

to reach God was through successive grades of intermediate beings. Angel worship, therefore, was encouraged and taught. This is in direct contradiction to the Word about our Lord (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). In doing this, they dwelt on things which they had seen in visions! Rather than focusing on the Person of Christ, they spent their time searching into the significance of visions. This is an evil common to many forms of sensuous religions today.

c. Denial of the Body. v. 19.

When you get right down to the essence of this false teaching, it does not give Christ His proper Headship in the Body. He is the Source of spiritual life and activity for the believers.

The verb "supplied" is present tense and is a verb which means to strengthen fully. It originally meant to lead a stage chorus, then to defray its expenses, hence to supply in any sense. Here, of course, it means to maintain the united condition of the Body members. It's a tremendous word. Every joint and ligament is supplied by HIM and maintained in union by HIM.

"Knit together" means exactly what it says. Same verb as in 2:2. Modern science has illuminated the intricate relationship between the head and the entire physiological systems. Like a tremendous scheme of telegraphic apparatus. The whole point is that the increase which God desires flows through the Head and brings conformity to it. The physical sympathy between head and body is paralleled to the spiritual vitality and efficiency between Christ and His members. It all depends upon submission to His will and conformity to His mind.

Conclusion What is the real purport of this section? It is to enforce the primacy of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things. Soteriologically--it is Christ. There just is NO other Saviour nor method of salvation, but through Christ our Lord.

THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

"What About Asceticism?"

Colossians 2:16-19

Introduction

1. Biblical Christianity is not a coterie of regulations. Rather, it is Christ Himself and the abundant life which is found in Him!

2. The "therefore" of v. 16 is a signal to look back to see what is referred to by the word. Immediately it is noted that the reference is to the fact that all the fullness of God dwells in Christ and believers are full in HIM.

3. Those who understand the stupendous work which God has wrought in their lives--circumcision, baptism, quickening, deliverance, and advantage over evil forces--are not to be led into false considerations. Two errors are to be noted which do not bear upon Biblical Christianity one whit whatsoever. Here they are:-

1. PRACTICAL ERRORS vv. 16, 17.

Paul writes that the Colossians are not to subject themselves to judgment concerning five important practical matters. The present tense of the verb "judge" means that some persons were actually judging the salvation of the Colossians on the matters in question. He tells them to stop this! The idea of judging means to take to task or call into account on the matters listed. What are these items? Mark them:-

a. Meats. Although the Greek word here means "eating" as opposed to food as such, the thought of Mosaic regulations is certainly part of the picture here. However, it must be remembered that the OT law was given in connection with food because of its uncleanness and not on ascetic grounds. The dominant idea, then, is between eating and abstinence! See Lev. 11 for legal prohibitions in the O.T.

b. Drink. Again the idea of "drinking" is important here for the Greek word is that rather than drink

per se. The OT does have something to say about drink (Lev. 10:9; 11:34,36; Num. 6:3). But the point here is between actually drinking and abstinence therefrom.

ITEM What Paul is driving at in these matters of eating and drinking is the same that he ponders elsewhere (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 8:8; Heb. 9:10).

- c. Feast day. The original text uses the noun for festival or feast day. Holyday in the AV means a sacred day as was its earlier intent. The Israelites had many such feasts. Lev. 16, 23 lists some of these and the regulations connected with them. Paul argues that the keeping of Pentecost, Passover, etc. are not proper subjects of judgment or accounting. Their keeping or failure to do so does not bear upon one's salvation!
- d. New Moon. This festival is linked to the Sabbath in Isa. 1:13 and Ezek. 46:1. It was celebrated by blowing of trumpets, special sacrifices, feasting, and religious instruction. It was an important issue in the life of the people. When the new moon appeared, it was with loaded statements that the day was declared to be sanctified. How one reacts to this is not suitable grounds upon which to judge a person.
- e. Sabbath Day. From the yearly festivals, to the monthly moon, Paul now comes to the weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath was a peculiar day set as a sign between Israel and the Lord (Ezek. 20:12). For Israel it was an important and striking matter. Paul urges, however, that it cannot be used to censure a believer on Christ.

NOTE An ascetic is one who practices items of self-denial and in this instance expects gains. The believer is full, hence ascetic practices are vain for him. It is not the intent of these listings to expose the freedom of a believer that the items mentioned are wrong. It is their wrong use that Paul argues against. Ritual and ceremony can add not one whit to your salvation. Blessed be God.

Let not, however, the proper use of holy exercises as believers and fully saved be practiced! What then is the purpose of all these items? The answer is given in v. 17--they are shadows of the things to come. They proclaim: Christ is coming! Once He has come, we no longer need the shadows! He is the true Substance upon which our hearts ought to be fixed. Amen and Amen!

## 2. DOCTRINAL ERROR vv. 18, 19.

From the practical error, Paul moves to one which is doctrinal and theological. Again he warns against those who would sit in a seat of judgment. The verb used here is stronger than the verb judge and is only found here in the NT. It means to act as an umpire or to arbitrate. The thought is that no one is to be allowed to decide for or against you in the matters mentioned. The reason is that there would be a frustrating of the truth which the Colossians knew in Christ. In what does the doctrinal error consist? A first century modernism. It is the same as today: denial of the Word of God; denial of the Person of Christ and His work; denial of revelation and involvement in human speculation. Study the details:--

- a. Human speculation. This is set out in the phrase "voluntary humility and vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." v. 18. The word for humility is used elsewhere in the NT (Acts 20:19; Eph. 4:2). It connotes the fact that these false teachers expressed an affectation of superior reverence of God as shown in their reluctance to approach God otherwise than indirectly. The word really has the idea of a taking pleasure in humility. This is really being inflated vainly. It's a powerful picture of self-conceit.

The fantastic thing about this whole setup is that it is by fleshly mind. They claimed to be free from the flesh, but they were actually being governed by it!

- b. Denial of Christ. v. 18. Here is the crux of the matter. The false teachers indicated that the way