

Message #12

Colossians 2:20-23

When Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians, several unsound and unbiblical religious concepts were creeping into the church through many unsaved people. Paul wanted the Colossians to realize that Jesus Christ is fully and completely enough to make one right with God. Jesus Christ is far superior to Judaistic legalism (2:16-17). Jesus Christ is far superior to Gnostic mysticism (2:18-19). Jesus Christ is far superior to religious Asceticism (2:20-23).

IN VIEW OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST, DO NOT SUBMIT YOURSELF TO ANY RELIGIOUS OR ASCETIC ORDINANCES INVENTED BY MEN.

We are to submit ourselves to the ordinances and lifestyle patterns of God. As Dr. S.L. Johnson said, many passages tell us that certain practices must be avoided and certain moral and ethical commands and exhortations must be followed; however, these are all things sanctioned by Scripture. The thing we must avoid is submitting to specific taboos and practices which have been invented by men and are not found in the Word of God (*Bib. Sac.*, July 1963, p. 205). Such things do no enhance our spirituality, they damage it.

Human taboos are dangerously wrong. Religious asceticism will never produce a godly, spiritual stability or strength. It will weaken the individual and the church, not strengthen it.

HEADING #1 – The main challenge against man-made decrees. **2:20**

The main challenge is simply this; in view of the fact that in the mind of God, you have been so identified with Jesus Christ that you have died with Christ, which means all of your sins are gone, why would you submit yourself to man-made decrees and ordinances which have no bearing on your status in the sight of God?

The “if clause” of **verse 20** is first class conditional meaning reality is assumed. In other words, “since” you have believed on Jesus Christ and have a complete standing in God’s sight by being linked with His death, why would you even begin to think about submitting yourself to man-made rules and laws in order to make yourself right with God? You are complete in Jesus Christ; therefore, you do not need to follow a bunch of man-made ascetic practices to make yourself complete.

HEADING #2 – The many covers of man-made decrees. **2:21**

Man-made ordinances and decrees will cover itself under a variety of laws which basically say “do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.

In other words, men will invent handle not, taste not, touch not systems of religion and will make up unbiblical rules and laws which are not found in the Word of God.

Spirituality is determined by one's relationship with Christ and one's focus on God's Word. It is not determined by man-made dogmas.

HEADING #3 – The main causes for not submitting to man-made decrees. **2:22-23**

Cause #1 - Because all man-made decrees will perish. **2:22a**

If you want to devote yourself to something lasting, devote yourself to obeying the Word of God, for the Word of God will **NEVER** pass away. Rules and ordinances and man-made laws will all perish and so will the using of them and most of the people that used them.

You will be in heaven because of your relationship with Jesus Christ. You will be honored in heaven because of your faithfulness to God's Word. You will not be honored in heaven for the way you obeyed religious rules made up by men.

Cause #2 - Because all man-made decrees are invented by men. **2:22b**

There will be nothing invented by men that will last. Only that which has been created by God will stand.

Man-made systems of religion and laws are nothing more than the commandments and the teachings of men. The article "the" appears before men indicating these are specific men who do not know God. All systems of religion that focus on anything other than the Word of God are systems invented by men. They will perish along with the men who invented them.

It is very wise to ask is this restriction from God, or from humans? Is this restriction one that originated with God, or with men? What is the authority, God's Word or man's word?

Cause #3 - Because all man-made decrees appear valuable, but aren't valuable. **2:23**

(Fact #1) - Man-made decrees will have the appearance of wisdom. **2:23a**

Sphere #1 - It will appear to be wise in worship. **2:23a**

The word "religion" is a Greek word that speaks of a self-imposed religious worship.

Simply stated, false forms of worship will appear to be somewhat of a wise way of worshipping God. It will appear to be valuable, but it will not be valuable according to God's estimation.

Sphere #2 - It will appear to be wise in humility. **2:23b**

The words "self-abasement" speaks of humility of mind. Worthless worship and religion will appear very humble. Those in it will appear to have a very humble mindset. But behind the appearance is a proud and arrogant mind that will not bend or buckle to the true authority of the Word of God.

Sphere #3 - It will appear to be wise in bodily abasement. **2:23c**

Some of the most physically disciplined people you will ever see are religious people who have man-made systems of being right with God.

Most of the world will look at these people and admire them for their extreme dedication in worship. To God, it is worthless. It is of no value because it is a religion invented by sinful men. God does not and will not accept any worship system invented by men. He will only accept worship that conforms to Him, for He and He alone is able to determine worship that meets His standards.

(Fact #2) – Man-made decrees are not valuable for man. **2:23d**

A man-made system of worship is of no value to God or to man. Notice carefully the statement “no value against fleshly indulgence.” Do not be deceived; people who appear religious but do not have a true relationship with Jesus Christ and are not deep in the Word of God are people who do not have victory over fleshly indulgence. In other words, they appear spiritual, but behind the scenes in the privacy of their lives and worlds, are those given over to fleshly indulgences.

Ladies and gentlemen, man-made systems of religion will never work. If it isn't biblical, it isn't powerful. If you want victory, if you want freedom and if you want truth—focus on your relationship with Jesus Christ and on the Word of God. That will set you free!