

Guidelines for the exercise of the Lord's day Prophecy Message Three : The Constituent of the One New Man—the All-inclusive, Extensive Christ Replacing Culture

I. Overview:

If we get into the depths of the book of Colossians, we will see that in this book Paul is dealing with the hidden matter of human culture. When we came into the church life, we brought our culture with us, and this culture undermines our enjoyment of Christ and the church life. The book of Colossians reveals that the all-inclusive, extensive Christ is everything in God's economy. Such a vision will terminate the influence of culture on the experience of Christ and on the church life. In the church as the new man, there is no room for regional, cultural, or national distinctions and no place for any race, nationality, culture, or social status. As the constituent of the new man, Christ is all and in all. The new man is Christ in all the saints permeating us and replacing us until all natural distinctions have been eliminated, and everyone is constituted with Christ. When we have the vision of the all-inclusive, extensive Christ with the adequate experience of Christ, the one new man will appear among us in a practical way, and we will realize the life of the new man.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Explain in Colossians Paul is dealing with the matter of culture.

In Colossians Paul is dealing with the hidden matter of man's culture. A strong indicator of this is the use of the word barbarian in 3:11, a word not used in either 1 Corinthians 12:13 or Galatians 3:28, verses parallel to Colossians 3:11. Paul's use of the word barbarian in Colossians indicates that this Epistle deals with culture.

B. Why do we say the source of the trouble among Colossians saints being culture?

The source of the trouble among the believers in Colossae was culture; particularly Jewish culture and Greek culture had been saturated with respect to philosophy. At the time of Paul, there included three main elements; Jewish religion, Greek philosophy, and Roman politics. Among them, Jewish religion and Greek philosophy had invaded the church; culture today exerts a strong influence on us.

Day 2 —

A. Expound that problem in Colossae was culture.

The problem in Colossae was not sinfulness, as in Corinth; it was culture. Asceticism and philosophy are two of the leading products of culture. Paul pointed out that in the church as the new man, there is no room for either the cultured or the uncultured. There is no place for philosophy, asceticism, or observances. In the new man there is room for nothing other than Christ.

B. State how the peace of Christ will settle all the disputes among us.

In Colossians 3:15 and 16 Paul charges us to let the peace of Christ arbitrate in our hearts; this peace will settle all the disputes among us. Colossians needed a referee, an arbitrator, to calm down all the differing opinions. When the peace of Christ calms our opinions, the word of Christ will replace them.

Day 3 —

A. Expound what the seven major aspects of Christ in Colossians are.

In Colossians 1:9—3:11 we see seven major aspects of Christ: that Christ is the portion of the saints, that He is the first both in creation and in resurrection, that He is the mystery of God's economy, that He is the mystery of God, that He is the body of all the shadows, that He is the life of the saints, and that He is the constituent of the new man. These aspects of Christ are presented in a marvelous sequence.

B. Describe the new man having come into being and living in a practical way.

In the region near the Mediterranean, the travel was not convenient, but there was considerable traffic among the churches. There is a lesson for us here. Although we enjoy all the modern conveniences and means of transportation, there may not be as much traffic among the churches today as there was at the time of Paul. However, there the new man had come into being and was living in a practical way.

Day 4 —

A. Why do we say that the existence and living of the new man in a practical way is a matter of tremendous significance?

The Roman Empire covered a vast area and peoples. In the attempt to unify the people culturally, the Roman Empire used the Greek language. However, it was not successful in uniting the peoples. The differences among the nations, races, and social classes remained. But in a practical way the one new man created in Christ Jesus. There were not only local churches in various cities but also one new man in a real and practical way.

B. Why is it shameful that any local church isolates itself from other churches?

How wrong it is for us to have the attitude of standing apart from other local churches, fearing that others may interfere with our affairs or otherwise trouble us. Any church which holds such an attitude has a consciousness only of itself, not of the totality of the new man. Those who insist on this attitude cause the new man to be fragmented. There is a portrait of the living of the new man in Colossians 4:7-17!

Day 5 —

A. Explain the intrinsic significance of the new man in Colossians 3:10-11.

Christ is all the members, and He is in all the members. There is no room for the natural man. In the church as the new man, Christ is everything. This implies that every brother and sister must be constituted of Christ. We must be permeated with Christ, saturated with Christ, and have Christ organically wrought into our being. Then, we shall be replaced by Christ. Eventually, the new man comes into existence.

B. Expound how there can be the reality of the new man.

For this to be a reality, we must take Christ as our life and live Him, not ourselves. If Christ is the living of all the saints, then only He will be in the new man. All the saints, whatever their nationality may be, will live Christ. Then in a way that is real and practical, Christ will be all the members of the new man.

Day 6 —

A. Expound according to Colossians 3:10, the new man is being renewed.

Full knowledge is the issue of renewing, its result, not the means of being renewed. If we seek the things on earth instead of the things above, we shall not have the renewing of the new man. But when we seek the things above, the new man grows within us. The result of this growth is full knowledge to make the new man being renewed.

B. How can we realize the life of the universal new man in a practical way?

When we set our mind on the things above, spontaneously the new man grows and is renewed within us. This causes our whole being to be renewed and transformed. Then wherever we may be, we can have the practice of the new man; the new man will appear among us in a practical way, and we shall realize the life of the new man.

III. Conclusion:

At the time of Paul, the Roman Empire was strong in the aspects of military, politics, economy. The Roman Empire covered a vast area and embraced many different peoples. In the attempt to unify the people culturally, the Roman Empire used the Greek language. However, the differences among the cultures, races, and social classes remained. But there was on earth in a practical way the one new man created in Christ Jesus; in the region near the Mediterranean, the new man had come into being and was living in a practical way. Paul in Colossians 4: 7 ~ 17 presented the portrait of the living of the new man. Through the personal greetings of the saints, they are mingled in the body, and the churches are brought into a new man in reality. By means of the traffic among the churches, there is no distinction between the churches. At the same time, this fellowship can be related to the concern of the apostles. Whatever cannot be done in the old man is accomplished in the new man. What a prevailing testimony!