

Colossians Chapter 2 Continued

Colossians 2:14 "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;"

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances”:

This is referring to the handwritten certificate of debt by which a debtor then has acknowledged his indebtedness.

All people (Rom. 3:23), owe God an un-payable debt for violating His law (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10; Matt. 18:23-27), and are thus under sentence of death (Rom. 6:23).

Paul graphically compares God’s forgiveness of believers’ sins to wiping ink off a parchment.

Through Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, God has totally erased our certificate of indebtedness and made our forgiveness complete.

Nailing it to his cross”:

This is another metaphor for forgiveness.

The list of the crimes of a crucified criminal was nailed to the cross with that criminal to declare the violations he was being punished for (as in the case of Jesus, as noted in Matt. 27:37).

Believer’s sins were all put to Christ’s account, nailed to His cross as He paid the penalty in their place for them all, thus satisfying the just wrath of God against those crimes that were requiring punishment in full.

“The handwriting of ordinances”:

In secular literature, this “handwriting” was an IOU signed by the debtor.

Here it might be paraphrased, “a certificate of debt consisting of decrees.”

This refers to the Mosaic Law, which the Jews had contracted to obey, and to which Gentiles by conscience were obligated.

Owing to man’s inability to fulfill this obligation of obedience, he then was indebted to God.

But through Christ this debt was graciously blotted out.

The word "blotting" means that they were done away with forever.

Our sin was not covered, it was blotted out.

Our sin is gone.

Our sin died on the body of Jesus on the cross.

Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;"

Jesus fulfilled the law, when He was our perfect sacrifice on the cross.

He was, in fact, our Substitute.

Colossians 2:15 "[And] having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

“Having spoiled”:

In yet another element of the cross work, Paul tells that the cross spelled the ultimate doom of Satan and his evil host of fallen angels (Genesis 3:15; John 12:31; 16:11; Hebrews 2:14).

“Having spoiled principalities and powers”:

By the Cross God disarmed or deprived Satan and all his demonic horde of the power and sway with which they formerly gripped the Colossians.

By this statement, Paul might well have asked the Colossians, how can you give ear to any doctrine advocating angel worship (verse 18), when they are all subject to God? (See 1:16).

While His body was dead, His living, divine spirit went to the abode of demons and announced His triumph over sin, Satan, death, and hell (see notes on 1 Peter 3:18-19).

“Made a shew of them openly”:

The picture is that of a victorious Roman general parading his defeated enemies through the streets of Rome (see notes on 2 Cor. 2:14-16).

Christ won the victory over the demon forces on the cross, where their efforts to halt God’s redemptive plan were ultimately defeated.

For more on that triumphant imagery (see notes on 2 Cor. 2:14-16).

Sin was a terrible power over all of us, before we were saved.

The penalty of sin (death), was a constant threat.

Usually principalities and powers are speaking of the power of darkness.

It was Satan, who Jesus destroyed on the cross.

Satan was defeated.

He even lost the keys to hell.

Jesus took them away from him.

Jesus went into hell, and took the keys, and brought out many captives with Him.

Verses 16-17

Paul warns the Colossians against trading their freedom in Christ for a set of useless, man-made, legalistic rules (Gal. 5:1).

Legalism is powerless to save or to restrain sin.

Colossians 2:16 "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days]:"

“Therefore” (draws on 2:14):

Since God has annulled the law, the Colossians are to “Let no man ... judge you” regarding dietary matters (“meat ... drink”), or regarding religious calendar observations.

The false teachers sought to impose some sort of dietary regulations, probably based on those of the Mosaic Law (Lev. 11).

Since they were under the New Covenant, the Colossians (like all Christians), were not obligated to observe the Old Testament dietary restrictions (Mark 7:14-19; Acts 10:9-15; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 8:8; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; Heb. 9:9-10).

“Holyday”:

The annual religious celebrations of the Jewish calendar (e.g. Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles (Booths); Lev. 23).

New moon”:

The monthly sacrifice offered on the first day of each month (see Numbers 10:10; 28:11-14; Psalm 81:3).

“Sabbath days”:

The weekly celebration of the seventh day, which pictured God’s rest from creation.

The New Testament clearly teaches that Christians are not required to keep it (see notes of Acts 20:7; Rom. 14:5-6).

The only Judge that Christians should be concerned with is Jesus.

Jesus has placed His law in the heart of the Christian.

We call it conscience.

If you do not feel guilty for not keeping these specified days, it is only because you must have a clear conscience.

The men spoken of here, are those who would put you back under the law.

You cannot please men.

Stop trying.

Just please God.

Colossians 2:17 "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ."

“Shadow ... body”:

The ceremonial aspects of the Old Testament law (dietary regulations, festivals, sacrifices) were mere shadows pointing to Christ.

Since Christ, the reality has come, the shadows have no value (Hebrews 8:5; 10:1).

This verse could be translated:

“For these were a shadow of future things, but the substance belongs to Christ.”

The Mosaic dietary restrictions and calendar celebrations (verse 16), were a “shadow of things to come”, in that they foreshadowed or foretold of coming spiritual blessings.

But the substance of these blessings or divine benefits themselves come; not from the law, but from Christ.

The Colossians then, should not allow any heretics to tie them up with both their legalistic rules and regulations.

They should instead occupy themselves with all the blessings granted them through Christ.

If we are the body of Christ and He is the Head, we should do as the Head instructs us.

He controls us.

Colossians 2:18 "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,"

“Beguile you of your reward”:

Or “rob you of your prize”:

The heretics, if their doctrine were accepted, would then rob those Colossians of many of their spiritual blessings.

These false teachers displayed false “humility”, and advocated a gospel of “worshiping of angels,” that is, paying homage to angelic beings.

