

Colossians

The Christ of the Church

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See also: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians
(The New International Commentary on the New Testament)

Colossians

Christ is the head of the cosmos (2:19)

God reconciles all things to himself
by the death of Christ (1:20, 22)

God has revealed the previously
hidden mysteries to his saints (1:26)

mysterion is universally Christ
(1:26-27, 2:2, 4:3)

oikonomia focuses on Paul's task (1:25)

pleroma focuses on Christ's supremacy
in relation to the divine nature (1:19, 2:9)

Ephesians

Christ is the head of the church (4:15-16)

God reconciles Jews and Gentiles
by the death of Christ (2:16)

God has revealed the mystery more
specifically to his holy apostles and
prophets (3:5)

mysterion is diversely Christ's work
(1:9, 3:3-6, 5:32)

oikonomia focuses on God's design
(1:9-10, 3:2, 9)

pleroma focuses on Christ's supremacy
in relation to the church's nature
(1:23, 3:19, 4:13)





Lycus River Valley

Meander R.

 **Hierapolis**

 **Laodicea**

Lycus River

 **Colossae**



Lycus River



Cities of the Lycus Valley

- Colossae was a city in the Lycus Valley of Asia Minor, within the Roman province of Phrygia (present-day central Turkey)
 - It is on the southern edge of the Lycus Valley
 - ~112 miles east of Ephesus
- Two neighboring cities mentioned in the letter
 - Laodicea is ~10 miles slightly to the NW
 - Hierapolis is ~12 miles to the NW
 - 2:1; 4:13, 15-16

Letter to the Laodiceans

- Paul instructs the Colossians to “read the letter from Laodicea” (4:16)
 - Some believe this was actually the book of Ephesians, which Paul may have intended to circulate to all the cities of the Lycus Valley, including Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea
 - In the Book of Ephesians some early manuscripts do not specify the destination

Laodicea

- Founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus II and named in honor of his wife Laodice
 - (At some point between becoming king in 261 BC and divorcing her eight years later)
 - Like Colossae it was located on the south bank of the Lycus, ~10 miles downstream
- It was the center of a judicial circuit
- It was a center of banking and finance
 - “Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’” (Rev. 3:17a)

Laodicea

- Its economic prosperity is attested by Strabo at the beginning of the first century AD (Bruce, 6)
- It suffered repeatedly from earthquakes
 - An earthquake destroyed Laodicea about the time Paul wrote Colossians (AD 60)
 - The Laodiceans rebuilt from their own resources with no assistance from Rome
 - “One of the most famous cities of Asia, Laodicea, was in the same year overthrown by an earthquake and without any relief from us recovered itself by its own resources” (Tacitus, Annals 14:27)

- Laodicea was a center for the manufacturing of clothing—known for the quality of glossy black wool from the sheep grown in the area



- “you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17b)

Main Road in Laodicea



Hierapolis Colonnade



Hierapolis

- The name Hierapolis means “holy city”
- The modern Turkish name is Pamukkale, meaning “Cotton Castle” or “Cotton Fortress”
 - The city is famous for the hot springs and the limestone formations that cascade down the hillside below the city

Limestone Formations at Hierapolis



Calcium Deposits (Travertines) at Hierapolis



Hot Springs at Hierapolis



Water in the Lycus Valley

- Laodicea depended on external water supplies
- The lukewarmness for which Laodicea is known reflects the condition of the city's water supply (Rev. 3:15-16)
 - The water supplied by the hot springs of Denizli (~5 miles away) was tepid and nauseous by the time it was piped to Laodicea, unlike the therapeutic hot water of Hierapolis or the refreshing cold water of Colossae which came from snow-and-rain-fed streams from the peak of nearby Mount Cadmus

