
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON CXVII : THE WISE AND SPIRIT FILLED LIFE OF SUBMISSION / THE HAUSTAFEL (5:15-6:9)

The Haustafel —

WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT THE ‘HAUSTAFEL’ NOW? — The natural flow of this section would have us expound 5:21, then possibly an introduction into the Haustafel prior to going into 5:22-6:9. But from my studies I believe it best to teach 5:21 in connection with 5:22ff. So while this may not be the order of things, I believe it best to give a basic introduction to the entire next section and then start with 5:21 in the next lesson.

WHAT IS THE ‘HAUSTAFEL’ AND WHERE DID THE TERM COME FROM? — The term *Haustafel* (plural, *Haustafeln*) is said to have been first coined by Martin Luther during the Reformation and may be translated from the German literally (or over-literal) as ‘house-table’ or ‘household tables,’ thus the sense is **‘house code, household code.’** It is used as a **‘table of instructions for the household, a domestic code of conduct’** given to wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters (and sometimes the state and its citizens; see below). Although the term applies here (Eph 5:22-6:9) some commentators have noted it would be more correct to refer to these as a ‘code of social duties’ or even briefer a ‘social code’ or ‘code of stations (in society)’ since it fails to cover 1 Pet 2:13-3:7 with its reference outside the household in 1 Pet 2:13-17. But since Haustafel is the term in general use we will use it. (Thielman, 366, says Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism* contains a section on “*Die Haus Tafel*” [Luz 1998: 233] but I have not found that in any of my web searches). [Best, 521; Arnold, 369; Hoehner, 720; O’Brien, 405; Thielman, 366; Bruce, *Colossians*, 163]

THE ORIGINS OF THE HAUSTAFEL — It is important to acknowledge that the Haustafel did not originate with the Apostles but may be found in the Jewish and secular world of their day. The earliest known Haustafel is that of Plato and Aristotle, written nearly four centuries before the New Testament (Aristotle, 384–322 BC, was the student of Plato, c. 428– c. 348 BC):

“Now that it is clear what are the component parts of the state, we have first of all to discuss household management; for every state is composed of households. Household management falls into departments corresponding to the parts of which the household in its turn is composed; and the household in its perfect form consists of slaves and freemen. The investigation of everything should begin with its smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of the household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children; we ought therefore to examine the proper constitution and character of each of these three relationships.” [Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1253b.1 -14; note dependent upon where this is found the translations differ but the gist is the same throughout]

Note Plato and Aristotle starts with the state and how the household effects the welfare of the state as a whole. But that aside, they recognize the same three groups: the master and the slave, the husband and the wife, and the father and the children. “This discussion, which treats husband-wife, parent-child, and master-slave relationships, focuses on authority and subordination within these relationships, and relates the topic of the household to the larger topic of the state, can be found as early as the classical Greek philosophers (cf. Plato, *Leges* 3.690A-D; 6.771E-7.824C; Aristotle,

Pol. 1.1253b, 1259a).” [Lincoln, 357]

Harold Hoehner gives a good synopsis of the Haustafeln found in the secular world before and during the time of Christ:

“In the first century B.C. the Stoic Arius Didymus, Augustus Caesar’s friend and philosophical teacher, continued to discuss household management in comparison with the various management forms of the political state: parents to children as monarchic, husbands to wives as aristocratic, and children to one another as democratic. He discusses how the man of the house relates to his wife, children, and slaves in a philosophical way rather than in ethical exhortations as exhibited in Col 3:18-4:1 and Eph 5:22-6:9. Seneca of the first century A.D. attributes the concept of ‘household management’ to Aristotle. The Aristotelian household management concepts are seen in the Jewish writers Philo and Josephus. Philo compares management [sic] of a household with Joseph’s preparation to manage a city or nation. He shows the proper conduct of the husband-wife, parents-children, and master-servants. Building on the fifth commandment of the Mosaic law, Philo shows the place of parents and children as well as slaves. Josephus also writes about the relationships of husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves. Others in the first century B.C. and A.D. such as eclectic Stoics like Ariston, Hecaton, Hierocles, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Neopythagoreans like Bryson and Callicratidas reflect the Aristotelian view of household management.” [Hoehner, 723f]

Much has been written about these secular Haustafeln; for further studies in the origins of the Haustafel see Harold Hoehner, 720ff; Ernest Best, 520ff; Andrew Lincoln, 357-360; Muddiman, 205-255; Thielman, 365ff.

