

LESSON 8

HOLDING FAST TO THE HEAD

Having shown that decrees of the Law have been abolished and that all evil forces have been defeated (see the discussion on 2:8d and 10b), Paul proceeded toward the logical conclusion. He told the Colossians not to feel obligated to follow these decrees or to let others compel them to submit to man-made religious traditions.

FOLLOWING CHRIST INSTEAD OF THE LAW (2:16, 17)

Paul said that the Colossians should look to Jesus to learn how to please God, practicing Jesus' teachings regardless of the judgment of others.

1. What earlier reasons had Paul given before verse 16 for the Colossians to follow Jesus alone?
2. What two categories can the list in verse 16 be divided into?
3. What are some of the major Jewish festivals that Christians no longer had to observe?
4. Is the keeping of the Sabbath commanded of Christians?
5. What improvements did the new covenant provide in comparison to the Law?

AVOIDING HUMAN PRACTICES (2:18, 19)

Paul told the Colossians to beware of those who would try to "delude" them (2:4), take them "captive" (2:8), and "act as [their] judge" (2:16). Then he said, "Let no one keep defrauding you. . . ." This statement is a command for continuous action. The apostle was commanding the brethren not to let false teaching continually rob them of the benefits provided by Jesus.

6. How can the trait translated “self-abasement,” which is elsewhere translated “humility,” be either good or bad?
7. What does the word translated “worship” in verse 18 mean in this context?
8. What does the phrase “taking his stand on visions he has seen” mean?
9. Could the false teachers Paul was speaking about actually have seen some kind of vision?
10. What do the words translated “fleshly minded” mean?
11. How does the body of christ “grow” (v. 19)?

**DYING WITH CHRIST
TO THE WORLD’S PRINCIPLES
(2:20–23)**

In verses 18 and 19, Paul emphasized that false teaching could turn the Colossians away from Christ. Prior to warning the brethren not to let that happen, he had affirmed the superiority and authority of Christ by stating that He is the image of God, the Creator, head over all things including the church, and the basis for reconciliation with God (1:15–20). All wisdom and knowledge are in Him, the fullness of Deity is in Him, and the opportunity to be made complete is in Him. The Christians in Colossae had been stripped of their sinful passions and were forgiven of all their sins in Him (2:3–13). For these reasons, the Colossians were to remain in Jesus and follow Him only.

12. Why does Paul begin verse 20 with the word “if,” when he is writing to baptized Christians?
13. What negative or “do not” commands can be found in the teachings of Jesus?
14. What might have been the source of the “decrees” Paul refers to in verse 20?
15. What broader meaning can the word translated “handled” in verse 21 have?
16. What reasons did Paul give in verse 22 for not following these worldly decrees?

17. What does the word translated “appearance” in verse 23 mean?
18. What did Paul mean by the phrase “self-made religion”?
19. In what three ways can the phrase “but are of no value against fleshly indulgence” be taken, and which view seems to be correct?
20. How can Christians promote godly living within themselves?