"MAN-MADE RELIGION"

Colossians 2:16-23

8/7/2016

INTRODUCTION:

***Beware of man-made religion!**

Man-made religion is dangerous for three reasons:

I. It clings to a shadow, but misses the reality (v. 16-17)
(The Illusion of man-made religion)

II. It intrudes into a "spiritual" realm, but lets go of Christ (v. 18-19)
(The Intrusion of man-made religion)

III. It restricts the body, but cannot restrain the flesh (v. 20-23)
(The Delusion of man-made religion)

A. The world's religion "sounds" spiritual, but it is not (v. 20-22)

B. The world's religion "looks" spiritual, but it is not (v. 23)

CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION:

Many ask the question today: "Why are there so many religions?"

The Bible teaches that there is a true religion (Ja. 1:27) and false religions (II Cor. 11:13-15).

Wherever there is the real, Satan (to confuse and distort) will always seek to introduce the unreal.

Today, the pure waters of Bible Christianity are muddied by "tradition" Christianity.

Today, some who profess Christ possess a living faith; but others - a "dead faith." Some trust the grace of God for salvation, others the works of man.

Some believe in the finished and sufficient work of Christ at Calvary; and others propose that Christ did not pay it all.

Such conflicts are not new. Paul and the Colossian church faced the same problems.

V. 16

"Therefore" - Paul draws a conclusion based on what was previously said.

Paul, after declaring born-again believers to be rich in Christ (2:1-5), rooted in Christ (v. 6-7), and complete in Christ (v. 8-10); and having complete and total victory over sin (v. 11), death (v. 12-13), and guilty (v. 14-15) -- he now warns not to fall prey to the dangers of man-made religion (Col. 2:16-23).

Paul's theme in chapter 2 is one of warning about those religious hucksters who would tempt people to doubt the adequacy or sufficiency of Christ.

(Note: the admonitions to beware of such false teachers - 2:4, 8, 18)

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Man-made religion is dangerous for three reasons:

I. It clings to a shadow, but misses the reality (v. 16-17)
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V. 16

"Let no man" - regardless of fame, reputation, notoriety; regardless of religious rank or "ecclesiastical" influence, regardless of education or degree; regardless of charisma, charm, or persuasiveness. Don't be intimidated! Don't doubt the sufficiency of Christ!

"Judge" = to criticize, to belittle, to condemn.

The false teaching involved:

1. Abstaining from certain foods
2. Observing certain days

"Meat or drink" - Note: The erroneous doctrine to be perpetrated in the last days - I Tim. 4:1-5. God has lifted the ban on certain meats (as being clean and unclean - Lev. 11) (Acts 10:14-15 - v. 15 - "And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.")

Sin is not a matter of what goes into your belly, but what comes out of your heart (cp. the Pharisees' tradition and Christ's response - Mark 7:1-9, 13-23).

The Roman Catholic Church is an example of the heresy that spread through Colossae.

This religion , which imposes dietary restrictions (EX: no meat on Friday and no meat during "Lent") is committing the very wrong that Paul is addressing.

1. "Holy Day" - Refers to the yearly holy day or feast and festivity times of Passover, Pentecost, etc. (cp. Lev. 23:2ff).
2. "New Moon"- Refers to the monthly "holy days"
3. "Sabbath" - Refers to the weekly "holy days"

Colossians 2:16-17 is also diametrically opposed to the fundamental teachings of Seventh Day Adventism (which holds the adherents of that cult under a legalistic code of ethics, which does not apply to the N.T. Christian).

The two distinctives of Seventh Day Adventism are:

1) Dietary laws
2) Sabbath worship

According to their works religion, those refusing to adhere will not be saved.

V. 17

"Shadow" = that which has appearance but is not actual. A reflection but not the realization. A representation but not the reality. A symbol but not the substance. A type but not the tangible fulfillment.

"Things to come" = refers to: prophecies of Christ's first coming; prophecies of the future day of rest (the Kingdom of God - Heb. 4:9-10).

O.T. Israel offered "burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the Sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts" (I Chron. 23:31). And such an observance was out of love and obedience to God.

However, when Christ died, His sacrifice fulfilled the O.T. symbols and types; therefore, such sacrifices today (EX: the Mass) detract from the complete work of Christ at Calvary (cp. Heb. 9 & 10).

SEE: Heb. 9:12, 14. The one sacrifice of Christ is all we need for eternal life and godly lives. SEE: Heb. 9:22-28; 10:4, 10, 12, 14.

