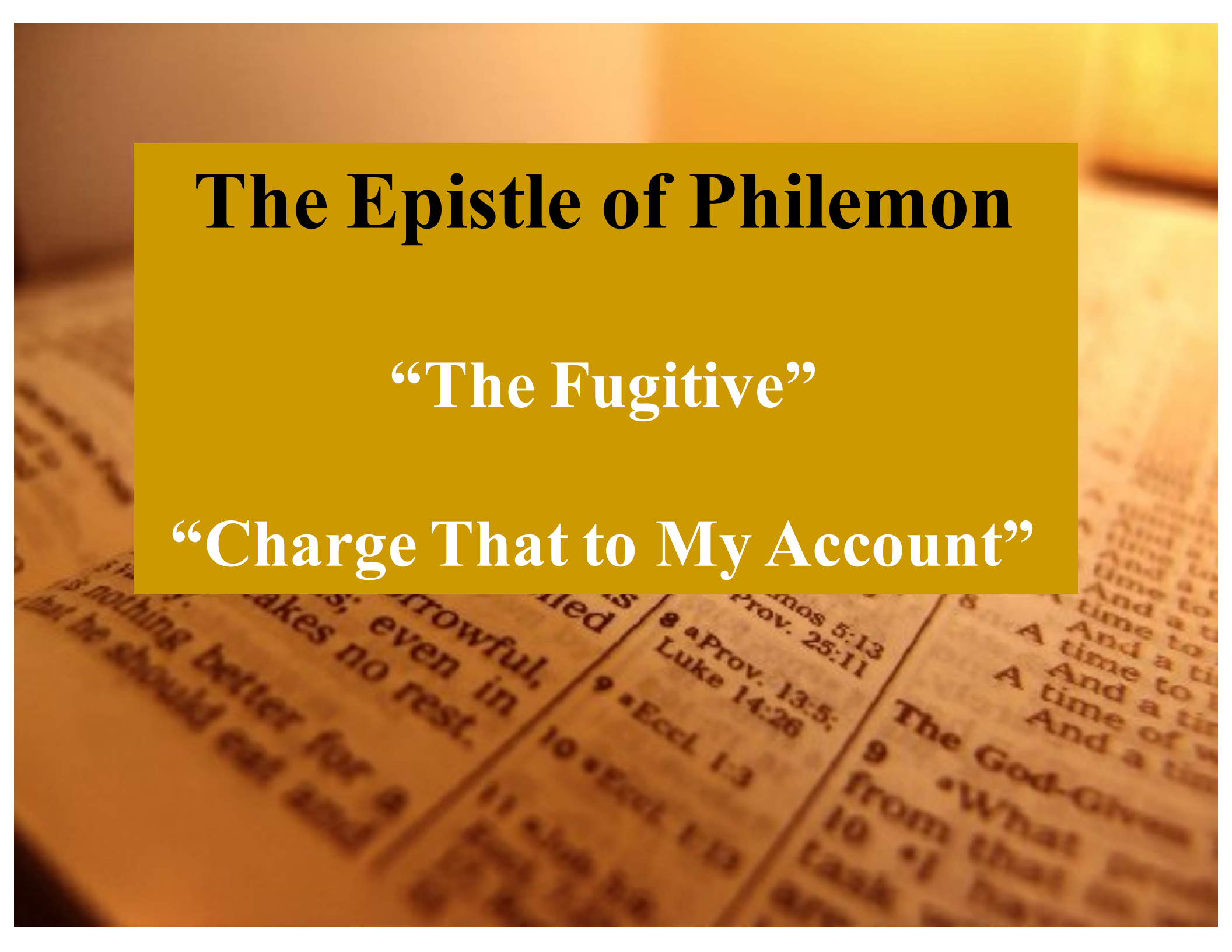


The Epistle of Philemon

“The Fugitive”

“Charge That to My Account”



■ **Rome 1** - Paul, under house arrest for 2 years c AD61-63, writes to the Churches at Colossae (& personally to Philemon), Ephesus and Philippi

