

EMMAUS EQUIPPING

COLLEGE BIBLE CLASSES

Assignment 6

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6-1 Slavery in the Greco-Roman World

In the New Testament letter of Philemon, the apostle Paul writes on behalf of a slave named Onesimus. Part of identifying the historical-cultural context of Philemon includes knowing something about the institution of slavery in the Greco-Roman world. Consult several New Testament histories or Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias and read their articles on slavery. Then write a two-page summary of the practice of slavery in New Testament times.

Slavery was prolific. Slavery was not primarily racial but an economic and social institution. Slaves were considered property and their treatment varied widely.

1. Who became slaves?

- a. Prisoners of war
- b. Abandoned infants
- c. debtors, and
- d. those sold into slavery by family or themselves (see why below).

2. Why did people become slaves?

Rome's military campaigns produced vast numbers of slaves. The main reasons are:

- a. Conquest,
- b. poverty, and
- c. punishment

3. What did slaves do?

- a. Household chores
- b. agriculture,
- c. mines,
- d. education (as tutors),
- e. commerce,
- f. government administration. Some held responsible roles.

4. Positives

Though slavery was harsh, household slaves could enjoy relative stability, opportunities for education, and in some cases advancement. Some formed close ties with masters.

5. Freedom

Those who became free from slavery became Roman citizens (with limited rights). Slaves could be freed by

- a. manumission (legal release),
- b. purchase of freedom, or
- c. being granted freedom in a will.

6. Rights

Slaves had no legal rights as persons; they could not marry legally, own property, or testify in court. However, Roman law did afford some protection from excessive cruelty, and manumission offered hope.

7. References

- a. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary.
- b. Craig S. Keener, The IVP Bible Background Commentary
- c. Scot McKnight & Grant Osborne, Dictionary of Paul and His Letters

6-2 Haggai

Look up Haggai in an Old Testament survey or introduction and read what the author(s) has to say by way of introduction (e.g., author, date, audience, situation, purpose). Use what you have learned to write a one-to two-page description of the historical setting of this prophetic book.

1. Who was the author?
 - a. Haggai the prophet.
2. What was his background?
 - a. No genealogy or occupation.
 - b. Likely among the returned exiles, possibly elderly, and a spiritual leader raised by God.
3. When did he write?
 - a. In 520 B.C.
 - b. During the second year of King Darius of Persia.
 - c. His four prophecies were delivered within about four months.
4. Haggai's contemporaries:
 - a. Zechariah the prophet began prophesying two months after Haggai.
 - b. Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, A descendant of David
 - c. Joshua (Jeshua) son of Jehozadak - High Priest.
 - d. Together, they worked to complete the rebuilding of the temple.
5. Who was the biblical audience?
 - a. Jewish exiles who had returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest.
6. What were their circumstances?
 - a. They had been back nearly 20 years, but after starting the temple they abandoned the work due to opposition and poverty.
7. How was their relationship to God?
 - a. Probably neglectful and ignorant.
8. What was happening at the time the book was written?
 - a. Judah was under Persian rule.
 - b. The exiles had returned from Babylon, begun rebuilding the temple, then stopped.
 - c. Haggai and Zechariah were sent to stir the people to complete the work, which they did in 516 B.C.
9. References
 - a. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv-study-bible/old-testament/introductions/introduction-to-haggai.cfm?a=910001>
 - b. [Haggai by John MacArthur](#)
 - c. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/jfb/Hag/Hag_000.cfm?a=910001
 - d. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Hag/Hag_000.cfm?a=910001

6-3 Laodicea & the Seven Churches

1. Read Revelation 2–3 and list the seven churches that receive a letter.
2. Next, copy a map of Asia Minor from a Bible atlas and locate the seven churches. On your copy trace the route among the seven churches that a messenger probably followed to deliver the letter.
3. Finally, look up Revelation 3:14–22 in a commentary or background commentary and make a list of every historical-cultural fact about Laodicea that you can find.