Colossae



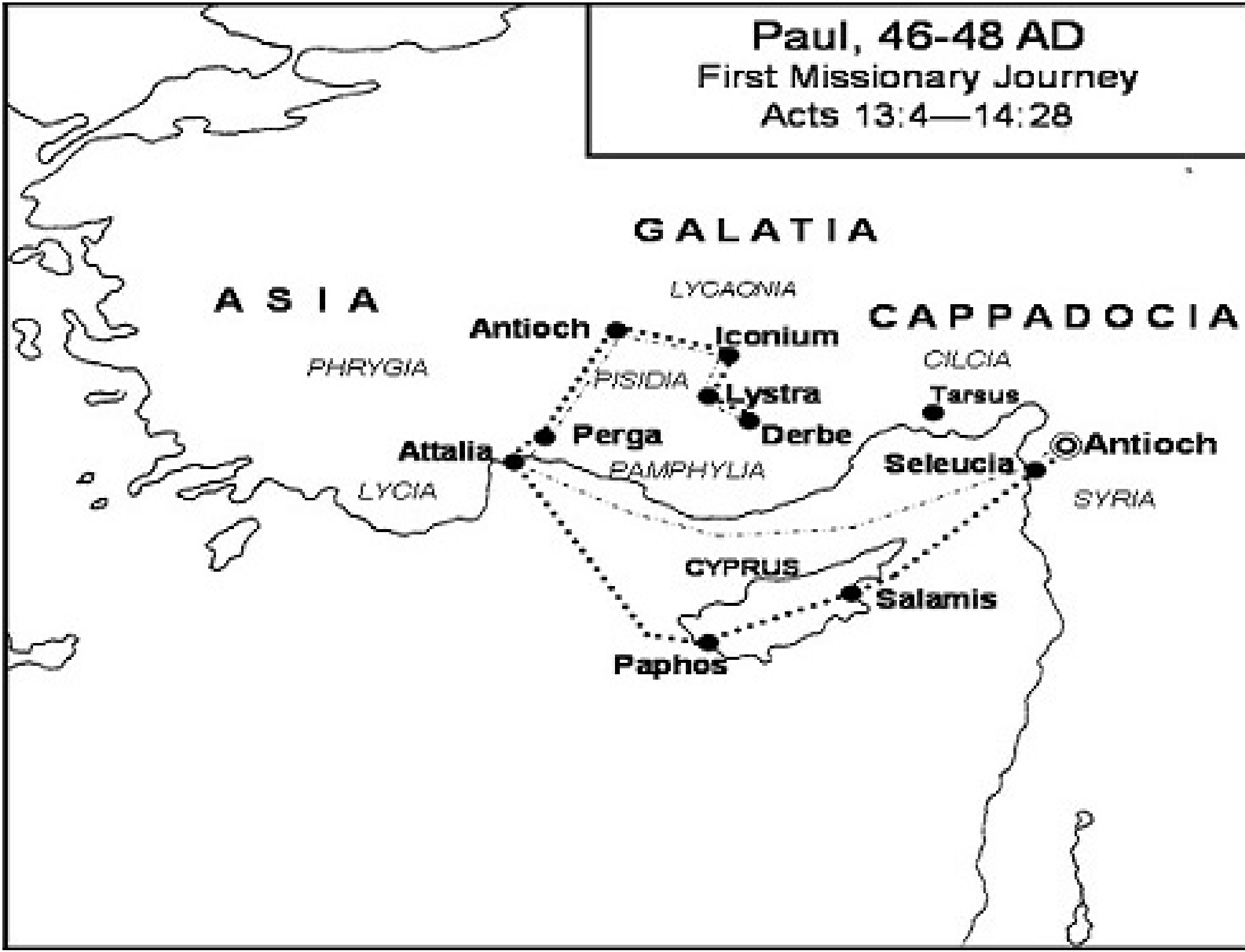
Colossae

- First appears in existing history in Herodotus in 480 BC (Bruce, 4)
- Eighty years later Cyrus the Younger, marching east from Sardis with an army of mercenaries in his quest for the Persian throne, crossed the Maeander and after a day's march through Phrygia, arrived at Colossae, “an inhabited city, large and prosperous” (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.2.6; Bruce, 5)

Arrival of the Gospel in the Lycus Valley

- People from Phrygia first heard the gospel at Jerusalem (Acts 2:10)
 - Phrygia was evangelized within 25 years
 - In AD 47 or 48 Paul and Barnabas evangelized the cities of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium (Acts 13:14-14:4)
 - Both cities are located within “the Phrygian and Galatian region” (Acts 16:6)
 - Iconium—easternmost city of Phrygia (map)

Paul, 46-48 AD
First Missionary Journey
Acts 13:4—14:28



Arrival of the Gospel in the Lycus Valley

- Paul evangelized Phrygia Asiana (the region where the Lycus Valley is) farther west (map), during his “Ephesian ministry” (AD 52-55)







