

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS

"Part L: Colossians - Discerning Errant Pagan Doctrines Through The Doctrine Of Christ's Supremacy"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We are bombarded with many different beliefs, and it is often hard to sift them all out to define which is the truth:

(1) Some teach that for specific needs, a Christian should pray to a particular "saint" rather than directly to God for special answers to those needs: the following is a list of those various occupations and their patron saints to whom they are **told** to pray:

Advertisers in need of help with their businesses are told to pray to St. Bernardine of Siena. People with convulsive children are told to pray for results through St. Scholastica. Those with mentally ill associates are told to pray for results to St. Dymphna. Comedians needing help to be funny are told to pray to St. Vitus. Administrators in hospitals needing help with public relations are told to pray to the Apostle Paul.

(The Catholic Encyclopedia, p. 243-244)

Well, is it better to pray to these patron saints for help, or do we pray directly to God?! How do we know for SURE?!

(2) Others believe that when Christ died, He released us

only from the **ceremonial** Law directives (sacrificial system, etc.) but that Moses' Ten Commandments are still binding, Seventh Day Adventists Believe . . ., p. 243-244. Thus, we should keep the commands regarding honoring parents, having no other gods but God as ours **and** observing the daily sabbaths as **SATURDAY!**

Well, should we have met here yesterday and not today!? (3) Some Christians believe that syncopated music is wrong, for it came from ungodly forms of pagan worship in West Africa during the slave trade. Yet, in last Sunday's worship service, a missionary and honorary member of Nepaug Church sang a song from her heart that touched many lives, and it was in **syncopated** rhythm!

Were we wrong in tolerating such music last Sunday as we have so often before since it was syncopated?! How can we tell?!

(We turn to the "Need" section in our sermon . . .)

Need: "It is hard to know God's TRUTH today in view of the many CONFUSING and CONFLICTING beliefs that abound! Is there a comprehensive way I can SORT OUT errant views to get to truth?!"

- I. **When man fell into sin, departing from the God of truth, his VIEW of REALITY became distorted by sinful IMAGINATIONS, making him adopt many errors as truth to his harm. (Ro. 1:18-23)**
 - A. Though God created the world and set man up as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
 - B. The **process** of that **fall** came through accepting **distortions** as **truth**:
 1. Satan placed **doubt** in Eve's mind that God had really **forbidden** her to eat the fruit, Gn. 3:1. This statement discredited the **transmission** of God's command to Eve **through Adam!**
 2. Eve accepted the assumption that what she had heard from Adam was inaccurate, and **added an erroneously IMAGINATIVE, ascetic** idea that God wouldn't even let her **touch** the tree, 3:3b!
 3. Satan used Eve's **error, MAGNIFYING** it to imply that God was selfish by not letting Eve even **touch** the tree, thus concluding that Eve could not **really** die were she to eat its fruit, Gen. 3:4-5.
 4. **Misled** in part via **errant imagination**, Eve ate the fruit, Gn. 3:6.
 - C. Man's errant imaginations progressed until people in Colossae adopted seeming **OPPOSITE** beliefs: Ramsay reports that a **Jewish lady** in the area could be **both** an honorary **synagogue ruler AND** a **priestess** of the **imperial cult**, Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia ii, p. 637ff, 649ff, 673ff as noted in F. F. Bruce, Ephesians and Colossians, p. 166.
 - D. When Christianity came to Colossae, old pagan tendencies toward being misled by imaginations threatened doctrinal purity and godliness:
 1. Early **Gnosticism** (the belief that matter is innately evil so that God has no direct connection to it, but relates to mortals by a long string of angelic mediators) led Christians to deny Christ had a real body, B.K.C., N.T., p. 677. This opposed Christ's incarnation & resulted in adherents indulging in physical lusts, Ryr. St. Bib., KJV, p. 1770!
 2. **Judaistic** beliefs were also adopted, leading Christians incorrectly to submit to the Mosaic Law in order to please God, *Ibid.*
 3. **Oriental mysticism** was also accepted by these believers, leading some to a false humility and angel worship, *Ibid.*, p. 678-679.
 4. Finally, they turned **ascetic** as had Eve, advancing non-biblical "**don't**" regulations authored only by mere men, *Ibid.*, p. 679.
- II. **God used Paul's letter to the Colossians to purge the mind of errant pagan ideas by noting Christ's cosmic supremacy for the believer:**

