

Sunday, August 23, 2020—Colossians 1:25 To Fulfill The Word of God (Were Any New Testament Books Written After II Timothy?)

### Colossians 1:25

- **Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;**
- **Whereof I am made a minister**—the English word “whereof” is an adverb that carries the following meanings, according to Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language*:
  - Of which. We are not guilty of the crime whereof we are accused.
  - Of what. Whereof was this house built?
- Taken in context, Paul was made a minister of/to the church the body of Christ in verse 24.
  - Colossians 1:23—Paul was made a minister to every creature under heaven.
  - I Timothy 1:23—the Lord Jesus Christ put Paul into the ministry.
  - Acts 26:16-18
- Colossians 1:25—Paul was made a minister to the body of Christ by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you**—Paul’s receipt of this ministry was “according to” or in line with “the dispensation of God” which was given to him. Notice that this “dispensation” was given to Paul for “you” i.e., the Colossians and by extension the entire body of Christ.
  - I Corinthians 9:17—Paul had a “dispensation of the gospel” committed to his trust.
  - Ephesians 3:2—through the dispensation committed to Paul God is dispensing grace to the world. This is how God is choosing to manage his household during this dispensation.
  - Luke 16—a dispensation deals with house management.
  - Romans 6:14—we are not under the law during this dispensation because we are under grace.
  - Galatians 4:4-5—when Christ came in his first advent he was under the operating principle of the law.
  - Matthew 23:1-3—Jesus told his disciples that they needed to honor those who sat in Moses seat. Why? Because in that dispensation they were under the law.

- Colossians 1:25—Paul was a minister to the body of Christ according to the dispensation God had give him. A failure to recognize and understand the dispensation committed to Paul is why the church is in the condition it is presently.
- **to fulfil the word of God**—this dispensation was given to Paul for the purpose of fulfilling the word of God. The word translated “fulfil” is the same word that is translated as “complete” in Colossians 2:10. In other words, the word of God would have been incomplete without the Pauline revelation.
- I used to think this meant that when Paul set his pen down after writing II Timothy that the word of God was complete in the sense that no New Testament books were written after II Timothy. I now realize that is not what this verse is saying. This verse is saying that without the revelation/dispensation committed to Paul the word of God would have been incomplete.
- It is my current understanding that other New Testament books were probably written after Paul’s death. Let us consider II Peter as a case study.
  - II Peter 1:13-15—Peter is preparing to die when he wrote II Peter. When Peter wrote II Peter 1, he explicitly tells his readers that he is “shortly” preparing to die i.e., “put off this my tabernacle” in a manner that is consistent with what the “Lord Jesus Christ shewed” him.
  - John 21:17-19—in these verses the Lord predicts the manner (crucifixion--“thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not”) and the timing of Peter’s death (“when thou shalt be old”). So, Peter is not going to die until he is old, according to Christ.
  - Consequently, when Peter writes II Peter he tells his readers in Chapter 1 that “shortly I must put off this my tabernacle” i.e., Peter is telling his readers that he knows he is going to die in the near future. In addition, Peter explicitly states that his death will be “even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” The Lord showed Peter this in John 21:17-19.
  - Therefore, Peter is “old” when he writes II Peter. Which means that no portion of II Peter could have been written before the conversion of Paul in Acts 9. Peter is alive and active in the book of Acts after Cp. 9. In Acts 10 Peter has his sheet vision and visits Cornelius. In Acts 11 Peter answers questions regarding his visit with Cornelius. Peter is present at the Jerusalem Council meeting in Acts 15.
  - II Peter 3:15-16—all Paul’s epistles appear to have been written when Peter penned II Peter.
  - Therefore, II Peter was written after Paul had written “all his epistles” when Peter was an old man.
- Hebrews would be another.
  - II Timothy 4:6-7—Paul is at the end of his life when he writes II Timothy.

- II Timothy 4:9—knowing he is going to die; Paul asks Timothy to come unto him.
- II Timothy 4:21— Paul writes II Timothy from a location in which there was a local assembly. Paul greets Timothy on behalf of all the brethren and asks him to come where he is.
- History records Paul’s death as having transpired in Rome at the hands of Emperor Nero. We know from the book of Romans as well as from Paul’s imprisonment in Acts 28 that there was at least one local church in the city of Rome.
- In II Timothy Paul summoned Timothy to join him where he was before the time of his execution. Paul was executed in Rome at the hands of Emperor Nero between 64 and 67 AD. Therefore, if Timothy fulfilled Paul’s final instructions in II Timothy that would have put Timothy in Rome at the time of Paul’s death during the persecution of Christians by Emperor Nero.
- Hebrews 13:23-24—this is the next and final time the New Testament mentions Timothy. From these verses we learn two things: 1) Timothy had been deprived of his liberty and 2) He was in Italy when he was “set at liberty.”
- Therefore, we have scriptural evidence that Timothy, Paul’s ministry companion would have been in Italy at the time of Paul’s death if he had heeded Paul’s final instructions in II Timothy 4. Second, we know that had Timothy followed these instructions he would have been walking into Italy/Rome at a very dangerous time for Christians in general given the Neronian persecutions. More specifically, given Nero’s hatred for Paul, it makes sense that Nero would have moved against one of Paul’s chief ministry partners i.e., Timothy if given the opportunity. This would explain how and why Timothy came to be deprived of his liberty when in Italy.
- All of this of course means that Hebrews was written after Paul’s death.
- Colossians 1:25—the word of God would have been incomplete without Paul’s epistles. This does not mean that II Timothy was the last New Testament book to have been written. There is strong scriptural evidenced that other books were written after Paul was dead.