It is generally agreed we will never know the true origins of these Haustafeln, although it is universally accepted they did not begin within the early churches. Did they find their source in the Greco-Roman world under the influence of Aristotle, or Hellenistic Judaism, or Stoicism, or even more widely? Or does it really matter? *“The question as to the origin of the form may not be all that important; if people are to live together, there are certain basic areas in which they require moral guidance and Christians must offer them this guidance as much as Jews, Greeks or Romans.”* [Best, 521] *“It is natural that any given society would adhere to specific rules for the order of life, politically, domestically, socially, and religiously. It is also natural that since believers then and now are a part of society, they too need a code of conduct.”* [Hoehner, 725; see also O’Brien, 407]

HAUSTAFELN IN SCRIPTURE — Other than our present passage in Ephesians, there are other Haustafeln or fragments of a Haustafel scattered throughout the New Testament. Two of these Haustafeln are nearly identical in form, Eph 5:22-6:9 and Col 3:18-4:1, each having the same six social groups identified in three pairs. A third always associated with these two by the commentators is 1 Pet 2:18-3:7 (some would include 1 Pet 2:13-17 as part of the Haustafel since it addresses the believers’ relationship to the state). There are two important differences between the household codes in Ephesians and Colossians and that of 1 Peter: first, Peter gives advice to slaves in respect of angry and abusive masters, and their masters are not addressed, and secondly advice is given to wives in respect of non-Christian husbands (from these differences we can assume Paul had in mind wholly Christian households while Peter included mixed households). **See the attached separate sheet for a comparison of these three Haustafeln (all from NKJV).**

Many Bible students also include some of the following in some form or another (the lists from commentaries and the verses within these lists also may differ). These verses contain instructions to various members of the household but not in the sequence of pairing we find in Ephesians and Colossians.

1 Timothy 2:8-15 (men / women) — ^{2:8} *I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;* ⁹ *in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,* ¹⁰ *but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.* ¹¹ *Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.* ¹² *And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.* ¹³ *For Adam was formed first, then Eve.* ¹⁴ *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.* ¹⁵ *Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self control.*

1 Timothy 5:1,2 (older men with younger men / older women with younger women) — ^{5:1} *Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers,* ² *older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.*

1 Timothy 6:1-2 (servants) — ^{6:1} *Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.* ² *And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.*

Titus 2:1-10 (older men & women with younger men & women / servants) — ^{2:1} *But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine:* ² *that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience;* ³ *the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things —* ⁴ *that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,* ⁵ *to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.* ⁶ *Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded,* ⁷ *in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,* ⁸ *sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.* ⁹ *Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back,* ¹⁰ *not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.*

Some commentators also include Paul's counsel to believers in relation to the state since that is a topic often included in the secular Haustafel:

Romans 13:1-7 (state) — ^{13:1} *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.* ² *Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.* ³ *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.* ⁴ *For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on*

him who practices evil. ⁵ *Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.* ⁶ *For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.* ⁷ *Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*

The question may be asked, how far do we go? There are admonitions to believers in all different stations of society; when is it considered a part of a haustafel and when is it a simple admonition? So whether these may be considered 'haustafeln' or not, here are other admonitions given throughout the NT: 1 Cor 7 (sexual relations within marriage / single women and widows / divorce / servants); 1 Cor 11:2-16 (men / women); 1 Cor 14:34-36 (husbands / wives); Philem 10-20 (servants / masters).

