



## THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

### Lesson Number 13



**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

# UNPRODUCTIVE RELIGION

“<sup>2:16</sup> Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: <sup>17</sup> Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. <sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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, <sup>21</sup> (Touch not; taste not; handle not; <sup>22</sup> Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? <sup>23</sup> 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.”<sup>KJV</sup> (Col 2:16-23)

## INTRODUCTION

The Spirit is establishing the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ. **Every believer in every sense, is complete in Christ.** No area of life is not covered.

### TO FULFILL THE LAW

In Christ Jesus, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us. As it is written, *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of*

*the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Rom 8:3-4). **Salvation brings no glory to God if sinners are left the same way they were found.** Men may imagine that such a condition is acceptable, but it is not.

Everything required to fulfill the summation of the Law is found in Christ Jesus: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first*

*and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”* (Mat 22:38-39).

### TO APPROPRIATE AND MAINTAIN SALVATION

Everything that is required for the appropriation of salvation is found in Christ Jesus: faith, repentance, remission, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, peace, etc. Nothing is lacking. Every single resource required to come to Christ and obtain salvation is found in Him –

*There are eternal realities “above,” where Jesus is now seated. They are to be our focus. – by Given O. Blakely*

## OUTLINE

- ▶ LET NO MAN JUDGE YOU (2:16)
- ▶ LET NO MAN BEGUILE YOU OF YOUR REWARD (2:17a)
- ▶ NOT HOLDING THE HEAD (2:19a)
- ▶ THE NECESSITY AND SOURCE OF NOURISHMENT (2:19b)
- ▶ IF YOU ARE DEAD WITH CHRIST (2:20a)
- ▶ WHY ARE YOU SUBJECT TO ORDINANCES? (2:20b)
- ▶ THE RELIGION OF PROHIBITION (2:21)
- ▶ EMPHASIZING WHAT IS PERISHING (2:22a)
- ▶ THE COMMANDMENTS AND DOCTRINES OF MEN (2:22b)
- ▶ THE SHOW OF WISDOM (2:23a)
- ▶ POWERLESS RELIGION (2:23b)

and that even included being drawn to Him and given to Him (John 6:37,44). We are **“complete in Him.”**

### THE MAINTENANCE OF SALVATION

Everything that is required for the maintenance of that salvation is found in Christ Jesus: the Holy Spirit, strength, confidence, joy, endurance, comfort, etc. The *“spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* is given to us in Christ (2 Tim 1:7). Provision is made for being changed *“from glory unto glory”* (2 Cor 3:18), being *“strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man”* (Eph 3:17). Ponder the inclusion of Divine fellowship, God’s attentive ear and perceptive eye, and the power of prayer (1 Pet 3:12). There is *“the whole armor of God”* (Eph 6:11,13), the righteousness of God (Phil 3:9), and strength to *“do all things”* (Phil 4:13). We are **“complete in Him!”**

### APPREHENDING THE TRUTH

It is one thing to hear the truth of God. It is quite another thing to *“apprehend”* it – that is, to perceive it with such clarity that it becomes our own. This is why Paul spoke of his energetic pursuit of the things for which Christ had taken hold of him: *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not*

*count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead”* (Phil 3:12-13). Elsewhere this is called laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12).

**As long as we are in this world, we are subjected to influences that suggest we are not complete in Christ.** Some are more aggressive in this representation than others. Some scoff at the very notion of adequacy in Christ Jesus. Others acknowledge there is some sufficiency in Him, but that it must be combined with other factors to be effective. Some represent life in Christ as an adjunct to life – not even the main aspect of it.

In all of these approaches, Jesus Christ is not the fundamental Person, and eternal life is not the ultimate experience. Therefore, life in this world is erroneously set forth as primary, and temporal relationships and circumstances become the emphasis. Let it be clear, the Lord Jesus Christ does not sanctify such an arrangement. His indispensable ministry will not be realized in such an environment. **The work of the Lord Jesus is effectual only when the revealed agenda of God has been embraced.** Just as surely as Abraham could not be blessed until he ordered his life by the Divine agenda revealed to him, so **no professing believer can experience the blessing of Jesus until they have perceived and embraced that for which Jesus has apprehended them** (Phil 3:12).

It should be evident to you that this has some startling ramifications. Much of what is paraded before us as *Christianity* and *Christian ministries* is nothing more than flesh in a religious garb. It is not acceptable.

**This text will affirm that the greatest threat to apprehending**

**Christ’s all-sufficiency is found in religion itself – powerless and lifeless religion.** It is the religion of procedure and routine, and it has no heart in it. There is neither power nor grace in it. It does not bring joy or peace, or relish the presence and fellowship of the Father and the Son. It offers a creed, a movement, a position, and a “way of life” – **but it does not offer life itself, which is essential to any vital association with the Living God.**

The Spirit will not approach this subject casually. You will immediately sense that the conditions described represent significant threats to the people of God. They are conditions the saints are not to allow, or *“let,”* happen. A solemn charge is thus delivered to them.

### TWO APPROACHES TO RELIGION

There are two approaches to religion – to the development of a godly manner of life. *“Religion”* has to do with the external part of spiritual life. As it is written, *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27). The question is, “How is this to be accomplished.”

### Regulating the Flesh

The first approach is to major on the regulation of the flesh. This is embodied in the Old Covenant. It was a system *“imposed”* upon basically recalcitrant people (Heb 9:10). This approach deals with people as being alienated from God – without a heart for Him or His will. It basically keeps the flesh in check through a system of procedures and threats. Scripture refers to the effects of such a system in these words: *“who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* (Heb 2:15).

This was the approach of the Old

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Covenant, for men had not yet been reconciled to God. Sin had not been removed, the devil had not been destroyed, and sin had not been effectively condemned in the flesh (Rom 8:3). Thus rules and regulations were imposed upon the hard-hearted to keep them from committing transgression. The witness of Moses, the Prophets, John the Baptist, and Jesus testify to the ineffectiveness of this approach. **Rather than eliminating sin, it discovered it, for “by the Law is the knowledge of sin”** (Rom 3:20). The whole arrangement proved to be *“the ministration of death”*

Jesus. First, the individuals themselves were changed – fundamentally changed within. They were given a *“new heart”* and a *“new spirit”* (Ezek 36:26). Rather than Divine laws remaining on tables of stone, they were written by God upon the hearts of the redeemed, and put into their minds (Heb 8:10; 10:16). Instead of God being *“a God afar off”* (Jer 23:23), He took up His abode within His people (Zech 2:10; 2 Cor 6:16).

Now men were strengthened within so they could bring their bodies into subjection (1 Cor 9:27). Rather than

Now those in Christ are not told to control their lusts, but to mortify them, putting them to death in the energy of Divine power. *“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Col 3:5).

**What is a procedure compared to these marvelous provisions? What are the laws and ordinances of mere men compared to the effectiveness of Divine power within?** In redemption men are qualified for the presence of the Holy Spirit, the tutelage of grace, and the intercession of the King of glory. They have access to things that simply cannot be accomplished by a law – any law.

The issue the Spirit will now put before us regards believers returning to a regimented form of spiritual life. It is a way that has the appearance of wisdom, yet it is utterly powerless to implement the will of God. If people choose to return to such a system, sin will gain dominance over them again. We must ever remember that *“the strength of sin is the Law”* (1 Cor 15:56). **This is because Law, when employed as a means to righteousness, awakens the principle of sin.** Thus it is written, *“when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died”* (Rom 7:9).

This brief introduction should prepare us to receive the stern tones that follow. The Spirit is not dealing with a small and inconsequential matter. **The survival of the saints is at issue.** Whether sin is subdued or not is the matter at hand.

If men do not choose the New Covenant way, there is no hope for them to stand approved before God.

**What is a procedure compared to these marvelous provisions? What are the laws and ordinances of mere men compared to the effectiveness of Divine power within?**

and *“the ministration of condemnation”* (2 Cor 3:7,9). The law, with its *“meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances* (regulations for the body)” (Heb 9:10) **wrought no change within men.** It brought no strength, or means of recovery. Rather, it only heaped up guilt, defiled the conscience, and confirmed the utter helplessness and defilement of humanity. Through it *“every mouth”* was *“stopped,”* and *“all the world”* became *“guilty”* before God (Rom 3:19).

**Living in the Spirit**

There is another way of controlling the flesh – and it is effective. Once a basis was established through which men could actually be changed, an effective means of subduing the sinful nature was opened to those in Christ

attempting to subdue sinful inclinations procedurally the glad announcement is made: ***“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”*** (Gal 5:16). The faithful are admonished, *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof”* (Rom 6:12). Joyfully they are told *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”* (Rom 8:13). Rather than being given a procedure or cunningly devised regimen they are told, ***“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”*** (Titus 2:11-12). This effectively addresses living.

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**LET NO MAN JUDGE YOU**

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*“<sup>2:16</sup> Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: <sup>17</sup> Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”*

The words that follow will make no sense to the flesh. Their very tone will arouse all manner of fleshly expressions and explanations. The Spirit, who surely knows how to speak *“expressly”* (1 Tim 4:1) speaks with exacting precision. He

says precisely what needs to be said, and in most definitive language. **He will set a Divine mandate before us. This is something we are not to allow to happen.** All of the resources required to fulfill this word are available to faith, and

designed for those who live by that faith.

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE JUDGED**

“Let no man therefore judge you . . .” Other versions read, “Let no one act as your judge,”<sup>NASB</sup> “Do not let anyone condemn you in matters,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “let no one pass judgment on you,”<sup>RSV</sup> and “never let anyone criticize you for.”<sup>NJB</sup>

The word “judge” involves human evaluation and assessment. It includes the ideas of condemning, criticizing, and holding one accountable for crime, or an infraction of Divine law. The one who judges binds something on a person that God has not bound, condemning the individual who refuses to subscribe to their opinion. **In this case, something from which Jesus has freed us is once again bound upon the people.** They may employ Scripture, but they do not “rightly divide” it (2 Tim 2:15), “understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Tim 1:7).

**Notwithstanding the current trend of “accountability,” we do not answer to men, but to God.** With great power we are told that it is God “with whom we have to do,” or “to whom we must give account”<sup>NKJV</sup> (Heb 4:13). In the end, and let there be no doubt about this, “every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12). If you imagine that while we are in this world we culture giving account of our lives to men, you will not adequately prepare for inevitably giving an account to God.

When subjected to the human evaluation of the Corinthians, Paul said, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but **He that judgeth me is the Lord**” (1 Cor 4:4). Paul followed the same course as David, allowing the Lord Himself to judge him. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts” (Psa 139:23). Let it be clear, no person will become the worse for doing this!

**A NOTE OF WARNING**

This text is not championing the expression of personal opinion, or suggesting every person may do what is “right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6), or

that my way is as good as your way. Rather, it is alerting us to the fact that there are religious men who make demands of us that God has not made. They go further than the Lord has gone, and are demanding in doing so.

