:27. Paul explains in the next verse: all things were created through Him. If He made all things, He was not made. Jehovah's Witnesses read firstborn as the first thing God created, and their New World Translation adds the word other in 1:16, 17 and 20. That word is not in the Greek.

■ **COL 1:18 [FULFILLS]** He would be the Firstborn ← PS 89:27 • MEDIUM p.~

■ **COL 1:20 [FULFILLS]** His sacrifice brings peace between man and God ← IS 53:5b p.~

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH
FOR THE PLACE · LITTLE DUG UP

COLOSSAE

COLOSSIANS 1:2 · 2:1 · 4:9 · 4:12 TO 13



Top: the mound of Colossae near Honaz, Denizli, Turkey. Photo A.Savin, Free Art License. Bottom: a bronze coin of Colossae from the late 100s AD, with a Roman emperor on one side and the goddess Artemis in a chariot pulled by deer on the other. Münzkabinett, Berlin, photo Reinhard Saczewski, public domain.

WHAT IT IS

Top: the hill where Colossae stood, on the Lycus river in western Turkey. Under the grass are the walls, streets and a theater of the town Paul wrote to. Bottom: a coin made in Colossae. On the deer side you can read KOLOSSENON, of the Colossians.

HOW OLD IT IS

People lived on this hill for thousands of years. Herodotus says it was a great city when the Persian king Xerxes passed through in 481 BC. The coin is from the late 100s AD, about 120 years after Paul wrote. A matching coin in Berlin is dated to the emperor Commodus, AD 180 to 192.

THE TOWN THAT FADED

By Paul's day Colossae was smaller than its neighbors, Laodicea and Hierapolis. The historian Orosius says an earthquake hit all three in Nero's day. Over the next centuries the people moved to a safer town nearby called Chonae, today Honaz. Colossae was left empty.

NEVER DUG UP

Unlike the other cities Paul wrote to,

Colossae was never dug until recently. A team from Pamukkale University led by Barış Yener began surveys in 2021. The first real dig started in 2025 and found about 60 tombs cut into the rock, more than 2,200 years old.

WHY IT MATTERS

Paul wrote one of his greatest letters to a small, fading town he had never seen. God does not save His best words for big cities.

WHAT IT CONFIRMS

Colossae was a real town in the Lycus valley with Laodicea and Hierapolis close by, just as the letter says, 4:13.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

Nothing from the church of Colossae has been found yet. The house where they met, maybe Philemon's, is still under the dirt.

²¹Once you were alienated from God and were hostile in your minds, engaging in evil deeds. ²²But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy, unblemished, and blameless in His presence— ²³if indeed you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope of the gospel you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

PAUL'S SUFFERING FOR THE CHURCH // 2

CORINTHIANS 11:16-33

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, which is the church. ²⁵I became its servant by the commission God gave me to fully proclaim to you the word of God, ²⁶the mystery that was hidden for ages and generations but is now revealed to His saints. ²⁷To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹To this end I also labor, striving

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

with all His energy working powerfully within me.

2

CHAPTER 2 IN 30 SECONDS

Somebody in town is selling an upgrade: deep philosophy, strict food rules, holy days, angel visions. Paul says you do not need an upgrade. All the fullness of God lives in Jesus, and you are complete in Him. Your debt was nailed to the cross. Rules about do not touch and do not taste cannot fix the heart.

ABSENT IN BODY, PRESENT IN SPIRIT // REVELATION 3:14-22

¹For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me face to face, ²that they may be encouraged in heart, knit together in love, and filled with the full riches of complete understanding, so that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴I say this so that no one will deceive you by smooth rhetoric. ⁵For although I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit, and I delight to see your orderly condition and firm faith in Christ.

ALIVE WITH CHRIST // EPHESIANS 2:1-10

⁶Therefore, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him, ⁷rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, which are based on human tradition and the spiritual forces of the world rather than on Christ. ⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form. ¹⁰And you have been made complete in Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

■ COL 2:1 [FIELD NOTES] See the Laodicea Field Notes page.

■ COL 2:3 [FULFILLS] His character marked by wisdom and knowledge ← IS 11:2 p.-

■ COL 2:8 [NOTE] PHILOSOPHY. Paul is not against thinking. He quoted Greek poets, Acts 17:28. He is against any system that takes you captive and leaves Christ out. If a teaching makes Jesus smaller, it is empty, no matter how smart it sounds.

¹¹In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of your sinful nature, with the circumcision performed by Christ and not by human hands. ¹²And having been buried with Him in baptism, you were raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH

LAODICEA

COLOSSIANS 2:1 · 4:13 TO 16 · REVELATION 3:14 TO 22



A water tower at Laodicea. The round holes are the ends of stone water pipes, and the white crust is minerals left by the water. Photo Rjdeadly, CC BY SA 4.0.

WHAT IT IS

A Roman water tower at Laodicea, the big city about 10 miles from Colossae. Water came in through stone pipes and was sent out to the city in clay pipes. Look for the round pipe holes and the thick white crust.

