

Colossians & Philemon

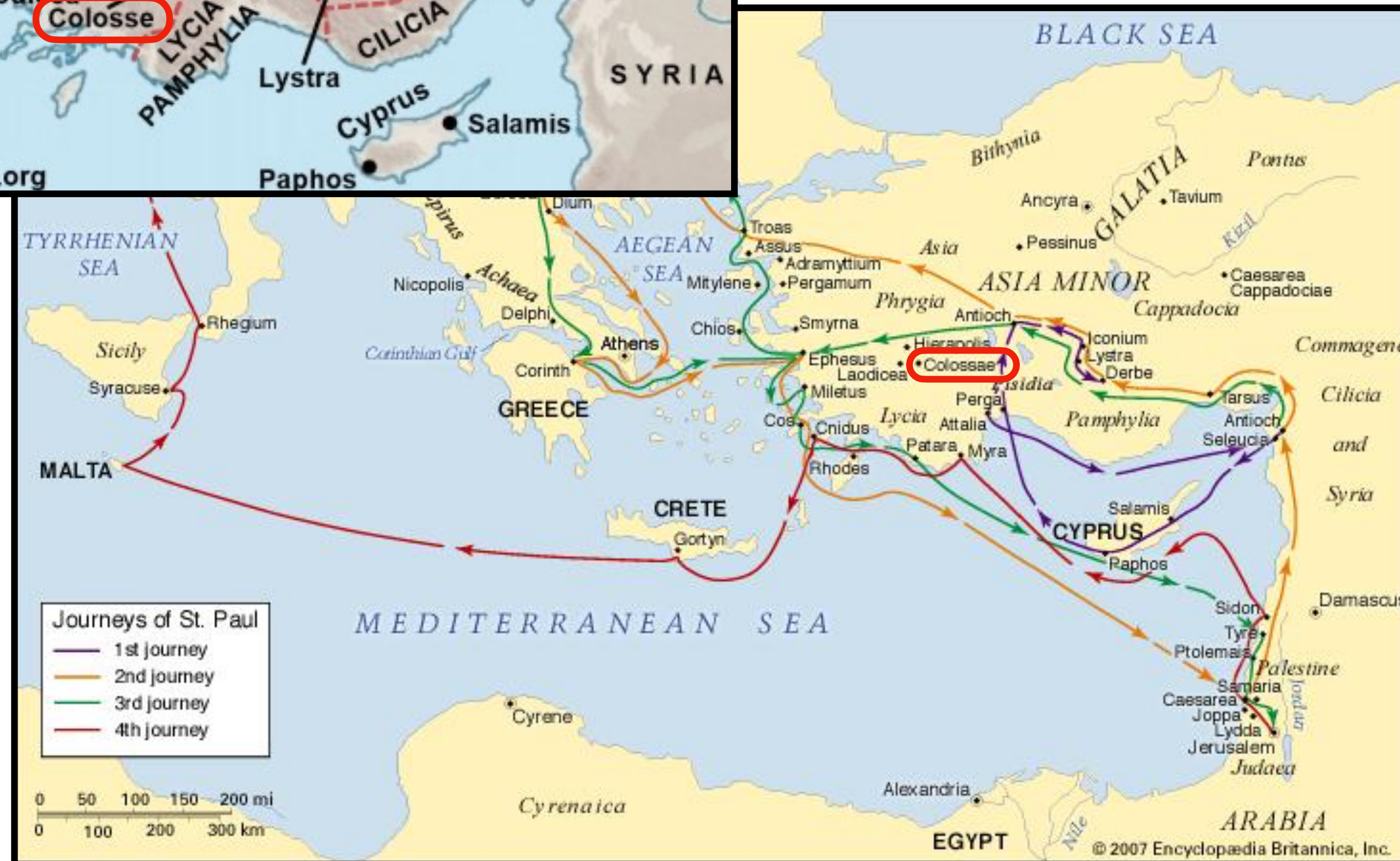
Cover to Cover

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Colossians

Context & Critique

- Written by Paul while in prison
- Church at Colossae established by Epaphras
- Paul had not visited Colossae, but was close with Epaphras
- Colossians, like Laodecians, have yet to meet Paul
- Not Paul?
 - Uses new words not found elsewhere in Paul's (or other NT) writings
 - Advanced Christology
 - Employs a liturgical-hymnic style (not Paul's usual style)



Colossians



Church of Colossae

Challenges Within

- **Church Struggled with:**
 - **Temptation to fall back into old habits associated with former life & beliefs**
 - **Pressure to follow Jewish customs & traditions**

In what ways do we fall into these same traps?

Church of Colossae

Paul's Message

- **Paul reminded them:**
 - **You are now in Christ and Christ is in you**
 - **Mutual edification and encouragement—serve as if serving the Lord**

In what ways did Paul encourage the church to respond to their struggles?

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Colossians 1:15-20

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Colossians 1:21-23

Analogy

and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins...

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Colossians 1:12-14 & 3:11

Instructions for Christian Households (3:18-4:1)

Mirrors What Paul Wrote to the Ephesians (5:21-6:9)

- **Wives & Husbands**
- **Children & Fathers**
- **Slaves & Masters***

Philemon

Context

- Onesimus - slave
- Philemon - slave owner
- Paul - apostle
- Tychicus - message deliverer



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d8/Philemon_and_Onesimus.jpg

Philemon



I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

Philemon 1:12-21

How do you characterize this appeal?

Colossians & Philemon - Key Takeaways

Cover to Cover

- Christ Crucified: in a short poem, Paul clearly states Christ's purpose and His supremacy in all things
- Consistent & Courageous Message: Paul sends the same instructions to churches he has never met as he does to those he established
- Faith in Action: Paul's appeal to Philemon is the embodiment of living out faith in Christ—his request disrupts the status quo order of Roman (and legal) customs by transforming to a new humanity fulfilled by Christ
- If someone you know has issues with how the Bible addresses slavery, point them to Colossians and Philemon