Right here we must see there is liability in being a novice. These law-and-procedure purveyors are cunning in their presentation. They use Scripture, and present, what appears to be, powerful arguments. If a person is not learned in the ways of the Lord, they can be turned aside by such people. Therefore, the maturity of believers is said to have this objective: “That we henceforth be no more children, **tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive**” (Eph 4:14).

Part of not allowing any man to judge you is personally growing up into Christ “in all things” (Eph 4:15). If you do not do this, you are vulnerable to such men. It is imperative that the people of

<sup>NKJV</sup> “by what you eat or drink,” <sup>NIV</sup> “in questions of food and drink,”<sup>NRSV</sup> and “on matters of food and drink.”<sup>NAB</sup>

**Under the Ceremonial Law**

This doubtless has primary reference to the distinction of foods that were inherent in the ceremonial law. There were two sets of guidelines concerning foods. First, the general ceremonial law specified clean and unclean meats, prohibiting the ingestion of unclean ones (Lev 11:2-47).

- ✚ Clean beasts had to have cloven hoofs and chew the cud (11:3-8).
- ✚ Clean fish had to have both fins and scales (11:9-12).
- ✚ Unclean fowls were identified as the eagle, ossifrage (vulture), osprey (buzzard), vulture (red kite), kite (black kite), raven, owl, night hawk, cuckoo, hawk, little owl, cormorant (similar to pelican), great owl, swan, pelican, gier eagle (kind of vulture), stork, heron, lapwing, bat, fowls that

**If you imagine that while we are in this world we culture giving account of our lives to men, you will not adequately prepare for inevitably giving an account to God.**

God separate themselves from all forms of religion that allow people to remain “babes in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1). **Whether it is preaching, teaching, music, entertainment, games, etc. – if it promotes spiritual juvenility it weakens spiritual defenses.**

Make it your business to “**be men in understanding**”– something God requires of you (1 Cor 14:20). See confidence and assurance as essential to your survival, as it expressly taught by the Spirit (Col 2:2’ Heb 3:6,14; 6:11; 10:22, 35). This will enable you to resist the judgment of men, against which this text warns us.

**MEAT OR DRINK**

“ . . . in meat, or in drink . . . ” Other versions read “in food or drink,”

- creep, going upon all four (11:13-20).
- ✚ Clean flying things had to have legs above their feet so they could leap off the earth (locust, bald locust, beetle, grasshopper – 11:21).
- ✚ Whatever went upon four paws were unclean (11:27).
- ✚ Things that creep upon the earth were unclean (weasel, mouse, tortoise, ferret, chameleon, lizard, snail, mole – 11:29-31).
- ✚ What crawled upon the belly, crawled on all four feet, or had “many feet” was unclean (11:41).

*The Law of the Nazarite*  
Second, there was the law of the

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Nazarite.

- ✦ The Nazarite had to separate himself from all strong drink: vinegar of wine, vinegar of strong drink, or liquor grapes (Num 6:3a).
- ✦ He could not eat moist or dried grapes (Num 6:3b).
- ✦ All the days of his separation he could not eat anything coming from a grape vine, from the seeds to the skins (Num 6:4).

Several years after Pentecost, these laws were still honored by the sensitive of heart – such as Peter (Acts

*at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?” (Mat 15:11,17). Again, “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” (Mark 7:15).*

Now, such encroachments were entering among the Colossians, and Paul deals directly with the matter. **The brethren are not to allow any person to approve or condemn them because of what they ate or drank.** Such rules have no place among the saints, even though it is not unusual to find dietary laws taught as though they directly related to Divine approval.

14:14).

Those who affirm that pork, etc are inferior and contaminating foods have taken too much upon themselves. However practical such teaching may appear to be, it is not supported by Jesus and the Apostles.

It is our business to give diligence in this matter, not allowing any man to judge or condemn us because of what we eat or do not eat. While there is certainly room for private persuasions on such things, **they cannot be bound upon others** by the ones possessing them.

#### AN HOLY DAY

*“... or in respect of an holy day.”*  
Other versions read, *“a festival,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“a religious festival,”* <sup>NIV</sup> and *“annual festivals.”* <sup>NJB</sup>

The word *“holy day”* is more literally translated *“feast”* or *“festival,”* as several translations confirm. This distinction of days also reflected Jewish priorities commanded in the ceremonial law. The three great Jewish feasts were (1) The Feast of the Passover, (2) The Feast of Tabernacles, and (3) The Feast of Pentecost. These were the three annual feasts that all Jewish males had to attend (Ex 23:17; 34:23; Deut 16:16). The blessing of the Lord was contingent upon the faithful observance of these feasts. As it is written, *“For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, WHEN thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year”* (Ex 34:24).

**In Christ Jesus, no such stipulations exist.** With hearts being changed, and a fundamental love for God possessed, the test of ones commitment to God is not found in the observance of festivals. The Old Covenant requirements bound religious seasons and cycles upon people because they were not regenerated. It forced a remembrance of epochs such as the deliverance from Israel (the feast of the Passover), the celebration of the ingathering of the fruit and the harvest (the feast of Tabernacles), and the celebration of the final harvest, fifty days after the Passover (the feast of Pentecost). Without these feasts, the people would soon have forgotten their deliverance

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10:14-28). Following that, there were some who were aggressive in promoting such laws. Paul even identified a coming departure of the faith by those who *“commanded to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth”* (1 Tim 4:3).

Until the conversion of the household of Cornelius there had been no specific Apostolic doctrine affirming these laws were no longer binding. A seemingly solid case could be built for them being honored – at least in the eyes of the novices and unlearned.

#### Jesus Clarifies the Matter

Although the meaning of His words had apparently escaped many, Jesus had affirmed defilement does not come from what is eaten. *“Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man . . . Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in*

#### The Kingdom of God and Meat and Drink

First, the kingdom of God does not consist of meat and drink. **That is, it does not deal with dietary practices.** As it is written, *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Rom 14:17).

#### Food Does Not Commend Us to God

Foods do not recommend us to God, or cause us to be more pleasing to Him. As it is written, *“But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse”* (1 Cor 8:8).

Ceremonial law did not deal with what was inherently right or wrong, such as was iterated in the Ten Commandments. As it is written, *“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is **nothing unclean of itself:** but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean”* (Rom

from Egypt. They would not have associated the ingathering of the harvest with the work of the Lord. Nor, indeed, would the latter harvest, brought on by the latter rain, have been a source of thanksgiving to God. **These holy days were the appointed means of enforcing thanksgiving among an unregenerate people.**

With the “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), the necessity of observing these holy days was removed. Now the law was written upon the heart of the people, and put into their minds. In Christ, the people serve God with “one consent” (Zeph 3:9). They are not the better for observing special holy days, nor are they the worse for not doing so.

As in the matter of meats and drinks, there is room for personal persuasion in the observance of days, or special holy days. However, that view cannot be bound on another person, and we are to allow no man to do it. As it is written, “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. **Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.** He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it” (Rom 14:5-6).

#### THE NEW MOON

“... or of the new moon . . . ”

The “new moon” was the beginning of the month. For Israel the “beginnings” of their months was a solemn occasion. A burnt offering was presented to the Lord of two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year without spot. Each bullock offered was to be accompanied with an ephah (about six quarts) of fine flour mixed with oil. Each ram offered was to be accompanied with a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah (1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>5</sub> quarts) of fine flour mixed with oil. The offering of each lamb was to be accompanied with a grain offering of one tenth of an ephah (a little over one pint) of fine flour mixed with oil (Num 28:11-15). The reference to “the beginnings of your months” reads differently in later versions, emphasizing that it refers to the new moon: “on the first days of your months,” <sup>NASB</sup> “New Moon festivals,” <sup>NIV</sup> “your new moons,” <sup>JPS,TNK</sup> and “at the new

moons.” <sup>Septuagint</sup>

Again, if an individual chooses to honor the Lord on the new moon, there is no word condemning him (of course, neither is there any word commending him). However, no believer is to allow another to judge him for honoring the new moon. God has not bound this practice upon those in the Son, and thus men cannot do it.

#### THE SABBATH DAYS

“... or of the Sabbath days . . . ”

Other versions read “sabbaths,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “a

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Sabbath day,” <sup>NASB</sup> “a Sabbath,” <sup>NRSV</sup> “The sabbaths,” <sup>DOUAY</sup> and “Sabbath.” <sup>NAB</sup>

There were a number of Sabbaths bound upon Israel, beginning with the seventh day of the week. This Sabbath existed before the giving of the Law (Ex 16:26,29). It was also a part of the Law, being the fourth commandment (Ex 20:9-11). Other sabbaths included the land Sabbath every seventh year (Lev 25:2-4), the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 16:29-31), the ninth of the seventh month (Lev 23:32), together with sundry others. All of them were to be kept (Ex 31:13; Lev 19:3,30).

Here again, the Lord ordained a day on which no servile work was to be done. It was a time to be devoted to holy thought and activity. However, since the people did not have new hearts and new spirits, it was approached as a day in which normal activity could **not** take place. “**But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates**” (Ex 20:10). “Six days thou shalt do thy work,

and on **the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed**” (Ex 23:12). Even during harvest times, they were to refrain from working on this day: “Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: **in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest**” (Ex 34:21).

Although all manner of arguments have been presented concerning the necessity of honoring the Sabbath day, the Spirit admonishes the people of God

not to allow any man to bind it upon them. **However plausible the arguments may be, no man can condemn you for not keeping the Sabbath days, or commend you for keeping them!** With Israel, this was a matter of being accepted by God. Acceptance in Christ is on a higher and more effectual basis.

At the conclusion of this section, I will provide a brief commentary on the Sabbath day, and how it is to be viewed by those in Christ Jesus.

#### AS SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME

“Which are a shadow of things to come . . . ” Other versions read, “which are a mere shadow of what is to come,” <sup>NASB</sup> “only a shadow of what is to come,” <sup>NRSV</sup> and “an image of the things which are to come.” <sup>BEB</sup>

A “shadow” is “an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object.” It can also mean “a sketch or an outline.” <sup>THAYER</sup> In this text, “a shadow” was a **ceremonial depiction of various aspects of life in Christ.** It was the Lord’s way of introducing His ancient people to the marvelous benefits that would be realized

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in the new and better covenant to be mediated by the Lord Jesus. What was accomplished ceremonially under the Law would be fulfilled in the persons of the elect. **They would do by nature what the Jews did through ceremonial observance.**

These shadows are better understood by those who are in the Son that they were by the Israelites. They serve to clarify the apparition of new covenant benefits. **As the light of the Gospel shines upon them, they become clear.** It also becomes clear that they were like shadows that are dispelled at the rising of the sun.

#### THE BODY IS OF CHRIST

*“ . . . but the body is of Christ.”*

Other versions read, *“the substance is of Christ,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“the substance belongs to Christ,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“the reality, however, is found in Christ,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“the reality belongs to Christ,”* <sup>NAB</sup> and *“the real thing, Christ Himself.”* <sup>NLT</sup>

Remember, the postulate being

This same truth is stated yet another way in Second Corinthians. *“For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us”* (2 Cor 1:20). The NASB reads, *“For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”*

**When real life is possessed, it is folly to ascribe redemptive value to a routine.** While there are certain God-ordained routines (like baptism, the Lord’s table, and assembling together), they obtain their value by the identity of Christ with them. Were it not for His vivifying presence, they would be nothing more than lifeless shadows, like those bound upon the Jews.