1. The seven churches

- a. Ephesus
- b. Smyrna
- c. Pergamos
- d. Thyatira
- e. Sardis
- f. Philadelphia
- g. Laodicea

2. Map and potential route



3. Laodicea history

a. History & Foundation

- i. **Geography:** Built on a long hill between the Asopus and Caprus valleys.
- ii. Established by Antiochus II Theos (261–253 BC) honoured his wife Laodice.
- iii. **Roman:** Flourished under Roman administration; famed for agriculture, banking and glossy black wool.
- iv. **Disasters & resilience:** Devastated by a 60 CE earthquake and then rebuilt.
- v. **Water infrastructure:** Advanced water regulation

b. Population & Society

- i. **Ethnic mix:** Resettled with Syrians and Jewish groups.
- ii. **Archaeological:** ~20 x Christian chapels; the largest early basilica, the “Church of Laodicea,” occupies a full block, from early 4th century.
- iii. **Council of Laodicea (363–364 CE):** Issued numerous canons, including Sabbath vs. Sunday observance, liturgy standards, and biblical canon limits.

c. Economy & Technology

- i. **Textiles:** Renowned for glossy black wool used in cloaks and carpets.
- ii. **Trade hub:** Located on key transit routes.
- iii. **Water engineering:** Sophisticated infrastructure included aqueducts, inverted siphons, and regulated water rights.

d. Culture, Food & Daily Life

- i. **Wealthy agriculture:** Local productivity included fertile plains and livestock.
- ii. **Medicinal reputation:** Celebrated for eye salve.
- iii. **Law-conscious:** Name “Laodicea” implies “people and justice”.

e. Size & Urban Features

- i. **Urban prominence:** Hosting councils, courts, and religious leadership.
- ii. **Architectural remains:** Excavations reveal theatres, agoras, baths, gymnasium, bouletērion (council house), stadium, church basilicas, and administrative halls.

f. References

- i. Blue Letter Bible commentaries:
 1. David Guzik, Revelation 3 Study Guide
 2. John Brown, Revelation 3 Commentary
 3. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown (JFB), Revelation 3 Commentary
 4. Chuck Smith, Revelation 3 Sermon Notes
 5. Matthew Henry, Revelation 3 Commentary
 6. John Trapp, Revelation 3 Commentary
 7. https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/revelation/revelation-3.cfm?a=1170014
 8. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/brown_john/Rev/Chap_03c.cfm?a=1170014
 9. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/jfb/Rev/Rev_003.cfm?a=1170014
 10. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/smith_chuck/SermonNotes_Rev/Rev_10.cfm?a=1170014
 11. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Rev/Rev_003.cfm?a=1170014
 12. https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/trapp_john/rev-3.cfm?a=1170014
- ii. Wikipedia: [Laodicea on the Lycus](#), [Council of Laodicea](#), [Laodicean Church](#)
- iii. Ancient History Sites: [Laodicea ad Lycum](#)
- iv. Planet Travel Advisor: [Laodicea on the Lycus – Ancient City](#)
- v. Ancient Pages: [Laodicea and One of the Seven Churches of Asia](#)
- vi. Biblical Archaeology Society: [Church of Laodicea in the Bible and Archaeology](#)
- vii. GotQuestions.org: [Laodicea in the Bible](#)
- viii. Madain Project: [Laodicea on the Lycus](#)
- ix. [The Church of Laodicea in the Bible and Archaeology](#)

6-4 Samaria

Read the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman recorded in John 4:1–39. Then read an article on “Samaria” or “Samaritan” in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia and make a list of all the ways the article helps you understand the conversation between Jesus and the woman.

Below is a list of the notes from the articles read. I tried to group them into categories to make it easier to follow rather than just a randomly ordered list of insights.

1. The Woman’s Background and Circumstances

- a. Unnamed: She is not identified by name, let’s call her Samantha.
- b. Social outcast? Samantha comes to draw water alone at midday—the hottest part of the day—suggesting social ostracism or avoidance by other women.
- c. Marital history: Jesus reveals Samantha has had five husbands and is now living with a man who is not her husband.

