

A Study of Colossians 2

I. Outline.

1. Not Carnality by Christ (Colossians 3.1-11).
2. Character of the New Man (Colossians 3.12-17).
3. The Christian Home (Colossians 3.18-25).

--NKJV Headings

II. Summary.

“Paul praised the brethren for their faith in Christ and the love that they manifested toward all the saints (Col 1.4). However, as our text will clearly show, Paul had also been alerted to a growing problem that threatened the very well-being of the Lord’s church at Colossae. Armed with this information, Paul did not hesitate to express his concern that someone would ‘beguile’ the brethren with ‘enticing words’ (Col 2.14). The precise identity of the problem at Colossae has been contested for centuries. What was it that the Colossians were being enticed to believe, and by whom were they being seduced? A number of internal clues help to answer these questions. In general, we can be certain that, whatever its exact identity may have been, the false doctrine besetting the church at Colossae was ‘not after Christ’ (Col 2.8). It was a philosophy owing its origin (and basic principles) to mere human wisdom and human traditions. Herein lay the real danger: The doctrine detracted in some form or fashion from the centrality, adequacy, and supremacy of Jesus Christ. More specifically, it appears that the doctrine was modeled, to some degree, after Judaism in that it emphasized (1) the practice of circumcision (Col 2.11-12); (2) the observance of Jewish holy days (Col 2.16); and, (3) a restricted diet concerning food and drink (Col 2.16). Additionally, the doctrine went beyond Judaism by exaggerating the power and position of angels, even to the point of promoting the worship of angelic beings (Col 2.18). Finally, the doctrine was patterned after the ‘commandments and doctrines of men,’ which gave heavy emphasis to the idea that neglecting the flesh makes one more spiritual (Col 2.20-23). Such are the circumstances that occasioned Paul’s inspired letter to the Colossians” [B.J. Clarke, “An Exhortation and a Warning (Col 2.1-12),” in *Studies in Philipians and Colossians*, Editor: Dub McClish, 2000, p. 132].

III. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Church.

If you are not familiar with the 15 Bible Periods, please click here:

<https://maplehillchurchofchrist.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/15bibleperiods.pdf>

IV. Words/Phrases to Study

Colossians 2.2-3... “Man is searching for knowledge and wisdom through a multitude of means. He will not find them until he comes to Jesus wherein those things are revealed. Paul was especially concerned that the Colossian brethren know true wisdom is found in Christ because there were false teachers who would seduce them with false reasoning that sounded good but had no substance in truth. Though Paul was not with them bodily, he could say he was with them in spirit. Through the reports of others, like Epaphras, he could see their works and rejoice that they had kept their lines straight and presented a solid front before the enemy. Surely this

suggests an active faith that is held steadfast and not mere belief (Colossians 2:3-5)." [Gary C. Hamton, *The Sufficiency of Christ*, an e-Sword Module].

Colossians 2:2... THAT THEIR HEARTS MIGHT BE COMFORTED—"He regards the danger to which they were exposed and the afflictions which they endured and by mention of these prepares them for his exhortation" [J.W. Shepherd, *GA Commentary*, p. 273].

Colossians 2.3... TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE—"The false teachers threatening the Colossians claimed to possess a secret wisdom and transcendent knowledge available only to the spiritual elite. In sharp contrast, Paul declared that all the richness of truth necessary for salvation, sanctification, and glorification is found in Jesus Christ, who himself is God revealed. Cf., John 1.14; Romans 11.33-36; 1 Corinthians 1.24, 30; 1 Cor 2.6-8; Ephesians 1.8-9; Eph 3.8-9." [John MacArthur, *ESV MacArthur Study Bible*, loc263155].

Colossians 2:8-12... "Philosophy means a way or principle of life. If we accept a way of life and belief which comes only from the thinking and logic of men, we will not be following Christ, and we cannot expect to be saved in heaven. Some taught in those days that men should believe other ideas besides those which the inspired apostles taught. Much of this had to do with their belief in the existence of other deities or gods. They believed that the movement of the stars and heavenly bodies affected human life. There were Greek philosophies and Jewish errors. All of this had somewhat to do with the problems in the Colossian congregation. Paul reminds them that Christ is their supreme head and that the fullness of the Godhead bodily resided in him. To counteract the Jewish insistence that Christians must still accept circumcision, Paul said they had received a circumcision when they were baptized. This was the removing of sin from their lives" [Warder Novak, "Paul Warns of Dangerous Philosophies," in *Gospel Advocate*, 4/21/1977, p. 243].

