

2020-2021 Bible Study

#28

4/20/21

Reminder

- We will not meet for Bible Study next week on **Tuesday, April 27** or **May 18**
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Review of our Last Class

- Last week, we found Paul in *Jerusalem*, where he caused a near riot requiring the Romans to place him in protective custody
- Just before going into the barracks, he addressed the Jews with his defense
- Once in the barracks, the Romans wanted to interrogate him by scourging until he played the Roman Citizen card
- The next day before the assembly of Jews, Paul proclaimed that he was being persecuted for believing in life after death, and the resurrection of the body
- Again, the Romans had to rescue him from the mob
- Once a plot to kill him was discovered, the Romans sent him to *Caesarea* under protection

Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- *Felix*, the Roman governor agreed to hear the case and demanded that the Jewish leadership come to him
- He found no serious crime and after Paul refused to go to Jerusalem to stand trial, he demanded to be tried before *Caesar*
- *Felix* kept him in prison for two years before leaving him for his successor *Festus*
- Again, he protected Paul from the Jewish leaders, and even allowed King *Agrippa II* to review his case
- When Paul ended his defense both agreeing that Paul had not committed any serious crime, but *Festus* was required to send him to Rome as he requested

Acts 26 -27

- At the conclusion of this interview, all agreed that Paul was not guilty of any crime and could have been released, but he had to be sent to *Rome* as he requested
- At this point it was decided to send Paul to Rome under the protection of *Julius*, a centurion of the *Augustine Cohort*
- Next, Luke presented a detailed itinerary of Paul's voyage to Rome including being shipwrecked

Acts 28

- Paul finally arrives in *Rome* where he was placed under house arrest pending his trial before *Caesar*
- As a Roman citizen, he was afforded a fair amount of freedom to be visited by members of the Roman church and other Jews while remaining under Roman guard
- It was from this place of house arrest that he began to write what are referred to as his “captivity epistles”

The Captivity Epistles

The Captivity Epistles

- The following are the letters Paul wrote while in captivity (*Caesarea* and/or *Rome*) known as the “**Captivity Epistles**”
 - **Ephesians**
 - **Philippians**
 - **Colossians**
 - **Philemon**
- This is the order in which they appear in the New Testament (not necessarily in the order in which they were written)
- Following our review of these letters, we will end our study of Paul by looking at his **Pastoral Epistles** (written to individuals)

The Captivity Epistles (Cont)

- As we observed, the **Book of Acts** states that after two years of captivity in *Caesarea* (under two prosecutors, *Felix* and *Festus*), Paul was sent under Roman guard to Rome having appealed to Caesar as a Roman citizen
- Father pointed out that some scholars (mainly Protestants) referred to these four letters as “Deutero-Pauline Epistles” as they questioned Paul’s authorship due to their being written in a different style than the earlier letters ¹
- More recently, this theory has been rejected, giving Paul authorship of them all

The Captivity Epistles (Cont)

- The Catholic Church has always maintained that Paul was the author
- As mentioned, scholars are not sure when these letters were written except that it was sometime during his long captivity
- Some of them could have been written during his time in *Caesarea* and the rest while in Rome, or all could have been written in *Rome*
- What matters is that he wrote them while under house arrest for some alleged violation of the Law that he had not committed

The Captivity Epistles (Cont)

- In these letters, we are introduced to his “theology of suffering” (the importance of suffering for Christ)
- Each time he focused on his and our suffering for Christ
- This is seen as a reflection of his suffering imprisonment, and his persecution for the “Cross” while in prison
- We now begin to meditate more on this concept (beginning with his **Letter to the Ephesians**)

The letter to the Ephesians

Letter to the Ephesians

- The *Ephesians* were the members of the Church at *Ephesus*
- Paul visited *Ephesus* at the end of his second journey (52 AD) and again at the beginning of his third journey when he wrote **1st Corinthians** and **Galatians**
- He had to leave at the end of his first trip, after he participated in the burning of the magic books and he had to leave the city on his second trip, after his confrontation with Demetrius, the silversmith who sold silver miniatures of the goddess *Artemis*
- It was after his departure from *Ephesus* on his second trip that he wrote **2nd Corinthians** and **Romans**