#### FULFILLING OBLIGATIONS

There remains in men this inveterate notion that there is a point at which their obligation toward God is fulfilled. This is the mentality of the Law, and the emulation of shadows. Some feel they have done enough when they have

as peace, mercy, the love of the truth, the Spirit of adoption, and the spirit of power and love and a sound mind, it makes little difference what is done. The emphasis in Christ is receiving what God has provided in Christ Jesus. Once that is done, God will work in us *“both to will and to do of His own good pleasure”* (Phil 2:13). He will then work in us that which is *“well pleasing in His sight”* (Heb 13:20-21).

#### SPECIAL CONSIDERATION OF THE SEVENTH DAY SABBATH

As for the Sabbath day, Israel, who received the commandment, never really entered into God’s rest, or Sabbath. That is a matter of record (Heb 4:1-9).

There is a greater rest that was typified by the Law’s Sabbath day, but never fulfilled by it. That is the rest of faith, and is discussed at length in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. A parallel is made between the fourth commandment Sabbath and the *“rest”* of faith.

The Sabbath day was bound upon Israel because their hearts were hard. They would have forgotten God altogether if He did not demand they remember Him on that day, dedicating it exclusively to Him. In Christ, however, our nature is changed, so that we actually know, and delight in knowing, the Lord. Now every day becomes a Sabbath so far as sanctifying the Lord in our memory.

This does not mean keeping the Sabbath is wrong. Nor, indeed, does it mean we are to demand that everyone keep it. Our text forbids us to judge one another on this matter. The recollection of God as the Creator of the universe is wonderful. Intimate fellowship with Him by faith is **more** wonderful. That is why Scripture affirms, *“We which believe do enter into rest”* (Heb 4:3), even though Israel **did not**. The word used in that text is *“sabbaton,”* or Sabbath. It is a higher and more extensive rest which overshadows, but does not obliterate, the former Sabbath.

The fourth chapter of Hebrews deals extensively with the Sabbath, showing it has been overshadowed by a greater Sabbath – one of spiritual rest. The passage is Hebrews 4:1-11, and speaks rather plainly. Under the Law, the Sabbath day was imposed upon the people

**In Christ, our obligation is not in doing so much as it is in receiving. True advancement comes in the appropriation of enlightenment, inner strength, the atonement, and the grace of God.**

affirmed is that we are *“complete”* in Christ. Now the Spirit establishes that new life is not Christ plus the shadowy ceremonies of the Law. It is not Jesus plus routines, diets, feasts, or days. All such things are only ancient apparitions of the realities experienced in Christ Jesus.

**All reality, blessing, benefit, and spiritual substance is traced directly to the Lord Jesus Christ.** He who has the Son possesses everything of which shadows testify. True life cannot be poured into a routine. Divine approval cannot be obtained by going through a mere procedure. *“The substance is of Christ,”* and only of Christ. We are *“complete in Him”* – that is *“complete”* in every possible sense of the word.

attended an official service, paid their tithe, or taken the Lord’s Supper. For them, that is adequate. Thus they withhold their hearts and minds from the Lord, living purely for themselves. **They imagine that a few religious peaks will make up for their practical alienation from God.**

Such an approach was partially true under the Law, even though the people did not even keep the routines faithfully. **In Christ, our obligation is not in doing so much as it is in receiving.** True advancement comes in the appropriation of enlightenment (Eph 1:15-20), inner strength (Eph 3:16-18), the atonement (Rom 5:11), and the grace of God (Tit 2:11-13). Without such things

because of their hard hearts. They would have forgotten God altogether if a day had not been commanded from which to rest from ordinary labors and concentrate upon the Lord. In Christ, we are simply told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb 10:25) – we are not told not to work. There is something in the renewed heart that senses the need for focusing on a gathering of kindred spirits, and building one another up in the most holy faith. That is why an exhortation, or reminder, is given for them to do this, not a commandment like the Sabbath day commandment.

We also have records of early believers meeting on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). This was doubtless done because of our Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9), and His appearance to the disciples on a first day of the week (John 20:19). This is an area of sharp controversy among believers in Christ. **However, the fact that neither Jesus nor the Apostles ever bound the Sabbath day upon people makes it wrong for others to do so. It is in the area of conscience.** Jesus said of the Sabbath, *"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:28).

**However, the fact that neither Jesus nor the Apostles ever bound the Sabbath day upon people makes it wrong for others to do so. It is in the area of conscience.**

You do not have to prove the Sabbath has passed. The Adventists have to prove Jesus has bound it upon us. It will do no good to **infer** that such a thing is binding. We must have a word from Jesus or his Apostles on the matter. It cannot be affirmed that every one knew the fourth commandment, and therefore it was not necessary to affirm it, for that was not the case with the Gentiles. The Gentiles did not keep the Sabbath day. Although God's law was written upon their conscience (Rom 2:15), yet no Gentile nation advocated the seventh day as the Sabbath. If it was not a key issue for them, it cannot be for us. To me, that is a more powerful argument than one based upon research and inference.

The first day of the week is held before us as a central time for believers.

✚ Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9).

- ✚ He appeared to Mary Magdalene on the first day of the week (Mk 16:9).
- ✚ Following His resurrection, He twice appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week (John 20:19,6).
- ✚ The day of Pentecost was on the first day of the week (50 days after the Passover Sabbath).
- ✚ The disciples at Troaz met on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
- ✚ The Corinthians were instructed to lay aside their offerings on the first day of the week (1 Cor 16:2).

This is sufficient evidence to confirm the Sabbath day is **not** binding upon those in Christ Jesus. It has been overshadowed by a greater glory. There is a greater *"rest"* realized in Christ, and it fulfills the Sabbath commandment.

## LET NO MAN BEGUILE YOU OF YOUR REWARD

<sup>18</sup> ***Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind . . .***

Aggressive Jewish teachers were not the only threats to the Colossian brethren. They were also being subjected to other distracting influences. If they were not resisted, they would drive a wedge between the people and God.

The warnings that follow deal with religious novelties. They are not as advanced as the procedures and ceremonies instituted under the Lord. However, they were representative of the

kind of subtleties that turn men away from the Lord Jesus. The church of our day is being subjected to this kind of theological and religious corruption.

### BEGUILED OF YOUR REWARD

*"Let no man beguile you of your reward . . ."* Other versions read, *"Let no one cheat you of your reward,"*<sup>NKJV</sup> *"Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"disqualify you for the prize,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"Do not let anyone disqualify you,"*<sup>NRSV</sup> *"Let no man rob you of your prize,"*<sup>ASV</sup> and *"Do not let anyone condemn you."*<sup>NLT</sup>

### There Is A Prize to Be Obtained

In Christ, there is a prize to be obtained. Paul said he forgot the things that were behind, counted everything else

but *"dung,"* and pressed *"toward the mark for the prize"* (Phil 3:14). The Spirit admonishes us, *"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain"* (1 Cor 9:24). Elsewhere the prize is referred to as an *"incorruptible"* crown (1 Cor 9:25), a *"crown of righteousness"* (2 Tim 4:8), the *"crown of life"* (James 1:12), and the *"crown of glory"* (1 Pet 5:4). **If this prize, or crown, is not obtained, there has been absolutely no point to being a "Christian."** Life has been lived in vain, and the end of the person's life will be no different than if he had never *"known the way of righteousness."* For such people, like Judas, *"it had been good if that man had not been born"* (Matt 26:24).

*There are eternal realities "above," where Jesus is now seated. They are to be our focus. – by Given O. Blakely*

A perusal of the average church would never leave one with the impression that such a danger existed – that a man could take your prize, rob you of the prize, or disqualify you from the race. Some have even adopted a theology that affirms such a thing is not possible. However, this is a very real warning, and is to be heeded with all sobriety and diligence.

**Losing the Reward**

To be drawn away from Christ is to be drawn away from all that He brings – every single aspect of salvation. A person can have nothing that grace gives if he turns away from the One who gives it. Thus, those who are “*beguiled of their reward*” have it taken away from them by being deluded into a form of religion in which Jesus is not primary.

This is equivalent to running “in

or teacher is from the supposedly right church does not mean he may be heard with our guards down. Because he is not overbearing does not mean he is right. Because he sees certain things the way you do does not mean everything he says can be received.

One of the serious deficiencies of denominationalism is that it leads people to accept teaching because it is associated with a particular group. **Know that all teaching, regardless of its proponent, is linked with either Jesus of Satan, light or darkness, salvation or damnation.** If it is not linked with Jesus, it necessarily competes with Him. The acceptance of such teaching will involve the sure forfeiture of “*the reward of the inheritance.*” That is the gravity of the text before us.

**VOLUNTARY HUMILITY**

“... in a voluntary humility...”

**Know that all teaching, regardless of its proponent, is linked with either Jesus of Satan, light or darkness, salvation or damnation.**

vain” (Gal 2:2; Phil 2:16), beating the air (1 Cor 9:26), or becoming a “*castaway*” (1 Cor 9:27). In this case, a “*reward*” is not speaking of an aspect of salvation, but of its culmination. Elsewhere it is called “*the reward of the inheritance*” (Col 3:24). It is the outcome of confidence, referred to in Hebrews: “*Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward*” (Heb 10:35). It was the consideration of the “*reward*” that moved Moses to “*esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*” (Heb 11:26).

The thought that a “*man*” could so bewitch us that we would lose this “*reward*” is a most sobering consideration. Even though some choose to affirm such a thing is not possible, yet we are solemnly admonished to see to it this does not happen. Among other things, this obligates the people of God to evaluate what they hear – to “*try the spirits*” (1 John 4:1). Because a preacher

Other versions read, “*taking delight in false humility,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*delighting in self-abasement,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*consciously making little of himself,*”<sup>BBE</sup> and “*delighting in humble-mindedness.*”<sup>YLT</sup>

The idea here is that the teachers would present themselves in the cloak of modesty and humility. Jesus referred to such as coming “*in sheep’s clothing,*” while actually being “*ravening wolves*” (Matt 7:15). Whether they are feigning humility, or are clothed with what they conceive to be real humility is not clear. In either case, it is not an acceptable humility, and it does not bring spiritual advantages to those possessing it or those taught by such people.

**“Voluntary humility”**

**proceeds from the flesh.** Even though it may have the appearance of genuine humility, it has not come from an awareness of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is self-imposed rather than being

produced by the cognition of the guilt of sin, the need of a Savior, and the raging war between the flesh and the Spirit.

**The world has a humility of its own.** It is more akin to culture than to spirituality. As the word “*voluntary*” indicates, there is a certain pleasure taken in this kind of humility – like being proud one is humble. “*Voluntary humility*” is considered to be a notable attainment by the one possessing it. It is a form of fleshly discipline rather than the result of seeing the truth about ones own self.

