



eLesson 007

Text: Colossians 2:16-23

Subject: More Warnings

Colossians – Part 5

Previous warnings. The first two warnings in Colossians were about being deluded by false persuasion and about being taken captive by philosophy, empty deception, and man-made traditions. Knowing more about Jesus inoculates us against such diseases. There are two more warnings. Read Colossians 2:9-15 and 2:16-23. Notice the word *therefore* in 2:16. Whenever you see a *therefore*, find out what it is there for. The *therefore* in verse 16 is a hinge connecting 2:16-23 back to 2:9-15. Do you see what the *therefore* is there for? It is because knowing more about Jesus protects you from being judged and defrauded. Jesus, the great God, has done great things for you ... therefore, pay close attention to these warnings.

Ceremonial foods and days. Do not let anyone judge you about ceremonial foods and special days, 2:16. That is the third warning. What foods and days? Does it refer to all foods and days? No. Does it mean those of the false religions in Colossae? No. The answer is in 2:17, *"things which are a mere shadow of what is to come."* The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible ... so read Hebrews 8:5 and 10:1, in their contexts. They support the teaching of Colossians 2:17. The Colossians were actually being warned about the ceremonial observances of Old Testament Law. The rituals of the Old Covenant were shadows of Jesus cast forward in time. However, the real present and future substance belongs to Christ. Some believers, apparently unwilling to let go of the past, were judging the Colossian believers about ceremonial food and drink ... and about the observance of special religious days. Does that sound familiar? However, in Jesus they were free from those things. That did not mean that they were free to sin ... or free to live undisciplined lives ... or free to ignore God. It did mean that they were free from the Law to follow Jesus unencumbered by the ritualistic observances of their past Old Testament faith. Knowing more about Jesus protects us from those who want to judge us based on outdated rules.

How does this warning apply to us today? We need some self-discipline and restraint in answering that question. It is too easy to think about someone else or someone else's type of Christianity ... do not do that. Think about yourself. Some Christians are almost incurably ritualistic. Not finding enough ritual in the New Testament, they selectively extract some from the Old Testament ... or they create their own ... or they perpetuate those of their brand of Christianity. They may even equate their rituals to Biblical commandments. Some may even violate the commandments of God to keep their religious traditions ... as did some in the days of Jesus, Mark 7:3-13. Some who strongly hold to their own traditions eagerly judge and condemn non-conforming Christians. That is wrong. We must not let them judge us. Traditions and rituals can be good ... but cold, heartless ritual done out of habit is of no value. Paul encouraged believers to follow the traditions that he had taught them, 1 Corinthians 11:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6. But what were those traditions? Maybe they were about baptism and the observance of the Lord's Table. We do not know what they were. However, such encouragements by Paul should never be used to equate today's extra-Biblical church traditions to those detailed in

Scripture. Traditions and rituals can be good. However, we must reject any that are contrary to the Bible. There are good rituals and good observances. Fasting is good. I am free to fast. However, I am not free to judge you on your fasting ... nor should you judge me. Worshipping God in special ways on special days is good. You are free to celebrate your choice of special days. However, you are not free to judge me according to your religious calendar. Moreover, I should not to let you judge me. When it comes to your rituals and traditions, ask yourself ... are they Biblical? Have you slipped and started making a mental list of other people's rituals and observances? Be careful! Do not judge them. Instead, judge your own rituals and your own observances.

Let no one defraud you of your prize, Colossians 2:18. That is the fourth warning. Remember Jesus, our great God and Savior ... and be careful of those who delight in self-abasement and in the worship of angels. Humility is very good. Pride is very wrong ... strongly condemned in the Bible. There are people who have a type of pride disguised as self-abasing humility. They have a false or feigned humility. You can almost hear them saying, "I am so proud of my humility." If given an award for humility, they would proudly display it. That is not true humility. In Paul's day, these same types of people also taught angel worship ... a sin. The Bible documents the reality and role of angels. Angels are messengers of God. However, they are not to be worshipped. In certain segments of Christianity, angels are given a dangerously high place of honor ... and a misguided interest in angels has multiplied greatly in America. Be very careful. Angel worship is wrong. If you let others lead you into these things, they will defraud you of your prize. What prize? See 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 for a description of your rewards-judgment. Do not let others defraud you of your eternal rewards.