Paul warns the Colossians not to allow the false teachers to cheat or defraud them of their temporal blessings or eternal reward (2 John 8), by luring them into irrational mysticism.

“Voluntary humility”:

Since the false teachers took great delight in it, their ‘self-abasement’ was actually pride, which God hates (Prov. 6:16-17).

“Worshipping of angels”:

The beginning of a heresy that was to plague the region around Colossae for several centuries and far beyond, a practice the Bible clearly prohibits (Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9).

“Things that he has not seen”:

Like virtually all cults and false religions, the Colossian false teachers based their teaching on visions and revelations they had supposedly received.

Their claims were false; since Jesus Christ is God’s final and complete (see notes on verses 3-4), revelation to mankind (Heb. 1:1-2).

“Fleshly mind”:

See note on Rom. 8:6.

This describes the unregenerate and is further defined (in Eph. 4:17-19).

“Intruding into those things which he hath not seen”:

The heretics claimed to have witnessed numerous revelations and visions.

Angels are part of the creation.

They are not the Creator.

We should worship and serve only God.

This is the mistake that a third of the angels made when they followed the archangel Lucifer.

The best advice is worship the Creator and not any of His creation.

Colossians 2:19 "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

There is no spiritual growth for the body (the church), apart from union with the Head, Christ (John 15:4-5; 2 Pet. 1:3).

The Greek word “holding” means to hold fast to someone, so as to remain united with him.

The “Head” is Christ.

Thus, “not holding the Head” reveals that the local heretics possessed no relationship with Christ; they were not therefore true Christians.

As the “Head” is Christ, so the “body” is figuratively represented to be the church, and the “joints” and “bands” are by implication the individual believers within the church.

“Having nourishment ministered, and knit together”:

This means being supported and united.

From Christ (the “Head”), then, the church (“body”), derives spiritual growth as it is supported and united by the various ministering believers (“joints,” “bands”) in the assembly.

All Christians, who make up the body of Christ, should grow by letting the Head (Jesus Christ), direct them in all they do.

The body can only function properly when the head gives the signals to each part of the body.

In a human, the brain sends impulses to the arms and legs and other parts of the body for them to function properly.

If the signals are not received from the brain, then all of the other parts of the body do not function properly.

It is the same thing in the spiritual sense.

Let the Head control the body, or else the body will not function properly.

Colossians 2:20 "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,"

“If ye be dead”:

Or, “since you died”.

Paul’s expression, “to die,” figuratively means to be free from something.

That from which the Colossians had been freed is “the rudiments of the world,” that is, from the elementary religious teachings espousing salvation by merit and good works.

“Dead with Christ”:

Refers to the believer's union with Christ in His death and resurrection (see notes on Rom. 6:1-11), by which he has been transformed to new life from all worldly folly.

"Rudiments of the world":

See note on verse 8.

These are the same as "the commandments and teachings of men" (verse 22).

Since the gospel has freed the believer from attempting to gain heaven by self-effort, he should never "submit" himself again to such legalistic "ordinances."

When you are dead, you do not have to follow ordinances.

You do not have to pay taxes when you are dead.

This is just saying, that to be dead in Christ took care of all of the fulfillment of ordinances.

When you are in Christ, He makes the decisions.

It is no longer necessary to have a set of rules to go by.

Christ breaks no spiritual laws.

The verse above is showing that true Christianity makes you one with Christ.

There is no law against the activities of Christ.

Verses 21-23

These verses point out the futility of asceticism, which is the attempt to achieve holiness by rigorous self-neglect (verse 23), self-denial (verse 21), and even self-infliction.

Since it focuses on temporal "things destined to perish with us," asceticism is powerless to restrain sin or bring one to God.

While reasonable care and discipline of one's body is of temporal value (1 Tim. 4:8), it has no eternal value, and the extremes of asceticism serve only to gratify the flesh.

All too often, ascetics seek only to put on a public show of their supposed holiness (check out Matthew 6:16-18).

Colossians 2:21-22 "(Touch not; taste not; handle not;" "Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?"

These three prohibitions are examples of the heretical teaching to which the Colossians were about to submit.

They were to abstain from certain foods and drinks.

Legalism is largely negative in nature; Christianity is nicely balanced, containing both negative and positive aspects.

This was one of the things that made the Pharisees so angry with Jesus.

He did all the above.

We know that the Jews were very careful to keep all the ordinances.

Jesus fulfilled these ordinances on the cross.

Since all these foods “are to perish with the using,” it is foolish to base one’s eternal salvation on abstinence from temporary things like food.

What you touch, or put into the mouth, does not defile you.

The two following Scriptures say it best.

Matthew 15:20 "These are [the things] which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

Mark 7:15 "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man."

Colossians 2:23 "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh."

This verse is better translated, “Which things do indeed have an appearance of wisdom consisting in self-imposed worship and false humility and in severe treatment of the body; but this is of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

The apostle concedes that legalism is outwardly impressive, but he denies asceticism’s ability to harness the sensual appetite of man’s sinful nature (“flesh”).

In this, Paul is still reminding them that many things that appear to be wise to the flesh of man are not necessarily wise in God's sight.

It is good to crucify your flesh, but if it is done to prove something to the world, it is wrong.

Our salvation lies in Christ alone, not in any will worship on our part.

Colossians Chapter 2 Continued Questions

1. Describe what happens to us when we are baptized.

2. The penalty for sin is _____.
3. When was our sin abolished?
4. Who is the quickening Spirit?
5. What has Jesus done with the handwriting of ordinances?
6. Who specifically, did Jesus defeat on the cross?
7. How many of the angels followed Lucifer out of heaven?
8. What causes the body to function properly?
9. True Christianity makes you one with _____.