

Mushrooms or a Mighty Oak Tree

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.”

(Acts 20:29-30)

The Apostle Paul realized that Satan would raise up false teachers from even within the church who would bring in false teachings, doctrine, pagan practices, worldly ideas, and man-made trends. They are like dangerous animals attacking the church and are difficult to handle. They are like wolves that wish to attack and kill the sheep. We, as leaders, must be very careful to make sure that such wolves will not enter and destroy any of the flock of God. We must guard the truth! These people are motivated by a quest for money and power. They pervert the truth by bringing in such practices as: new age teachings; human ideas and philosophies; current trends from other churches; people-pleasing teachings concerning prosperity and get rich quick doctrines (reported to be faith). Some persuade you to exercise your liberty in Christ through putting aside any restraint of Christian, holy living, reverting to traditional cultural beliefs (in opposition to the teaching of the Bible) and becoming involved involving practices of the occult and spirits. Some will even allow immoral lifestyles to be present in the churches. Newspapers are reporting the permitting of homosexual (same sex) marriages in several church organizations today.

Unfortunately Paul's fears when it came to the future of the churches he established came to pass. The Epistles he wrote to these churches revealed that some rejected Paul's teachings in favor of false ones. Later Paul wrote to the same Ephesian church and said, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” (Ephesians 4:14-15)

He did not want us to be spiritually immature, like children who are unstable and carried about by the winds of false doctrines. We are growing up into oak trees and not mushrooms. Winds will blow down mushroom churches but never the mighty oak.

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:3)

This verse reminds me of the song the saints of God sing, “I shall not be, I shall not be moved. I shall not be, I shall not be moved. Just like the tree that's planted by the waters. I shall not be moved.”

The church of Colosse was one church that Paul admonished to maintain the teachings that he gave. This was one of the churches that he had founded during his three year ministry at Ephesus (Acts 20:31). His ministry during this time was so powerful that all Asia heard the gospel (Acts 19:10). Paul wrote to them from Rome (Acts 25:11-12; Acts 28). In his epistle to the Colossians he was so concerned that they would keep the correct doctrines. This epistle is considered a twin epistle to the one written to the Ephesians.

In many cases Paul's epistles were read out loud to the congregation when they assembled. Then they made a copy and distributed it to the other churches in the area (Col. 4:16).

"If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard..." (Col. 1:23)

"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught..." (Col. 2:7)

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2:8)

Can you get the picture of a tree; grounded, settled, rooted, and growing up tall?

"False teaching appeared to supplant the centrality and supremacy of Jesus Christ in creation, revelation, redemption and in the church." It seems that there was a mixture of Christian teaching, extrabiblical traditions, and pagan philosophy. (Full Life Study Bible, page 1871)

Who is Jesus Christ?

To combat these false teachings Paul asserted the following concerning Jesus Christ.

- ❑ Jesus is the express image of the invisible God. (Col. 1:15)
- ❑ All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily. (Col. 2:9)
- ❑ Jesus is the Creator of all things. (Col. 1:16-17)
- ❑ Jesus is the Head of the Church. (Col. 1:18)
- ❑ Jesus is the all Sufficient Source of Salvation. (Col. 1:14, 20-22)
- ❑ Jesus is in us, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)
- ❑ We are to be buried with Jesus in baptism. (Col. 2:12)

- ❑ “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed do all in the name of Jesus.” (Col. 3:17)

- ❑ Christ is all, and in all. (Col. 3:11)

Study Questions

1. What do false teachers bring into the church? _____

2. Colossians is a twin epistle to which book? _____

3. What was usually done with the Epistles in order to get the message to the people?

4. What were the false teachings at Colosse trying to accomplish? _____

5. Which Scriptures did Paul use to combat the false teachings? _____

6. Who is Jesus according to the Scriptures used in this lesson? (Support your answers with Scripture.) _____