FORMAT OF THE EPH / COL HAUSTAFELN — Here are the similarities and differences between the two most similar Haustafeln found in Ephesians and Colossians:

- Both household codes address six groups in three pairs: wives-husbands, children-fathers, and slaves-masters. The elements of the form are: the party is addressed, the imperative is stated, amplification is given, and the motivation is presented.
- There is a symmetrical pattern in which every class of individuals has its corresponding class immediately after it. The subordinate partner is addressed first followed by the partner in authority, thus admonitions to husbands follow those to wives, those to parents follow those to children, and masters are addressed after slaves.
- The first of the pair is given longer instruction regarding their duties than the second of the pair, the notable exception to this being the first pair in Eph where the husbands are given three times more instruction regarding their duty than the wives (forty-seven words are addressed to wives and 143 to husbands).
- In Col Paul places more emphasis on the slave/master relationship while in Eph the emphasis is upon the wives/husbands. The wives/husbands section in Eph is the longest statement in the NT on this relationship, comprising twelve verses (5:22-33). In Col only one verse is devoted to the wives and one verse to the husbands. In Eph Paul devotes four verses to children/parents (6:1-4) and five verses to slaves/masters (6:5-9); in Col Paul devotes two verses to children/parents (3:20,21) and four verses to slaves/masters (3:22-25).
- In Col Paul adds 'as is fitting' in his command to the wives and 'not to be harsh' in his command to the husbands. In Eph 5:21-24 Paul adds the exhortation to mutual submission in v 21, which immediately gives the passage a different flavor, while in Colossians the notion of submission is only applied to the wives.
- Each of those addressed are ultimately answerable to the Lord.
- The most obvious difference with the Eph Haustafel is Paul's introduction of the churches in relation to husbands/wives.

The Haustafel in 1 Peter is quite different, beginning with the believers' responsibility to government (if part of the Haustafel-proper, some commentators do not include this as part of the household code), then slaves (masters are not addressed), then wives / husbands. Children / parents are not addressed. Peter's instructions to the wives is much longer than his instruction to husbands. His instructions to slaves is longer even than to the wives, leading into a prolonged illustration of

Christ suffering for sins. [Hoehner, 727ff; Best, 521; Lincoln, 354f, 360; O'Brien, 405, 408f; Arnold, 363f]

THE EPHESIAN HAUSTAFEL IN THE FLOW OF CONTEXT — How does Paul's comments on the 'household codes' fit within his flow of thought? Paul began the second half of his letter with the appeal for believers to "*walk worthily of the calling to which you were called*" (4:1) and to "*bear with one another in love*" (4:2). He later repeats this: "*you should no longer walk like the Gentiles walk*" (4:17), "*walk in love, just as Christ loved us*" (5:2), "*walk as children of light*" (5:8), and then again, "*therefore, watch carefully how you walk*" (5:15). So Paul is deeply concerned with the believers' conduct (our "walk") and that it be thoroughly consistent with their call to live in a relationship with the one true and holy God. More immediately, this passage is directly dependent upon the exhortation to "*be filled with the Spirit*" (5:18) which Paul follows up with five participles describing how to be filled and the characteristics of those filled with the Holy Spirit, the last being "*submitting to one another in the fear of Christ*" (5:21). This indicates an attitude of self-denial and a concern for the needs of others as an essential part of what it means to work alongside of others within the community of believers. This naturally flows into what it means to be "*filled with the Spirit*" within the closest of all relationships, that of our households (it was not uncommon in Paul's day for the household to include servants). "These characteristics are relatively easy to manifest in a church setting because fellow believers may only see each other a few hours each week. However, Paul's injunction to be filled by the Spirit extends beyond merely a church service or a casual gathering to the believer's life at home and at work where he or she will be observed twenty-four hours a day." [Hoehner, 720] "The transitional nature of the participle is important since in the ancient context of Ephesians the idea of Christians assembling together for worship and the idea of the household were closely connected. From Christianity's beginnings through the end of the second century, Christians met for corporate worship in houses, and it seems likely that those in charge of these households, as the hosts of the meetings within them, had a strong influence over what took place there. Because of this, the movement from a description of corporate worship among believers filled "*in the Spirit*" to the subject of conduct within the household was natural." [Thielman, 365f] Each of us has distinctive role obligations within the Christian household, and the work of the Spirit can be hindered by individual self-centeredness that is displayed by rejecting the proper Christian role in relationships and an attitude of giving oneself to others. Wives, children, and slaves are addresses equally with their husbands, fathers, and masters. Each are expected to do "*what is right*" (6:1) and "*as to the Lord*" (5:22; 6:5). Each of the twin admonitions stand together, the exhortations to subordination and the reminders of responsibilities, and the first ought not to be interpreted apart from the second.

