

Remnant Life Church
November 1, 2015
The J-G Virus in Colosse
Part 1 - Judaism
Colossians 1:15-19

- Historical teaching this morning – Why?
 - The purpose and reason we study the Bible is to understand
 - + Understand what is being taught – the truths and concepts
 - + Understand how to incorporate that into my life so that I live guided by what I learn
 - Too many people in the church today focus exclusively on the first part but never engage the second
 - We have too many “Brilliant, worldly Christians” in the church
 - This morning I want us to look in more detail at the context from which Paul writes his letter so that we can better understand how to apply those principles he is teaching into our own lives
- Review of the 3 things in 1:3-4
 1. Gratitude
 2. Prayer
 3. Encouragement
- A primary reason that Paul wrote this letter was to deal with a virus that had begun to infect the church in Colosse
- It was a virus of false teaching that had been around for a while and was trying to infect the young church
- Two strains of teaching had been making their way through the area – Judaism and Gnosticism
- Important to understand these 2 teachings because the principles they represent are still present and attempting to infect our churches today
- As a church and as Christians we MUST be able to spot things like this since deception is going to increase as we draw closer to the return of Jesus
- **Judaism**
 - Def: The religion and culture of the Jewish people
 - It encompasses the 4 aspects of their civilization: historical, social, political, and religious
 - The term was first used during the intertestamental period (the time of Malachi’s ministry around 420 BC to the appearance of John the Baptist in the early 1st century AD)
 - While nothing of canonical writing is recorded it is a time of great activity that is shaping the NT world that Paul lives in and during it all the Jews are fighting desperately to maintain their identity, their culture, and their religion

- That time period can be divided into 5 segments based on who was ruling at the time (quickly state)
- Much of that begins in earnest with the rule of the Greeks
 1. Hellenistic Period – 331-164 BC – Alexander the Great (death in 323; land divided among his 4 generals)
 2. Ptolemaic Period – 320-198 BC – Ptolemy I – Egyptian rule over the annexed land of Israel when the generals divided
 3. Seleucid Period – 198-164 BC – descendants of Seleucus one of Alexander's four generals who had gained control over the region of Babylon (modern day Iraq - often referred to as the Syrians) - it is during this period that many of the walls of Jerusalem are torn down
 4. Maccabean Period – 164-63 BC – Judas Maccabeus led a military revolt to take back the temple after an altar to Zeus had been set up and a pig offered as a sacrifice; it stood in place for 3 years. No offerings to God occurred there during that time period. That battle was won but the Greeks were still in control.
 5. Roman period – 63 BC-135 AD – Romans capture Jerusalem and the conquering General Pompey entered forcibly into the Holy of Holies; this ultimate act of sacrilege introduced an atmosphere of hostile mistrust that set the tone for the Jewish/Roman relationship that we read of in the NT
- All during this time the Jews are being handed back and forth from one ruling group to another while their culture is being assaulted and assimilated
- Because of this the law (Torah or Pentateuch the first 5 books of the OT) was desperately held to as the only thing that was truly theirs and defined them even in captivity
- It was the scribe Ezra (who led the 2nd of the 3 returns of the people from captivity in Persia back to Jerusalem – along with Nehemiah) who began to read the law back to the people as a way of reintroducing identity, calling, and purpose back to the people (the Torah had actually been lost and then found by accident)
- After hundreds of years of this life the people began to believe that only strict obedience to the law saved a person's soul
 - + In other words it was knowledge and only those with a strong intellect who could be truly righteous
 - + In addition, they believed that your actions, not faith, is what saved you
 - + It was the activities of your faith on the outside that made a difference not the person on the inside
- This became the foundation of the legalistic teachings and beliefs of the Pharisees
- While Judaism does represent the people its philosophy of life, in opposition to what Paul was teaching, became the issue for the people of the church in Colosse and a source of confusion.