

COLOSSIANS 2:20-23 | OUR RESPONSE (PART 2)

VERSE 20 – BLUE

That we are **dead with Christ** is implied by our being **in Christ** (Col. 1:2) and will be explicitly stated in Colossians 3:3.

This question gets to the heart of the matter of sufficiency and completeness in Christ. If we are sufficient in Christ, there are no **rudiments of the world** or **ordinances** which will make us "more complete" or "more sufficient."

The word **rudiments** is used in Greek to refer to *elementary principles* such as the order of the alphabet or to the planets in their order. Compare Hebrews 5:12, where it is translated **first principles**. Paul seems to equate **rudiments** and **ordinances** as the same. The word **ordinances** is from δογματίζω [dogmatizo], from which we get *dogmatism*. The same root is used in verse 14. Unlike verse 14, where the reference appears to be more directly connected with the law, here Paul speaks in general of any of the *world's dogmatisms*.

VERSE 21 – BLUE

The general *dogmatisms of the world* are exemplified in **touch not; taste not; handle not**. These should not equate to a license to sin, not only because of Romans 6:2 (given in the same context of being **dead with Christ** (v. 20)), but also in the greater context of this verse (see Col. 3:1ff).

Our nature, it seems, loves *dogmatism*. When there is none to be had, we simply make it up.

One of the great freedoms of Pauline *right-division* is that we recognize the value of simply taking the Bible for what it says, not for *what people say it says*. In this, we shed the bondage of **touch not; taste not; handle not**.

VERSE 22 – BLUE

It is important to keep the parentheses together, though the verse separation speaks otherwise. The things that a person under **the rudiments of the world** is not supposed to **touch** or **taste** or **handle** are things **which all are to perish with the using**. Paul is saying that *these things carry their own punishment*. Christians do not need a set of *commandments for morality*, they just need to use their own intelligence. We can rail against alcohol use and drug use, or we can just *use our brain* and know that there are substances which bring their own punishment. As people under grace, it is much better to use our intelligence and allow others to use theirs rather than make a *rule-book for holiness*.

After the parenthetical phrase, Paul picks up where he left off with the **ordinances** of verse 20, saying that these are **after the commandments and doctrines of men**, rather than of God. Man-made ordinances cannot lead to being more **complete in him** (v. 10) than we already are.

VERSE 23 – BLUE

The **commandments and doctrines of men** (v. 22) have a **shew of wisdom...and humility** but, in the end, have no **honour to the satisfying of the flesh**. In other words, they are *all show, no substance*.

The **shew of wisdom** is said to be **in will worship**. This unique phrase is built on two Greek words-

- θρησκεία [threskia] - religion (see v. 18)
- θελω [thelo] - a person's will / desire.

Man seems satisfied with a "man-made religion" and often will settle with that rather than go the distance in Biblical study.

VERSE 1 – BLUE

This verse summarizes the thoughts beginning in 2:12-13, where Paul says we were buried (died) in Christ and raised again. Therefore, Paul concludes, that since we have a sufficiency in Christ (2:10), not in the Law (v. 14) or in principalities and powers (v. 15), we are not to allow ourselves to be judged by man (v. 16), robbed of our reward by man (v. 18), or subject ourselves to ordinances (v. 20).

In the previous section Paul gave instruction for those **dead with Christ** (v. 20), now he gives instruction for those **risen with Christ**. Namely, to **seek those things which are above**. The average student of the Word misses the great change from previous dispensations, in which the Jewish nation was seeking the **things on earth** of the coming Messianic reign of the Davidic king. But in this dispensation, this earth offers no hope, and our Savior sits **at the right hand of God**. Our is completely a dispensation of spiritual matters (faith, hope, and love is all that remains). Unlike the Jewish nation, our hope is not in the future restoration of the Kingdom (Acts 1:5), but in the "blessed hope" of the rapture, when we shall **forever be with the Lord** (1 Thess 4.17).

The Jewish nation had long been taught to store up their treasures in Heaven (Mt 6:20), but they would receive those treasures on earth (Mt. 6:33). On this earth they were to trust God to provide (Mt. 6:25) and lay up treasures in heaven for the provision during the Kingdom. With the nearness of the Kingdom, they were even to sell their possessions and give to the poor, as a means of laying up treasure in heaven (Lk 12:33). The Jew was a citizen of the commonwealth of Israel, which was a recipient of the covenants and promises. However, for the church, **our conversation is in heaven**, (Phil 3:20). The Jewish nation is looking for the "better country" and the city God has prepared for them (Heb 11:13-16). The church is not seeking an earthly reward but looking for the presence of the Lord.

One of the reasons the apostles are given such "bad press" in modern commentaries as it relates to the Kingdom is because the commentators fail to recognize that the Kingdom is physical (and yet future). Failing to recognize the dispensational change, they chide the apostles for looking for an earthly, physical kingdom.

VERSE 2 - BLUE

Confirming what he said in verse 1, the believer is instructed to put his or her **affection on things above**. The word **affection** is φρονέω [phroneo], which is inherently a *thinking* word, not an *emotion* word. So why did the King James Bible settle on **affection**, rather than something like *mind* (as in Philippians 2:5)? As it turns out, the first entry in the Oxford English Dictionary for *affection* is "The action or result of affecting the mind in some way; a mental state brought about by any influence."¹

VERSE 3 – BLUE

Paul reminds us, as in Colossians 2:20, that we are **dead**, having been **crucified with Christ** (Gal. 2:20). Being such, we are **hid with Christ in God**, seeming to say that the "full version" of our saved-self has not been revealed.

VERSE 4 - BLUE

The appearance of Christ is a reference to the Second Coming, which is the only time that Christ becomes "manifest." This is not a reference to our future glory, but our presence with Him **in glory**. It is location, not status that is in mind in this verse.

This verse is a strong argument that those in the body of Christ will **appear with him** at the Second Coming. However, it is not evidence that the **ten thousands of his saints** who come with the Lord (Jude 14) is the body of Christ, because this was prophesied by Enoch, long before the mystery was revealed, and thus must be a reference either to angels or Jews (as the word *saints* is always used in the Hebrew Scriptures).

¹ "affection, n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2022. Web. 19 April 2022.