HOW OLD IT IS

Roman. The water system was built and repaired from about the first century AD on. The exact date of this tower is not known. A city law about the water, carved in stone in AD 114, set huge fines for anyone who dirtied the water or broke the pipes.

THE WATER

The water came from springs several miles south, near today's Denizli. It was so full of minerals that it crusted the pipes shut, and workers had to clean or replace them.

■ COL 2:11 [FULFILLS] God would circumcise the hearts of His people so they would love Him ← DT 30:6 · MEDIUM p.-

DEMONIC NOTABLE

HOT, COLD AND LUKEWARM

Jesus told this church, How I wish you were one or the other! So because you are lukewarm, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth, Revelation 3:15 to 16. Many scholars think He was pointing at their water. Hierapolis had hot springs that healed. Colossae had cold, fresh water. Laodicea's water, piped in from miles away and full of minerals, was neither.

THE EARTHQUAKE

Tacitus says an earthquake ruined Laodicea in AD 60, and the city rebuilt with its own money, without help from Rome. Jesus said, You say, I am rich; I have grown wealthy and need nothing, Revelation 3:17.

PAUL AND LAODICEA

Paul was struggling in prayer for them, 2:1. He greets the believers there and Nympha's house church, 4:15, and tells Colossae to swap letters with them, 4:16.

WHAT IT CONFIRMS

Laodicea was a rich city next to Colossae, with a water system that fits Revelation 3.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

The water reading of Revelation 3 is a strong guess, not something the Bible spells out.

13 When you were dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our trespasses, **14** having canceled the debt ascribed to us in the decrees that stood against us. He took it away, nailing it to the cross! **15** And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

16 Therefore let no one judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a feast, a New Moon, or a Sabbath. **17** These are a

■ **COL 2:13 [NOTABLE]** The debt is a handwritten IOU, a list of everything we owe God. Paul says God did not just stamp it paid. He took it away and nailed it to the cross. Many preachers picture the sign nailed over Jesus' head that listed His crime, John 19:19, with our list nailed there instead.

■ **COL 2:15 [DEMONIC]** Christ disarmed the powers and triumphed over them by the cross

shadow of the things to come, but the body that casts it belongs to Christ. **18** Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you with speculation about what he has seen. Such a person is puffed up without basis by his unspiritual mind. **19** He has lost connection to the head, from whom the whole body, supported and knit together by its joints and ligaments, grows as God causes it to grow.

20 If you have died with Christ to the spiritual forces of the world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its regulations: **21** "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"? **22** These will all perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. **23** Such restrictions indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-prescribed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body; but they are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

3

CHAPTER 3 IN 30 SECONDS

You were raised with Christ, so set your mind on things above. Take off the old clothes, like anger, lies and greed. Put on the new ones, like kindness, forgiveness and love. Then Paul brings it home: wives, husbands, kids, parents, slaves and bosses. Whatever you do, do it for the Lord.

PUT ON THE NEW SELF // EPHESIANS 4:17–32

1 Therefore, since you have been raised with Christ, strive for the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not

■ **COL 2:16 [NOTE]** A SHADOW. Food laws, festivals, New Moons and Sabbaths were a shadow, 2:17. Jesus is the body that casts it. So do not let anyone judge you over these things. Seventh day Adventists and some others say Paul means the extra holy day sabbaths of the Law, not the weekly Sabbath.

■ **COL 2:18 [NOTE]** WORSHIP OF ANGELS. Scholars still debate what the Colossian teachers taught. It seems to mix Jewish rules, special visions and praying to angels. The habit lasted. About AD 363 a church council in Laodicea banned calling on angels, and in the 400s Theodoret said Phrygia still had chapels to the angel Michael. Some scholars read it as joining the worship that angels give God in visions.

■ **COL 3:1 [NOTABLE]** You were raised with Christ, so live like it. Where your mind goes, your life follows. This does not mean ignore life down here. It means let heaven set your priorities on earth.

■ **COL 3:1 [ALLUDES TO]** Refers to ← PS 110:1 p.~

END TIMES PROPHECIES THE HEART DEMONIC NOTABLE

on earthly things.³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

⁵ Put to death, therefore, the components of your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.⁷ When you lived among them, you also used to walk in these ways.⁸ But now you must put aside all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices,¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.¹¹ Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.¹³ Bear with one another and forgive any complaint you may have against someone else. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which is the bond of perfect unity.¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, for to this you were called as members of one body. And be thankful.

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

■ COL 3:4 [PROPHECY] When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory → STILL TO COME

■ COL 3:5 [DEMONIC] Put to death greed, which is idolatry

■ COL 3:15 [HEART] Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

■ COL 3:16 [HEART] Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLDS // EPHESIANS 6:1-4

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they will not become discouraged.

SERVING WITH HONOR // EPHESIANS 6:5-9; 1 TIMOTHY 6:1-2

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only to please them while they are watching, but with sincerity of heart and fear of the Lord.

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, as for the Lord and not for men,²⁴ because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.²⁵ Whoever does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

4

CHAPTER 4 IN 30 SECONDS

Pray, and talk to outsiders with grace and a little salt. Then comes the team photo: Tychicus the mailman, Onesimus the runaway now a brother, Mark back on the team, Luke the doctor, and Ephraim the prayer warrior. Read this letter in Laodicea too. Paul signs it himself: remember my chains.