Letter to the Ephesians (Cont)

- It would appear that Paul left *Timothy* in *Ephesus*, as its bishop, on his final trip through *Macedonia* (tradition says the *Timothy* was eventually martyred there for the Faith)
- This means that the church in *Ephesus* was a church founded by Paul
- *Ephesus* was a metropolis and the capital city of that region (this was very different from the small churches he established in *Galatia*)
- Father said that after Paul was released from prison (in Rome), he may have visited *Ephesus* one last time

Letter to the Ephesians (Cont)

- Father said that it is a very “Pauline” letter containing a thanksgiving, dogmatic, and moral section, then ending with a short conclusion or epilogue
- Again, its location in the New Testament is based on the length of the letter, so it comes in fifth place right after **Galatians** and before **Philippians**

Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1

- **Ephesians 1:3-23** *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,...things in heaven and things on earth...who fills all in all”*
 - Notice that Paul did not say that, “I sealed you”
 - Father said that our coming inheritance, based on being sealed by the Holy Spirit, is based in our coming resurrection
 - We know this from Paul’s teaching in **Romans 8**
 - The image of the word “sealed” is in the image of the anointing by the Holy Spirit
 - In the early church, this anointing was done by the “laying on of hands,” which can be seen today as Chrismation (Eastern Church) or Confirmation (Western Church)

Ephesians 1 (Cont)

- In the middle of this section (**Ephesians 1:15-18**), we find resurrection images (authority, power, and dominion)
- “Everything” is in Him, implying that nothing is above Jesus
- Paul was making these claims to offset *Gnostic* dualism since the average pagan in *Ephesus* believed in many of the countless gods in the universe ₂
- These Gnostics would only share this secret knowledge with someone who joined their group (“Gnosticism” meant “knowledge”)
- Father pointed out that all of that nonsense was demonic

Ephesians 1 (Cont)

- Paul was telling the people of *Ephesus* that the truth was that God created everything, and it was all “very good”
- This idea helped form the Judeo-Christian tradition that was growing throughout the Churches that Paul had formed
- These churches were growing exponentially
- Paul may have founded the Church in *Ephesus* on five or six Jewish families within a synagogue, and by this point, they may have had over 100 people in attendance
- Most of these were converts from the local Gentile community

Ephesians 1 (Cont)

- Both groups brought a certain amount of baggage with them when they entered the Church
 - The Jews brought the two bags of circumcision and Kosher
 - The Gentiles brought the two bags of Gnosticism and dualism
- Paul addressed these same issues in his letters to the Corinthians to include:
 - The resurrection of the dead (which they initially rejected)
 - An argument **against** the idea that they could do anything with their bodies (eating food offered to idols and going to cult prostitutes) because their bodies did not mean anything
- Father pointed out that once again, Paul will hammer Gnosticism and dualism with the *Ephesians*

Ephesians 1 (Cont)

- The style of this letter as well as the letter to the *Colossians* appears to be aimed at a general audience (many of whom he has not met) rather than a group of people he knew
- These Gnostic cults taught that there were intermediaries (little spirits) between Heaven in the spirit world and the earth world
- The Gnostics were fascinated with these intermediate beings (they were similar to, but not Angels)
- This is why when Paul talks about the angel Gabriel, the Gnostics try to pin him down as what type of pagan spirit he might be

Ephesians 1 (Cont)

- The Jewish Christian understood angels
- The Gentile Christians (from Gnosticism) had all sorts of misconceptions and preconceived ideas of the intermediary spiritual beings, and saw them through this lens
- This is why Paul stipulated that none of these could compare with Jesus whose name (Yahweh) was above every other name
- We will hear this argument again when we get to the **Letter to the Philippians**
- Also, the idea of the Church being the body of Christ will be spelled out in all of the captivity epistles