

The Letter to the Saints at Colosse—Part 2

Southside church of Christ, Huntsville

Reading Assignment—Colossians 3-4

Introduction

Recall that the letter can be roughly divided into two parts. Chapters 1-2 address the concept of Christ as head and seeking his pure doctrine. Purity will be manifest in proper and pleasing worship. Chapters 3-4 are instructions on how to live a life like Christ.

To begin, we must elevate spiritual things above fleshly lusts and desires. In fact, we must make the lusts of the flesh of no effect as if they were dead to us. Christ died to the flesh, and so we must die to the flesh as well. Just as Christ arose and ascended, we must set our minds on things above. Even though we put these things away, we can't just leave an empty void (Mt. 12:43-45). We must be willing to put on the characteristics of Christ. The most important characteristic being charity or brotherly love. Peace is also important; we must seek out peace with God through Christ. If we behave the way he describes, we will have peace with other men as well. He ends the letter by acknowledging those who have been helpful to him and passing along greetings.

Several of the similarities between Ephesians and Colossians are found in the instructions on how to treat other people. We should forgive others as Christ forgave us (Ep. 4:32; Co. 3:13). This is a total forgiveness, not simply ignoring the problem. We are to teach each other through singing (Ep. 5:19; Co. 3:16). Instructions are given to spouses and parents (Ep. 5:22-25; 6:4; Co. 3:18-19; 3:21), children (Ep. 6:1-3; Co. 3:20), and employers and employees (Ep. 6:5-9; Co. 3:22-4:1).

Chapter 4 clues us in on some interesting relationships between early Christians. We know from Acts 12:12 that John Mark was the son of Mary. In Colossians 4:10 we learn that he is also the nephew of Barnabas. This could explain why the contention was so sharp between Barnabas and Paul in Acts 15:39 and why Barnabas chose to take John Mark. Colossians 4:9 records that Onesimus is from Colosse implying that Philemon is as well. Also, the brethren were in communication from church to church as illustrated by the instruction to share letters with the church in Laodicea. Demas was obviously well known of the brethren as he is also mentioned in Philemon 1:24. At one time he was important to Paul, but eventually fell away (II Ti. 4:10). We have the same type of experience as Christians today. We can travel to remote places and run into some brother or sister whom we have not seen in a while. Immediately we exchange reports with that one. Our reports often include the faithfulness of other brethren. When we travel we often carry salutations for the brethren at our destination. These things show that now, as then, we are part of a spiritual kingdom with a fellowship that spans great distances. Our common faith binds us no matter how we might be separated physically. This example also illustrates how we should have both an interest in and love for each other.

Instructions

While reading chapters 3 and 4, be sure to identify the major and minor themes as well as the major arguments used to support the themes.

Chapter 3

Major Theme:

Major Argument:

Minor Themes:

Chapter 4

Major Theme:

Major Argument:

Minor Themes:

Questions

1. Explain the importance of thanksgiving in Colossians 2:7, 3:17, and 4:2.
2. List some things that might be 'filthy communications.'
3. Sum up the meaning of Colossians 3:9-14 in a few words.
4. Why was Paul in bonds?

5. How could the brethren help Paul open doors?

6. In what way are Christians dead?

7. What does it mean to do everything 'in the name' of Christ?

8. According to Colossians 3:17 what types of songs should we sing?

True or False—Be sure to provide scripture for your answer.

T or F—Paul endorses using salt on our food.

T or F—The word must dwell in us while we are singing.

T or F—Colossians 4:1 clearly limits the authority of masters.

T or F—Paul mentions the Christian walk four times in the letter to the Colossians.

T or F—It is impossible to know the will of God.

Thought Questions

1. How does Christ hide our life? (Co. 3:3)

2. Look up the word 'renewed' in Colossians 3:10. Using the definition, explain how we are 'renewed in knowledge.'

3. When communicating with others, is our sole responsibility to speak what is truth? Does it matter either how we come across or how it is received? (Co. 4:3-6)