

# The MYSTERY

Hidden for Ages

## Is Now REVEALED

*A Study of the Book of Colossians*

LESSON 13

This Week's Passage:  
**Colossians 2:15–19**

New International Version (NIV)

<sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. <sup>18</sup> Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. <sup>19</sup> They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

**Memory Verse: Colossians 2:13**

<sup>13</sup> *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,*

### Day One: Read Colossians 2.

1. In Colossians 2:11–14 Paul began a list of blessings that Jesus has accomplished for believers: we have been spiritually “circumcised” so that we are no longer “ruled by the flesh” (v. 11); we were buried and raised with him in baptism (v. 12); and we have been forgiven and our “record of debt” has been canceled (vv. 13–14, ESV). Now in verse 15 Paul adds one more big accomplishment to this list. What is it?
2. The “powers and authorities” in verse 15 are Satan and his demons. Though disarmed, they are still for a limited time able to tempt and accuse believers (Rev. 12:10).
  - a. Because of Christ’s victory we are able to withstand the enemy’s assaults. What resources has he given us for the daily battle? (Eph. 6:10–18)
  - b. What additional reassurance do we have as we resist? (1 Jn. 4:4b; Jas. 4:7b)
3. We often feel powerless in the face of our foe. How do the resources and reassurances above transform the way you think and act?

The language Paul uses to describe Christ’s defeat of Satan and the forces of evil recalls a kind of Roman victory parade called a *triumphus*: “Behind the general as he rode in splendor through the city would follow, in chains, prisoners from the successful campaign just concluded”<sup>1</sup>; this parade was “designed to humiliate [the prisoners] and bring public attention to their subjugation.”<sup>2</sup>

## Day Two: Read Colossians 2:16–19.

4. What issues were the false teachers using to judge the Colossian believers? (v. 16)
5. Some of the restrictions and observances in verse 16 were based on Old Testament law, so they were not inherently bad. But it seems that the false teachers were wrongly saying that it was necessary for believers to follow these dietary rules and observe these celebrations to achieve spiritual fullness.

- a. What evaluation does Paul give of these restrictions and observances in verse 17?
- b. What is the difference between a shadow and the thing that throws the shadow? What point is Paul making with this comparison?

The false teachers were claiming to be spiritually superior to the other believers; however, “verse 17 powerfully introduces us to an equality among believers.... For since all who possess Christ have ‘the substance’, no Christian can have more or less. Therefore there can be no higher breed or upper class in this community.”<sup>3</sup>

- c. Paul has already told us where true spiritual fullness comes from. What has he said? (vv. 9–10)

6. The Old Testament restrictions and observances advocated by the false teachers became dangerous when they were viewed as a way to improve upon the sufficient work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The best defense against this danger was grasping the reality found in Christ, a reality which the Old Testament foreshadowed. How do the passages below show that the reality found in Christ is far superior to the shadows?

Rom. 3:20–24

Rom. 10:4

Gal. 3:23–25

Heb. 10:1–4, 11–14

### **Day Three: Read Colossians 2:16–19.**


7. What other practices are the false teachers exhibiting and promoting? (v. 18)
8. While it is not completely clear what the practices of these false teachers entailed, one thing is clear—these practices caused them to be “puff[ed] up with idle notions” (v. 18).
  - a. What does it mean to be “puffed up”? (If you need a hint, consider the following verses, where the same Greek word is translated in other ways: 1 Cor. 4:18, 19; 5:2.)
  - b. How does this attitude cause the false teachers to treat the Colossian Christians? (vv. 16, 18)
  - c. What attitude should believers have instead? (1 Cor. 8:1b; 13:4)
9. How does Paul describe the mind of one who is “puffed up”? (v. 18)

What sort of mind does Paul want believers to have? (3:2; Rom. 12:2)

10. Colossians 2:16 begins with a strong “Therefore....” Reread Colossians 2:10–19. Think about why that “therefore” is there. What is the relationship between the truths in verses 10–15 and the teaching in verses 16–19?

### **Day Four: Read Colossians 2:16–19.**

11. What is the final word on the false teachers Paul has been discussing? (v. 19)
12. What benefits come from being connected to Christ, the Head—benefits these false teachers were missing out on? (v. 19)

13. Being connected to the Head necessarily means being connected to the body, the church. What characterizes this body? (v. 19b; 1 Cor. 12:12–27;  \* Eph. 4:11–16)

## Day Five: Read Colossians 2:1–19.

14. Paul's deep concern for the Colossians is evident in chapter 2. He doesn't want anyone
- to \_\_\_\_\_ them by fine-sounding arguments (2:4),
- to \_\_\_\_\_ through hollow and deceptive philosophy (2:8),
- to \_\_\_\_\_ them by what they eat or drink... (v. 16),
- or to \_\_\_\_\_ them (v. 18).
15. The issues and practices that led the false teachers to judge the Colossians are different from the ones that lead people in the church today to judge others. What might some of these modern-day issues and practices be?
16. How does a solid understanding of the truths in Colossians 2:9–19 (the sufficient work of Christ; the difference between shadows and reality; and the working of the head and body) do *both* of the following things:
- give confidence and freedom to individual members of the body?
- protect the unity of the body?



Reminder: Remember to read the entire book of Colossians this week.

\* Indicates verses for further study

<sup>1</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 214.

<sup>2</sup> Sam Storms, *The Hope of Glory: 100 Daily Meditations on Colossians* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 187.

<sup>3</sup> Dick Lucas, *The Message of Colossians & Philemon* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1980), 118.