5 ■ **Philippi**

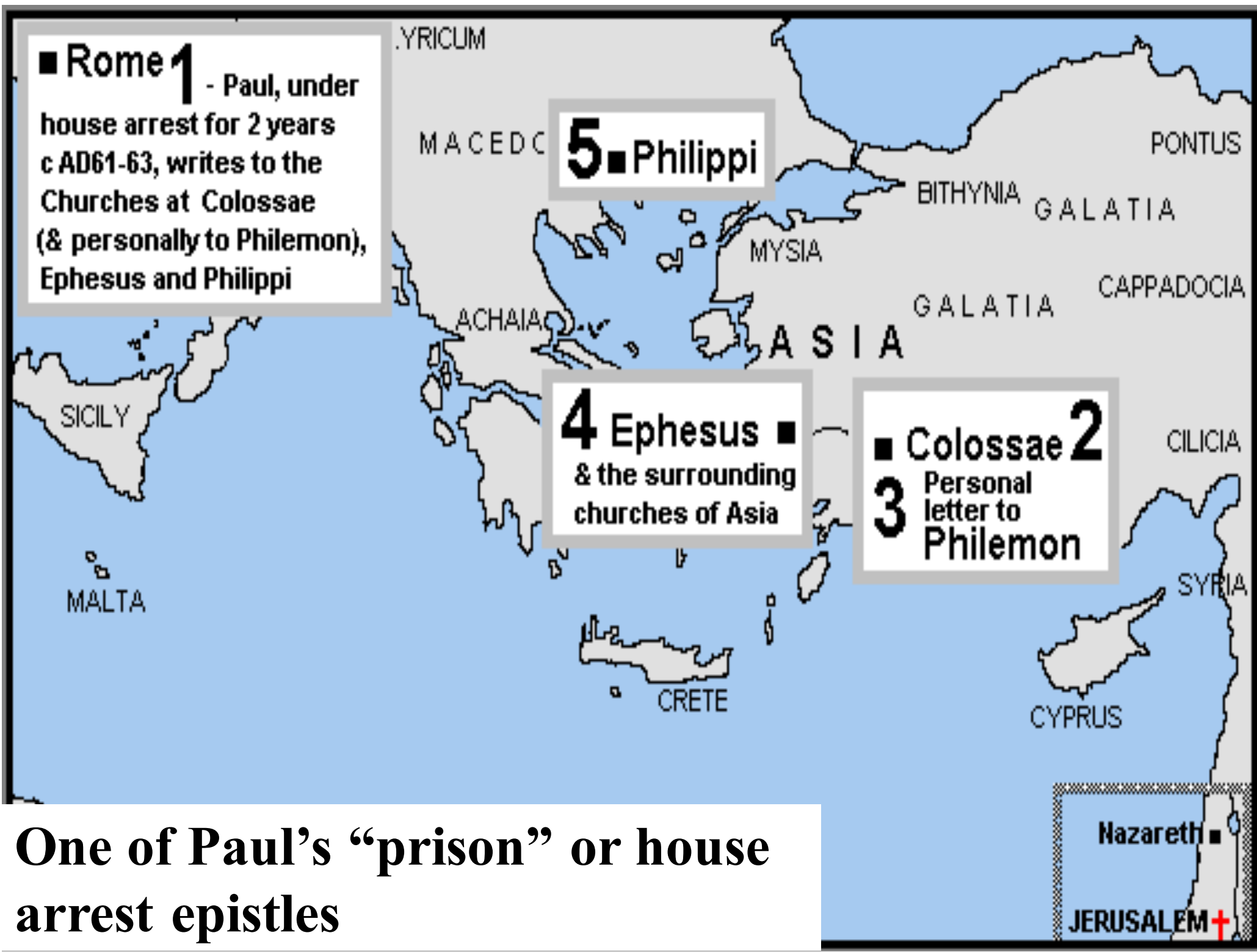
4 **Ephesus** ■ & the surrounding churches of Asia

■ **Colossae 2**
3 Personal letter to Philemon

One of Paul's "prison" or house arrest epistles

Nazareth ■

JERUSALEM +



The Occasion

Onesimus was a runaway slave from Philemon in Colossae and probably stole something (v. 18). He made his way to Rome and came into contact with Paul during his house arrest and was converted.

Paul wrote this letter, along with Ephesians and Colossians, and sent them with Tychicus and Philemon (Eph 6:21; Col 4:4-7, 9)

Why didn't Paul condemn slavery and order Philemon to release Onesimus?

If early Christians began an open crusade against slavery they would have quickly been crushed by the iron foot of Rome. Moreover, the message of the Gospel would have become hopelessly confused with a socio-political movement. The method of the early church was to proclaim the life-changing message of the gospel and let the change come from within. Paul didn't speak overtly against slavery, his theology spoke for him. Over time this strategy was effective, as slavery slowly came to an end in the Roman Empire.

Key Verse

Philemon

"I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me."

(Philemon 10-11)

The Purpose

Unlike Paul's other letters, Philemon is not concerned with doctrine, but to show the life-changing effects of Christianity on social conditions and personal relationships.

Paul wrote this letter to appeal to Philemon to forgive and restore his runaway slave Onesimus.

Outline

I. The Prayer for Philemon (1-7)

II. The Plea for Onesimus (8-17)

III. The Pledge of Paul (18-25)

Characteristics

Warm and affectionate

Many people (eleven) are mentioned

Play on the name Onesimus (10-11, 20)

Excellent illustration of imputation (18-19)

How did the story end?

While we are not told in Scripture, we can surmise that when Paul was released he did visit Philemon in Colossae and that Philemon did accept and forgive Onesimus.

As for Onesimus, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in his letter to the Ephesians in about A.D. 107 mentions a man named Onesimus who was the bishop of the church in Ephesus.

Is it possible he was the same man?