"But (in contrast to the "shadow") . . . the body (the reality; the physical, literal fulfillment) is of Christ" -

To have Christ is to have reality. To trust anything other than Christ Himself is to cling on to a mere shadow and to have the semblance of "the way, the truth, and life" not the One who is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6).

II. It intrudes into a "spiritual" realm, but lets go of Christ (v. 18-19) (The Intrusion of man-made religion)

V. 18

"Beguile" - to cheat out of a prize, to rob from reward. Literally, the word refers to making a decision (judgment) about someone and thereby fooling them into thinking that they are losers, when really they are not. "The verb was used of an umpire's decision against a racer" (Vine, p. 112).

"Voluntary humility" - a self imposed appearance of humility (EX: The Pharisees who disfigured their faces to appear to be fasting - Mt. 6:16; cp. Is. 58:5)

Beware of those who look religious.

"Worshipping of angels" - refers to worship of any Heavenly messenger (no saint, no prophet, no angelic spirit being is to be worshipped)

Angels are never to be worshipped (Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9 - "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." . . . "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.")

"Intruding" - to enter into something you should not be.

"Horoscopes, yoga, transcendental meditation, and other aspects of eastern mystical, New Age teaching must be avoided by the child of God.

"He hath not seen" - He says he saw something (either by vision or by dream) that he really did not.

Oral Roberts did not see an 800 foot Jesus. Joseph Smith did not see some prophet named Moroni, nor did he receive the Book of Mormon on the "golden tablets of Nephi."

Roman Catholics are not being visited by visual encounters with the Virgin Mary.

Charismatic are not recipients of visions and dreams from God.

Jehovah's Witnesses are not being told when the end of the world will come.

All of these supposed visions and visits are lies of the devil, designed to divert people's attention from Christ and His only Word, the Bible.

How does God describe such false religious hucksters?

1. Vain (empty allusions)
2. Proud ("puffed up" = blown up in the head)
3. Fleshly (carnal/physical) minds devoid of spirituality

V. 19

Those who intrude into the 'spirit world" do so to their own calamity, because they are holding onto something other than the "Head" - Jesus Christ.

The picture is of someone who, being distracted, turns away from holding reality, and reaches for a mirage (a vain, empty, hollow, worthless counterfeit).

To release one's grip on the all-powerful, all-sufficient Christ, is to slip away from the One who alone (as Head) gives direction and sustenance.

"Joints & Bands" = ligaments and sinews. The picture is of body parts being connected by ligaments and sinews to the head, from which flows the "nourishment" (the spiritual supply and provision which comes from Christ).

"Increaseth" = to grow as a body grows.

"With the increase of God" = with the growth that God alone gives (as opposed to man-made religious "secrets" to growth).

III. It restricts the body, but cannot restrain the flesh (v. 20-23) (The Delusion of man-made religion)

A. The world's religion "sounds" spiritual, but it is not (v. 20-22)

V. 20

"Dead with Christ" - to be alive to what Christ is alive to, and separated from what He is separated from.

"The rudiments of the world" = the basic philosophies and elementary principles that the world views as essential to spirituality.

The believer is in the world, but not of the world (Jn. 17:14-16).
Why . . . "are ye subject to ordinances"? = Why are you letting yourselves be controlled by man's dogmas and decrees? Why are you submitting to the world's ascetic teachings?

V. 21

What "ordinances" is Paul speaking about? Such superstitious or legalistic taboos as:

"You should not touch"
"You should not taste"
"You should not handle"

True spirituality is not a matter of a list of man-made DO's and DON'Ts.

V. 22

No material thing is to be viewed as a god or idol, but the things God has given us are to be used.

"Meats for the belly and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them" (I Cor. 6:13).

We are to use the things of this world, but not abuse it (I Cor. 7:31).

"The commandments and doctrines of men" - a continuation of the thoughts of verse 20. The point is, that some of the Colossians were subjecting themselves to man's dogmas.

B. The world's religion "looks" spiritual, but it is not (v. 23)

"A shew of wisdom" = to have the appearance of spiritual wisdom.

"Is will-worship" = a system of worship that stems from the will of man. Self-made worship; man-made worship.

To the world's eyes, that which looks religious must be:

1) "Humility" - Pretentious holiness dressed in religious garb and actions

2) "Neglecting of the body" - human taboos and hard treatment of the physical body.

--Asceticism -- Monkery -- Nunnery -- are not the secret to moral purity and God-honoring spirituality.

"Not in any honor" - not having any value in restraining the satisfying (filling up; indulgence) of the flesh.

Since all sin stems from the "heart" or the spiritual aspect of man, the battle must be fought there. To afflict one's body (to deal with externals) is to miss the core of our problem.

CONCLUSION: