**King Jesus, Human Philosophies, Traditions and the Kingdom**

**Or Christ vs. the World’s Philosophies**

Let’s talk about Colossians

Theme of Colossians: The supremacy of Christ. The all-sufficiency of Christ.

Colossians, first and foremost, is about Christ.

It is about Christ in us and it is about us in Christ.

In Colossians, Paul is exposing and debunking a strain of teaching which had found its way into Colossae, not unlike what had happened several years before in Galatia.

This strain of teaching has been called the Colossian heresy:

They have been captured by a philosophy which involves the stoichaea – ABCs—the fundamental ways of the world in 2:20-23. In Coll 2 he talks about not being held captive (better: kidnapped) by human-based philosophy or rules that “lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”

In our day, this might include a political philosophy or a cause other than that of the kingdom.

Christ in Colossians:

Col 1:2 We are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Col 1:3 We thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col 1:4 Our faith is in Christ Jesus.

Col 1:7 Epaphras a faithful servant and minister of Christ.

Col 1:13 God has brought us into the Kingdom of His Son.

Col 1:14 We have redemption in Christ.

Col 1:14 We have forgiveness of sins in Christ.

Col 1:15 The Son is the image of the invisible God.

Col 1:15 The Son is the first born over all creation.

Col 1:16 In Him, through him and for him, all things were created

Col 1:17 Christ is before all things.

Col 1:18 Christ has supremacy in everything.

Col 1:19 All the fullness of God dwells in Christ.

Col 1:20 Christ is reconciling all things to Himself.

Col 1:22 We are presented holy in God’s sight by Christ.

Col 1:24 Christ is the head of the body.

Col 1:27 God’s glorious mystery is Christ in you.

Col 1:28 Christ is the one who we proclaim.

Col 1:29 Christ’s power works in us.

Coll 2:2 The mystery of God is Christ.

Coll 2:5 Our faith is in Christ.

Coll 2:6 We live our lives in Christ.

Coll 2:9 In Christ all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form.

Coll 2:10 In Christ we are brought to fullness.

Coll 2:11 In him you were circumcised.

Coll 2:13 We are made alive in Christ.

Coll 2:17 The law is a shadow. The reality is found in Christ.

Coll 2:20 We died with Christ.

Coll 3:1 We have been raised with Christ.

Coll 3:3 Our life is hidden with Christ.

Coll 3:4 Christ is our life.

Coll 3:11 Christ is all and is in all.

Coll 3:17 Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Interestingly, the Holy Spirit mentioned once in Colossians (Coll 1:8) (look at Paul’s other letters).

● Romans 25 times

● 1 Corinthians 20 times

● 2 Corinthians 10 times

● Galatians 15 times

● Ephesians 10 times

● Philippians 3 times

● 1 Thessalonians 4 times

Colossians 2:6-15

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202%3A6-15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29503a)] of this world rather than on Christ.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202%3A6-15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29506b)] was put off when you were circumcised by[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202%3A6-15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29506c)] Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202%3A6-15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29508d)] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians%202%3A6-15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29510e)]

In Colossians Paul is talking about the great value of being in Christ. Our value comes from being in Christ, not from anything the world can give to us.

Col 1:14 We have redemption and forgiveness of sins in Christ.

Col 2:7-8 We live our lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him

Col 2:10 In Christ you have been brought to fullness.

Note: fullness = pleroma = filled full. We are filled full in Christ. We need no other philosophy or perspective.

Col 2:11 In him you were also circumcised… having been buried with him in baptism

Col 2:17 The Law is a shadow, the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Col 2:19 If we are not dwelling in Christ, we have lost connection with the head.

Let us go through this passage:

Paul’s word to us:

Let no one take you captive to hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental forces (*stoicheia*) of this world rather than Christ.

Elemental forces - στοιχεῖα - stoicheia –

stoixeíon– properly, fundamentals, like with the basic components of a philosophy, structure, etc.; (figuratively) "first principles," like the basic fundamentals of Christianity. ABCs

What would make this philosophy that Paul was concerned about so deceptive? It combined elements of different ideas that were prevalent and accepted in the ancient culture: asceticism, mysticism, mystery religion, Jewish tradition, Gnosticism.

What would be our stoicheia today?

1. Prosperity gospel

2. American dream

3. Comfort/materialism

4. Personal ecurity

5. Being a good person/ a nice guy

6. Universal salvation

7. Moral relativism

8. Entertainment/leisure

9. Post modernism

10. Scientism

11. Republicanism/social conservative politics.

12. Democratism/progressive politics.

What might be some others philosophies that are deceptive and can

kidnap our faith and drag us away?

