

YOU ARE COMPLETE in HIM.

COLOSSIANS 2:10, NKJV

A new creation focus through Colossians ...

Workers from "the Circumcision"

Over the years, Paul was able to accumulate a team who worked with him in spreading the gospel. On his first missionary journey, Barnabas was at first the lead man, with Paul doing quite a bit of preaching also, and with John Mark as the young man who was necessary in doing all the daily chores. During that journey, Mark left them when they arrived on the mainland of what is now Turkey, and returned to Jerusalem. Paul was first known as Saul, and was listed secondly, as in "Barnabas and Saul." But on the western side of Cyprus, Paul received his apostleship from the Lord

Jesus, evidenced in striking blind a Jewish false teacher. Luke, in the book of Acts, notes the change in Paul's status to a full-fledged apostle by changing Saul's name to Paul. Paul's position as an apostle of Jesus is subtly noted by the alteration in Luke's description of that early traveling party: "Paul and his companions" (Acts 12:25-13:13). Paul and Barnabas separated after the first missionary journey, and on the second mission Paul was accompanied by Silas, who was a prophet, who was a Roman citizen, and who had been a leading man in the congregation at Jerusalem. After that Timothy was added to the contingent in Lystra, and Luke at Philippi.

- **Aristarchus** — Aristarchus shows up on Paul's third missionary journey. When a silversmith named Demetrius incited a disturbance in Ephesus, "the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia" (Acts 19:29). As Paul and his crew finished up their work on the final missionary journey, Aristarchus was one of those in the ship accompanying Paul and the offering collected from the Gentile churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). And on the trip to Rome, on which Paul was a prisoner who had made his appeal to Caesar, Aristarchus was, along with Luke, a passenger, as the historian recorded: "And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica (Acts 27:2). Later, as Paul writes this letter from Rome to the brethren in Colossae, he notes, "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings" (Colossians 4:10). Aristarchus (as later information indicates) was a Jewish Christian, still working with Paul in Rome, and had been arrested also and imprisoned with Paul. Clearly a dedicated man of God!

- **Mark and Justus** — Mark's background has already been noted, including his desertion from the party on Paul's first missionary journey, and the apostle's refusal to take Mark with him on the second. After stating that Aristarchus sent his greetings to the church in Colossae, Paul adds, "and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision; and they have proved to be an encouragement to me" (Colossians 4:10,11). It is worthy of note that these men are described as "workers" as contrasted to "loafers," and that their work was for the kingdom of God (which is the church). Jesus, an English name from the Greek, was a common name, equivalent to Joshua. But, as was somewhat customary, Justus was a substitute name because of the reverence given to the name Jesus. It is clear that Paul appreciated their work and the encouragement it gave him.

Real names, real people, real situations ... these are the things which give these letters credibility as authentic rather than the made-up fake letters which tend to circulate even to this day. In addition, modern Christians get a glimpse into the workings of Paul and his teammates as they worked to spread the gospel and strengthen the saints. These are instructive for positive modeling in working together today!

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