

New Testament Foundations: Session Fourteen

Colossians & Philemon: Letters from Prison

COLOSSIANS – THE PREEMINENT CHRIST

Authorship

1. Paul wrote Colossians during his _____ imprisonment in Rome between 60-62 AD. Colossae was part of a tri-city area that included Hierapolis and Laodicea in the Lycus river valley about 100 miles from Ephesus.
2. Paul had never visited Colossae at the time of his letter (2:1). _____, a Colossian native who had been saved in Ephesus, started the church in Colossae. The church was started during Paul's lengthy Ephesian ministry, when for over two years all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10).

Colossians 1:6, 7

All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf...

Background

1. The false teaching being propagated in Colossae was an early form of _____ that blended Christianity, Jewish ritualism, Greek philosophic speculation, and pagan mysticism.

Colossians 2:16, 18

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

2. These pre-Gnostics believed that salvation came through _____ knowledge known only to the initiated. Paul responded by declaring that the mystery was Christ. Salvation is open and available to anyone who will believe.

Colossians 1:26, 27

...the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

3. These pre-Gnostics believed that all matter was _____. Paul by declaring that the eternal, uncreated God took on flesh and became a man so that He might redeem all men.

Colossians 2:9

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

4. These pre-Gnostics believed that because matter is evil, God could not have _____ the world. Instead, a lesser deity known as the Demiurge created it. Paul responded by declaring that God (in Christ) is the creator of both the invisible spiritual world and the visible material world.

Colossians 1:16

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created by Him and for Him.

5. These pre-Gnostics believed that _____ was based on the strict observance of ritual and the severe treatment of the flesh. Paul responded by declaring that this only gave the *appearance* of morality.

Colossians 2:23

Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Purpose and Themes

1. Paul's purpose was to expose the Colossian heresy and _____ those who had fallen under its spell.

Colossians 2:8, 18

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize...

2. The primary theme of Colossians is the _____ and all-sufficiency of Christ.

Colossians 1:17, 18

And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

God's beloved Son	He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. 1:13
Redeemer	...in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 1:14
God's visible image	He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 1:15
Firstborn of all creation	...the firstborn of all creation. 1:15
The Author of creation	For by him all things were created...through him and for him. 1:16
The Head of all things	And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. 1:17, 18
The Preeminent One	...that in everything he might be preeminent. 1:18
The Embodiment of God's fullness	For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell... 1:19 / For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily... 2:9
The Mediator of reconciliation	...and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. 1:20
The hope of glory	To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 1:27
The Mystery of God	...the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 2:2
The Conqueror	He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. 2:15
The Reality behind the shadows	These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. 2:17
The Exalted One	If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 3:1
Our Life	When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 3:4
The Forgiver	...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 3:13
The Rewarder	...knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. 3:24

3. A secondary (and derivative) theme of Colossians is the believers' _____ with Christ.

Colossians 3:3, 4

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

4. Another related theme of Colossians is Paul's exhortation to spiritual _____.

Colossians 1:28

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Colossians 2:6, 7

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 3:8-10

...put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

PHILEMON – PAUL'S PERSONAL LETTER

Authorship

1. Paul wrote to Philemon during his first imprisonment in Rome between 60-62 AD.
2. Philemon, an affluent leader of one of the house churches in _____, was well known for his hospitality. He was undoubtedly a convert of Paul's, although since Paul had never been to Colossae, he was probably converted in Ephesus.

Philemon 1:1, 2

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker, and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house.

Background

1. Onesimus (whose name means "useful") was a _____ of Philemon's who escaped with money stolen from his master. He eventually ended up in Rome, was converted by Paul, and began to minister to the apostle during his imprisonment.

Philemon 1:10

...my child, Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment...

2. Paul soon decided that even though Onesimus was very useful (a play on his name), he _____ to Philemon and he must send him back. Onesimus returned (accompanied by Paul's companion Tychicus) with this letter and Paul's request for his continued services.

Philemon 1:12-14

And I have sent him back to you in person, that is, sending my very heart, whom I wished to keep with me, that in your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; but without your consent I did not want to do anything, that your goodness should not be as it were by compulsion, but of your own free will.

Themes

1. The most pervasive theme in Philemon is the proper use of _____.

Philemon 1:8, 9, 14

Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do that which is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you. But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

2. Paul could _____ to Philemon because of the depth of their relationship and because of his confidence in Philemon's love and loyalty.

Philemon 1:21

Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say.