There is a vast difference between “*voluntary humility*” and “*humility of mind*” (Acts 20:19), or being “*clothed with all humility*” (1 Pet 5:5). The former is basically a self-disciplined appearance before men. The latter is a posture that is fundamentally before God, and secondarily before men. This is said of such humility, “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*” (James 4:10). And again, “*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time*” (1 Pet 5:6).

**WORSHIPING OF ANGELS**

“... and worshiping of angels...”

In this case, an apparently humble teacher promotes inordinate attention to angels. Thereby, he is turning the heart away from the Lord Jesus, in whom we are “*complete.*” You may recall that John the Apostle twice fell before an angel in worship. He himself provides the account of these occasions.

✚ “*And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Rev 19:10).

✚ “*And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God*” (Rev 22:8-9).

These accounts confirm the awesome appearance of angels. Truly, they are *“greater in power and might”* than men (2 Pet 2:11), excelling in strength (Psa 103:20) and wisdom (2 Sam 14:20). **Yet, even though they are supernatural and immortal (Lk 20:36), they are not the proper objects of worship.** They are not to be compared with the Lord Jesus, whom they themselves worship (Heb 1:6). All of the angels have been made subject to Christ (1 Pet 3:22). Yet, there were subtle teachers who led people into the worship of angels, doing so in a display of seeming humility. These men were robbers.

This *“worship”* doubtless took the form of prayer, as though angels were viewed as effective mediators between God and man. In this sense, the text represents false teachers coming in great humility, as though they were unable to go directly to God, and therefore approached Him through an angel. This practice is still found in Roman Catholicism. But it is altogether wrong, for *“there is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus”* (1 Tim 2:5). **Approaching God through an angel is not a sign of humility, but the confirmation of unbelief.** It is wrong and sinful in every sense of the word.

While many of us do not contend with men who promote the worshipping of angels, it has not always been so among those professing allegiance to Christ. Early in the history of the church, the Platonists promoted this view among Christians. Infected with this error, Catholicism still urges prayer to angels, which is a form of worship. Various artifacts have been created of angels which, it is affirmed, brings protection to those who wear them. Roman Catholicism has long promoted bowing to images – which bowing is an act of worship, as John bowing before an angel.

Even though most of us have not contended with such misrepresentations, there are even lesser things that are promoted as objects of worship. There are other forms of unlawful adoration that are more common to us. There are those who give the glory and honor due to Jesus only, to movements, creeds, and theological views. This is a common

practice, and is strictly forbidden by the sense of this text.

**INTRUDING INTO THINGS NOT SEEN**

*“. . . intruding into those things which he hath not seen . . . ”* Other versions read, *“taking his stand on visions he has seen,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“goes into great detail about what he has seen,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“dwelling on visions,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“having his thoughts fixed on things he has seen,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“entering into things which he has not seen,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“walking in the things which he hath not seen,”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“going on in detail about visions,”*<sup>ESV</sup> *“advancing himself in those things which he never saw,”*<sup>GENEVA</sup> *“pinning every hope on visions received,”*<sup>NJB</sup> and *“even though they say they have received visions about this.”*<sup>NLT</sup>

As you can see, the various

all – *“intruding into things which he hath NOT seen.”*

There is a sense in which all of these views are true. The particular emphasis of this text, however, is confirmed in the verse that follows. The point is that these men were pretentious. **They had barged into forbidden areas, and were teaching things they had not perceived at all.** There are areas of reality that are not meant to be traversed by men. As it is written, *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever . . . ”* (Deu 29:29).

Further, God has *“revealed”* the matters intended for us to know, through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Christ

**Anyone and everyone who teaches a message that does not have Jesus at its center, or has not come through Him and His appointed expositors, the Apostles, is the type of teacher mentioned in this text.**

versions present two seemingly contradictory ideas. First, that these false teachers are intruding into things they have **NOT** seen. Second, that they are intruding into things they **HAVE** seen. What is the meaning of this expression.

- ✦ First, these men profess to be dealing with things that are NOT visible to mortals – in particular, things that have to do with angels. Such a teacher barges into these areas, *“intruding into things which he hath NOT seen”* – things not visible.
- ✦ Second, their teaching is based upon private visions they profess to have experienced, without any regard for the Word of God or the Person of Christ – *“taking his stand on visions HE has seen.”*<sup>NASB</sup>
- ✦ Third, a spiritual assessment is given of these teachers. In it, Paul affirms they are trespassing in a forbidden area, and have really seen nothing at

that God has spoken in *“these last days”* (Heb 1:2). All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are *“hid”* in Christ alone. **Anyone and everyone who teaches a message that does not have Jesus at its center, or has not come through Him and His appointed expositors, the Apostles, is the type of teacher mentioned in this text.**

A contemporary example of such teaching is Mormonism – one of the fastest growing religious cults of our time. It is based upon a message Joseph Smith professed to receive from an angel. It involved the writing of additional Scripture, and the upstaging of Jesus by a purported prophet than came after Him. Those who embrace this teaching choose to be known as Christians, more precisely referred to as *“latter day saints.”* However, they have been turned away from Christ, not to Him. By their own confession, they are not complete in

*There are eternal realities “above,” where Jesus is now seated. They are to be our focus. – by Given O. Blakely*

Christ. They have therefore been “beguiled” of their reward.

**VAINLY PUFFED UP WITH HIS FLESHLY MIND**

“ . . . vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind . . . ” Other versions read, “inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,”<sup>NASB</sup> “his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions,”<sup>NIV</sup> “puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,”<sup>RSV</sup> “being foolishly lifted by his natural mind,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “their sinful minds have made them proud.”<sup>NLT</sup>

The idea is that there is no point

law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). The “natural man,” which is synonymous with the “fleshly mind,” does not receive “the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know him, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14).

Such a mind inflates a person’s opinion of himself – which is the opposite of humility. **Let it be clear, when the “fleshly mind” dominates a person, it is not possible to avoid its effects.** In this case, it will move a teacher to probe in forbidden areas, and imagine that he has done so under the direction of God. The teaching that such a person

is the exaltation and veneration of religious scholarship and educational attainments. **While it is certainly not wrong to discipline our minds, and profit from exposure to the truly wise men of the ages, such attainments must be made subordinate to faith.** The most precise as extensive training and discipline of the mind is accomplished by faith. When a person believes God and relies upon Him, the mind is made better, and thoughts more acceptable to God.

If this is not kept in mind, men will actually assign to the mind a value that causes the Lord Jesus to occupy a lesser role in personal life. **In such a case, teaching will become corrupted, for a fleshly mind cannot contain or expound the truth of God.** Where, therefore, such a mind is promoted, Jesus is necessarily excluded.

It requires an extraordinary amount of faith and vigilance to train the mind, yet maintain one’s faith. Many a soul has lost their faith in the name of education, and many a preacher has settled for powerless presentation by insisting on allowing the “fleshly mind” to assert itself in their preaching. The only answer to this jeopardy is to be Christ centered in our thinking.

In Jesus the word of Isaiah finds its ultimate fulfillment: “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee*” (Isa 26:3). In the soil of “perfect peace” the fruits of righteousness will grow – fruits no regulation can produce.

**Let it be clear, when the “fleshly mind” dominates a person, it is not possible to avoid its effects. In this case, it will move a teacher to probe in forbidden areas, and imagine that he has done so under the direction of God.**

to or benefit in such a person or his teaching. Whatever significance this kind of teacher appears to have is only a vain show – it is not real. The person makes a claim to being humble, but is really puffed up with pride. **He is dominated by the fleshly mind that cannot possibly be humble.** The carnal mind cannot traffic in the things of God, for it is “enmity against God; for it is not subject to the

brings may appear humble, but it is not. **The fact that Jesus is not prevalent in it means the teaching will take away the reward of those who receive it.** The business of the saints is to see to it they are not beguiled by such men.

**THE JEOPARDY OF THE TIMES**

One of the jeopardies of our times

**NOT HOLDING THE HEAD**

“<sup>19a</sup> **And not holding the Head . . .**” Other versions read, “not holding fast to the Head,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “He has lost connection with the Head,”<sup>NIV</sup> “not joined to the Head,”<sup>BBE</sup> “not holding closely to the Head,”<sup>NAB</sup> “such a person has no connection to the Head,”<sup>NJB</sup> and “they are not connected to Christ.”<sup>NLT</sup>

This is speaking of the one beguiling the saints of their reward. He

comes in a vain display of humility, and promotes obeisance to things and personalities who are created. The reason for the corruption of such an individual is that he is not “holding the Head,” or connected with Christ. **Whatever comes to the saints must come through Christ, or it is an obstacle to the obtaining of glory.** A resource that does not come from Jesus is not a resource at all. It may have an appearance

of humility and wisdom, but we must not be deceived by it.

**It must be remembered that there is only one Head** – the Lord Jesus Christ. The Grecian empire was pictured as a leopard with four heads (Dan 7:6). Satan is depicted as a great red dragon with “seven heads” (Rev 12:3). The adversarial beast that rose out of the sea to oppose the church had “seven

heads” (Rev 13:1). Spiritual Babylon, the apostate church, is set forth as a harlot carried by a beast with “seven heads” (Rev 17:3,7,9). But when it comes to the total picture, there is only one Head, and it is the Lord Jesus. He is in every sense of the word “*the Head OVER ALL THINGS*” (Eph 1:22). He is “*THE Head, even Christ*” (Eph 4:15). Not only is He “*the Head of THE BODY, the church*” (Col 1:18), He is also “*the Head of ALL principality and power*” (Col 2:10).

In redemption, a connection is made between the Lord Jesus and the church – the Head and the body. **Whatever comes to the body is sent by Christ through the gifts He has given to the church** (Eph 4:8-16). When it comes to messages, God has nothing to say to the church that does not come directly from Jesus. Thus it is written, “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds*” (Heb 1:1-2). The word of God to those who saw the glory of the Son on the holy mount was, “*Hear ye Him!*” (Matt 17:5).

#### THE SOURCE OF ALL SPIRITUAL LIFE

The Headship of Christ does involve His authority over everything and every one. However, in this text, authority is not the subject. **Here the distribution of resources and the maintenance of the life of the church are the point** – as seen in the relationship of the head to the body. All spiritual life comes directly from Christ, who is “*the Head of the body.*” **Absolutely no spiritual life results from a mere procedure, a routine, a program, or a habit.**

This flies directly in the face of much of contemporary Christianity. Religious “how to” merchants have

appeared like a horde of ants upon the landscape of religious life. They come in the form of procedural experts, counselors, and educators. They offer ways for the people of God to be guaranteed Divine favor and success – but the ways are not centered in Christ, and do not require Christ. **The secret of**

– the connection accomplished by faith.

#### Serious Charges

These are serious charges, but they are intended to be. Paul does not take for granted that Judaizers promoting circumcision, holy days, new moons, and Sabbaths, are serious. He does

**The subversion of the faith of God’s elect is never traced back to an innocent teacher, a naive preacher, or a benign procedure. Rather, it has come from a person who himself is not holding fast to the Head.**

#### their methods is not faith but work.

It is personal discipline, not a personal trust in the Lord. The heart and core of their religion is a sort of outline, and not a life-sustaining connection with the Lord of glory. They are like those who recommend standing in the glow of incandescent lights, when they could reside in the blazing glory of “*the Sun of righteousness*” (Mal 4:2). Beware of them!