The Colossians were being warned against the smooth talking spiritual tricksters. They used many fine sounding arguments, combining moral teaching, philosophy, self-discipline and religious practices. These theories about God were being discussed and taught constantly at the pagan and Jewish school in the Greek cities of the time.

This is why we have to be students of God’s Word and be watchful or we too will fall prey to the deceitful philosophies that pervade our culture. Our faith must be focused on Christ. He is the fullness of God in bodily form.

All these alternate teaching are hollow and useless. Would you go back to learning and reciting your ABCs after you are already a fluent reader?

V10 You do not need anything else but Christ. Since you are in Christ, you have the fullness of God in you! (John 1:16, Gal 3:27)

V11-12 How do you come to be in Christ? Baptism (Rom 6:1-4, Gal 3:26-27, Acts 2:36-38, 1 Pet 3:21)

Baptism = circumcision of the heart by God

Circumcision = cutting away of the physical flesh

Baptism = cutting away of the sinful nature (Rom 6:6)

What was the intent of circumcision under the law?

v. 11 We are circumcised in Christ, not in physical circumcision.

We are moral beings in Christ, not through moral actions.

We become moral by cutting off the flesh in and through baptism, not by acting morally. This is why Christians enforcing our moral ideals on the world through political action is a questionable use of our time and energy.

We are socially just people in Christ, not through social justice causes.

We help God to bring social justice to the world primarily (but not only) by bring people to Christ. It is in Christ that real social justice is found.

V13-15 “having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness”

canceled - ἐξαλείψας - exaleipsas

“charge of legal indebtedness” – NIV

“the record of the charges” – NLT

“the certificate of debt, with its obligations” Holman Christian

“the handwriting in the decrees against us” - Berean Literal

“handwriting” – a term that is found very common in ancient papyri, a handwritten legal certificate of debt.

Jesus covered, blotted out our sin, and then cancelled the debt by nailing it to the cross. (Bruce, p. 109)

V15 Jesus publicly nailed that blotted out debt certificate to the cross to show all the hostile powers (whether human or spiritual beings) that they were vanquished and no longer had power over God’s ransomed people.

Jesus made a spectacle of the worldly powers—showing them to be powerless against him, and, therefore, powerless against us as well. They are “powerless tyrants.”

The stoichaea are disarmed and powerless in light of the kingdom of God.

So we, as disciples, do not turn to or rely on any such worldly powers.

V16-17

There is not, nor can there be a “Christian” political party or partisan effort of any kind. We can ally with certain causes, but we cannot give our loyalty to any group, and that includes our country.

As disciples, we obviously value all human life, but our means toward that is through bringing people into the kingdom and bringing the kingdom to the lost, not through political action or through the courts. The same for homosexuality or other immoral behaviors. We do not defeat the demons of darkness through changing laws, but through allowing God to change hearts one at a time.

Col 2:16-23 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. found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person goes into great detail about what they have seen…

Since you died with Christ to the elemental forces (stoicheia) of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands ad teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

In v. 16-23 Paul deals with a particular philosophy, which is the legalism of grace-free Judaism, but this can be applied to any human idea or philosophy.

The legal prescriptions of the law are all but shadows of what is now reality, that is, us in Christ.

Heb 10:1-22 Christ Jesus has done away with the law. He has fulfilled the law of the O.T. Do not go backwards to the Law! The Law is part of the stoicheia, the ABC fundamentals.

If the Law is a mere foreshadow, what about the powers and authorities of this world?

We do not base our righteousness on added rules about clothing, movies, card-playing, tattoos, dating practices.

Our weapons are not the weapons of the world.

We do not use the politics of power.

Michael Burns Escaping the Beast: “When we yoke ourselves with one of the philosophies of the present age, we lose the ability to distinguish ourselves from the world, and the prophetic voice is silenced (as we are shouted down by those within our own ranks who accuse us of being what they actually are, which is partisan and beholden to the world.”

V18-19 Paul says for the Colossians not to let anyone disqualify them from the prize.

v. 19 Those who rely on the stoichaea and not Christ have lost connection with Christ, who is all-sufficient for the growth of the church.

Our righteousness is in Christ, not any earthly political or other cause.

Neither is it in any private religious experience/vision/prophecy/miracle/revelation.

V20-23 Paul is saying all of these things are useless. They are but a shadow. Christ is the real thing.

V20. The Colossians died to these things when they became united with Christ.

Asceticism is not a means to righteousness. Neither is alliance with any earthly cause.

V. 20 The stoicheia are the ABCs of the world. Human philosophies or parties or schools of thought, be they progressive or conservative, freeing or constraining are but ABCs compared to knowledge of Christ.

Philosophies are the working of human mind, independent of divine revelation.

These things do not work!

I want to recommend to you Michael Burns’ book Escaping the Beast from IPI.