

## Colossians 2:16-23

Legacy Standard Bible 2022

Fifth century or earlier manuscript variants: [inserted] [~replaced] [-omitted]

### Learning objectives

- Participants will distinguish ideas from reality.
- Participants will distinguish asceticism from Christian morality.
- Participants will articulate how to lead a moral life as a Christian.

### Working Outline of Colossians 2:16-23

- I. Co-workers and I greet you. 1.1-2
- II. My co-workers and I write to strengthen you. 1.3–4.6
  - A. We thank and pray to God for you. 1.3-12
  - B. Because Christ ranks above all others. 1.13–3.17
    1. God brings us into Christ’s kingdom. 1.13 – 2.5
    2. Discern true and false Christians. 2.6 – 3.17
      - a. You learned to be true Christians. 2.6-7
      - b. You remain true Christians. 2.8-23
      - c. **You behave as true Christians. 3.1-16**
      - d. **3.17 Worship as Christians**
  - C. 3.18 – 4.6 Therefore You must behave as Christians
- III. Co-workers and I share with you. 4.7-18

**16 Therefore, no one is to judge you in food and [~or] drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— 17 [~things] which are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.**

*Popular Judaism:* foods, festivals, lunar calendar, sabbath keeping.

*Popular paganism:* asceticism leading to spiritual power and revelatory experiences.

*Exodus 25:40* “Make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.”

*Pattern:* Hebrew tabnît, copy, model, image, plan... Greek LXX typos, mark, model, image, statue, form, type, archetype, example, pattern.

*Hebrews 10:1* “The Law ... has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things.”

*Plato* [pagan] distinguished the “real” world of ideas from the shadow world of sense experience.

*Philo* [Jew, 20 bc - ad 50] developed Plato’s concept to argue that the invisible God was known through “shadows,” or copies, of his character, rather than through sensory vision...

*Paul* [Christian] believes that the Old Testament prescriptions testified to genuine principles, but that those principles are fulfilled in Christ. IVPbbcNT (Keener, 2014).

*Western religions* distinguish the ‘physical’ world of pain and death from a heavenly, ‘spiritual’ paradise of everlasting delight for those who meet certain conditions.

*Eastern religions* distinguished this ‘illusory’ world from the great cosmic unity to which our spirit will return, unless our karma be too bad.

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*Biblical religions* believe that the present world is in bondage to evil, but will one day be liberated and remade as an everlasting home, when humans are resurrected to dwell with God and his angels.

**18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, going into detail about visions he has seen, being puffed up for nothing by his fleshly mind, ...**

*Query:* What are three 'reward snatchers'? *Reply:* Asceticism, spiritual mediators, personal visions.

*Query:* What is the origin of these preoccupations? *Reply:* A carnal mind.

### Worship "of" angels (1)

*Objective genitive:* Worship offered to angels.

*Forbidden:* Dt 4:19, Je 8:2.

*Subjective genitive:* Worship offered by angels.

*Commanded:* Dt 32:43 LXX & DSS, Ps 97:9 'gods'.

"A Jewish (or Christian Jewish) synagogue in Colossae ... delighted in their worship sabbath by sabbath as a participation in the worship of the angels in heaven (cf. 1 Cor. 11:10)." J D G Dunn, *NIGTC: Colossians & Philemon* (Eerdmans 1996), 181.

Since worship offered to angels was forbidden by the Law and the prophets, this was probably not the problem.

Since worship offered by angels was commanded in the Law and the Psalms, why was this a problem?

Since angels worship Yahweh without mediation of Messiah Jesus, humans cannot join with them whilst still on earth where we worship Yahweh through the only Mediator, Jesus Christ.

### Dead Sea Scroll 4Q400, fragment 2

1 Wonderfully to praise Your glory among the wise divine beings, extolling Your kingdom among the utterly h[oly.] 2 They are honored in all the camps of the godlike beings and feared by those who direct human affairs, won[drous] 3 beyond other divine beings and humans alike. They tell of His royal splendor as they truly know it, and exalt [His glory in all] 4 the heavens of His rule. [They sing] wonderful psalms according to [their insight] throughout the highest heaven, ... And declare [the surpassing] 5 glory of the King of the godlike beings in the stations of their habitation. [...] 6 How shall we be reckoned among them? As what our priesthood in their habitations? [How shall our holi]ness [compare with their utter] 7 holiness? [What] is the praise of our mortal tongue alongside their div[ine] knowledge? [Michael O. Wise, Martin G. Abegg Jr., and Edward M. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperOne, 2005), 465–466.]

**19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.**

*Hold to:* teaching 2 Th 2:15, faith He 11:6, hope 6:18, Name Re 2:13.

*Body:* supplied (from outside), held together (by sound teaching), growth from God.

*Query:* How do we make the body grow?

**20 If [therefore] you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees: ...**

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*Pythagoreanism*: (6th cent BCE, revived in 1st cent) vegetarianism, abstinence from flesh, intellectual discipline, mathematics, purity rites, a new body after death.

*Decrees*: 'be dogmatized', see 'dogma' 2:14, Jewish religious laws and regulations.

### Dead / crucified with Christ

1. Christ who lives in me. Gal 2:20
2. Exempt from religious law and rules. Col 2:20
3. Our life is hidden with Christ in God. 3:3
4. We walk in newness of life. Rom 6:4
5. We are no longer enslaved to sin. 6:6
6. We will live with him. 6:8
7. We may bear fruit for God. 7:4

**Christian life, morality and maturity derive from faith in Christ, not from religion nor from human will.**

**21 "Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch"? 22 Which deal with everything destined to perish with use, which are in accordance with the commands and teachings of men; ...**

*Touch*: "You must not touch it, lest you die" Gen 3:3. Outside of Judea, some Jews forbade touching particular foods.

*Teaching*: "In vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts and teachings" Jer 29:12 LXX

*Query*: What are some current, bogus, religious teachings?

**23 which are matters having, to be sure, a word of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abase-ment [-and] severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.**

*Stoicism*: free oneself from bodily pleasures, to contemplate the soul.

*Asceticism*: pagans becoming Christian brought their asceticism (self denial) with them.

*Christianity*: abstaining from premarital sex and drunkenness was mistaken for asceticism.

*With "and"*: A list of three practices: (1) religion, (2) humility and (3) asceticism. Evidence: 3rd and 4th century manuscripts.

*Without "and"*: Two practices: (1) religion and (2) humility, both implemented by (3) asceticism. Evidence: 4th & 5th century mss.

*Question*: Was "and" omitted by mistake or inserted intentionally?

### Seven paths to Christian morality

1. Conversion: We have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Gal 5:24
2. Holy Spirit: We walk by the Spirit. Gal 5:25
3. Faith: We reckon ourselves risen with Christ. Rom 6:6-7
4. Obedience: "Keep my commandments." Jn 14:15
5. Fear: The Lord is an avenger in all these things. 1 Thes 4:6
6. Trust: He will provide a way of escape. 1 Co 10:13
7. Love: Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Ro 13:10