#### NO RELATION TO CHRIST

Whatever is **unrelated** to Christ cannot be essential to the acquisition or maintenance of spiritual life. Furthermore, the teacher who is not in Christ, and to whom Jesus is not manifesting Himself (John 14:23), has no place among the people of God. Every valid spiritual resource is found with Christ, and is sent by Him to His people.

**Whenever a preacher or a teacher brings something to the people that did NOT come from Jesus, it is because that person himself is not holding to the Head.** That is why the Lord Jesus does not speak to Him, there is no connection with Him

not tell us they are sincere, devoted, and convinced they are right. He does not point to the teachers who promote a self-imposed humility and say they are just not clear on a few things. He does not commend them for having a high regard for heavenly beings, like angels.

#### The subversion of the faith of God’s elect is never traced back to an innocent teacher, a naive preacher, or a benign procedure.

Rather, it has come from a person who himself is **not** holding fast to the Head. Such an one is **not** walking in the light as Jesus is in the light (1 John 1:7). Their doctrine is **not** the result of them being “*joined to the Lord*” (1 Cor 6:17). **It is the absence of a real association with the Lord Jesus that has produced their doctrines – doctrines that will rob the saints of their reward and disqualify them from the prize.**

I hardly see how anything could possibly be more serious, or have more far reaching implications. O, that more were given to see this!

### THE NECESSITY AND SOURCE OF NOURISHMENT

“<sup>19b</sup> . . . from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit

together, increaseth with the increase of God.”

Now the Spirit will further establish the role of the Lord Jesus in regard to spiritual growth and advance.

*There are eternal realities “above,” where Jesus is now seated. They are to be our focus. – by Given O. Blakely*

He does not take for granted that the people see this, for *“many false prophets are gone out into the world”* (1 John 4:1). Every single one of them have this in common: **the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, is not at the heart of their teaching.** They may boast that they have

Note, the words that follow relate to *“all the body”* – not just the stronger believer. I understand that there is a stage during which we are *“under tutors and governors”* – guardians and managers.<sup>NASB</sup> **However, that is not a time of real growth.** Rather, it is the appointed way of keeping sin from

*the Father, but by Me”* (John 14:6). **There is no point in the Christian experience where this ceases to be true.**

The objective of every valid ministry is to enable the people to make the connection with Jesus! If this does not happen, nothing else matters. No discipline or procedure can compensate for **not** holding fast to the Head.

Remember, this is true for *“all the body,”* not just for the leaders. The aim is assist all of the members to *“grow up into Christ in all things.”*

#### Confirmation in Ephesians

This same truth is again stated in the book of Ephesians. *“the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body . . . ”* (Eph 4:16). The *“whole body”* is every single member of it. **No one in Christ Jesus is afforded the luxury of remaining infantile and unlearned.** No provision has been made for a member of Christ’s body to remain in a state of ignorance. Although the condition is quite common, a lack of spiritual growth is never right. **It is wrong for a person living in the brightness of the day of salvation to remain in a state of spiritual infancy.** Christ has been exalted, and is presently ministering spiritual sustenance to His people, bringing them from one stage of glory to another through the working of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). **If this change is not taking place, it is because the connection with Jesus is not firm** – and that is the most favorable view of the situation.

It is the responsibility of every prophet, preacher, teacher, elder, etc., to bring the people into a deeper and more productive fellowship with the Son of God. **If this does not happen, the individuals will not be strengthened, and the professed leader has been unfaithful.** They may adhere to a sectarian creed, and be good members in standing, but if they are not connected with Jesus, they will not grow.

#### JOINTS AND BANDS

*“ . . . by joints and bands . . . ”* Other versions read, *“joints and ligaments,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“ligaments and sinews,”*<sup>NIV</sup> and *“joints and ligaments.”*<sup>RSV</sup>

**It is a principle of truth that it always stands up to the test of sound reason. Faith is not unreasonable, but has a logic of its own.**

made a place for Him, but it is not the preeminent place. When the people were faced with the early believers, *“they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus”* (Acts 4:13). Those believers were holding fast to the Head. However, the teachers of our text are not noted for being *“with Jesus.”* Rather, they are noted for their peculiar methods, techniques, and procedures.

The Spirit now reasons upon the indispensable role of Jesus. **It is a principle of truth that it always stands up to the test of sound reason.** Faith is not unreasonable, but has a logic of its own. What follows will make perfect sense, therefore, to those who believe.

#### ALL THE BODY

*“ . . . from which all the body. . . ”*

Other versions read, *“from WHOM all the body,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“from whom the entire body,”*<sup>NASB</sup> and *“from whom the whole body.”*<sup>NIV</sup>

The means through which every single member of the body of Christ is nourished is Christ Himself. **It is not possible to become truly better by keeping a routine or following a discipline.** Some will vigorously contest this statement, but their objections will all fall to the ground like weightless notes. **Either life comes from Jesus, or it does not come at all!** If Jesus Himself does not sustain the individual, they will not be sustained, vigorous religious disciplines notwithstanding.

breaking forth. As it is written, *“Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world”* (Gal 4:1-3).

However, this whole situation changes when the Lord Jesus is brought into the picture. *“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”* (Gal 4:7). This is true of *“all the body.”* Its maturity does not depend upon rules and regulations, but upon a vital connection with Jesus – a connection that is sustained by faith.

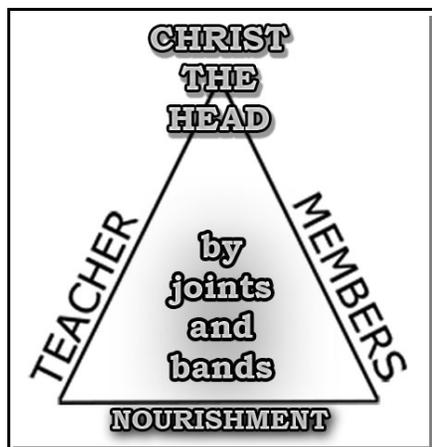
This puts the lie to the Joseph Smith’s (Mormonism), Mary Baker Eddy’s (Christian Science) and C. T. Russell (Jehovah’s Witnesses) of the world. In each of these cases, information was received **that did not come from Jesus.** This being the case, it is not possible for their doctrine to support the saints, for **whatever Jesus does not give has no place in sustaining and maturing the people of God!**

This is a point upon which we must be dogmatic. It is involved in our Lord’s affirmation, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto*

The word “joints” means bond, fastening or connection. “Bands” means that which binds together – the middle item that joins two or more things together: link, joint, bond. In the body, sinew, ligament, muscle. <sup>THAYER</sup> **The meaning is that Jesus ministers to the whole body from the point at which they are connected to Him.** The ministry itself is accomplished at the point where people are united with one another.

Two things, therefore, must take place before effective ministry can be realized. **First**, the one ministering must be connected to Jesus. **Second**, he must be connected with those to whom he is ministering. The godly teacher is connected with the Lord Jesus by means of spiritual sinews and muscles. The same is true of his connection with the people. The people themselves are also connected to Jesus by the same means. **If these connections are in place, spiritual sustenance will flow from the Head to the teacher, and then to the people.** If either connection is missing, edification is impossible!

**The preeminent sinew is faith, which is always associated with hope and love.** This “threefold cord” is not easily broken, and firmly holds the people together with Christ and with one another. However, if any of these are weak or missing, the sustaining flow of life is interrupted. It is not possible to overstate this fact.



**NOURISHMENT MINISTERED**

“ . . . having nourishment ministered . . . ” Other versions read, “nourished,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “being supplied,” <sup>NASB</sup> “supported,” <sup>NIV</sup> “being given strength,”

**If these connections are in place, spiritual sustenance will flow from the Head to the teacher, and then to the people. If either connection is missing, edification is impossible!**

<sup>BBE</sup> “ministered to,” <sup>DARBY</sup> “supplied with nourishment,” <sup>DOUAY</sup> “furnished,” <sup>GENEVA</sup> “given all that it needs,” <sup>NJB</sup> “get our nourishment and strength,” <sup>NLT</sup> and “gathering supply.” <sup>YLT</sup>

**The ministration itself comes from the Lord Jesus Christ – the Head.** It comes through the vital connection that is made with Him in salvation. It is realized at the point the lives of His people intersect with one another. That intersection is not in the flesh, but in the spirit. The life of one believer can connect with the life of another who has actually past from this world – like coming into the fellowship of “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:23). Those separated by distance can also have a spiritual impact upon one another (Col 2:5). Jesus, for example, can still minister to people through Paul. He can minister to us through those remaining in this world, yet far from us. He can also minister to us through face to face fellowship. But He will only do so through the “joints and bands” – the spiritual points at which we intersect with Him and with one another.

**In view of this circumstance, the current trend of infrequent gatherings and reduced exposure to things pertaining to life and godliness is exposed for what it really is.** Through such trends the work of God is being circumvented, spiritual growth inhibited, and connections with Jesus eroded. If these statements seem strong, let it be known that they are not nearly strong enough.

**No person can survive in this world without spiritual nourishment.** It simply is not possible. Furthermore, no person can receive that nourishment if it does not come from Jesus. It cannot be received if there is no

connection with Jesus, nor can it be received if there is no connection with one another. That, of course, is the significance of the church being called “the body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 1:23; 4:12; 5:30).

**KNIT TOGETHER**

“ . . . and knit together . . . ” Other versions read, “held together,” <sup>NASB</sup> “kept together,” <sup>BBE</sup> “united together,” <sup>DARBY</sup> “compacted,” <sup>DOUAY</sup> and “joined together.” <sup>NLT</sup>

**The idea is that believers are knit, or held, together by what passes to them from Jesus.** Speaking of the same marvelous process, the book of Ephesians states it this way: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part” (Eph 4:16). The NASB reads, “from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part” (Eph 4:16).

Here is the true picture of unity, and it conflicts sharply with many views of unity. **We are not held together by what we believe, but by what we supply and receive!** It is not our name that unites us, or our religious heritage, but the nourishment sent from Jesus, that has been ministered to us through the various members of the body. Therefore, where unity does not exist, Jesus has not been nourishing the saints. **Where that nourishment is lacking, there has not been a proper connection with the Head.** Of course, this has some rather significant implications. It is not our prerogative to go about judging other people. Rather, our energies are to be expended in realizing the productive fellowship of the Lord

*There are eternal realities “above,” where Jesus is now seated. They are to be our focus. – by Given O. Blakely*

Jesus, who Himself supplies nourishment to His body.

**A spectating religion is one that is necessarily characterized by spiritual poverty.** It is one where nourishment cannot be properly realized. A religion of specialists produces spiritual malnutrition – like a whole body which only has functioning little fingers, but is impotent everywhere else.