Paul then connects the purpose of the household codes with the larger theme of the conflict between believers and the powers of evil. He contends the powers have exerted a devastating impact on human relationships and part of the purpose of the household codes is to counteract that influence by defining and exhorting each believer to align themselves with their proper role within the household. The powers of darkness have conspired to devastate the network of the family relationships, and that the family continues to be a target of their attack to this day. The transformed relationships that Paul calls for can only happen as a result of the power of God enabling every household member, thus the call to "*be strong in the Lord*" (6:10) is the basis for living out the specific role obligations that Paul has instructed. [Hoehner, 720; O'Brien, 409; Arnold, 363, 371f; Best, 519; Lincoln, 349, 363f, 385; Thielman, 365ff]

SIMILARITIES / DIFFERENCES WITH SECULAR HAUSTAFELN — While the content of the household code found in Scripture does share some similarities with contemporary Greek and Roman household values, there is much that is strikingly different and, indeed, countercultural. In what ways did the Haustafel of the NT agree and differ with that of Paul's world?

THE BASIS FOR THE HAUSTAFEL OF THE WORLD WAS THE STATE — The most important difference is the model or basis for the codes. The Greek writings include instructions regarding the duties of the husband, father, and master but any motivation found within the secular Haustafel may be reduced to subjection or duty to the state. "The New Testament does not compare the household with a political entity such as a city or nation, in the way Aristotle and others do. In the Graeco-Roman world the household was viewed as the foundation of the state. Proper management of the household, then, was a vital social and political concern. The main lines of the discussion on household management, which were set by Aristotle, continued through to the first century A.D., with the Peripatetics, Dio Chrysostom, Seneca, and many others comparing it with the various management forms of the political state. Jewish writers such as Philo and Josephus also adopted Aristotle's outline of household management concepts, particularly that of subordination, in relation to the proper conduct of husband-wife, parents-children, and master-servants." [O'Brien, 406] For example, while a Hellenistic writer would propose that if slaves were treated well they would be more productive, Paul states that slaves should not be mistreated because the Lord is master of both parties and both are answerable to him (Eph 6:9). For husbands and wives Paul gives the example of Christ's love and care for the church as the motivation to please the Lord. Moving more directly to marriage itself, Ephesians provides a radical Christian understanding as a 'one flesh' relationship which mirrors the metaphor of Christ's marriage to his bride, the churches, and ultimately points to the bringing of all things together in unity (Eph 1:9-10). Note as well that when Paul discusses the state in Rom 13:1-7, he makes no mention of the household. Nor does the NT writers mention the state when discussing the household regulations (Eph 5:22-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1; 1 Pet 2:18-3:7; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 6:1-10; Titus 2:1-10). Even when Peter discusses the believers' relationship to the state (1 Pet 2:13-17), the motivation for obedience is 'for the Lord's sake' (1 Pet 2:13) not for the sake of the state. So while believers are to be obedient to governing authorities (as long as there is no conflict with the Lord's commands, Acts 5:29) the motive for it all is the glory and honor of Christ, not the state. [O'Brien, 405ff; Hoehner, 724f; Lincoln, 357f; Arnold, 370; Thielman, 365ff]

