

## 11. Human Laws and Regulations Rejected—Colossians 2

An over-arching premise of Col 1 is that God had all his fullness dwell in Christ, His son. Col 1:19-20 teaches:

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

In Eph 1:22-23, the church is the fullness of Christ:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

In Col 1:25-26, Paul adds that he presented God's word in its fullness:

25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

In Col 2, Paul builds on these facts: God, who delivers out of the powers of this world and translates us into the kingdom of the son of His love, chose to sum up all his fullness in Christ with the church being Christ's fullness. The word of God, similarly, was the fullness of God's mystery. The God and Father, his son the Lord Jesus, and the word of the apostles are full and complete, with nothing lacking. All human laws and regulations are unnecessary, and they are untrue and harmful. With a 21<sup>st</sup> century religious world founded on denominational and sectarian false doctrine, it becomes important to throw off the shackles of religious error and hold to the fullness of the truth of God as presented by the apostles and prophets.

### ***All the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge***

Col 2:1-3

*I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. 2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

The teachings of the New Testament—the written word of the apostles and prophets—gives us the full riches of complete understanding. The truth is that man needs no other instruction. It is of this written word that Paul said in Eph 3:4-5:

4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The reason for this all-sufficiency of the New Testament is clear: in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. The New Testament is complete and thorough and true; just as Paul stated in 2 Tim 3:16-17:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Col 2:4-5

*4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.*

Set against all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—James calls it “the perfect law” in James 1:25—are the deceptive but fine-sounding arguments of the false religions, sectarians, and denominations. The key for man in a modern world is the same as it was for the man in the New Testament world: be “firm in your faith in Christ.”

*6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

This firm faith in Christ requires us to be rooted and built up in him and strengthened in the faith that we were taught--not just any faith will do. Jude 3-4 expresses this same principle:

I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. 4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

### ***Hollow and Deceptive Philosophy***

Col 2:8

*8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

The world is full of books and television shows where men seek to take advantage by their hollow and deceptive philosophies. Evangelical sounding themes and new-age religions abound, most of which are materialistic (basic principles of the world) and/or built on human traditions. These all lead away from Christ and his treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Even the smallest change to the teaching of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament is impermissible. Paul wrote in Gal 1:6-9:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

Col 2:9-12

*9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*

Paul returns to the themes of chapter one: the fullness of all Deity (Godhead ASV) is in Christ; and we receive this fullness in Christ. Since Christ is every power and authority, he commands; and those of hollow and deceptive philosophies and tradition do not. In this power and authority, we were baptized (buried) and raised with Christ through our faith in the power of God. Do you believe God raised Christ from the dead? That power will enable you to put off your sinful nature as you are raised from the waters of baptism.

### ***The Written Code Taken Away***

Col 2:13-15

*13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

The same power of God that made us alive with Christ and forgave us our sins canceled the written code with its regulations by nailing it to the cross. Therefore, we are free from the Old Testament law and its ordinances. Those who bind the Old Testament today are the same group as those who teach and bind human philosophies—they are false teachers. The Hebrew writer taught in Heb 8:6: “6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.” Heb 8:6-7 adds:

6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

### **False Humility and Worship**

Col 2:16-19

*16 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. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 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. 19 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.*

Out of human philosophies and false teaching spew false requirements. Those binding regulations look to it to justify those things not approved in the New Testament, such as holidays, special celebrations, etc. Modern holidays, such as Lent, Mardi Gras, Easter, and Christmas, are examples of binding days not bound by the New Testament. False humility appears today in religious garb and postures not commanded in the New Testament. Many modern religions worship angels and venerate them by constructing statues, which become angelic idols, forgetting God's eternal law in Ex 20:4: “4 You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of **anything in heaven above** or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.” Modern sectarianism relies on alleged visions and dreams of their founders and even their modern day leaders. All of these--and more—lead people away from Christ.

### **Human Commands and Teachings**

Col 2:20-22

*20 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: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.*

The result of all human machinations and speculations outside the New Testament is that they lead people to submit to false rules and commandments. Whatever their requirements, they are empty and vain and will perish, because they are based on human commands and teaching. Sincere people will inquire with a simple question: Where is that found in the Testament of Jesus Christ, written by the inspired apostles and prophets? Those who are teaching should never be offended when asked to prove their contentions by the scriptures. Peter encouraged in 1 Peter 3:15: “15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” In addition, Peter also said in 1 Peter 4:11: “11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.”

Col 2:23

*23 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.*

Human philosophy and vanity, Old Testament laws and ordinances, modern revelations and visions; denominational and sectarian doctrines, or new-age and world religions all teach regulations that appear wise, good for worship, and humble. In reality, they are of no value.

### ***Study Questions from the Scriptures***

1. Col 1:19-20: Where does the fullness of God dwell?
2. Eph 1:22-23: What is the fullness of Christ? Who fills everything?
3. Col 1:24-29: Who commissioned Paul? What did he present?
4. Col 2:1-3: To what extent did Paul want them to understand? What is hidden in Christ?
5. Eph 3:4-5: What can we understand by reading Paul writings? To whom has the mystery of Christ been revealed?
6. 2 Tim 3:16-17: What is God-breathed? For what is it useful? How complete is it?
7. Col 2:4-5: Why was Paul telling them these things?
8. James 1:25: What is perfect?
9. Col 2:6-7: In whom are we to be rooted and built up? In what are we to be strengthened?
10. Jude 3-4: For what are we to contend? When and how often was the faith delivered? To whom was it entrusted?
11. Col 2:8: What kind of philosophy tries to take us captive? Upon what does it depend?
12. Gal 1:6-9: What happens to those who pervert the gospel?
13. Col 2:9-12: What lives in Christ? Where do we find our fullness? Over what is Christ head? How were we buried and raised in Christ?
14. Col 2:13-15: What happened to the written code of the law? What was nailed to the cross?
15. Heb 8:6: How do the old and new covenants compare?
16. Heb 8:6-8: Why was it necessary for Jesus to seek a better covenant?
17. Col 2:16-19: What are we not to be judged by? What is a shadow of things to come? Are we to worship angels?
18. Ex 20:4: May we make idols? May we make idols of heavenly forms?
19. Col 2:20-22: On what are human rules and regulations built?
20. 1 Peter 3:15: For what should we always be prepared?
21. 1 Peter 4:11: How should we speak?
22. Col 2:23: Of what value are human regulations?