

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians

Chapter Twelve

Let No Man Beguile You

“¹⁸ Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Colossians 2:18-19).

Very often people do not even consider the ramifications of false doctrine upon a life. False doctrine leads to false practices. False practices lead to lives wasted in increments of time spent on nonsensical religious endeavors. Religion is man pursuing God through philosophies and human traditions. Christianity is God pursuing people through love, mercy grace and truth. The Christian must be cautious he is not beguiled into false religious practices that eat up his life in small bites of wasted pursuits. We must be careful to never mistake religious zeal for orthodoxy.

“¹ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ² For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:1-3).

The proper presentation of the gospel leads a person to both an understanding of his completeness in the finished work of redemption and the sovereign right of Jesus to be the Lord of those He redeems. He is the “Head” of the “body” that is formed by individuals trusting in the completeness He provides in the gift of salvation.

The whole of the epistle to the Romans leads to a pinnacle for the reception of Christ as Lord. Paul is condemning certain religious practices which are a contradiction against the believer’s completeness in Jesus Christ. “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:10). Therefore, these contradicting practices against the believer’s completeness in Jesus Christ were a denial of Jesus’ right to absolute Lordship over the believer’s life. Although these practices were seemingly innocent and harmless, they were actually serious deviations that severed the Lordship of Jesus Christ from believers. The metaphor is that these false practices sever the Head from the body.

These three false practices are legalism, mysticism and, asceticism. Each of these three false practices was presented as alternative acceptable roads to completeness and access to God.

What is mysticism?

Mysticism is praying to *angels* or communicating with *spirits* as mediators and intercessors between God and men. It came from the influence of the pagan mystery religions. It often involved miraculous visions and spirits speaking through people (this was the common pagan practice of “tongues”). The false teacher of mysticism involved those he had “beguiled” into seeking various experiences through contact with spiritual messengers (“angels”) capable of communicating with God (*the gods in pagan religions*).

If Satan can get a person to be dependent upon anyone other than Jesus Christ, he has succeeded in creating another mediator and intercessor that replaces Jesus Christ in that person’s life. One of Satan’s greatest deceptions to accomplish this is to get the professing believer to focus on his own religious experiences and to begin seeking after miracles in his life. That person thinks he is involved in worshipping God. Actually he is “voluntarily” submitting himself to spiritual beings (“angels”) and is worshipping those spiritual beings by seeking religious experiences and miracles through them.

Other than God, the only spiritual beings that exist are “angels.” They exist as demon’s (fallen angels) and a heavenly host of holy Angels. Although angels can work miracles, they do so only by the authority of God and by His permission and delegation.

Why does God condemn seeking angels to bring about miracles, visions or religious experiences?

God is the source of these things. Nowhere in Scripture is man directed to seek after these things. Angels were created to minister to mankind, not to be worshipped by mankind. Humans are naturally awed by things beyond their comprehension. This awe makes people susceptible to worshipping things and beings that should not be worshipped.

Worship is giving worth to something. If we see a wonderful piece of craftsmanship, we would not think of praising the tools involved in its production. Our attention would be given to the craftsman who used the tools. If we see a beautiful painting, we would not think to praise the canvas or paint brushes involved in its production. We would praise the artist whose talent created the painting. If our ears are blessed with the music of a master, we would not praise the instrument he played. Our attention would be drawn to the skillful musician in the use of the instrument. Angels are simply God's instruments as He works His masterpiece of love in the redemption of souls.

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:14)?

God's heavenly hosts of holy angels do not want man's worship. In fact, anytime worship was given to one of them, they immediately stopped it and redirected that worship to God. Any kind of preoccupation with Angels is a form of false worship resulting from false doctrine.

“¹⁵ Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day *that* the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: ¹⁶ Lest ye corrupt *yourselves*, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷ The likeness of any beast that *is* on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, ¹⁸ The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that *is* in the waters beneath the earth: ¹⁹ And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven” (Deuteronomy 4: 15-19).

“⁵ And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. ⁶ And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ⁹ And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. ¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:5-10).

“⁸ 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. ⁹ 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” (Revelation 22:8-9).