THE HAUSTAFELN WITHIN SCRIPTURE ARE UNIQUE BECAUSE OF ITS EMPHASIS ON CHRIST — As just stated, the secular Haustafeln has its foundation on the state but Scripture places the foundation upon OT Scripture and the risen Christ. Timothy Gombis (quoted in Arnold, 371) argues that Paul's purpose for the household code in Ephesians is to set forth a vision and a plan for "how believers ought to conduct themselves in new creation communities, thus epitomizing the triumph of God in Christ." In that article he states "the Hellenistic philosophers argued that the household was a microcosm of society (politeia) and that social order can only be maintained by ensuring the right ordering of life in the household. For Paul, the church is a new society. Thus, the purpose of the household codes is to help the church effectively actualize its new identity in Christ. The church as a whole can function well as a unified society of believers only if each

household is functioning properly.” [Arnold, 371] The New Testament writers of course also relied upon the Old Testament teachings for their Haustafel; e.g., for the Haustafel in Eph 5:22-6:9, Genesis 2:24 (also Lev. 19:18; Exod. 20:12; Ezek. 16:1-14). “If the Stoic disciple asked why he should behave in a particular way, his teacher would no doubt tell him that it was ‘fitting’ because it was in conformity with nature. When a Christian convert asked the same question, he was told that such behavior was ‘fitting in the Lord’; members of the believing community should live thus for Christ’s sake. The added words, simple as they are, transform the whole approach to ethics. The inclusion of such summaries of domestic responsibilities here and in Eph. 5:22-6:9, it has been said, shows ‘a sense of the values of ordinary family life.’” [Bruce, Colossians, 162f]

THE SECULAR HAUSTAFELN ONLY ADDRESSES THOSE IN THE POSITION OF AUTHORITY — Greek literature addresses those in the position of authority (e.g., the husband, father, and master) but not those who are asked to submit to authority (e.g., the wife, children, and slave) whereas the NT addresses both the husbands and the wives, the fathers and the children, the masters and the slaves as independent moral agents. In addition to that, Paul addresses the ‘subordinate’ first and thus accords to them a social dignity that is unparalleled in the ancient world. [Hoehner, 724]

THE SECULAR HAUSTAFELN ACTUALLY DEPRECATES THOSE IN SUBMISSION — The Haustafel of the world shows little to no respect to the ‘subordinate.’ **WOMEN** – The woman in Greek literature is portrayed as being inferior in all things and, in particular, her capacity to think deliberatively (τὸ βουλευτικόν, to bouleutikon, ‘to deliberate, take counsel, resolve, give counsel’ [Thayer’s], ‘to think about a course of action, deliberate; to reach a decision about a course of action, resolve, decide’ [BDAG]). It must be admitted however that the Greek word (χείρων, cheirōn, ‘worse in quality, inferior, whether physical health or morally’ [LSJ Lexicon]) used in these texts could mean inferior only in bodily strength, virtue, rank, or it could have reference to intelligence. Aristotle (*Oeconomica* 1.3.4 §§1343b.30-1344a.6) is much more even-handed for he uses (ἀσθενής, asthenēs, ‘want of strength, weakness, feebleness, sickliness’ [LSJ Lexicon]) to describe physical weakness of women in comparison to men and describes men as inferior (χείρων, cheirōn, ‘worse in quality, inferior, whether physical health or morally’ [LSJ Lexicon]) to the woman in some areas of domestic responsibility. The Jewish writers Philo and Josephus however, in their interpretation and praise of Mosaic law, took a harsher tone. Josephus could write, “The woman, it [the Law] says, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be obedient, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for God has given authority to the man” (*c. Ap.* 2.24 § 199). Philo instructs, “Wives must be in servitude to their husbands, a servitude not imposed by violent ill-treatment but promoting obedience in all things” (*Hyp.* 7.3). This is contrasted with the teachings of the New Testament where the woman is exhorted to *choose* to be submissive. Peter does describe the wife as weaker (ἀσθενής, asthenēs, ‘want of strength, weakness, feebleness, sickliness’ [LSJ Lexicon]) physically, but the husband is to honor her as she is a joint heir with him in the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7). Hence, there is no deprecation of her as a person for she is equal with man before God. [relying heavily on Hoehner, 724f; Lincoln, 357f] **SERVANTS** – In Hellenistic writings, slaves are thought to have no deliberative faculty (τὸ βουλευτικόν, to bouleutikon, ‘to deliberate, take counsel, resolve, give counsel’ [Thayer’s], ‘to think about a course of action, deliberate; to reach a decision about a

