

Facing/Replacing Lies with the Truth

Introduction: In this section of Colossians we're going to look at some of the intellectual dangers (well crafted arguments—2:4) the church at Colosse was facing that are very similar to those we may face today. Watch how Paul compares and contrasts some of these philosophies. In essence, he says, "Here's one set of ideas the culture and religion says are true, but I want to show you what God says is the real truth." He points out with compassion and love:

There are Six Contrast and Comparisons

False human teachings
External circumcision
Dead in sin
Legal code condemned us
Evil authorities over us
Shadows

True teachings of Christ
Internal circumcision
Alive in Christ
Forgiveness of sin
Christ's triumph over them
Reality

Colossians 2:4,8,18. Paul begins his teaching on these contrasts with a warning about:

- I. **False human teachings**—vv. 4,8,18-23. "See to it that no one takes you captive (kidnaps) through **hollow and deceptive philosophy**"—v. 8 (...fine-sounding arguments—v. 4).
 - A. **There were 3 philosophies that threatened the Colossians:** (hallow/deceptive)
 1. **Mysticism**—v. 18 (Today it's translated to moving us to the "god" within us.)
 2. **Asceticism**—vv. 20-23, e.g., we win God's favor through extreme self-denial.
 3. **Legalism**—v. 16 (Spirituality judged by our drinking, eating or religious action.)
 4. **Application:** today a fast decline of moral foundations: One word worldview: "whatever." "The result is a mentality that esteems pluralism, relativism, tolerance and diversity, without critical reflection of the implications of views and actions." Barna Result: No absolute moral truth; truth is relative to the individual/circumstances (32% adults; 9% teens believe in moral absolutes).

Colossians 2:8-10. God's answer to our longing for truth is only found in Jesus Christ.

- B. **True teachings of Christ**—vv. 4, 8-10 (this is the contrast to the above—v. 8).
When I have Christ I have EVERYTHING. v. 9—"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10] and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority." Jesus is not a step to fullness/ completeness. **He's the one step we need to everything, because He is GOD!**

Colossians 2:11-13. In this second set of contrasts, Paul mentions the external/internal.

- II. **External circumcision**—vv. 11-13. There were two things
 - A. **Circumcision symbolized: external sign of commitment/Israel was different.**
Paul wanted Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) believers to focus more on:
 - B. **Internal/spiritual circumcision of the heart**—vv. 11-13; Romans 2:28-29a.

Next, Paul relates another set of contrast by telling us what water baptism means:

III. **Baptism symbolizes death to life—an outward sign of an inward reality**—v. 12.

Now because we have identified with Christ in His resurrection, we've been raised from the dead too. We've also received a new circumcision of the heart.

Colossians 2:13b-15. In this 4th set of contrasts, Paul explains the Law of Moses was a:

IV. **Legal code that condemned us.** vv. 13-14—*“You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14] He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. 15] In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.”* NLT

- A. **The purpose of the Law**—v. 13b. The law wasn't bad; it's purpose was to tell us about God's standards. If we don't keep it perfectly, we're condemned—Gal. 3:24.
- B. **Forgiveness of sin**—vv. 13b-14. But Jesus canceled the charges; He did something! Romans 8:1-2— *“Therefore, there is now **NO condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”* All followers of Jesus are forgiven/set free! Why?

The 5th contrast reminds us of something essential we understand. Before Jesus:

V. **Evil authorities were over us** (spiritual rulers, forces, authorities of evil)—v. 15. (READ!) Ephesians 6:12— *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”* (Yes there are spiritual forces of evil...BUT:)

Christ has triumphed over them. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them —v. 15. Read v. 15 and Ephesians 4:8-10. In summary, Jesus disarmed them and as a result, they have no power over us any more, unless we let them. Jesus has triumphed!

Colossians 2:16-17. The last contrast in this passage has to do with shadows and reality.

- VI. **Shadows:** vv. 16-17—*“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.”*
- A. **Rituals**—v. 16. Look at the list. What were these rituals for? (Reality is coming!) Hebrews 10:1—*“The law is only a shadow of the good things are coming - not the realities themselves...”*
 - B. **Reality**—v. 17b. Who was the reality? The shadows are gone and **reality** is here (Heb. 7:18-19,22,25). Summary: Let's avoid things not essential; we have Jesus...the fullness!

Conclusion: Let's not be kidnapped/taken captive by fine sounding arguments. Instead of “whatever,” or the opposite - trying to please God by external rules; instead of condemnation because of our inadequacy or being enslaved by sin and spirits; God offers fullness, completeness in His Son; forgiveness, freedom, reality and no shadows. **WOW!**

Application: In what ways am I trying to force God to accept me? What traditions am I holding on to that are only shadows? Do I see myself “complete” in Jesus, lacking nothing? Let's also reflect on Barna's quote: If we “esteem pluralism, relativism, tolerance, diversity (and political correctness), without critical reflection of the implications of these views and actions,” or what the Bible says, what will be the result to us/our church? Does the Bible trump cultural views of right and wrong? How and when should biblical views be expressed? (See John 8:1-11.)