

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

LESSON SEVEN = *The Churches of Galatia*

Bible Class Series by Ray Reynolds (2/2/11)

Introduction: Each of the congregations in the New Testament had unique features and characteristics. They all had qualities we can learn from and use to better our own congregations today. In this lesson we are going to consider the churches of Galatia. Let's study together

Discussion:

I. *The Geography of Galatia*

There are really three regions that made up "Galatia" during Paul's time (Asia Minor/Anatolia).

- * The northern part of Galatia (The Gaul's = primitive)
- * The southern part of Galatia (Lycaonia = somewhat primitive).
- * The Roman colonies (i.e. Antioch of Pisidia = modern, Greek influence)

There are various schools of thought on who Paul is specifically writing too in Galatians.

- * You will hear about the Northern Galatian theory and the Southern Galatian theory.

The central part of Asia Minor was a harsh climate (mountains, dry, plateaus, etc.).

II. *The History of Galatia*

The early history of the area of Galatia is somewhat vague.

- * This area is not as rich with history as many of the larger coastal cities.

The region of Galatia had many different religions.

- * One popular one was the worship of mother goddess Cybele (illicit sexual behavior).

Each region is rich with history, especially in reference to Christianity.

III. *The Beginning of the Churches in Galatia*

The beginning of the church in Antioch of Pisidia.

- * It was founded by Seleucius I Nicator in the third century BC as a border fortress.
- * Later the Romans took control in 188 BC and it became an imperial colony in 11 BC.

The beginning of the church in Iconium.

- * This is 60 miles southeast of Antioch and bigger than Lystra or Derbe.
- * It was a very agricultural city and had an abundant water supply.

The beginning of the church in Lystra.

- * It had high and barren plateaus and would have been difficult to travel on in Paul's day.
- * Roman and Jewish colonies established it around the third century BC.
- * The city was about ten miles from the Kopree River and a major trade route.

The beginning of the church in Derbe.

- * This is probably the last city Paul and Barnabas visited before retracing their steps home.
- * The first journey proved somewhat successful as it says they taught many people.
- * Luke doesn't tell us of any opposition in this city on the first trip.

The beginning of other churches in Galatia.

- * They may have established a church in Perga.
- * The second journey and third journeys also prove to be fruitful.

IV. The Work of the Churches in Galatia

Contacts were made in Galatia.

- * Paul and Barnabas have just touched the hem of the garment.

Churches were established throughout Galatia.

- * Paul returns with Silas and Barnabas probably with John Mark.

Visits were made often with these congregations.

- * The missionary teams would often visit and then retrace their steps to visit again.

A letter was written to these brethren to address some issues.

V. The Letter to the Churches in Galatia

The following outline could be used for Galatians:

- I. Introduction & Greetings (1:1-10)
- II. Paul Defends His Apostolic Ministry (1:11-2:21)
- III. Paul Defends the Gospel (3:1-4:31)
- IV. Paul Describes the Freedom in Christ (5:1-6:10)
- II. Conclusion & Benediction (6:11-18)

Anyone have a favorite verse from Galatians they want to share?

VI. The Dilemmas of the Churches in Galatia

The opponents of Paul in Galatia

- * Remember that the Jews were working to convert Gentiles to Judaism in Galatia.
- * Consider the issues described in **Galatians 1-2** from within the church and without.

The opponents of true Christianity

- * These new churches suffered at the hands of the Gentiles and the Jews.
- * **Galatians 4:9-10** tells us they kept the special days and seasons and traditions.

The issue of apostleship

- * They are accepted on the first trip. What changed? (**I Corinthians 9:2, II Corinthians 10-12**)

The new gospel or another gospel

- * Paul was fearful that these new Christians were easily persuaded to fall away.

VII. The Maturity of the Churches in Galatia

The power of the Holy Spirit.

- * Paul shares the necessity of being in Christ, having faith in God, and signs of adoption.

The chains of Legalism.

- * Paul is giving the people an opportunity to release their chains.

The freedom of grace.

- * Men like Timothy and Titus were living proof of the grace of God.

The joy of stability.

- * The churches were unstable and fickle so Paul seeks to give them balance and security.

The ability to learn from our mistakes.

- * Paul doesn't mince words with these brethren. . . . se all need to learn and grow up.

Conclusion: God clearly blessed the churches in Galatia. We can see that history shows the wisdom and providence of God throughout the New Testament. We should trust Him to provide direction for the church today. It is my prayer that by studying about these wonderful congregations of the Lord's people that we will see our place in the kingdom. Next week we will study about the church in Corinth.