2. Timeline and Context within Jesus’ Ministry

- a. Where: The encounter happens as Jesus travels from Judea back to Galilee, near Sychar at Jacob’s Well.
- b. When: Around the “sixth hour” (midday by Jewish time).
- c. Historical: Jews and Samaritans had significant enmity against each other.

3. Nature of the Relationship Between Jesus and the Woman

- a. Controversial: Jesus, (Jewish), engages a Samaritan woman - an action against the cultural norms. Jews despised Samaritans as ethnically and religiously impure.
- b. Respectful: Christ treats Samantha not as a social outcast, but as one in need of eternal life.
- c. Recognition: Samantha comes to see him as a prophet, and Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah.
- d. Gender barriers eliminated: It was highly unconventional for a rabbi to speak publicly with a woman, especially a non-Jewish one.
- e. Elevates women: Samantha evolves from someone who was probably marginalised to becoming an evangelist.

4. Why This Encounter Was Recorded

- a. Impact: Samantha’s testimony likely leads to an unexpected evangelical outcome and likely conversations, as she testified: “He told me everything I ever did”.
- b. Inclusion: Demonstrates Christ’s calling was to all people.

5. Link to the Parable of the Good Samaritan

- a. A Samaritan (despised) acts as the compassionate neighbour.
- b. Both situations challenge prejudices and highlight that compassion and that salvation transcend ethnic and social divisions.

References

1. Topical Bible: Conversation with the Samaritan Woman – ([Bible Hub](#))
2. John 4 (Wikipedia) – ([Wikipedia](#))
3. Jesus’s interactions with women (Wikipedia) – ([Wikipedia](#))
4. The Samaritan woman at the well (Wikipedia) – ([Wikipedia](#))
5. Parable of the Good Samaritan (Wikipedia) – ([Wikipedia](#))

6-5 Nehemiah

Use a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia to answer the following questions about the book of Nehemiah:

1. *How much time passes between the month of Kislev (or Chislev) in Nehemiah 1:1 and the month of Nisan in Nehemiah 2:1?*
2. *Where is Susa (Neh. 1:1)?*
3. *For which empire did Susa serve as one of three royal cities?*
4. *What other biblical character lived in Susa?*
5. *Did this character live before Nehemiah or after?*
6. *Which empire did King Artaxerxes rule over and when (Neh. 2:1)?*
7. *What was a cupbearer's (Neh. 1:11) status in the royal court?*

Researched insights on Nehemiah from a cultural, historical, and biblical perspective:

1. Time between Kislev and Nisan
 - a. About four months (Kislev = Nov/Dec, Nisan = Mar/Apr).
2. Location of Susa
 - a. Susa was the winter capital of the Persian Empire, in modern southwestern Iran.
3. Empire of Susa
 - a. Susa served as one of the three royal cities of the Persian Empire.
4. Other biblical character in Susa
 - a. Esther lived in Susa
5. Before or after Nehemiah
 - a. Esther lived before Nehemiah (during King Xerxes/Ahasuerus, earlier than Artaxerxes).
6. Empire of Artaxerxes
 - a. King Artaxerxes I ruled the Persian Empire from 465–424 BC.
7. Status of a cupbearer
 - a. The cupbearer was a high-ranking, trusted official, close to the king, responsible for tasting wine for safety. It was a role of influence and prestige.

Appendix

Research Questions

1. Who was the author?
2. What was his background?
3. When did he write?
4. Who were the contemporaries?
5. What was the nature of his ministry?
6. What kind of relationship did he have with the audience?
7. Why was he writing?
8. Who was the biblical audience?
9. What were their circumstances?
10. How was their relationship to God?
11. What kind of relationship did they have with each other?
12. What was happening at the time the book was written?
13. Are there any other historical-cultural factors that might shed light on the book?