Arrival of the Gospel in the Lycus Valley

- Paul later evangelized Phrygia Asiana (the region where the Lycus Valley is) farther west, during his “Ephesian ministry” (AD 52-55)
 - “All who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10)
 - Paul may not have evangelized the Lycus Valley himself (Col. 2:1), though he had met some from those congregations—Archippus and Philemon (4:17; Philem. 2, 19B)

Arrival of the Gospel in the Lycus Valley

- Epaphras may have taken the gospel to the Lycus Valley (1:4-7)
 - “our dearly loved fellow slave who is a faithful servant of Christ” (1:7)
 - “fellow prisoner” (Philem. 23)
 - “a slave of Christ Jesus” (4:12)
 - Epaphroditus at Philippi was evidently a different person (Phil. 2:25; 4:18)

Delivery of the Letter

- Tychichus apparently delivered the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians (4:7-8; Eph. 6:21-22) and possibly the letter to Laodicea (4:16)
 - Unless Archippus was charged with delivering the letter as well as proclaiming the gospel at Laodicea (4:17)
 - Tychichus was a native of the province of Asia, one of Paul's fellow travelers on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4) and a messenger of Paul (2 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 3:12)

The Colossian Heresy

- Paul warns the Colossians against “the tradition of men” which is characterized as “philosophy and empty illusion” (2:8)
- The Colossian heresy may have claimed that the fullness of God could be appreciated only by mystical experiences which required severe self-discipline and abstention from indulgence
- Paul's answer is that the fullness of God is embodied in Christ so that those who are united to him by faith have access in him to that fullness (2:9-10, 20-23)

The Message of Colossians

- You don't need Christ plus, you need Christ period!
- Paul addresses the issues of the gospel which were threatened by the Colossian heresy:
 - the uniqueness of the person of Christ, in whom the fullness of deity was embodied
 - the perfection of Christ's redeeming and reconciling work on the cross
 - spiritual freedom in Christ (2:16-19)

Key Words & Phrases

- **Him** (Christ, 11 times; Epaphras, 1 time, 4:13)
 - 1:16-17, 19; 2:6-7, 9-10, 12-13, 15; 3:4
- **Faith/faithful/faithfulness** (9 times)
 - (bolded verses: Gk. *pistos*, the root word)
 - 1:**2**, 4, **7**, 23; 2:5, 7, 12; 4:**7**, **9**
- **Flesh** (9 times)
 - 1:22, 24; 2:1, 5, 11, 13, 18, 23; 3:22
- **Word/message** (7 times)
 - 1:5, 25; 2:23; 3:16-17; 4:3 (1 Cor. 16:9), 6

Verses to Remember

- 1:9—Outlines chapters 1 & 2 (doctrinal)
- 1:10—Outlines chapters 3 & 4 (practical)
- 1:27
- 2:9-10, 12
- 2:20-23 (you died with Christ)
- 3:1-4 (raised with Christ)
- 3:5-11 (put off)
- 3:12-17 (put on)
- 3:18-4:1 (subject yourselves)

Verses to Remember

- 3:11b—with 1:18 forms the theme of the book
- 3:19—The husband's obligation to love his wife
 - The husband is commanded to love and forbidden to be harsh: “love your wives and do not treat them harshly”
 - The husband's active and unceasing care for his wife's well-being
 - A Jewish saying: “One should always be on his guard against wronging his wife, for since her tears are frequent she is quickly hurt”

Verses to Remember

- 3:19—Applied to a husband, the command to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, love and peace (vv. 12-15) and to allow Christ's Word to live within him abundantly (v. 16) and to be thankful to God for everything (v. 17)—including his wife whom he is to love dearly (v. 19) means **he will not . . . he cannot treat anyone harshly, especially his wife**

Verses to Remember

- 4:2-6

- *Redeeming*: to buy out of the hands of a person; to redeem, set free (Gal. 3:13; 4:5); mid. to redeem, buy off, to secure for one's self or one's own use; to rescue from loss or misapplication (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5)
- Explanation of definition: (act.) to redeem, as a figurative extension of the act of purchasing something in the marketplace; (mid.) to make the most (of the time)

Memory Verse Review ***(1 Corinthians—Philippians)***

- 1 Cor. 1:10—“Now I...”
- 2 Cor. 8:9—“For you know...”
- Gal. 2:21—“I do not...”
- Eph. 4:4-6—“There is...”
- Phil. 1:27—“Only let...”

Memory Verse for Colossians

1:18a

“He is the head of the body, the church”