Colossians 2:9... FOR IN HIM DWELLETH ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY—"You must not be drawn from Christ. He is all in all. In him is the divine fullness (all divine power). In him as revealed was God in bodily form. Compare John 1:14" [B.W. Johnson, *The People's New Testament*].

Colossians 2.11... IN WHOM ALSO YE ARE CIRCUMCISED—"The Jews stressed the importance of a physical circumcision. In Christ, sinful ways, to which our fleshly desires lead, are cut off. The 'circumcision of Christ' may be his death on the cross which made it possible for our sins to be put away from us. Or, it may refer to the putting away that is done when one yields to Christ. The circumcision of our body of sins, as it was described by Paul in the previous verse, is accomplished in baptism. Note, Paul says we are buried in baptism, which would eliminate sprinkling or pouring. When we are raised out of the watery grave, we are cleansed because we showed faith in God's power to take away sin. Certainly, the God who could raise Jesus from the dead can rescue us from the spiritual death" [Gary C. Hampton].

Colossians 2:12... BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM—"The putting off the body of the flesh or the true spiritual circumcision was effected by being buried with him in baptism. This implies that they were dead to sin through faith in Christ" [David Lipscomb, *GA Commentary*, p. 279].

THROUGH FAITH IN THE OPERATION OF GOD—"I get very frustrated when religious people claim that baptism is a "work of human merit, an attempt to earn salvation". And then I look at what the denominational world has put in the place of baptism: (a) Mere mental assent-which never saved anyone (John 12:42-43; James 2:24). (b) The mourners bench-praying through. Praying didn't save Paul or Cornelius. And praying through is a whole lot more 'work' than simply allowing oneself to be

baptized. (c) Praying for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, even when actually possessed, didn't save the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:47). And if you want to talk about 'work,' just watch the 'work' that people put into praying for the baptism of the Holy Spirit" [Mark Dunagan, *Mark Dunagan Commentaries*, an e-Sword Module].

Colossians 2:14... NAILING IT TO THE CROSS—"The whole of the Mosaic law, including the commandments written on stones (2 Cor. 3:7), was taken out of the way, nailed to the cross, and is no longer in force as a law in any of its parts. In the new covenant many laws that were in the old covenant were re-enacted and are to be obeyed not because they were in the old, but because they are in the new" [David Lipscomb, p. 281]. ||||| **DRL NOTE:** *Please consider the following excerpt from an excellent lecture on this section of Colossians in the 2000 Annual Denton Lectures Book. There are those among us who are wanting to have something new to teach, and so they are telling us we have been misusing this passage all of these years when we have used it as the abrogation of the Old Law. Not so, the documentation is given here in this portion of Denham's lecture.* "The 'handwriting of ordinances' refers to the law of Moses. **It has frequently been noted that the word handwriting is from a Greek term that is used as a 'technical term for a written acknowledgement of debt.'** Deissmann finds this in the papyri. As C. F. D. Moule observes, the word was used often in the Koine period of 'an `I.O.U.,' a statement of indebtedness, personally signed by the debtor.' Some commentators, as C. F. D. Moule and his father Handley C. G. Moule, see it here as referring both to the law of Moses (for the Jew) and to what law existed under patriarchy (for the Gentile). Those holding to this view appeal to the fact that the Colossians were for the most part of the "uncircumcision" and hence, Gentiles, as noted earlier. However, **their position ignores the Judaizing element of the Colossian heresy in which they had evidently become partakers.** The 'ordinances' to which Paul later refers contemplate Jewish observances. The Colossian Gentiles had adopted the Jewish law and custom to a certain extent and had combined these with their pagan mysteries and mysticism, as well as the imported Greek philosophy which had filtered in from the time of Alexander the Great (4th century B.C.). A. T. Robertson identifies the heresy as 'an incipient Gnosticism,' which in a fuller form would trouble the church in Asia Minor into the second and third centuries A.D. Robertson shows that a strong Jewish element was coupled with pagan mysticism in the Colossian heresy, but fails to realize the force of this in Col. 2:14, in which he contends that it is the Gnostic teaching which has created the 'bond of indebtedness' that was cancelled at the cross. William Hendriksen properly observes that 'in the clearly parallel passage (Eph. 2:15) what has been abolished through the cross is not "a certificate of indebtedness with our signature on it" but "the law of commandments with its requirements".' Hendriksen, quoting F. W. Beare, adds, 'It represents simply the law as a written code.' The Judaizers, who had heavily influenced the Colossians, had brought them into bondage of the law of Moses and, thus, Paul sought to impress upon the minds of his readers the fact that the law was no longer extant as the rule of faith and practice for anyone, let alone Gentiles! The word rendered 'ordinances' refers to the 'decrees' and commands of that document. These were 'against us' and 'contrary to us' in that the law 'condemned, but could not save.' Christ, Paul says, 'has taken away' the handwriting with the force of putting it out of sight. The perfect tense 'stands in contrast to the aorist in this section and fixes attention on the present state of freedom resulting from the action which was especially before the apostle's mind.' As W. H. Griffith-Thomas observes, the perfect finite verb expresses 'the feeling of relief at completion,'