There are efforts being made to

Note the enlargement of the thought. It has been stated that nourishment is ministered by the Head, Jesus Christ, through and to those who are connected to Him. **Now it is stated that the actual increase, or growth, comes from God Himself.** Elsewhere it is clearly said, *“God giveth the increase”* (1 Cor 3:6-7). Ezekiel also spoke of God giving increase (Ezek 36:37).

All increase is not good. David spoke of those who troubled him being

life cannot be traced back to the direct ministration of Jesus, God will not cause it to grow – and all other growth is, at best, simulated. It is neither real nor acceptable.

**The nourishment ministry is an aspect of Christ’s mediatorship.** He is, after all, *“the Mediator of the New Covenant”* (Heb 9:15; 12:24). As such, He administers spiritual victuals to His people. This is accomplished through the union with Himself that is realized in the new birth.

Do you wonder why spiritual growth is so rare? There are poor souls who hear more about psychological principles (if there be such a thing) than the preaching of the Gospel. They are exposed to more speculation than Gospel affirmation. All manner of communication is taking place that is not the result of holding *“fast to the Head.”* It is not possible for such bantering to yield spiritual nutrition – which means it is impossible for God to grant increase under such conditions. These are weighty considerations, but they are surely true.

**A RESTATEMENT OF THE CASE**

What we have just considered is an explanation for the spiritual sterility of any message that does not have its genesis in Christ. **If we are truly “complete in Him,” then we are thoroughly incomplete without Him.** The Lord Jesus nourishes His people through a vital association with Himself. Working with this indispensable nourishment, God brings about the increase that is essential to our salvation.

**Where that increase is not being experienced, God is not at work. Where God is not at work, Jesus has not been sending out nourishment. Where Jesus is not sending our nourishment, there is no connection with Him.**

**God will not cause anything or anyone to grow that has not been nourished by Jesus. If the source of the life cannot be traced back to the direct ministration of Jesus, God will not cause it to grow – and**

knit God’s people together independently of the nourishment that comes from Christ. They are all futile, for Jesus will not work through them. **Whatever progress they may appear to make is superficial, and has no substance at all.** Men are not united together by opening books, or joining in the same institutional cause, but by being connected with Jesus.

**THE INCREASE OF GOD**

*“... increaseth with the increase of God.”* Other versions reads, *“grows with the increase that is from God,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“grows with a growth which is from God,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“grows as God causes it to grow,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“has its growth with the increase of God,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“growth into the increase of God,”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“achieves the growth that comes from God,”*<sup>NAB</sup> *“grows as God causes it to grow,”*<sup>NIB</sup> *“grows with the growth given by God,”*<sup>NJB</sup> and *“we victual as we get our nourishment and strength from God.”*<sup>NLT</sup>

*“increased”* (Psa 3:1). There are those in the world of whom it is said, *“the glory of his house is increased.”* Yet, when that person dies, *“he shall carry nothing away”* (Psa 49:16-17). Even *“backslidings”* have been said to increase (Jer 5:6), as well as sins (Jer 30:14).

**Only the increase that God gives is acceptable.** Faith can be *“increased”* (2 Cor 10:15). Churches can be *“increased”* in number (Acts 16:5). The *“fruits of righteousness”* can also *“increase”* (2 Cor 9:10). There can even be an *“increase”* in love for one another (1 Thess 3:12), as well as in giving (1 Thess 4:10). This is the kind of increase that comes from God.

Yet, this increase is not automatic, but is realized through appointed means. **God will not cause anything or anyone to grow that has not been nourished by Jesus.** If the source of the

**IF YOU ARE DEAD WITH CHRIST**

<sup>20a</sup> **Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world . . . ”**

The Apostle now begins to reason with us upon the basis of what he has affirmed.

✚ All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily.

*There are eternal realities “above,” where Jesus is now seated. They are to be our focus. – by Given O. Blakely*

- ✚ We are complete in Him.
- ✚ Jesus has circumcised us, *“putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.”*
- ✚ We have been raised from death in trespasses and sins.
- ✚ All of our trespasses have been forgiven.
- ✚ All nourishment comes from Christ, who is the exclusive *“Head.”*
- ✚ This nourishment is ministered through our vital connection with Him.

There are certain implications in all of these realities. By that I mean there are specific effects that are realized because of them. They are not mere statements, but are words containing both *“spirit” and “life”* (John 6:63). **When they are comprehended, they make sin unreasonable and righteousness reasonable.** They cause the wisdom of this world to be seen as *“foolishness,”* and the wisdom of God as powerful (1 Cor 3:19,24).

#### WHEREFORE

*“Wherefore . . .”* Other versions read *“Therefore,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“Since,”* <sup>NIV</sup> and *“You have.”* <sup>NLT</sup>

It is not enough to know the facts of a matter. We must also be able to reason upon them – to build sound thoughts and conclusions upon the foundation of truth. **An unthinking people is invariably a people dominated by sin.** A religion that does not promote godly thinking dries up the soul of the people. Any approach to serving God that relies more upon discipline and habit than upon thoughtfulness and insight is actually powerless.

The question that follows is based upon assumed acceptance of the affirmations that have been made. The absolute truthfulness of those affirmations compels the Apostle to reason in this manner.

Much of the preaching of our day is covered with the shroud of doubt. Speakers appear to be unsure of

themselves, and they deliver words that have not been burned into their heart and conscience. Too often an atmosphere of uncertainty is the result, where no solid convictions are held, and no firm resolves are made toward the Lord. It is imperative that the people of God rid themselves of influences that contribute to such uncertainty.

#### IF YE BE DEAD

*“. . . if ye be dead with Christ . . .”*

Other versions read, *“if you died with Christ,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“If you have died with Christ,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“Since you died with Christ,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“If with Christ you died,”* <sup>ESV</sup> *“If you have really died with Christ,”* <sup>NJB</sup> and *“If, then, ye did die with Christ.”* <sup>YLT</sup>

as a requirement, than an ordinance in which marvelous things were actually accomplished. **It was not enough that the Colossians were baptized. They were not to rest in that alone.** Now they are brought to reason upon their baptism.

This is death TO sin, **not** death IN sin! Believers are reason upon the basis of this death. As it is written, *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom 6:11). We have also become *“dead to the Law,”* with its condemnation and ordinances (Rom 7:4). **In Jesus we died to sin and to the world order.** We are

**It is not enough to know the facts of a matter. We must also be able to reason upon them – to build sound thoughts and conclusions upon the foundation of truth. An unthinking people is invariably a people dominated by sin.**

He is referring to the death that was realized at the time of our baptism. This is not the death **in** trespasses and sins from which we were quickened (Eph 2:1,5; Col 1:13). Rather, this is the death into which we were inducted by our union with Christ. Thus he speaks of being *“dead WITH Christ.”* The sixth chapter of Romans refers to this death with Christ in these words, *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were **baptized into His death?**”* (Rom 6:3). And again, *“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death”* (Rom 6:4). And again, *“For he that is dead is freed from sin”* (Rom 6:7). And again, *“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him”* (Rom 6:8).

**The issue here is not whether or not we should die with Christ, but whether or not we are actually dead with Him.** This casts a light upon baptism to which many are not accustomed. Too many of my former acquaintances have viewed baptism more

no longer under the dominion of sin and the world, and are therefore no longer obligated to them.

Paul refers to this death when speaking of his own crucifixion. **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me”** (Gal 2:20). Again he testifies, *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom **the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world**”* (Gal 6:14). He will now reason upon one aspect of this death.

#### THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD

*“. . . from the rudiments of the world . . .”* Other versions read, *“from the basic principles of the world,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“to the elementary principles of the world,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“elemental spirits of the universe,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“the rules of the world,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“ordinances of the world,”* <sup>GENEVA</sup> and *“elemental powers of the world.”* <sup>NAB</sup>

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these superior realities.

**SUBJECT TO ORDINANCES**

“... are ye subject to ordinances.” Other versions read, “subject yourselves to regulations,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “submit yourselves to decrees,”<sup>NASB</sup> “submit to rules,”<sup>NIV</sup> “under the authority of orders,”<sup>BBE</sup> “burdened with traditions,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “still let rules dictate to you,”<sup>NJB</sup> and “keep on following the rules of the world.”<sup>NLT</sup>

At this point, the Spirit embarks on an exposition of spiritual life that sharply conflicts with much that parades itself under the banner of “Christian.” **If you were to remove the element of “rules” and “regulations” from the religious arena, there would not be much left.** Whole “ministries” would suddenly become defunct. Understand, we are speaking of rules and regulations that men have **imposed** upon others, and by which believers in Christ are judged by men. These are not procedures that Jesus has imposed upon the church, but precepts of strictly human origin. They are set forth as a means to being godly, controlling the flesh, and acquiring spiritual growth.

**Our text will dogmatically**

**affirm that such “ordinances” are NOT the Divinely appointed means of subduing the flesh, growing in grace, or in any way acquiring spiritual maturity.**

It at once becomes obvious that

beyond such regulations, for it immediately addresses the real issues relating to life and godliness. Submission to the rules and regulations of reference actually contradicts the newness of life. It is not the proper response of a person who is “dead with Christ.” It does not fit in

**If you were to remove the element of “rules” and “regulations” from the religious arena, there would not be much left**

these “ordinances,” “regulations,” or “rules,” have to do with life in **this world.** They do **not** relate to being seated in heavenly places. They have nothing to do with fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9) or the “communion of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 13:14). **God does not work through them or honor them, and Satan is not neutralized by them.** These are not means in which angelic ministers become active. God has not committed His grace and truth to work through these means.

This is precisely why the question is asked, “Why are ye subject to ordinances?” Death with Christ moves us

with the truth of the “circumcision of Christ.” That is what makes submission to such regulation such a serious matter. The Spirit will now elaborate on this.

**CLARIFICATION**

Once again, let it be clear that our text is speaking about rules imposed upon the people of God. These regulations are represented as an appropriate means to reach Divinely appointed goals, or aims. People are affirmed to be the better for submitting to them, and the worse for not doing so. They are set forth as helping a person draw closer to God, and more effectively fulfill His Word.

**THE RELIGION OF PROHIBITION**

“<sup>21</sup> **Touch not; taste not; handle not.**” Other versions read, “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “Which say there may be no touching, tasting, or taking in your hands,”<sup>BBE</sup> “Do not pick up this, do not eat that, do not touch the other.”<sup>NJB</sup>

The words are in a sort of ascendancy, becoming more stringent from word to word. They are doubtless referring to the rules regarding various foods and drinks by which some of the saints were being judged. It is as though they said, “Do not take it, do not even taste it, do not so much as touch it!”

**CARE MUST BE TAKEN**

Care must be taken in the handling of this passage. **It is not a declaration of license, but the announcement that we are not**

**bound to obey the rules men have trumped up.** There are **Divine** prohibitions that are to be honored, from which we are not excluded. Here are a few of them.

✦ “That ye **abstain** from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (Acts 15:29).

✦ “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and **touch not** the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor 6:17).

✦ “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should **abstain** from fornication” (1 Thess 4:3).

✦ “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess 5:22).

✦ “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, **abstain** from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11).

