



# CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

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## Lesson 1

# CHRIST: HIGH OVER ALL

## NOTE TO THE TEACHER

The city of Colosse was in Phrygia, a district in Asia Minor. Paul worked in that region for three years. (See Acts 20:31.) On Illustration #1 the background is a map of the area of Phrygia. It is marked: \* Colosse has this mark: #. Ephesus is marked: +. You may want to print these place names on the map and refer to them when teaching.

From Colossians 1:7 and 4:12-13, it appears that Epaphras probably started the church at Colosse and became its first pastor. When he went to Rome to see Paul, it would seem (from Colossians 4:17 and Philemon 1-2) that Archippus (probably Philemon's son) served as interim pastor. Like many other churches of that day, it met in a home, probably Philemon's. (See Philemon 1-2.)

Remember this: The Christians who made up the first churches came from various backgrounds. Some had been pagan idol worshipers, while some knew the Jewish religion. If Paul or one of the other apostles could not be present, men of lesser abilities did the teaching. Because the New Testament was not yet completed, the Christians lacked written guidance. As a result, problems arose. It was so in Colosse.

It may have been for this reason that Pastor Epaphras went to Rome 700 miles away. There he became (perhaps voluntarily) a prisoner with the Apostle Paul. (See Philemon 23.) From Paul he learned the solutions to the Colossian problems. Epaphras, we are told, was a faithful minister of Christ who prayed fervently for the Colossians. (See Colossians 1:7; 4:12.)

The problem in the church at Colosse was this: A false teaching had come in which insisted that because man is so sinful and God is so holy (which is true) the sinner had to approach Him through many angelic beings (which is not true). These beings were go-betweens from man to God. By accepting this incorrect teaching, the Colossians were ignoring our Lord as the only One to go between man and God. (See 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1.) This false system included the worship of angels and strict self-denial. (See 2:18, 20-22.) Such teaching later became known as Gnosticism, meaning (in the Greek language) knowledge. The Gnostics claimed to possess secret knowledge and wisdom.

The Holy Spirit, overseeing Paul's writing, answered all these wrong ideas. (An understanding of Colossians is much needed today. Unfortunately, there are many who are deceived as those in Colosse were.) In this epistle we learn that all the fullness of God is in Christ alone. (See Colossians 1:19; 2:9.)

Those who trust in Christ have full knowledge and wisdom. (See 2:2-3. Read also 1:9-10, 28; 3:10, 16.) Further, Christ is shown to be the solution to all that mystified the false teachers. (See 1:26-27. The word *mystery* appears also in 2:2 and 4:3.) Because Jesus is who He is and what He is, He is the Head—the Head of the universe and the Head of the body of Christian believers, the Church. (See 1:18; 2:10, 19; compare Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16.) Christ's Headship is the subject of this volume.

**Scripture to be studied:** Colossians 1; Acts 19:1-41

**The aim of the lesson:** To show that because Christ is high over all, we should give Him first place in our lives.

**What your students should know:** That God has placed Christ over everything.

**What your students should feel:** Humbled, that One so lofty would live within them.

**What your students should do:** Examine their lives and unload those things which have kept Christ from having first place.

**Lesson outline (for the teacher's and students' notebooks):**

1. Beginnings of the Colossian church (1:1-8).
2. Colossian problems and Paul's prayer (1:9-11).

3. Christ, Lord of all (1:17-23).
4. Christ in the believer (1:24-29).

**The verse to be memorized:**

*That in all things Christ might have the preeminence.*  
 (Colossians 1:18b)

## THE LESSON

The Apostle Paul was an energetic missionary. He traveled widely, introducing people to the Lord Jesus, preaching the Gospel, teaching new converts, starting churches. Occasionally he hurried from one place to another. At other times he remained for long periods. When he was in Phrygia (the region in which the city of Colosse was located), he stayed for three years. Two of those years he spent in the city of Ephesus. (See Acts 19:10.)