which condition still remained. The aorist participle rendered 'nailing' is modal and emphasizes the means by which the law was taken out of the way. It was nailed by Christ to His cross and so died with Him. The cross then became the source for forgiveness, salvation, freedom, and peace. Not only this, but it also became the place of victory over the powerful spiritual enemies of God as is introduced through the next aorist participle" [Daniel Denham, "Holding Fast the Head (Col 2.13-23)," in *Studies in Philipians and Colossians*, Edited by Dub McClish, 2000, p. 147].

Colossians 2:18... **LET NO MAN BEGUILE YOU**—"This 'oriental mysticism,' as Rex Turner describes, posed a real danger to the well-being of the Colossians. The verb rendered 'beguile' might be more clearly rendered 'defraud.' It is from [*katabrabeuo*], which properly denotes: 'to decide as umpire against one, to declare him unworthy of the prize; to defraud of the prize of victory.' Thus, metaphorically it is used to mean, 'to deprive of salvation,' as Thayer notes of this particular text. Jay P. Green's interlinear renders the entire clause, 'Let no one cheat you out of your reward.'" [Daniel Denham, p. 149].

Colossians 2:20-22... "...contains Paul's warning against asceticism (Asceticism is the voluntary self-denial or abuse of the body for religious reasons). The reason for which we should disregard all rules about self-denial of the body is that all of these are man-made, and we Christians have died to all the rudiments of this world. We hold only to the things Christ has commanded (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:9)" [Wilbur Fields, *College Press Commentary*, p. 197].

Colossians 2:23... **WILL WORSHIP**—"Will-worship is after our own will. It is self-chosen, and for this single reason is a departure from allegiance to God" [David Lipscomb, p. 287].

V. **Lessons & Applications.**

Colossians 2:1... **WHAT GREAT CONFLICT I HAVE FOR YOU**—The care of the churches, even those we've never seen, should be occupying an important place in our minds.

Colossians 2:4, 8... **LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BEGUILE YOU ... LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU**—We can certainly be led astray and we need constantly to be on guard against it.

Colossians 2:6... WALK with its prepositions.

- 1) WITH God (Genesis 5.24)—Companionship.
- 2) BEFORE God (Genesis 17.1)—Under His Divine Surveillance.
- 3) AFTER God (Deuteronomy 13.4)—Following the example of Christ (1 Peter 2.21).
- 4) IN Christ (Colossians 2.6)—The Sphere of our Activity.

Colossians 2:8... False doctrine can be venerated and disguised.

Colossians 2:8... Philosophies that spoil...

- 1) Humanism
- 2) Subjectivism
- 3) Communism
- 4) Darwinism—Evolution
- 5) Existentialism
- 6) Calvinism
- 7) Cultism
- 8) Denominationalism

Colossians 2:8-11... "And so Paul, using the vocabulary of the heretics, told the Colossian brethren that in Christ 'dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' With reference to circumcision,

he declared that in Christ they 'were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands.' In speaking of the attractive symbols of the 'mystery religions,' Paul explained that in baptism they were buried with Christ, and raised with him through faith. He further told them that the perfect mystery is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1.27). That in Christ 'are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden' (2.3), and in him all things and all people find completion and unity (1.18-23)" [Leslie G. Thomas, *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary*, 1967, p 49].

Colossians 2.10... AND YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM—"This means that one has no need for any kind of philosophy or tradition from men in order to be saved. All that is necessary to secure salvation is to be found in the Lord Jesus. There is a COMPLETION, a FILLING UP in Him, so as to leave nothing wanting. This is true in respect of (1) the wisdom needful to guide us; (2) the atonement to be made for sin; (3) the merit by which a sinner can be justified; (4) and the grace needful to sustain us in the trials, and to aid us in the duties of life. 'There is no necessity therefore that we should look to the aid of philosophy, as if there was a defect in the teaching of the Savior; or to human strength as if He was unable to save us; or to the merits of the saints, as if those of the Redeemer were not sufficient to meet our wants'" [Guy N. Woods, *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary*, 1946, pp., 74-75].