course of action, resolve, decide' [BDAG]) at all, whereas in the NT slaves are enjoined to be obedient to the master and to render their service as to the Lord. Arius portrays slaves as stupid people who are unable to live by themselves thus benefitting from slavery. In contrast, the Book of Philemon and 1 Cor 7:21 encourage slaves to win freedom and thus to take care of themselves as free people. Peter uses their suffering as an example of the sufferings of Christ. The NT, therefore, does not deprecate the person who is to be submissive to another. [Hoehner, 724f] **MEN** – Typical of the content of all these discussions is the notion that the man is intended by nature to rule as husband, father, and master, and that not to adhere to this proper hierarchy is detrimental not only to the household but also to the life of the state. Aristotle (*Politico* 1.2.12 §1254b.14) states that the male by nature is superior and is to rule, and the female is inferior and is to be ruled. Later when he discusses the man's relationship to his family, the husband is to rule over his wife in the mode of a republican form of government and over the children using a monarchical form. In government the king may be superior in rank to his subjects but qualitatively the same as his subjects. The male is by nature more fit to rule than the female (the reverse is contrary to nature) but in the husband-wife (not the male-female) relationship, there may be rank in rule without distinction regarding essence (*Politica* 1.5.2 §1259b.1-18). *But in the New Testament wives, children, and slaves are addressed equally with husbands, fathers, and masters (5:22; cf. 6:1,5,9). They have their own calling before the Lord, which is as responsible, honorable, and important as that of husband, parent, and master. The Lord to whom everything is to be done is impartial, and slaves and masters, for example, are equally responsible. Those in authority have different roles with greater responsibility, but they are not better roles. The value, dignity, or worth of the members of the Christian household in a subordinate position is no less than that of those in authority.* [Hoehner, 724f; Lincoln, 357f; O'Brien, 406ff]

THERE HAVE BEEN NO EXACT PARALLELS TO THE HAUSTAFELS IN SCRIPTURE FOUND IN THE SECULAR WORLD -- "It is important to note that there was no identifiable literary form that we can call a 'household code' in ancient literature. Although Aristotle mentions the same social groups addressed in Colossians and Ephesians, nowhere else in Hellenistic or Jewish literature do we see each of these groups addressed in succession as we do here." [Arnold, 369f] While similar forms of paired relationships are found elsewhere (e.g., Philo, *Decal* 165-7; Josephus, *c. Ap.* 2.190-219; Seneca, *de Benef* 2.18.1ff), there are no precise parallels in form and never as consistently as in Ephesians and Colossians where in each case one member of the pair is superior and the other inferior (see below for the use of these terms), even though there was a tendency in the ancient world to define by opposites. Even the key features of the content of the Stoic exhortations to family members are decidedly different than what is found in Ephesians and Colossians. [Arnold, 369f; Best, 521f; Lincoln, 360; O'Brien, 405]

