

Deceptions in Religion

Colossians 2: 16 – 23

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Series: Living in Contentment

Colossians 2: 16 - 17

¹⁶ Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— ¹⁷ things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

The Deception of Legalism. Vv. 16 – 17.

- Don't let anyone act as a judge based on man made rules.
 - We all have rules by which we live.
 - The problem is when we determine those rules are rules of Christianity and judge others by them.
- The rules listed indicate Jewish influence among the false teachers.
 - God established these rules in His law for Israel.
 - They pointed to Christ, they are like a shadow, Christ is the body cast from that shadow.

Colossians 2: 18 - 19

¹⁸ Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 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 which is from God.

The deception of mysticism. Vv. 18 - 19

- To not be defrauded of your prize.
 - Do not delight in self-abasement, angelic worship, or ecstatic spiritual experiences.
 - Self abasement – unworthy of worshipping God directly.
 - Worship of angels – points to experience outside of Christ.
 - Visions – part of ecstatic experiences.
 - Paul makes it clear that these are not Godly spiritual things, but man-made, false and lead to pride.
- This leads to not holding to the head from which we as the body are nourished.

Colossians 2: 20 - 23

²⁰ If 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, such as, ²¹ “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” ²² (which all *refer* to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? ²³ These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

The Deception of Asceticism. Vv. 20 – 23

- Why submit to ascetic practices when you have died with Christ to the world?
 - To deny the body does not lead to greater spirituality.
 - The things we eat, handle and touch are all perishing.
 - These are man-made ideas of how to be super-spiritual.
- Such ascetic practices have the appearance of super-spirituality.
 - They only appear to be wise, but are foolish.
 - Self abasement is a false humility and really is only pride.
 - All such rules do nothing to curb the sin nature.

Conclusion

- Because we are complete in Christ:
 - We will live by necessary rules, but not make them the rule of Christianity and judge others thereby.
 - We will live under the control of the Holy Spirit and let the Word of God dwell richly in us, and not be deceived in other worship practices including seeking after ecstatic experiences.
 - We will live healthy lives, but not believe our denial of normal living practices makes us any more acceptable to God.
- Because we are complete in Christ we will live according to the word of God in the liberty we have been given.