

The Half Hour That Changes the World

Colossians

Book 51

Basic Questions behind the book:

"Everything is relative. There is no absolute truth!" If that's the case then why does that statement sound so absolute and final itself?

Summary of book:

The world around us today is much like the world of Colosse which Paul addresses in this letter: Believe what you want - the truth is whatever is true for you. No singular truth is right for everyone! That is the commonly held belief in our contemporary world. There is nothing new about the "New Age" movement, but what is surprising is why it is so popular once again. Such a discussion is beyond this study. Paul hadn't visited Colosse himself, but Epaphras and others Paul had influenced were involved there. We can tell something of their situation from the letter itself. There were those either in the Church or pressurizing it from outside who were suggesting that Christian beliefs should be combined with ideas and philosophies from other religions and groups. Following a typical opening section of greetings and an expression of thanksgiving, Paul prays for them that they will have wisdom and strength. He gives a masterful exposition of his doctrine of the person and work of Christ. He disputes the value of the false teachings going around Colosse and then exhorts them to live lives worthy of the Lord, in union with Christ. He shares helpful practical and ethical instructions and finishes with some personal greetings. The letter gives helpful pointers to those who are interested in what is called Christology, i.e. the doctrine of the person and work of Christ. The letter is also about connections, between God and Christ, between Christ and the Church, between believers in the church, and between Paul and his flock. Read Colossians as a book for an embattled Church in the first century but read it also for its timeless truths.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To combat errors in the Church and to show believers how to live within the all-sufficiency of Christ.

Author: The Apostle Paul.

Recipients: To the young Christian community in Colosse.

Dating: Approximately AD 60, during Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

Setting: It had been reported to Paul that this young church was embattled, being assailed by false teaching that suggested that not Christ alone, but a more syncretistic and relativistic approach was the way to go. Here he speaks passionately about the nature and person of the Lord Jesus Christ and then instructs them in how they should live as Christians.

Other Notes:

We see evidence in Colossians of a heretical movement that would later evolve into what is historically referred to as Gnosticism, a system of beliefs which at heart believed itself to have special knowledge known only by a privileged few, who denied the deity of Christ or that he was the Saviour. The Apostles and Nicene Creeds were written ultimately in response to these ongoing assaults.

"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ who is head over every power and authority." (2:9,10)