

# 9 Colossae

## Etymology

The name signifies “monstrosities”.

## Location/Description



Colossae was an ancient city of Phrygia, on the Lycus River, which is a tributary of the Maeander River. It was situated about 19 kms (12 miles) south east of Laodicea, 192 kms (120 miles) east of Ephesus and near the great road from Ephesus to the Euphrates.

It was one of a triad of cities in the area (the other two being Laodicea and Hierapolis), resting at the foot of Mount Cadmus. Its Biblical significance lies in the fact that the book of Colossians was addressed to the ecclesia there (Col. 1:2) and that Philemon lived in this city.

## Scriptural references

### New Testament

Col. 1:2,7,8; 4:12-13; Rev. 3:14-22

## Famous characters

Paul  
Epaphras



## Brief history

In 396 BC, during the Persian Wars, the satrap Tissaphernes was lured to Colossae and slain by an agent of the party of Cyrus the Younger. Pliny tells that the wool of Colossae gave its name (colossinus) to the colour of the cyclamen flower. During the Hellenistic period, the town was of some mercantile importance, although by the 1st century it had dwindled greatly in size and significance.

It does not appear from his Epistle to the Colossians that Paul had visited this city, for it only speaks of him having heard of their faith (Col. 1:4), and since he tells Philemon of his hope to visit it upon being freed from prison (see Philemon 1:22). To judge from the Letter to the Colossians, Epaphras was a person of some importance to the ecclesia there (Col. 1:7; 4:12).

In Byzantine times, Colossae fell into decay (possibly due to an earthquake) and the town of Chonae arose near its ruins. It is not mentioned in documents later than the end of the 14th century. The town was the birthplace of the Byzantine Greek writers Nicetas and Michael Choniates. In 1206–1230, it was ruled by Manuel Maurozomes.

## Unveiling the life of Colossae

Beneath the soil of Turkey lie the ruins of one of the most prominent cities in biblical history - Colossae. The site of Colossae has never been archeologically excavated.



Dr Alan Cadwallader, Senior Lecturer Biblical Studies at ACU, in his book ‘Colossae in Space and Time: Linking to an Ancient City’, writes:

“Colossae has been found to be a very different city from the small, insignificant place assumed by almost all New Testament commentators. With the discovery of new inscriptional evidence, it emerges as a proud

and prosperous city that confidently survived the ravages of earthquake, plague and famine that left other cities in Asia Minor in a state of collapse."

[http://www.acu.edu.au/alumni\\_and\\_giving/alumni/news\\_bulletin\\_archive/newsletters/2012/issue\\_9/Unveiling\\_the\\_life\\_of\\_Colossae](http://www.acu.edu.au/alumni_and_giving/alumni/news_bulletin_archive/newsletters/2012/issue_9/Unveiling_the_life_of_Colossae)  
bibleplaces.com

### **The Ecclesia at Colossae**

Paul had never visited Colossae when he composed his epistle to the ecclesia there, but he does imply that Epaphras founded the ecclesia, along with those at Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 1:7-8; 4:12-13). This was probably during Paul's third missionary journey, when he preached in Ephesus for two years, "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10).

(Compiler – Darren Peeler)



### **Streams of Cold Water**

In John's message to the Laodicean ecclesia (Rev. 3:14-22), he speaks of the lukewarmness of Laodicea, that they were "neither cold nor hot" (Rev. 3:15-16). This local allusion would have been clear to citizens of Laodicea, who knew of the cold, pure waters of nearby Colossae.



### **Sources:**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossae>