

Colossians

The Pen: The Apostle Paul

THEME: "Warning the Church Concerning the Worshipping of Angels"

INTRODUCTION: Five hundred years before Paul's time, Colosse was an important city. However, its neighboring city, Laodicea, had risen to greatness and had surpassed Colosse in importance. Hence, perhaps this is not one of the more important churches such as the church at Ephesus, etc. For that matter, it was not even started by the Apostle Paul. In the epistle of Colossians, Paul mentions that they had never seen him. Hence, the church was not founded by him, but was probably founded by Epaphras, a citizen of Colosse, a fellow servant and fellow prisoner with Paul. He was probably the one who brought these people to Christ. Epaphras, however, had been trained by Paul. (Who knows what teacher is training a Paul in a Sunday school class this Sunday?) When Paul was in prison, Epaphras came to visit him and told him of the terrible condition in the church at Colosse. (Paul wrote four epistles from prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.) The book of Colossians is written to warn the people concerning the danger of the condition. Let us notice the different things that prevailed.

I. THEY WERE TEACHING THAT THE ANGELS HAD A PART IN THE WORK OF CREATION, in other words, they worshipped angels. They had gotten so far that they associated angels with creation and gave them comparable standing in creation along with the Trinity. (Teacher: Spend a little time here teaching the act of direct creation. Stress the importance of the errors of evolution. Explain to the class that God created from nothing all that is.)

II. THEY TAUGHT THAT THE ANGELS HAD A PART IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION. (Teacher: Tell the class the exact story of redemption, how that Christ paid the penalty for our sins, all are sinners, all have to go to Hell if they die in their sins, and Jesus paid the penalty as our Substitute and redeemed us by His own blood on the cross. Explain how that by faith we may be saved.)

III. THEY TAUGHT THAT ANGELS SHOULD BE WORSHIPED. Again and again in the Bible we are reminded that none is to be worshiped but Jesus—not the preacher, not an angel, not the church, none! Simply Jesus is the object of our worship. Notice Colossians 1:16. Here Paul reminds the Colossian people that everything was created by Jesus. In verse 17, he reminds us that everything is held together by Jesus. The word "consist" means "holds together." It implies something like paste or another substance that holds something to another. Notice in verse 18, Jesus is supposed to have the preeminence in the church. All of these verses were written to combat the false teaching of angel worship.

IV. THEY TAUGHT THAT ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION OR PERFECTION COULD BE ATTAINED IN THIS BODY AND IN THIS LIFE. Paul combats this.

V. THEY PRACTICED ASCETIC HABITS AND RITUALS. They were not practical. They were trying to learn some new, spooky, spiritual, deep truth, but not putting into practice the carrying out of the Great Commission. This is always a danger in the Christian life. We want to learn more and more, but we want to do less and less. Learning more and more is of no value unless it makes us do more and more.

VI. THEY WERE NOT PLACING CHRIST AS THE SUPREME HEAD. The design of this letter to the Colossians was to correct these false teachings and to point out to the church the supreme headship of Christ, Who is above all principalities and powers.

VII. THEY WERE TEACHING GNOSTICISM. The word "gnostic" is formed from the Greek word for "knowledge." This teaching claimed to give a particular knowledge of the mysteries of the unseen world. At the beginning of Christianity when the Gospel was first preached, the western world was overrun with eastern magicians and soothsayers. They claimed for their peculiar knowledge the ability to communicate with a higher world. They advanced the theory that between God and man were various grades by which we might rise to the highest knowledge. Angels were intercessors here. This also was fought by the Apostle Paul.

VIII. THEY COMPROMISED WITH THESE HERESIES. Instead of opposing the heresies as they should, they tried to blend heresy and truth, and the Gospel was perverted. Notice Colossians 2:18. Perhaps this is the key verse to the entire book.

CONCLUSION: Let us notice the outline of the book of Colossians.

- I. CHRIST IS SUPREME IN THE WORLD AND IN THE CHURCH. Colossians 1.
 1. He is the firstborn of all creation.
 2. He is the head of all angelic creatures.
 3. He is the supreme head of the church.
- II. SANCTIFICATION COMES THROUGH CHRIST AND HIM ALONE. Colossians 2.
 1. It does not come through attaining some great spiritual experience.
 2. It does not come by vain philosophy of man's learning.
- III. THERE ARE FRUITS OF UNION WITH THE RISEN CHRIST. Colossians 3 and 4. What are these fruits? Some mystical experience? Some ascetic event? No! They are the fruits of purity, truth, love, etc.

It is a dangerous thing for a church to think they have risen above the simplicity which is in Christ and obeying His Great Commission. This was the danger of the church in Colosse. Paul wrote them to get them back on the track of obedience to a command rather than constant searching for doctrines that oftentimes do not even exist.

Memory verse: Colossians 2:6, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."