

Wenstrom Bible Ministries
Pastor-Teacher Bill Wenstrom
Sunday May 28, 2017
www.wenstrom.org

Colossians: Colossians 4:15-Paul Requests Colossians Pass Along His Greetings to the Laodiceans and Nympha and Her House Church

Lesson # 119

Colossians 4:15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. (NASB95)

Colossians 4:15 All of you please give my regards to each and every one of the brothers and sisters residing in Laodicea as well as Nympha likewise, the church which is in her private home. (My translation)

Colossians 4:15 is transitional and begins the final section of the Colossian epistle, which contains final greetings and instructions from Paul.

Colossians 4:7-9 contained a reference to the messengers who carried this epistle to the Colossians.

It also contains a commendation of Tychicus.

Colossians 4:10-14 presents greetings from Paul's companions in Rome.

Lastly, Colossians 4:15-18 communicates personal greetings from Paul and brief instructions from him.

In verse 15, the apostle requests that the Colossian Christian community pass along greetings from himself to the Christian community in Laodicea.

He also wants them to pass along greetings to a wealthy Christian woman in that city named Nympha as well as the assembly of believers which met in her private home.

We know that Laodicea in the first century was a large enough city to have more than one house church and that one of the churches was led by a person who Paul knew personally.

The fact that Paul greets the church in Laodicea in general but then specifically greets one house church indicates that he personally knew this woman Nympha.

She must have been a wealthy woman since usually the wealthier members of the Christian community would host gatherings to worship.

She had either never married, or was a widow or married to a man who was not a Christian since if he was a Christian, Paul would have named him first and then her.

If he was not a Christian, then he appears to have been quite tolerant of Christianity.

Since she knew Paul, it would appear she was either single or a widow since this would give her the freedom to travel for business or pleasure and thus come across a person like the apostle during her travels.

There are several house churches mentioned in the New Testament.

Priscilla and Aquila had an assembly of believers meet in their home (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19), as well as Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40), Gaius (Rom. 16:23), Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19) and Philemon (Philemon 2).

S.L. Johnson writes “With all of the stress in the modern church on large and luxurious buildings, it is refreshing to be reminded that, for many years, the Christian church met and grew in the homes of believers (cf. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philemon 2). Lightfoot reminds us: ‘There is no clear example of a separate building set apart for Christian worship within the limits of the Roman empire before the third century, though apartments in private houses might be specially devoted to this purpose.’¹”²

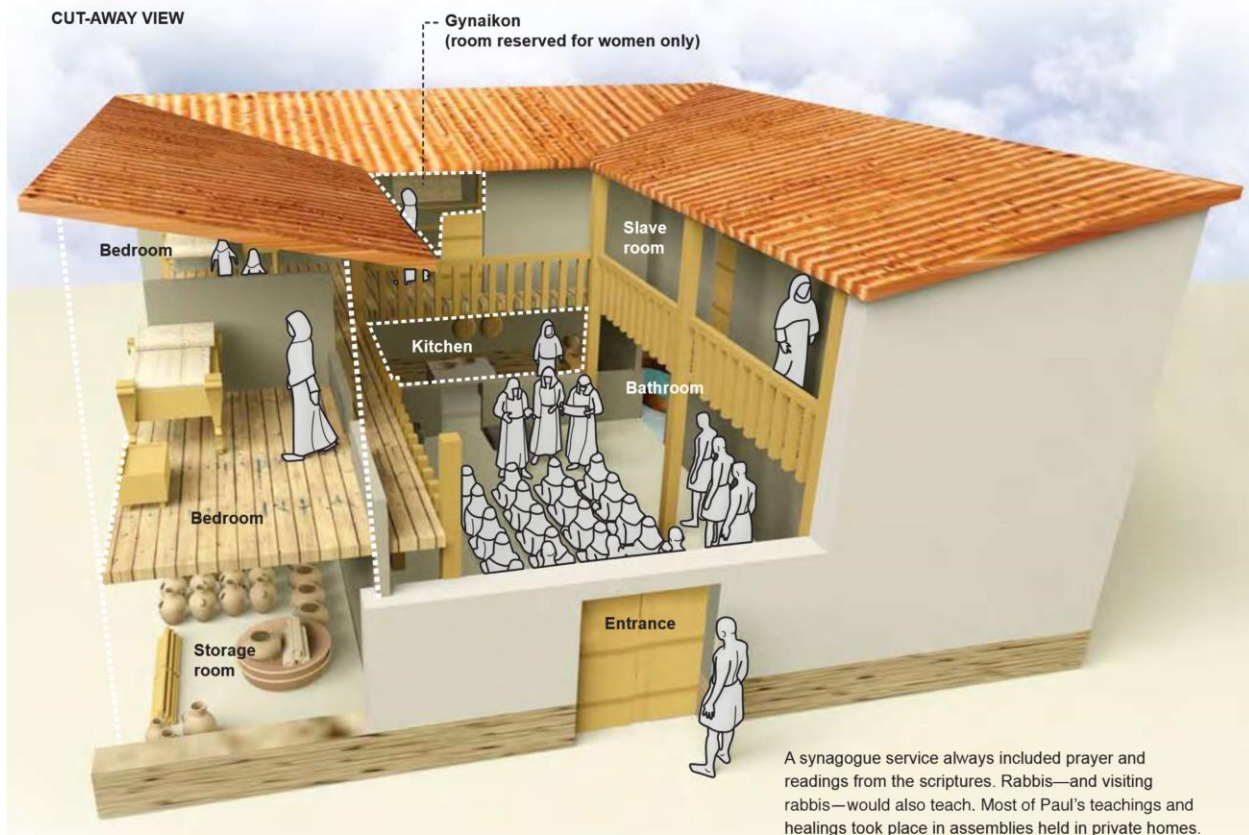
A.T. Robertson writes “Before the third century there is no certain evidence of special church buildings for worship (White, *Exp. Grk. T.*). See Acts 12:12 for Mary’s house in Jerusalem, I Cor. 16:19 for the house of Aquila and Prisca in Ephesus, Rom. 16:5 for the house of Prisca and Aquila in Rome, Col. 4:15 for the house of Nympha in Laodicea.”³

