

Background For Colossians

Plato:

- The realm of the Forms (or ideals). It is hierarchical, with the greatest Form (“the Good”) at the top. All others cascade downward from there.
- The realm of the Particulars (or the material world). They are based on the Forms.
- The Particulars are fashioned out of material stuff by the Demiurge, an impersonal force or artisan who brings things to material existence based on the Forms. [Think of the Forms like cookie-cutters; the material stuff as the cookie dough; and the machine that brings the cookie-cutter down onto the dough as the Demiurge).

Philo:

- This highest Form of Plato is personal, and is God.
- God is the ultimate Form, simply, pure spirit.
- God’s first Thought emanates from Him like the plan for a building from an Architect. This Thought is like God, but not God.
- This Thought is responsible for the creation of the spiritual world, which in turn affects the material world.

In both systems:

- “Good” is being pure spirit. Material is the absence of “good”.
- There is a dualism to all existence: spirit vs. matter (later, it was “grace vs. nature”). The spiritual realm is the higher, important realm. The goal is to escape the material to get to the spiritual. [In Christianity, the goal is the resurrection and re-creation of the material world into a glorified creation.]
- In both, the problem for creatures (humans) is the distance between the pure Spirit (God, or the Good) and the material (creatures, humans, earth, etc.).
- This distance means there is a problem for creatures who want to know the spiritual. It is above us and beyond us, and we cannot know it completely. [Plato says our reason enters into the realm of the Forms by giving us some way to understand them. Philo would say that we enter into the realm of the spirit by forsaking the material things of the world and focusing on spiritual things.]
NOTE: the problem for the creature in Christianity is not the distance between us and God as creatures, but rather as sinners.

Question: How can someone come to know the spiritual realm, the things I can’t see or touch or know?

Pastor Steve Garrick - Emmanuel Reformed Baptist Church