Dangerous church leaders. Unfortunately, there are some dangerous church leaders. In the worst cases they are not even Christian ... they are agents of Satan disguised as servants of God, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. There were, and are, many dangerous church leaders who are actually Christian. They are described in Colossians 2:18-19. They delight in false humility. They may also lead people into angel worship. Angels are messengers and should not be worshipped. Church leaders are also messengers ... and they should never be worshipped. Why do so many Christian leaders promote and willingly accept worship from their flocks? Moreover, why are so many in their flocks so willing to worship them? A good leader does not promote, and does not accept, worship of himself. There are subtle temptations in this ... often influenced by our traditions. Consider the following. Good Christian leaders shepherd the flock of God lovingly, non-domineeringly, and by example, 1 Peter 5:1-4. Should these good under-shepherds insist on special seating at the head table at the banquet ... or insist on special greetings ... or insist on being called by special titles? Jesus spoke about such people, Matthew 23:5-10. Good under-shepherds direct all worship to the Great Shepherd. Dangerous leaders may take their stand on things outside of the Bible ... sometimes even on personal extra-Biblical revelation. Some even claim to speak for God ... equating the authority of their own words to the Word of God. They have become disconnected from Jesus. Those leaders lead with no guidance from the Chief Shepherd. They are building their own kingdoms ... not the Kingdom of God. The Church needs more leaders who say by their lives, *follow my example as I follow Christ*.

Dead men are free. You have died to these things, Colossians 2:20. You are free from outdated or man-made rituals and traditions, 2:20-22. You are free from bad leaders and their influence. Their self-made religion has the appearance of wisdom, 2:23 ... but not God's wisdom. Actually, it has no value in your battle against the flesh. Your walk with God is to be vibrant and personal ... not legalistic enslavement to man-made rules. You have "*died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world*" 2:20. Furthermore, you have also "*been raised up with Christ*" 3:1. Live as if you have died and been raised with Christ ... because you have! Chapters 3 and 4 give great direction in living that kind of life. Take the time before the next lesson to study Colossians 3:1 - 4:6. Divide those verses into your own titled paragraphs. Do not let the chapter division mislead you ... one of your paragraphs might cross the chapter division.



Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. What is the “*therefore*” in 2:16 there for?

 2. What are the “*things which are a mere shadow of what is to come*” in 2:17?

 3. What is the limitation of the Old Law, Hebrews 10:1?

 4. What does our freedom from the Law not mean?

 5. Why is it that following some man-made rituals and traditions is wrong?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

 6. Is it a sin for someone to worship God while not following your traditions?

 7. Is it a sin for you to condemn their non-conformity?

 8. What prize could someone defraud you of?

 9. Describe some of the attributes and actions of dangerous church leaders.

 10. What makes you free from all of these things?
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Personal Reflection

No answers provided for these questions.

1. What are some of your extra-Biblical rituals and traditions?
2. Do you call the meeting room in your church the *sanctuary*? Why?
3. What special title does a large segment of Christianity give to their shepherds of the flock? Does that trouble you? Should it?
4. What special title do you or your fellow-believers call your local shepherd? Should that trouble you? Why?
5. What false self-abasement have you heard taught in the name of Jesus?
6. Why do we so often elevate the prideful?
7. How can you better lead by a loving and humble example?
8. Which warning was most important to you? Why?



Answers to Study Questions

1. What is the “*therefore*” in 2:16 there for? It connects 2:16-23 back to 2:9-15. It connects the protection discussed in this lesson to our knowledge of Jesus.
2. What are the “*things which are a mere shadow of what is to come*” in 2:17? The Old Testament Law.
3. What are the limitations of the Old Testament Law, Hebrews 10:1? The Law was just a shadow cast forward to the good things to come in Jesus ... not the real things ...and good never offer the perfection only available in Christ.
4. What does our freedom from the Law not mean? We are not free to live undisciplined lives ... not free to sin ... not free to ignore God.
5. Why is it that following some man-made rituals and traditions is wrong?
 - a. They are wrong if they are contrary to the Bible.
 - b. They are wrong if in following them I disobey the Word.
 - c. They are wrong if done coldly out of habit?
6. Is it a sin for someone to worship God in conformity to the Word while not following your traditions? No.
7. Is it a sin for you to condemn their non-conformity to your traditions? Yes.
8. What prize could you be defrauded of? Eternal rewards, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.
9. Describe some of the attributes and actions of dangerous church leaders. Non-Christians disguised as Christian leaders are dangerous. Christian leaders are dangerous when they are prideful ... have false humility ... teach angel worship ... accept or demand worship ... take their stand on anything but the Word ... claim to have special revelations ... equate their words to the Word of God ... are disconnected from Jesus, the true Head of the Body
10. What makes you free from all of these things? I have died with Christ and been raised with Christ.

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