✦ “And **be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit**” (Eph 5:18).

There are things in this world that have a defiling effect – such as fornication and evil. There are also things that are prohibited to us because of their association with life – like the eating of blood. For those with no understanding, such as newly converted Gentiles, there are meats that, when eaten, can lead one to the worship of idols – such as meats offered to idols (1 Cor 8:7).

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**THE REAL POINT**

The point here is that the essence of true religion is not found in what we do **not** do. Ours is not a religion of mere prohibition. Neither, indeed, are we commended to God upon the basis of such things as food. Thus it is written, *“But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse”* (1 Cor 8:8). **The defilement comes from the impact such things have upon the conscience** (1 Cor 8:7).

**SOME EXAMPLES**

An example of prohibitive religion is found in Paul’s description of a time of apostasy. *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

*Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer”* (1 Tim 4:1-5). This type of prohibition was formalized by Roman Catholicism, and for many years has been bound upon their people. In recent years, they have relaxed their laws concerning meats.

Another example is the manner in which the Pharisees taught the people, binding upon them prohibitions that God had not given. Jesus said of them, *“For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers”* (Mat 23:4).

There was also the *“tradition of the elders,”* vigorously maintained by Jewish zealots. *“For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables”* (Mark 7:3-4).

Under a system of Law, all of these things are ends of themselves. Honoring these rules was thought to produce some spiritual advantage, or put one in a more favorable posture before the Lord. **All of them could be done without the involvement of the heart.** None of them required faith in God, or a love for God. Whatever may be said of them, they did not serve to strengthen man’s spirit.

**EMPHASIZING WHAT IS PERISHING**

<sup>22a</sup> *Which all are to perish with the using . . .* Other versions read, *“which all concern things which perish with the using,”* NKJV *“which all refer to things destined to perish with the using,”* NASB *“These are all destined to perish with use,”* NIV *“All these regulations refer to things that perish with use,”* NRSV *“rules which are all to come to an end with their use,”* BBE *“and all about things which perish even while they are being used,”* NJB and *“Such rules are mere human teaching about things that are gone as soon as we use them.”* NLT

You might call this the practical side of religion. **If practical matters are reduced to how we deal with perishing things, then we are off on the wrong foot.** Kingdom practicality is

not found in handling or not handling perishing things. Rather, it is found in the acquisition of things that do not perish: the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), adding to our faith (2 Pet 1:5-8), seeking things that are above (Col 3:1-2), running with patience the race set before us (Heb 12:1-2), and laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12).

We have been called to obtain an *“eternal inheritance”* (Heb 9:15). **We cannot, therefore, become preoccupied with things that are destined to pass away.** In particular, our religion must not find its culmination in things pertaining to this world.

We are dealing with spiritual perspective here. Let no one imagine for a

moment that those in Christ are indifferent toward perishing things, living as though they did not even exist. How poignantly this is stated in First Corinthians: *“And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away”* (1 Cor 7:31). Other versions read, *“Those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away”* (1 Cor 7:31). **The idea is that we refuse to become absorbed into this present evil world, for it will pull us away from heaven.** In Christ, we are being *“changed from glory unto glory,”* moving toward an eternal goal while possessing eternal life. **In that posture, inordinate attachment to this world becomes lethal.**

Attachment to this world does not always come by means of enslavement to sinful habits. It can also come by having a religion that deals primarily with what is in this world instead of what is in heaven. That is the chief weakness of the ordinances and regulations against which we are being warned. **They make you more conscious of this world than the world to come.** They demand that

**If practical matters are reduced to how we deal with perishing things, then we are off on the wrong foot. Kingdom practicality is not found in handling or not handling perishing things.**

more attention be given to the body that to the soul. They require less of Jesus and more of fleshly effort.

**If our way of thinking and our emphasis has no place in heaven, it is not appropriate for this world either.** If the things to which we give our

heart, soul, mind, and strength here, making them our emphasis, will have no place in glory, they cannot be an appropriate **emphasis** now.

Inherent in this reasoning is the fact that our spirits cannot be made better by attention to the things of this world –

even if they are lawful. Worldly disciplines cannot bring you closer to God, or gain a greater degree of favor from Him. **You cannot become more pleasing to God simply by refraining from this or that – even when it is necessary to do so.** This is a perception that must register upon the conscience of us all.

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## THE COMMANDMENTS AND DOCTRINES OF MEN

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“<sup>22b</sup> . . . **after the commandments and doctrines of men?**” Other versions read, “*according to the commandments and doctrines of men,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*because they are based upon human commands and teachings,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*they are simply human commands and teachings,*”<sup>NRSV</sup> and “*according to human precepts and doctrines.*”<sup>RSV</sup>

It is the **source** of these rules and regulations that is their weakness. They have not come from God, but from men. Men may affirm they are based upon Scripture, yet it is their own thinking that has created their conclusions.

Even under the Law, the people of God were faced with the debilitating effects of doctrines taught by men. Isaiah wrote, “*Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men*” (Isa 29:13). Other versions read, “*And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men,*”<sup>NIV</sup> and “*their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote.*”<sup>NRSV</sup> Referring to this passage, Jesus said of His generation, “*But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Mat 15:9). Again He said to the Pharisees, “*Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye*” (Mark 7:13).

A religion of this type moves one to neglect the Word of God itself, finding refuge in the traditions, doctrines, and regulations of men. The individual thus

becomes expert in a sectarian line of thinking, but miserably ignorant concerning the Word of God Himself.

Let no one imagine for single moment that such an approach is innocent and harmless. Jesus said it voided the worship dictated by those rules, and made the Word of God of none effect. **That is, God neither occupies nor works within an environment**

matter in the following verses.

### TRUE PRACTICALITY

There is, indeed, a practical side to “*true religion.*” That aspect of spiritual life, however is NOT placed into the hands of men. **God has not licensed experts in this world to solve the problems of humanity.** I am going to be dogmatic on this point because of its importance. The religious book stores of

**That is, God neither occupies nor works within an environment created by the wisdom of men. The implications of this are staggering, but you do well to think upon it.**

**created by the wisdom of men.** The implications of this are staggering, but you do well to think upon it.

Remember, it has been affirmed that we are “*complete*” in Christ. **Nothing can be added to Him to make our lives more spiritually productive or acceptable!** There is no rule, discipline, or procedure conceived by men – regardless of their seeming spirituality – that can give you the advantage in the good fight of faith and the appropriation of eternal life.

I will concede that there are some disciplines that may assist a person in keeping sin from erupting. However, the subduing of the flesh is in order to the appropriation of the blessing of God. **If that appropriation does not take place, the forceful subduement of the external expressions of sin are worthless.** I will say more about this

this country are filled with books that provide purported secrets to a successful life. They use Scripture, yet the Scriptures do not say what they affirm. There are also all manner of religious professionals who are quite willing to offer you a solution to any dilemma in your life. Of course, all of these experts charge for their services.

The Word of God unveils to us heaven’s provision for the practical side of spiritual life – the “*how-to*” of it, if you please. A very succinct statement of this is found in the epistle of First John. After affirming that those in Christ have received an “*Unction,*” or anointing (1 John 2:20), we are told that **this is the appointed means of instructing us in areas not placed under man’s control.** That is, even though men are employed in the matter of bringing men to Christ and building them up in the faith (1 Cor 3:5), there is an area of life in

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which men are not the key contributors. This is, in fact, what men would call the “how-to” aspect of life. **As unconventional as it may seem to say this, men are not the appointed**

✚ **No need for man to teach you.** This is not a prohibition of teachers, for God has placed them in the church – and nothing He puts in it is unnecessary (1 Cor 12:28). Rather,

points to Christ, and awakens desires to please Him. He gives a proper perception of Christ, self, and the world.

✚ **As you learn from Him, you abide in Christ.** Here is the objective that is to be achieved in the “how-to” of spiritual life. It is to “abide in Him” – that is, in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is something that must be done if we are to be saved (John 15:1-8).

**As unconventional as it may seem to say this, men are not the appointed interpreters of “how-to” live acceptable lives.**

interpreters of “how-to” live acceptable lives.

this affirms that there is an area in which human teachers have not been given the key ministry.

**The point of our text is that no rule or regulation made by men can enable you to “abide” in Christ.** Such rules are ineffectual in the “heavenly places” where we were placed in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6). They do not reach deep enough in man, where the “thoughts and intents of the heart” are found (Heb 4:12).

Here is affirmation of the Spirit: *“But the Anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same Anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as It hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him”* (1 John 2:27). Notice the powerful assertions of this text.

✚ **The Anointing teaches you.** The Spirit Himself teaches the individual “of all things,” “concerning all things,” <sup>NKJV</sup> or “about all things.” <sup>NASB</sup> That is, He takes the things God has affirmed and opens them to the individual. This is the “how to” of spiritual life. It is how the Spirit “leads” us in the subduing of the flesh (Rom 8:13).

**The Lord has reserved the personal direction of His people as His own ministry.** That is involved in Christ being the “Good Shepherd” (John 10:11) and the “Captain of our salvation” (Heb 2:10). **No rule, however wise it may appear, can do what Jesus has been assigned to do through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.** Blessed is the person who learns this! Once grasped, genuine growth will be realized.

✚ **The Anointing abides in you.** It is understood that this Anointing is the Holy Spirit, given to every child of God (Gal 4:6). The point is not merely to receive the Spirit, but for Him to abide, or remain, in you.

✚ **What the Anointing teaches you is the truth, and not a lie.** What the Spirit teaches is flawless, and perfectly adapted to the nature of spiritual life. He accents the Word,

### THE SHOW OF WISDOM

<sup>23a</sup> **Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body . . .**”

<sup>NKJV</sup> “which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom,” <sup>NASB</sup> “seem to have a sort of wisdom,” <sup>BBE</sup> “they have a semblance of wisdom,” <sup>NAB</sup> and “In these rules you can indeed find what seems to make good sense.” <sup>NJB</sup>

to life and godliness, they are not really wise. They are not recognized in heaven as appropriate guidelines for those who live by faith.

The matter before us is of such consequence that the Spirit labors, as it was, to bring it home to our hearts. **This is something that we must see!** It will be difficult for some, for it flies in the face of nearly all contemporary Christianity. However, as you test this teaching, and search the Scriptures to see if it is so, it will be confirmed to your heart.

The rules and regulations of reference are not stupid or foolish in their appearance. It seems that these regulations promote godliness and a high regard for the will of God. They make a lot of sense, and no flaw is apparent in them. They have the appearance of being wise suggestions and good rules. However, the “appearance of wisdom” is not real wisdom! It just looks like wisdom. **That is, it is not wise in regards to the purpose of God.** In matters pertaining

**We will find that their wisdom is on the wrong level.** That level is of the earth, not of heaven. It has too much man in it, and too little God. These are not rules the Holy Spirit works with. They are not guidelines for which the intercession of Jesus is made. They do not fit into the “whole armor of God,” and are not a part of “the fruit of the Spirit.” They will not enable a person to “abide in Christ.”

