

### 3) How Do You Defend Against "Colossian Heresies?"

- A) It is important for all followers of Jesus Christ (that's us) to be able to explain what we believe about God (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:14-16), but how can we possibly understand every heresy?
  
- B) I believe this is where the Apostle Paul's approach in Colossians will be so helpful for all of us! His approach with the Colossian "faithful" (Colossians 1:1-2) reveals the best answer to our problem.
  
- C) Rather than attack the Colossian heresy (he will get around to that later, cf. 2:16ff), Paul explains what is absolutely necessary to know and practice in order to live a life which is fully devoted to Jesus.
  
- D) Paul's approach is not one of attacking the beliefs of the enemy! His approach is one of understanding the complete and total sufficiency of an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ (2:1-3).
  
- E) The thrust of the letter which Paul writes to the believers who are in Colossae is that there is more to Jesus than they can see! They are being persuaded by false teachers, only because they have not seen the fullness of Jesus Christ!
  
- F) Paul's letter to the Colossians is more important today than it was when it was written. In an age of religious magicians and spiritual charlatans, we need Jesus, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

# More Than Meets The Eye

Long Beach Alliance Church • June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007 • Happy Father's Day • Pastor Chris Lankford

**SEE TO IT THAT NO ONE TAKES YOU  
CAPTIVE THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND  
EMPTY DECEPTION, ACCORDING TO  
THE TRADITION OF MEN, ACCORDING  
TO THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES  
OF THE WORLD, RATHER THAN  
ACCORDING TO CHRIST.**

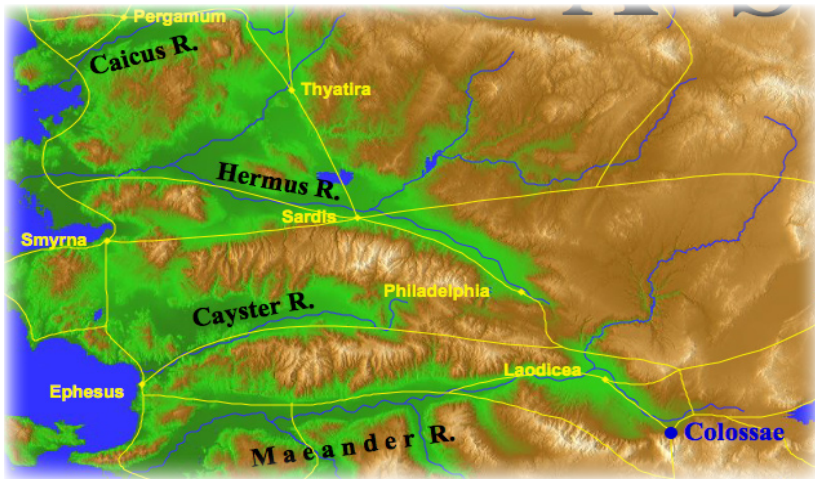
**~COLOSSIANS 2:8 (NASB)**

### 1) A Crazy Mixed Up World

- A) In a 2007 survey of United States Christians, only two-thirds (66%) believed that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. This is the lowest recorded percentage in the past 20 years\*.
  
- B) In the same survey, a whopping 63% of Christians believed that Jesus Christ probably sinned during His time on Earth. An extraordinary 76% of the same respondents were unclear whether Satan is a real spiritual being\*.
  
- C) David Kinnaman, who directed the survey, noted that "Most Americans have one foot in the biblical camp, and one foot outside it. They say they are committed, but to what? The spiritual profile of American Christianity is not unlike a lukewarm church that the Bible warns about. If

this continues, millions of people, including many within the youngest generations, will conclude the Christian faith does not represent deep, consistent truths about the spiritual and natural world...\*”

- D) This is not unlike the church to which the Apostle Paul writes in the book of Colossians. They, like their nearby neighbors Laodicea (cf. Revelation 3:14-22), struggled with a “one-foot-in one-foot-out” lukewarm Christianity.



## 2) The Problem In Colossae...

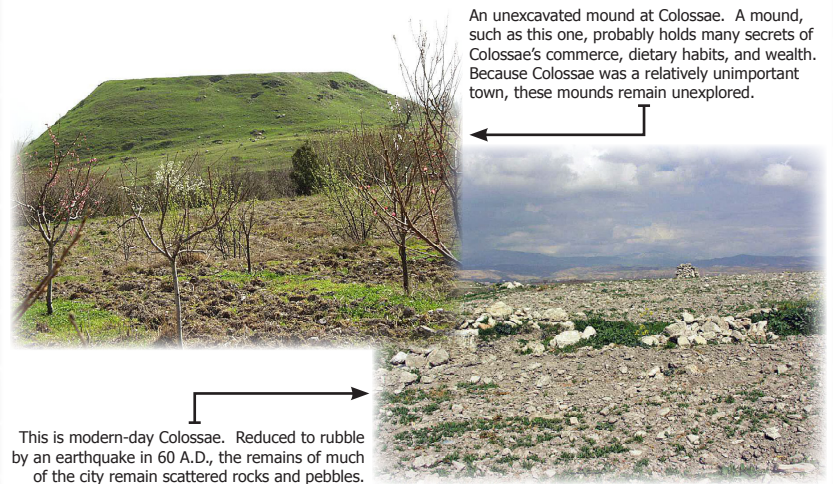
- A) In Colossians 2:4, 8, 16 & 18, Paul warns the Colossian believers about a dangerous and destructive “philosophy” which might “persuade, capture, judge,” or “defraud.” This “philosophy” has become known as the “Colossian heresy.”

\* Survey results are from “The Barna Update” (May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007), a special report on the spiritual activities of Americans written by David Kinnaman, President of the Barna Research Group, Ventura, CA -- who also published the annual report.

- B) The Colossian heresy was a complex system of belief which held that people could have “special knowledge” of creation and spiritual matters through angels and other “knowledge gathering” practices (cf. Colossians 2:18).

- C) This “philosophy” was almost certainly the seeds of the eventual movement known as “gnosticism.” Gnosticism was the attainment of special spiritual knowledge through “super-secret” practices and rituals†.

- D) Unlike Laodicea, there have been no excavations of Colossae. The city was probably destroyed by an earthquake in 60 A.D., but unlike neighboring Laodicea, Colossae was never rebuilt.



An unexcavated mound at Colossae. A mound, such as this one, probably holds many secrets of Colossae’s commerce, dietary habits, and wealth. Because Colossae was a relatively unimportant town, these mounds remain unexplored.

This is modern-day Colossae. Reduced to rubble by an earthquake in 60 A.D., the remains of much of the city remain scattered rocks and pebbles.

† Gnosticism (from the Greek ‘gnosis’ meaning “knowledge”) is far too complex of a philosophy/movement to detail here. It would be sufficient though, to say that Gnostics did not believe that Jesus Christ created the physical world, and felt they had come to this knowledge through special spiritual insights and relationships, much like the New Age Movement of our modern-day setting. I agree here with Hemer, who agrees with Lightfoot (*The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*, by Colin J. Hemer, pg. 184) that there is an intimate connectivity between Colossae and Laodicea, particularly with the immediate reference to “cold water,” a distinguishing characteristic at Colossae.