

## COLOSSIANS 4:7-18 | REPORTS, GREETINGS, AND CONCLUSION

## VERSE 7 | BLACK

Tychicus is mentioned in Acts 20:4, Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:12, and Titus 3:12. In most of these, he appears to be the “messenger” for Paul, delivering his letters. He is described as **a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord**. These are characteristics of Christian service toward which we should all strive.

## VERSE 8 | BLACK

Not only would Tychicus update the Colossians concerning Paul, but also come to know the **estate** of the Colossians and to **comfort** them. The word **estate**, as with **state** in verse 7 is simply *the things concerning you* and should not be confused with the “property” sense in which we sometimes use the word *estate*.

Note that the modern versions change **your estate** to something like “our circumstances” (NASB). While there is no doctrinal issue at hand, such opposite texts demand one to determine which one is the Word of God. Note also that verse 9 speaks of “our circumstances” being made known to the Colossians, and a change from **your** to *our* would thus make verse 9 repetitive.

## VERSE 9 | BLACK

Tychicus will be sent **with Onesimus** who is also a **faithful and beloved brother**, and also **one of you** (apparently from Colossae). Onesimus is the subject of the letter to Philemon.

The two will **make known unto you all the things which are done here**. I would love to know what they know! But God did not preserve that information for us, and Paul did not seem to think it needed proclaimed in writing.

## VERSE 10 | BLACK

Aristarchus is **a Macedonian of Thessalonica** (Acts 27:2). Here he is called **my fellowprisoner** and is almost certainly a Jew even from these words alone (confirmed in verse 11). His Jewishness is important, as will be seen in verse 11. As far as we know, only Jewish believers were imprisoned for their faith at this time. The Gentile world was, for the most part, unconcerned with a person’s faith practices, and the Roman Empire tolerated most religions. Exceptions came later, under Nero after the fire of Rome (A.D. 64, with Colossians written about A.D. 62). Aristarchus’ Jewishness could be presumed by putting this passage together with Romans 16:7 if you assume **my fellowprisoners** are the same in Romans as in Colossians.

Paul also mentions **Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas**. We know him better as *John Mark* (see Acts 12:12). John Mark is most definitely Jewish, a fact that becomes important in the next verse.

Modern translations refer to him as Barnabas’ *cousin*. The Greek is ἀνεψιός [anephiós] from which we get the word *nephew*. One may look and see that the word *sister* is not in the text. How then do we know that he is the **sister’s son** rather than the *brother’s* or even a cousin in the modern sense?

Modern Bible teachers often mention that “sister” is not in the text, and they are correct, in a sense. They also mention that *anephiós* means “cousin,” which is also correct, but only when fully understood. In mentioning these two points, they fail to mention two points:

- The word *anephiós* is the root of our English word *nephew*. A sister’s son would be just that.
- The English word *cousin* today means “offspring of an aunt or uncle,” but this was not the meaning in Middle English and earlier. The English word *cousin* comes to us from Latin *consobrinus*, which literally means “pertaining to the sister.” In early English, a cousin was ONLY the “sister’s son.”

I think there is more support for **sister's son** than there is for "cousin." Further, the use of "cousin" presumes the modern understanding upon the original understanding.

This reminds us that we should not be quickly dismissive of the KJV translator's choice just because it does not fit our modern understanding of words. A simple etymology search and comparison with older translations could clear up a lot of confusion. For example, the Geneva Bible, Coverdale Bible, and Bishop's Bible use "sisters sonne." The Douay-Rheims Bible uses the phrase "cousin german," which came into English when the phrase *cousin* was changing its meaning, and meant "sister's son."

Concerning **Marcus**, the Colossian assembly was instructed to **receive him** if he were to come that way. Remember, of course, that Paul and John Mark once split ways over differences in work ethic (Acts 15:37-39, especially v. 38). Now Paul wants the church to know that these differences have been mended.

## VERSE 11 – BLACK

We are unfamiliar with **Jesus, which is called Justus**. The name **Jesus** is Hebrew. There are two men named **Justus** in the New Testament, first in Acts 1:23, where Barnabas is surnamed Justus, and is unlikely in reference here since he was mentioned in the previous verse. Second, in Acts 18:7 a Jew named Justus lives next to the synagogue and Paul uses his home as a meeting place.

Paul says that these three (vv. 10-11) **are of the circumcision**. That is, they are Jews. This is extremely important for the next sentence, which is extremely insightful.

First, let's consider the common teaching that the Kingdom of God is "all things Christian." If this is true, then Paul must be losing his mind. He has mentioned Tychicus (v. 7) and Onesimus (v. 9), both who are called **faithful** (v. 7, 9), **brother** (v. 7, 9), and one even called **fellowservant** (v. 7). If the common teaching is correct, how can it be said of Aristarchus, Marcus, and Justus that, **these only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God**.

If one tries to argue that **these only** includes Aristarchus and Marcus, then Paul is claiming only five workers **unto the kingdom of God**. But then he goes on in the rest of the chapter to refer to Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Nymphas, and Archippus.

The only *literal* understanding is that Paul *literally* says that he has **only three fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God**. The other laborers, then, must be *unto something else*. This view is rejected by the mass of Christianity *because they have the wrong definition of the kingdom*. What if they understood the kingdom as *theocratic and Davidic*? That is, the future earthly reign of the Savior on the throne of David? If the *future, physical, fraternal* understanding of the Kingdom is presumed when reading this passage, then it simply tells us that Paul is *still* doing some Kingdom work, though he only has three helpers in this area. The majority of his ministry is to the *body of Christ* which we today call "the church." Since this letter was written late, we are not surprised that Paul is not involved in much Kingdom work. Israel has all-but diminished. Everything we see in Paul's prison epistles gives evidence of the diminishing of Israel (Rom. 11:12), including the lack of the miraculous or any other manifestation gifts.

A few summary points to ponder:

- This verse makes most sense when the standard church-based definition of the kingdom is rejected.
- This verse makes the most sense when an "overlap" of the *kingdom* ministry and the *mystery* ministry is assumed.
- This verse makes most sense when one assumes that the *kingdom* ministry is separate from the *mystery* ministry and Paul was involved in *both*.
- If the above assumptions are correct, then one must understand the two ministries to be different in *content* and not just different in *congregation*.