The Narrative Drama of the Epistle to Philemon

Assume/imagine that the epistle to Philemon is a drama. Every drama has a cast of characters—the *dramatis personae* (“persons of the drama”).

Who are the *dramatis personae* of our letter?
_________________________  ______________  ______________

Every drama has a setting or location. Our drama has two settings/locations. They are ________ and ____________.

Long ago, Aristotle wrote that a drama/narrative/story is composed of a beginning, a middle and an end.

A. Beginning

1. Scene One

   Our drama begins in vv. 18-19. What is being described here?

   What is the setting of scene one?

   Is the event described in Scene One contemporaneous with Paul’s circumstances when he writes this letter?

   Thus, Scene One is a ____________________________.

2. Scene Two

   This Scene is set in the location Paul inhabits as he writes the letter. He is ___ _________ at ____________.

   What has happened since Scene One (above)?

   How do you know?

B. Middle

1. Scene One

   Setting: same as Scene Two above

   Scene Two of the Beginning of our drama ended with Onesimus where?

   Our drama continues. What happens to him there?

   How do you know?
2. Scene Two

Paul now determines to take action. What does he do (v. 12)?

Why does he do this (vv. 5-7)?

What does he send with him (v. 19)?

C. End

Our story/drama has no actual end from the text of the NT. We must imagine the end based on the contents of Paul’s letter to Philemon.

1. Scene One

Imagine Onesimus fulfilling Scene Two of the Middle (above).

The setting is now ________________.

Onesimus does what?

2. Scene Two

What is Philemon’s response to the letter from Paul?

3. Scene Three

v. 22 indicates that the conclusion of our drama is _____________________.

Structure of Philemon (#1)

1-3 Christ
↓
  Jesus  co-workers (1)
    Lord  grace
    Jesus

Christ
4—my prayers (for you)  5—love
↓
  faith
  saints
7—heart  faith (6)
↓
    refreshed (7)  7—love
    brother (7)

9—love  all the more (ma/lion)
↓
  appeal (9)
  Paul
    aged/old
    now
    prisoner
Christ Jesus
appeal (10)
my (Paul) child (Onesimus)
  I have begotten/did beget
↑
(my) imprisonment, Onesimus
16—beloved all the more (ma/lion)

19—I Paul write (you)
  in the Lord
  brother (20)
↑
  refresh (20)
20—heart  refresh my heart (20)
  in Christ

↑
22—your prayers (for me)

23-25 Christ
Jesus  co-workers (24)
    Lord  grace
    Jesus

Christ