¹ Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, 241.

² Johnson, S. L., Jr. (1964). [Paul’s Final Words to the Colossians](#). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 121, 319.

³ Robertson, A. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Phm 2). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

Warren Wiersbe writes “In the first centuries of the church, local assemblies met in private homes. Even today, many new local churches get their start this way. It was not until the Christian faith emerged from persecution into official government approval that church buildings were constructed. It really matters little where the assembly meets, so long as Jesus Christ is the center of the fellowship. (For other examples of “the church in the home,” see Rom. 16:5 and 1 Cor. 16:19).⁴



Ancient Home Synagogue

The term “synagogue” refers generally to a Jewish assembly for prayer. During the first-century AD, the term referred primarily to buildings designed to house such assemblies. Jews living in Greek towns usually assembled for prayer in private homes—and if an assembly member was wealthy, the synagogue might have been held in a home like this one.

GRAPHIC BY KARBEL MULTIMEDIA, COPYRIGHT 2011 LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 153). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The fact that an assembly of believers met in Nympha's home not only indicates that she was quite well off financially but also very hospitable and practiced Christian hospitality, which is commanded of every Christian without exception.

In the first century, there was a great need in the church to provide shelter and food to visitors who had been uprooted from their homes because of persecution.

Furthermore, in the ancient world there were few motels or hotels, most of which were very undesirable.

In the Roman Empire, inns were many times places of ill repute and travelers, whenever possible, stayed with friends, thus, the New Testament emphasizes hospitality to strangers (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:1-3; 5:9-10; Titus 1:7-9; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9).

Since believers are members of the body of Christ according to 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 3:6 and Colossians 3:15 of which body, Christ is the head according to Ephesians 4:15, 5:23, Colossians 1:18, then when believers practice hospitality towards one another, they are in fact doing it to Christ.

Matthew 25:40 “**The King will answer and say to them (those Gentile believers who identified with Jewish believers during the Tribulation period), ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’**” (NASB95)

In the Old Testament, Abraham and his nephew Lot were examples of those who earnestly sought to demonstrate hospitality to strangers (Genesis 18:2-8; 19:1-3).

The first century apostolic church practiced providing for the needs of its own (Acts 2:45; 4:32-37; 9:36-41; 11:27-30; Romans 15:25-28; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4; 9:1-15).

There was great poverty in the first century apostolic church due to persecutions.

Therefore, it was critical for believers who were prospering or did have the essentials for maintaining a proper human existence to share their prosperity and abundance with those in the royal family of God who were destitute or poverty stricken.

When the believer provides for the needs of those who are poverty stricken in the body of Christ whether they are in his or her own periphery or in different parts of the world, it produces thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:1-15).

When the believer provides for the needs of those who are poverty stricken in the body of Christ whether they are in his or her own periphery or in different parts of the world, it is an expression of God's love in their life (1 John 3:16-18; Galatians 6:9-10).

Paul in Philippians 4:16-19 thanks the Philippians for providing for his needs while under house arrest in Rome awaiting his appeal before Caesar.

In this passage, Paul teaches that because the Philippians provided for him in his need, God will also do the same for them.

In fact, the Philippians who resided in the Roman province of Macedonia gave out of the poverty to other believers in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-15).