PRAYERFUL SPEECH AND ACTIONS

¹ Masters, supply your slaves with what is right and fair, since you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful,³ as you pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, so that we may proclaim the

■ COL 3:18 [NOTE] HOME RULES. See the Ephesians 5:21 note, p. 7, on mutual submission, and 5:25: husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

■ COL 3:22 [HEART] Work with a sincere heart, not just when the boss is watching.

■ COL 3:22 [NOTE] SLAVES. See the Ephesians 6:5 note, p. 7, for the honest context. Masters are told to be fair, 4:1, and Onesimus, a slave, is called a faithful and beloved brother, 4:9.

■ COL 3:23 [NOTABLE] Paul first said this to slaves, so it covers every job. Your real boss is the Lord, and He pays in an inheritance. The King James says do it heartily. Work done for Him is worship, so the shop, the office and the kitchen count as ministry. See The Church Is Not a Building in Ephesians, p. 7.

NOTABLE

mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may declare it clearly, as I should.

⁵Act wisely toward outsiders, redeeming the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

GREETINGS FROM PAUL'S FELLOW WORKERS //
ROMANS 16:21–23

⁷Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord.

⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about us, and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹With him I am sending Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

¹⁰My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you greetings, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas. You have already received instructions about him: If he comes to you, welcome him. ¹¹Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

¹²Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in the full will of God. ¹³For I testify about him that he goes to great pains for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas send you greetings.

■ **COL 4:6 [NOTABLE]** Salt keeps food from going bad and gives it flavor. Your words should be kind, but not bland. Grace with salt means people can tell you love them and also that you mean it. Be ready with an answer, 1 Peter 3:15.

■ **COL 4:9 [NOTE]** ONESIMUS. A slave from Colossae who ran away from his master Philemon, met Paul, and became a believer. Paul sends him home with this letter, now a faithful and beloved brother, and writes the little letter to Philemon asking him to welcome Onesimus like Paul himself, Philemon 16 to 17, p.-.

■ **COL 4:10 [NOTE]** MARK IS BACK. Paul once refused to take Mark on a trip because he had quit on them, and Paul and Barnabas split over it, Acts 15:37 to 39, p.-. Now Mark is on Paul's team, and Paul tells the church to welcome him. Later Paul says he is useful to me, 2 Timothy 4:11. Quitting once does not have to be the end.

■ **COL 4:13 [FIELD NOTES]** See the Hierapolis Field Notes page.

SIGNATURE AND FINAL INSTRUCTIONS // 1

CORINTHIANS 16:19–24; 2 THESSALONIANS 3:16–18

¹⁵Greet the brothers in Laodicea, as well as Nympha and the church that meets at her house.

¹⁶After this letter has been read among you, make sure that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

¹⁷Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."

¹⁸This greeting is in my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains.

Grace be with you.

■ **COL 4:16 [NOTE]** THE LETTER FROM LAODICEA. It is lost, or it is a letter we already have. Many think it is Ephesians, because in Ephesus is missing from 1:1 in the oldest copies, p.-. A fake Letter to the Laodiceans, 20 verses pieced together from Philippians and Galatians, later got into many Latin Bibles, like Codex Fuldensis about AD 546. The church never accepted it as Scripture.

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH

HIERAPOLIS

COLOSSIANS 4:12 TO 13



The Plutonium at Hierapolis: a stone arch over the small opening to the cave. Photo Carole Raddato, CC BY SA 2.0.

WHAT IT IS

The Plutonium, a shrine to Pluto, the Greek god of the dead, at Hierapolis. Below the arch is a small opening into a cave full of deadly gas. People called it a gate to the underworld.

HOW OLD IT IS

Hierapolis was founded about 190 BC. The shrine goes back about that far, and the Greek writer Strabo saw it working near the time of Jesus. It was rebuilt over the centuries. Italian archaeologists found part of it in 1965 and uncovered the whole shrine around 2013.

THE DEADLY GAS

Strabo said any animal that went in died at once. He threw in sparrows, and they fell dead. Priests of the goddess Cybele went in and came out alive, and people called it a miracle. In 2018 scientists found the gas is carbon dioxide. It is heavier than air and lies low, so a tall man standing up could live where a bird or a bull would die.

EPAPHRAS' TOWN

Epaphras worked hard for the believers in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis, 4:13. The gospel got into a town that bragged about its gate to hell.

LATER CHRISTIANS

Tradition says the apostle Philip died here, and a church was built for him about AD 400. Papias, who told how Mark and Matthew wrote their Gospels, led the church here about AD 100 to 130.

WHY IT MATTERS

Jesus said the gates of Hades will not prevail against His church, Matthew 16:18. In Hierapolis the gate of Hades was a real place, and the church outlasted it.

WHAT IT CONFIRMS

Hierapolis was a real city full of pagan worship, close to Colossae and Laodicea, just as 4:13 lists them.