Satan and all fallen angels want the worship of mankind.

“And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9).

“¹² How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³ For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. ¹⁵ Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (Isaiah 14:12-15).

“⁸ Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹ And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. ¹⁰ Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:8-10).

The worship of, or dependence on, any spiritual being other than God is Satanic in origin. If Satan can get you off track by getting you to chase after some religious experience or some higher plane of knowledge, he will have succeeded in keeping you from focusing your efforts on growing in knowing the Lord, growing in spiritual maturity and from ministering to others. There is only one mediator between God and men.

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Timothy 2:5).

According to Colossians 2:18, any person claiming he is guided by a new revelation, an extra-biblical vision, or some direct extra-biblical communication from God is a mystic (another word for this person is a Medium). Paul says this person is “intruding into those things which he hath not seen.” In other words he is involving himself with spiritual beings and things he has no business with. He is “intruding” into an area that is forbidden because he is “vainly puffed up” by his own carnal mind. That person is really chasing after recognition and vain glory for a spiritual connection that gives him/her spiritual superiority (status).

What happens when we allow Jesus to govern our lives through the Word of God (Colossians 2:19)?

The illustration of Colossians 2:19 is that each part of the *body* will only function properly when the right *head* is in control. Legalism, mysticism and asceticism are false doctrines that lead us in false directions. They involve us in worthless and empty pursuits that benefit no one. The message of Colossians 2:19 is that the proper exercise of the human will can only be achieved by accepting the correct leadership, direction and communication from the correct Lord. The Lord Jesus directs people to do His will through His Word (II Tim. 3:16-17). The source of all spiritual “nourishment” (*for growth*) is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His inspired Words inscripturalized in the 66 books of the Bible.

What is asceticism?

Asceticism is the religion of false worship through human regulations. It is spiritual legalism. Asceticism puts extreme unbiblical and extra-biblical restraints and expectations upon people. Only those practicing extreme forms of self denial could be truly considered *spiritual* (there are many degrees of this). Asceticism is the outgrowth of Dualism and is based upon the false belief that all material matter was evil. The spiritual could have no contact with the material. Therefore, the more a person was able to restrain himself from participation in the physical (*especially things that brought pleasure such as marriage, food, sleep, comfort, etc.*) the closer he would be to God. Monasticism developed from this false philosophy. Asceticism is summed up by the words “Touch not; taste not; handle not” (Colossians 2:21). The believer’s completeness in Christ gives him perfect and immediate access to God.

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

The believer's completeness in Christ opened the door for intimate fellowship with God.

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (I John 1:3).

“⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:6-7).

Nothing needs to be added to what Christ has already done.

1. Legalism adds nothing to what Christ has done. In fact it denies what He has done and is doing in our lives.
2. Mysticism denies the intermediary work of Christ and establishes such beings as angels, dead saints and the virgin Mary as intercessors between God and man.
3. Asceticism denies the believer's spiritual union in Christ. Since its philosophical foundation believes there can be no contact between the spiritual and material, it also denies the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

All three of these false doctrines deny the believer's completeness in Christ. To accept anyone of these philosophies is to be “spoiled” as a Christian; “beware!”

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1. What two things does the proper presentation of the Gospel lead us to understand? _____

2. Read Romans 10:1-13. What is the pinnacle that the previous teaching of book of Romans leads us to?

3. What is the contradiction of this that Paul is condemning in Colossians 2:16-23? _____

4. What do the three false teachings of Colossians 2:16-19 do in regard to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? _

5. What is Mysticism? _____

6. What is the name given to the spiritual messengers by the Mystics who had incorporated their pagan beliefs into Christianity? _____
7. Does God ever tell believers to communicate to Him through angels? _____
8. What spiritual beings exist in the spiritual realm? _____

- What are the fallen beings called? _____
9. Give some of the reasons why God condemns seeking angels to bring about miracles, answer prayer, or give visions or religious experiences.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
7. According to Isaiah 14:12-15 and Matthew 4:8-10, what do fallen angels want from mankind? _____

- According to Hebrews 1:14, what is God's intended order? _____

8. Define Asceticism and the central false belief behind this false philosophy? _____