- A. **Opposite** Gnosticism's infatuation with angelic mediators and its disrespect for the material world that rejected Christ's mediatorship, **all** the **fullness** of the **godhead** dwells in Christ in **bodily** form, 2:8-10.
- B. **Opposite** submission to the Law, Christ's **death ended** the Law's rule over the believer in **all** of its jurisdictions relating to him, Col. 2:11-17.
- C. **Opposite** mysticism's false humility and angel worship, Christ is the universal Head of the Church Who **alone** deserves our worship, 2:18f.
- D. **Opposite** asceticism, the believer's positional death in Christ to the sin nature freed him from its futile self-denial "**don't**" regulations, 2:20-23
- E. Thus, **Christ's Person & Work on Calvary is all in all in every way for the believer so all he is & does flows ONLY from HIM**, 1:9-29!
- F. Having established this grand truth, Paul applied it to **life** so that the believer could function **rightly** before God (as follows):
 - 1. The Christian must focus on his **All-Sufficient Savior**, Col. 3:1-4.
 - 2. This truth is applied to the various Colossian errors as follows:
 - a. Though Gnostics disdained the body, indulging in lust, we are to honor it as Christ's body is physical and honorable, and do so by **eluding** lust while **filling** the body's **needs**, 3:5-10, 18-21.
 - b. Though Judaism & asceticism keep rigid taboos, believers are to **accept** others and tolerate **practices** "foreign" to their heritage as they are under **Christ's** jurisdiction, **not man's**, Col. 3:11-17.
 - c. Though mysticism glorifies **many** beings, Christ is the believer's sole Head, so they are to honor Him **alone**, 3:16-17.
 - d. Accordingly, believers were to relate to others in family, job and church life with God's blessing, Col. 3:18-21, 22-4:1; 4:2-6.

III. **Colossians adds to the "thread of redemption" revealing Christ as the ALL-SUFFICIENT & thus CONFUSION-PROOF Savior, 2:9f.**

***Application:** To sort through man's confusing imaginations to define God's truth, (1) believe on Christ as Savior, Col. 1:13-14; Jn. 3:16. (2) Then, fellowship with Him by (a) confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) reliance on the Holy Spirit for behavior control (Gal. 5:16-23) to (b) obey Scripture, 1 Jn. 2:3-6. (3) Then, sift all confusing beliefs we face through the "grid" of Christ's all-supremacy and all-sufficiency doctrine (II A-F above), and discover God's refreshing truth!*

***Lesson:** Confusing and crippling pagan imaginations can be discerned as errant by the believer through focusing on Christ's cosmic supremacy.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon . . .)

The centrality and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ answers the questions we raised in our sermon introduction as follows:

(1) Regarding whom we should address in prayer for needs, Colossians 2:8-11 warns us against following the traditions of men that detract from Christ. Colossians 2:18-19 orders the believer not to get weighted down with seeking elevated beings, but to focus on the **sole** Head of the Church, Christ. Since 1 Timothy 2:5 notes that there is **one mediator** between God and man, Christ, and since these other texts warn us about shifting our focus from Him to other intermediaries set up by man, we should pray to God **only** through **Christ**.

Thus, the needs of convulsive children, of the mentally ill, of comedians, of hospital administrators seeking better public relations are all to be met in prayer by addressing them to God through Christ **alone**.

(2) Regarding if we are under the Sabbath day restrictions of the Mosaic Law, Colossians 2:13-17 states that since Christ died to the Law, and since the believer died positionally in Him, he is dead not only to the ceremonial aspects of Moses' Law, but also to the jurisdiction of the Ten Commandments: Paul orders us not to feel guilty when criticized for not keeping sabbaths or holy days in Col. 3:16, a command from Moses' Ten Commandments! We are removed from the entire jurisdiction of the Law, and we meet on Sundays as that was the habit of Early Church believers, Rv. 1:10.

(3) Regarding syncopated music in Church, Colossians 2:20-23 orders us who are free in Christ not to be subject to man's rules that are not in Scripture. Well, (a) there is no explicit Bible verse that condemns syncopated music. (b) Also, food offered even to **idols** is **sanctified** for believers when sold in the market (1 Cor. 10:25-26). (c) Besides, **God** led pagan astrologers through use of their practices regarding new stars and sky quadrants to find Christ in Bethlehem (Num. 24:15ff; Mtt. 1:9-10 with Z.P.E.B., v. Five, p. 513). Thus, we are not to forbid **even pagan craft forms** that are sanctified under the Holy Spirit's control, Rom 14:14a. Sharon Bouffard's presentation last Sunday was thus acceptable to God. (Yet, we should not condemn those who cannot accept syncopated music, 1Co. 10:28 f.)

Thus, the all-supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ settle for us what is right and wrong re: man's imaginative ideas!