**A SHOW OF WISDOM**  
*“Which things have indeed a show of wisdom . . .”* Other versions read, “indeed have an appearance of wisdom,”

**Rules and regulations created by men and their traditions are like**

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a network of entanglements that snare the soul. They become an end of themselves, and therefore prohibit growth into Christ in all things.

**WILL WORSHIP**

“... in will worship...” Other versions read, “self-imposed religion,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “self-made religion,”<sup>NASB</sup> “self-imposed worship,”<sup>NIV</sup> “sel-imposed piety,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “self-ordered worship,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “superstition.”<sup>DOUAY</sup>

“Will worship” is self-invented worship – a way of serving God that has proceeded from the human will rather than from God Himself. The word translated “worship” is ἐθειλοθηρηκεία (eth-elo-thraok-ei-a), and is used only here in Scripture. It does not mean “worship” in the conventional sense of the word, but “piety” – or a life that is offered to God. Several versions use the word “religion,” which is proper, for it refers to the external or outward form of spiritual life.

**The point is that the rules men have created and bound upon others, move men to express themselves in a stereotyped manner, according to set routines and procedures.** On the one hand, the elaborate liturgies of Catholicism and Orthodox churches are examples of such things. On the other extreme, the modern praise movement offers an excellent example self-imposed routines. Much of it is nothing more than an empty routine.

Keep in mind, these are rules that are being bound upon others. Our text does not remove the liberty of approaching the Lord in heartfelt ways that may not have been specifically outlined in Scripture. **When such routines, however, are taught to others, supposing that they will bring the person closer to the Lord, or make them more pious before Him, an unlawful thing has been done.**

Also, these are matters that are primarily external. They are not primarily matters of the heart, but of the body.

**HUMILITY**

“... and humility...” Other versions read “false humility,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “self-abasement,”<sup>NASB</sup> and “making little of oneself.”<sup>BBE</sup>

This is not true humility. It is not a humility that results from the awareness of Lord, the persuasion of faith, and the perception of God’s grace. While real humility is found on the inside,

its sinful inclinations. Others fasted for long periods of time, imagining that the harsh treatment of the body would lessen its desires, thus making the person more godly. Of course, no such teaching is found in the Word of God, although many have thought such things are suggested.

This approach to living for the Lord is not what Paul was referring to when he said, “I buffet [“beat”<sup>NIV</sup>] my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified [“a castaway”<sup>KJV</sup>”<sup>NASB</sup> (1 Cor 9:27). **The idea is that Paul**

**The point is that the rules men have created and bound upon others, move men to express themselves in a stereotyped manner, according to set routines and procedures.**

the humility of this verse starts on the outside, with the delusion that it can somehow work itself into the inside. **The truth of the matter is that there is no outward procedure, however impressive, that can touch, strengthen, and encourage the heart.** If humility is not a basic part of man’s nature, anything that appears humble on the outside is only feigned. It is not real before God.

**NEGLECTING OF THE BODY**

“... and neglecting of the body...” Other versions read, “severe treatment of the body,”<sup>NASB</sup> “harsh treatment of the body,”<sup>NIV</sup> “being cruel to the body,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “not sparing the body.”<sup>DOUAY</sup>

This approach is practiced within monastic approaches to religion. The monks of old often flagellated, or beat, their bodies, thinking this would subdue

**made his body serve him, rather than him serving his body.** That is the intent of the older translation “keep under my body.” While the word translated “keep under” etymologically means “strike beneath the eye, to give a black eye,”<sup>THAYER</sup> its use here denotes strict control, not outward punishment. It refers more to the mortification of the flesh, or “body of sin,” than to pounding on the body.

Should an individual, because of acquaintance with his own devices, choose to deprive the body of things that tends to awakens sinful desires, that would not be wrong – in fact, for him it would be right. However, to pass that along to others as the way to be holy would be wrong. Further, to assume that such conduct makes the individual more holy would also be entirely out of order. At best they subdue the outbreak of sin.

**POWERLESS RELIGION**

<sup>23b</sup> ... not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.” Other versions read, “but are of no value against the

indulgence of the flesh,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence,”<sup>NIV</sup> “but they are of no value

in checking self-indulgence,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh,”<sup>ESV</sup> “they are of

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*no value against gratification of the flesh,*"<sup>NAB</sup> and *"But they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person's evil thoughts and desires."*<sup>NLT</sup>

**NOT IN ANY HONOR**

The phrase "not in any honor" means **ineffective**, or not yielding any truly honorable results. We would say "not of any value." That is, there is a Divinely appointed objective that cannot be met in this manner. This is not the way to achieve what must be done.

This is another way of

ineffective. It cannot restrain the flesh, or subdue its inclinations. In fact, it has a way of making them all the worse. **If God's holy and just law could not subdue sin within, who is the fool who will imagine the laws of men can do so.** Sin gains its strength from law. As it is written, *"the strength of sin is the law"* (1 Cor 15:56). Paul said of the Law, *"But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead"* (Rom 7:8). Again he said of the Law, *"when the commandment came sin revived"* (Rom 7:9).

*the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind"* (Eph 4:22-23).

✚ *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice"* (Eph 4:31)

✚ **"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry"** (Col 3:5).

✚ *"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth"* (Col 3:8).

✚ *"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings"* (1 Pet 2:1).

Our text is saying that these requirements cannot be met by means of a man-made rule or procedure. There is no fleshly discipline than can satisfy these necessities. It makes no difference how wise it may appear, and what kind of justification is offered in support of it, it cannot do what God has demanded of you!

**The ordinances of men do not promote godliness.** They do not make men holy. They do not resolve the problem of sin. They cannot crucify the flesh or mortify the deeds of the body. They cannot make you acceptable to God, or draw you closer to Christ. They cannot make sin distasteful or heaven attractive.

If religious exercises do not help a person subdue sin, they have no value!

**JESUS CAN**

After all is said and done, God has provided a redemption that can accomplish all of these things. **This is because it is being administered by the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily.** Through Christ, all of the requirements of God can be fulfilled – and happily and satisfyingly so. The flesh can be subdued, the inner man can be strengthened, and the inheritance can be obtained. **However, without Him, no**

**This is another way of referring to religion without power. This is a religion that can be embraced by unregenerate people, who are not reconciled to God, and in whom the Holy Spirit does not reside.**

**referring to religion without power.** This is a religion that can be embraced by unregenerate people, who are not reconciled to God, and in whom the Holy Spirit does not reside. Paul said of this kind of religion, *"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,"* or *"They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly"*<sup>NLT</sup> (2 Tim 3:5).

In our time, the church world has been inundated with ineffective religion. **With more Christian "how-to" books than the world has ever seen, and more religious specialists than scarcely thought conceivable, churches have more self-help and recovery ministries than they have ever had before.** There are more Christian educational institutes, more workshops and more experts in human relationships. Yet, it has not stemmed the tide of sin or the appetites of *"sinful flesh."* Paul would say of the whole conglomeration of religious tips and procedures, *"they are without honor!"*

**TO THE SATISFYING OF THE FLESH**

The Spirit does not leave us guessing as to WHY the rules-and-regulations approach to religion is

Here is the unvarnished truth of the matter: **sin cannot be subdued by Law!** It cannot be controlled by rules, ordinances, and regulations. If this was possible, the Law would not have been ended as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4).

**THE NECESSITY OF CHANGE**

Here is a matter that those who promote procedures have not acknowledged. First, a fundamental change must take place within man. Those who *"have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom 3:23) cannot be made acceptable by a man-made rule or procedure. They must be born again (John 3:3-8). They must become a *"new creation"* (2 Cor 5:17).

Second, in the power of the new creation, sin must be subdued. How frequently this is stated.

✚ *"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live"* (Rom 8:13).

✚ *"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to*

**matter how rigorous the procedures embraced, such things will not and cannot be realized.**

It is time for the Lord Jesus to be preached as all-sufficient – the One in whom we are “complete.” Nothing is

lacking in Him. Everything we need is obtained from Him, and we are personally sustained by Him. Believe it!

## CONCLUSION

The passage we have just reviewed confirms that anything originating from man, regardless of its seemingly wise appearance, can contribute nothing of eternal value to the child of God. **While all manner of objections may be raised against this conclusion, and weighty defenses of human abilities be presented, the fact remains that those who have fallen cannot themselves present a suitable remedy for that fall.** If men want to come to God, they must be brought by Jesus, for He is “*the Way*.” If any message is adopted whereby the mind is illuminated and the heart stabilized, it must come through Jesus Christ, who is “*the Truth*.” If anything is received that makes for response to God, the ability to hear Him, and grow up into Christ, it must be received from the hand of Jesus, who is “*the Life*.”

God will not allow anything that does not come from Jesus to be instrumental causing us to be accepted by Him, or dwell forever in the house of the Lord. The “*fulness of the Godhead*” dwells in Christ, and in Christ alone. If we are going to receive of His fulness, we must receive it from Him. No procedure will do. There is no liturgy that can confer life. There is no life discipline of human origin that can make one better in the eyes of God – no rule or regulation conceived by man that can measure whether or not we are approved of God.

**At the point the heart is not involved, or the conscience is not aware of the eye of the Lord as well as the need for His grace, mere religious routine is being expressed.** It is imperative that the people of God see this. Religious routine does not bring an awareness of the need for Christ, and where that awareness is not found, Jesus

business. Whole professed ministries would come crashing down to the ground, for they depend upon the people being lifeless, helpless, and in a state of misery and need. If you can see it, a considerable percentage of modern Christian professions and ministries rely on the people being morally weak and spiritually ignorant.

**At the point the heart is not involved, or the conscience is not aware of the eye of the Lord as well as the need for His grace, mere religious routine is being expressed.**

will not minister. In fact, as illustrated in Israel, the Lord is actually repulsed by heartless routine (Isa 1:11-15; Jer 6:20; Amos 5:21-23).

Spiritual Babylon could not exist without lifeless routine. It is essential to the maintenance of its walls and the promulgation of its existence.

Were the professed church to suddenly tap into the Divine provisions that are in Christ Jesus, countless religious professionals would be put out of

In such a framework, rules and regulations appear quite valuable. However where the life of the Spirit is evident they, at the very best, are a sort of beginning beyond which every soul must pass.

It is time for the people of God to take a stand on the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ, refusing to allow the wisdom of men to direct how they live. Salvation makes full provision for those who obtain it through faith. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is lacking in Christ.

**Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. (Col 2:16-23, NIV)**

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Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/23/2004. In this session, we will be covering verses 1-4 of the third chapter. The title of our lesson is, "THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE." There are eternal verities that cannot be accessed in the earth – things that are essential life with God now, and in the world to come. It is imperative that our hearts and minds are focused and, and sensitive to, these realities, which are affirmed to be "above," where Jesus is presently seated. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

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**COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>**

**PLAN NOW TO ATTEND THE NEXT  
REFRESHING WATERS RENEWAL #15**

**Theme: "THE LOVE OF GOD"**

**August 3-5, 2003 (Tuesday thru Thursday)**

**Pray we will be able to hold it in the  
Joplin area.**