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AS WE CONSIDER THE HAUSTAFELN — The NT belies the idea that all believers lived in wholly Christian households. Much of the instruction given in the Gospels to disciples is addressed to individuals seen as members of the Christian community but not as members of households. In particular Mk 10.29 envisages disciples who have left, or perhaps been driven out from, their families (cf Mk 3.31-5; Mt 10.34f; Lk 12.51-3). But for Paul at least, only Christian households are in view (Peter does address unbelieving husbands, etc.). "The assumption that the whole household will be Christian helps to mitigate some of the hermeneutical problems associated with the appeal for obedience in this section. It can be taken for granted, for

instance, that no service will be demanded that is immoral or against the conscience of the subordinate party, and that the virtues of humility and self-sacrifice are equally enjoined on heads of households.” [Muddiman, 255] So while these haustafeln are a rich minefield of doctrine, many societal issues of the day are not addressed (quoting freely from Best, 524ff):

- The position of the single person, whether male or female, and of the widow is not addressed
- What was a Christian wife to do if her non-Christian husband ordered her to worship his gods?
- What was the position of a battered wife?
- When husbands and wives are addressed are these assumed to be free men and women or are marriages between slaves also in view?
- Would the marriage pattern have been the same for slaves as for those who were free?
- Was the primary obedience of the slave’s wife, or the women with whom he normally lived, to her husband or her owner?
- Could the owner split up a married slave couple and sell one off without either his or her agreement or the agreement of the other partner?
- What was the relation of freed slaves to their patrons or of slaves to free men or women other than their owners, a situation which might arise when slaves were present at worship in a house other than their owner’s?
- What of the behaviour of siblings to one another? Since the majority of people died before they were forty, the main relationship of people would not be with their parents but with their siblings.
- What would Paul have said to the Christian son of slave parents whose master wished to use him homosexually?
- What of the concubines a pagan husband may have had before conversion? What was he to do with them?

HAUSTAFELN WERE NOT MISSIONARY IN PURPOSE — “The HT will have been used in the ethical instruction of Christians, but its precise purpose is difficult to determine. *In the wider world it was probably originally designed to assist in preserving the good order of society, the family being seen as a microcosm of society and as a basic unit in its structure.* This purpose may well underlie its use in 1 Peter where there is an outward look towards society in 2.11f; free men are to honour the forms of society and wives and slaves are not to act beyond their accepted social roles. Adherence to the counsel of the HT would ensure a stabilising influence on the part of the church. In this way the code could also have had an apologetic function. This may also be true in respect of 1 Tim 6.1; Tit 2.10. The form in Ephesians and Colossians has been related to Gal 3.28 as an attempt to damp down expectations of equality, but parents and children are not mentioned in Gal 3.28. A missionary purpose can be seen in 1 Pet 3.1f but this is not the ruling purpose even of that HT, let alone of others, since there is no suggestion slaves should attempt to convert their owners.... The content of the HT in Ephesians is unrelated to the outside world and its purpose can therefore have been neither apologetic nor missionary.” [Best, 523f]

SOME SAY PAUL USED HAUSTAFEL TO DEFEND CHRISTIANITY TO ROME — In Greco-Roman culture, wives, children, and slaves were expected to accept the religion of the male head of the household, the *paterfamilias*, and so religious groups that attracted women and slaves were particularly seen as potentially subversive of societal stability. Because of that some scholars have argued that it was essential for Paul to include the Haustafel for apologetic purposes, that is, to demonstrate that the social structures of Christianity pose no threat to the stability of the Roman empire. As one commentator wrote, “the adoption and adaptation of the household code offered reassurance that the Christian movement posed no immediate practical threat to the *status quo*.” [Muddiman, 278] However, the precise reason for early Christians’ taking up this topic originally and the exact relation that had with social tensions must remain matters of conjecture. Writing against that theory, Clinton Arnold makes these comments: “There is nothing, however, within the text of Ephesians itself that suggests this motive. In fact, Paul explicitly says that believers ‘should no longer walk like the Gentiles walk’ (4:17).” [Arnold, 370; see also Lincoln, 358; Thielman, 366f]