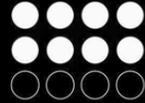


A Colony of Heaven

Paul's Letter To The Philippians



COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY

WEEK 7: Jesus Is Lord

Philippians 2:1-11

INTRODUCTION

Let's start with a little history.

The city of Philippi was established in 356 BC by King Phillip II. Phillip saw the potential of a thriving city on the major trade route in the region called the Ignatian Way. On either side of Philippi were mountains that could be mined for both silver and gold. This made Philippi a power base for trade. Like many classic rulers throughout history Phillip exploited and enslaved many people, forcing many to mine the mountains surrounding the city.

With Phillip's great wealth also came many enemies. In 336 BC Phillip was assassinated and his son Alexander the Great took over his reign. Alexander took his father's wealth and spread it into an empire that took over the ancient world. The Greek empire spread but Alexander the Great did not live long, dying at the age of thirty-two and this led the way to the empire eventually collapsing.

Then there was silence.

We do not hear much of anything about Philippi for a few hundred years. Until, in 44 BC, a Roman leader name Julius Caesar was assassinated. His adopted son, Octavian (Augustus), spent two years of his life tracking down his father's assassins, meeting them in the Battle of Philippi in 42BC. Octavian managed to avenge his father's death by killing his murders and this eventually led Octavian to become the first Roman emperor in 27BC.

Still with us? Stay awake!

The legend goes that when Julius Caesar was assassinated there was a comet that glowed in the sky for seven straight days. They called it Caesar's comet. Many believed, including the Roman Senate, that this was Julius' soul ascending into heaven. The Senate immediately declared him divine.

Now think about it for a second. If Julius Caesar was God then who was his son Augustus? You got it... The son of God. They would print on their coins things like "Augustus is the son of god." They would also say things like "Caesar is the divine king of salvation" and "Salvation is to be found in no other name but Caesar" or "There is no other name by which you can be saved."

The Roman gospel was that under Caesar there would be peace and salvation throughout the world. In places like Philippi people would have to swear allegiance to Caesar. They would bow their knee and confess his name. People were forced to confess the Roman gospel "Kaiser Kurios" which simply means "Caesar is Lord."

It puts Paul's letter in a little bit of a different perspective doesn't it? Everything Paul is writing about Jesus is conflicting with the Roman religion of the day.

Even deeper was the fact that there was a huge wealth disparity in Philippi. Yes there was lots of wealth because of the silver and gold, but with any wealthy city comes some sort of poverty.

Roman culture was an honor shame society. In Philippi there were honestiores or honorable ones and humiliores, which were known as dishonorable ones. There were levels of class including the Senate at the very top, who were the most wealthy and powerful, to slaves who had no voice in society. The interesting thing is that the honorable ones were only two percent of Philippian society, yet they held all the power and wealth.

One person has said, "Philippi was the most status-obsessed city in the ancient world." Everyone wanted to climb the social ladder. Not only this, humility was something that was despised. To say you were humble was not received in this status-obsessed culture.

Then we get to Paul.

It is an understatement that Paul views the church completely counter-cultural to this mindset. He calls the church to be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and mind, doing nothing out of selfish ambition, being humble and he ultimately calls them to look to the interest of others.

Wow! This is a lot different than what the average person was thinking. And yet Paul comes with a new way of living.

The amazing thing is that we can live like this. We can do this because we have the Spirit of Jesus living within us and we have the example of Jesus to follow (just read verses 6-11). We have the power to live the way Paul is instructing the church, not because we can do it in ourselves, but because Jesus gives us his strength.

So, lets live different than the cultural norm. Lets become the people of the future!

READ

Take time and read Philippians 2:1-11.

DISCUSS

1. When you read these verses what comes to your mind and heart?
2. From what we read in the introduction we see that Paul has a completely different call for the church compared to what was being practiced in society. Do you think that is the same today? Why or why not?
3. Do you see class distinction in our society? How does that make you feel? What is your response? How do you think the church should respond?
4. When you read verses 6-11 about Jesus being our example how does it make you feel? How does it make you feel to know that our King, King Jesus, is so much better than any human king?
5. It was said in the teaching this week that, "If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus." Do you agree? Why or why not?

PRAY

Take time to pray for you Community Group, our city and the greater needs that are at hand at City View Church.