Colossians 2.12... BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM—Baptism is a burial.

Colossians 2.11-13... HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES—Baptism is essential to salvation.

Colossians 2.14-17... AND TOOK IT OUT OF THE WAY NAILING IT TO HIS CROSS—The Old Law has been abrogated.

Colossians 2.16... LET NO MAN THEREFORE JUDGE YOU IN RESPECT OF ... THE SABBATH DAYS—The Sabbath was INCLUDED in that abrogation.

Colossians 2.17... WHICH ARE A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME—"All of the feasts, festivals, and holidays of the Jews—even the temple itself—foretold the coming of Christ. They were never meant to inspire legalistic adherence to the law, but wholehearted, devoted faith in the coming Messiah" [Charles Stanley, *The Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible*, loc116083].

Colossians 2 & 3... The WITH HIM statements of Colossians 2 & 3...

- 1) Dead with Him (2.10).
- 2) Buried with Him (2.12).
- 3) Risen with Him (2.12; 3.1).
- 4) Quickened with Him (2.13).
- 5) Hid with Him (3.3).
- 6) Appear with Him in Glory (3.4).

Colossians 2.17... The Old Testament was a SHADOW of things to come.

- 1) Hebrews 8.2—Tabernacle/Church
- 2) 1 Peter 3.19-21—Salvation of Noah/Our Salvation
- 3) 1 Corinthians 10.1-13—Salvation of Israel/Our Salvation

Colossians 2.23... FOUR Kinds of Worship.

- 1) Will Worship (Col 2.23).
- 2) Vain Worship (Matthew 15.7-9).
- 3) Ignorant Worship (Acts 17.23).
- 4) Acceptable Worship (John 4.24).

VI. Questions.

True or False

- 01. ____ Paul speaks of being “dead with Christ” in this reading.
- 02. ____ The handwriting of ordinances has been nailed to the cross.
- 03. ____ Being buried together with Christ results in being made alive with Him and being forgiven of all trespasses.
- 04. ____ It is not possible that a Christian could be beguiled with enticing words.
- 05. ____ Paul speaks about TREASURES in this reading.

MATCHING

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 06. ____ Touch not | A. hath He quickened |
| 07. ____ And you, being dead... | B. of your reward |
| 08. ____ in Him dwelleth | C. all the fullness of the Godhead bodily |
| 09. ____ joying and beholding | D. Taste not; handle not |
| 10. ____ Let no man beguile you | E. your order |

Fill in the Blanks

- 11. Paul urged the Colossian saints to _____ in Christ Jesus, the Lord.
- 12. The verse showing that baptism is a burial is _____.
- 13. Evidently Paul understood that it was possible for some of these Christians to be beguiled and that would affect their _____, according to verse _____.
- 14. Speaking of Christ, Paul writes: In whom are hid all the _____ of _____ and knowledge.
- 15. _____ out the handwriting of ordinances that was _____ us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, _____ it to his cross.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week’s handout

ANSWERS to Colossians 1 Questions... **01**—True (5); **02**—True (7); **03**—True (18); **04**—False (23); **05**—True (26); **06**—28; **07**—23; **08**—14; **09**—10; **10**—1; **11**—Their faith in Christ Jesus (4); **12**—QUALIFIED (12); **13**—MOVED (13); **14**—That in Christ should all fullness dwell (19); **15**—the hope of glory (27).

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle. The words may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. -DRL

H D W V F R I C H S N P
 S I C K E A N O T H E R
 B F P A T I E N C E I A
 W Y R E A P E D F A T Y
 R M I S E R I E S R H E
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ALSO	BEGUILE	BEING	BODY	CHRIST
CIRCUMCISED	DEAD	FAITH	FLESH	HAVING
HEAD	KNIT	LEST	MADE	ORDINANCES
POWER	PRINCIPALITY	RUDIMENTS	SEEN	SHEW
SINS	SPOIL	THEREFORE	THINGS	THOUGH
TOGETHER	VAIN	WISDOM	WORLD	WORSHIP

IX. EXTRA CREDIT FOR “SUPER” Bible Students...

Will you please consider answering these three SIMPLE questions based on the Bible text of this chapter? I will try to make use of your answers. Bring them with you next week. Tear out this last sheet from the Study Guide and be prepared to put it in a basket. I think it will be a great help to all of those in the class if you will do so. Thank you in advance for your marvelous cooperation!

W O R D: What word would you like to know more about in this chapter?

W O N D E R: I wonder what this phrase, verse, or series of verses means...

W I S H: I wish myself—or others whom I know or even don’t know—would understand this fact, principle, or concept from this chapter...