

*“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ.” Col. 2:13-17.*

Most teachers use these verses as “proof” that the Festivals (holydays), New Moons, and Sabbaths outlined in Leviticus 23 have been done away with (nailed to His cross). Their angle is Paul is writing to people who do NOT keep these Festivals and Sabbaths and encourages them to not let anyone else judge them for their refusal to do so. However, this angle is completely backwards.

Back in verse 8 Paul warns the Colossians to *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”* The key phrase here is *“after the traditions of men.”* Are the Festivals and Sabbaths *“after the traditions of men”* or are they according to the divine statutes from God?

In verse 20-22 Paul continues this thought by saying:

*“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?”*

Again, are the God-given Festivals and Sabbaths *“after the commands and teachings of men”*? No. So what is Paul saying? Jesus said something similar in Mark 7:2-9 when He spoke out against “the tradition of the elders” saying:

*“... Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”*

The issue here isn't simply washing your hands or dishes for health and cleanliness. The washing the Pharisees are referring to is a ritual washing they imposed upon the people.

This was merely tradition and commandments of men and have nothing to do with God's divine instructions.

By contrasting the commands of God and the commands of men **Paul is encouraging the Colossians for their observance of these Festivals and Sabbaths and warning them not to let anyone judge them “after the commandments and doctrines of men.”** What were they being judged for? *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink.” (Colossians 2:16).*

This phrase in the Greek is simply *“eating and drinking.”* The word for *“respect”* in the phrase: *“in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days”* is the Greek word *meros* and more accurately means *“in part of”* or *“when partaking of.”* **The Colossians were being judged by outsiders concerning “eating and drinking” while they were partaking of these Festivals and Sabbaths.**

So what then was nailed to the cross if it wasn't the Feast days and Sabbaths? Paul says it was *“the handwriting of ordinances that was against us”* but what is that? Most teach that it is the “ordinances” of the law of Moses including all the Festivals and Sabbaths. However, the Greek word used here is *δόγμα* which simply means “dogma” in English. This Greek word is NEVER once used for anything related to God's law in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the *Septuagint*. **Every occurrence of dogma in the Greek Old Testament refers to man-made decrees or rulings. Most often it's the statutes and judgments of pagan rulers.** This could, in no way, be speaking of God's Sabbaths. Jesus said, *“the Sabbath was made FOR man”*, not against man (Mark 2:27). In Ezekiel 20:12 God says:

*“Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.” (See also verse 20).*

Clearly God's Sabbaths are an integral part of His design for spiritual growth and sanctification. They are *good* for man and not *against* us. Now read verses 24 and 25:

*“Because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers' idols. Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live.” (NKJV).*

So the dogma stems from man-made statutes and judgments. **Not God's Sabbaths.**

The word used for “handwriting” is *χειρόγραφον (cheirographon)* which means, “a handwritten document, legal note, bond.” This is why many other translations use “certificate of debt (or, charges) contained in decrees.” (BSB, ISV, NET, NASB). The NLT translates it this way: *“He cancelled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross.”*

One way to visualize this is to read what happened at Jesus' crucifixion: *“Above his head they placed the charge [accusation] against him. It read, ‘This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.’ (Matthew 27:37, ISV).* The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of treason. They presented their case before Pilate saying, *“Whoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.” (John 19:12).* Pilate consented to the accusations against Jesus by the Jewish leaders and nailed His charge to His cross.

By submitting Himself to the death sentence Jesus took our place in death. The charges were placed upon Him instead of us. **These were not charges from God against the sinner, but condemning accusations from “the accuser of the brethren” – Satan (Revelation 12:9-10).** This is why Paul says, *“When he [Jesus] had disarmed the rulers and the authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross.” (Colossians 2:15).* These “rulers and authorities” are the condemning prosecutors of *“rulers of darkness” and “spiritual forces of evil.” (Ephesians 6:12).* **Christ did not die as a victim of God's justice, but submitted Himself to Satan's justice enforced by man.**

This is what Christ was taking away from our mindset. Any MAN-MADE “handwritten ordinance (dogma)” that places a barrier between us and God. We cannot fully enter into God's rest if we are constantly believing He is a condemning Father who makes us do penance in order for Him to even look at us. **We must realize that God did NOT forgive us because Jesus died. The death of Jesus reveals that God loves us and had already forgiven us “while we were yet sinners.” (Romans 5:8).** He had forgiven us from the day sin entered us and has been carrying us from *“all the days of old” (Isaiah 63:9).* *“We love Him, because He first loved us.” (1 Jn. 4:19).* He has *“abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances [man-made dogma]; for to make in himself from two [us and Him] one new man, so making peace.” (Ephesians 2:13-15).*

Each of us becomes a new man, a new creature, in Christ as His abiding Spirit dwells in us and through us. We will begin to live a life that is completely Christ-like. **“For we are made**

partakers of Christ.” (Hebrews 3:14). Isaiah 66:22-23 reveals it would make no sense for these Festivals, New Moons, and Sabbaths to be done away with after Christ’s death only to be reinstated again upon the new earth:

*“For as **the new heavens and the new earth**, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that **from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another**, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.”*

This is why Paul said these Festivals and Sabbaths “*are shadows of things to come.*” (Colossians 2:17). Jesus told His disciples: “*With desire I have desired to eat this **Passover** with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, **until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**”* (Luke 22:15,16). In vision Ezekiel and John saw the new earth and the restored tree of life “*bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit **every month**: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*” (Revelation 22:1-2; Ezekiel 47:1,12). Every month = **every New Moon!**

And we know that the followers of Christ kept observing the seventh-day Sabbath long after His ascension back to heaven (Acts 13:14; 42-44; 15:21; 15:13; 17:2; 18:4). They also observed Passover (Acts 12:4; Acts 20:6; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8); the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2; 20:16); and the Day of Atonement (Acts 27:9). Although these appointed times remained, the meaning and manner by which they were observed changed as God’s salvation plan progressed.

The last sentence found in Colossians 2:17 is often mistranslated by adding in the word “is” (“The body is of Christ”), but the phrase, “*the body of Christ*”, without the word “is” refers to God’s people- “*the church*” (1 Corinthians 12:27) with Christ as “*the Head*” (Ephesians 5:23). Paul refers to this right in the beginning of his letter to the Colossians when he speaks of “*Christ’s sufferings on behalf of his body, which is **the church.**”* (Colossians 1:24). And we see it again right in the context of Colossians chapter 2 when he says, “*And you have been made complete in **Christ**, who is **the Head** over every ruler and authority.*” (Vs. 10). So don’t let anyone outside the church (the body) condemn you for your faithful obedience to Christ (the Head) in partaking of God’s sacred Festivals and Sabbaths.

*“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”*

~ Colossians 2:16 ~

Is this proof that Christians are no longer to observe God’s Festivals and Sabbaths today? Most of the Christian world says yes and at first glance it is understandable why anyone would believe this. But what if we looked a little closer at the context and meanings of some of the Greek words used? Would we still believe the same, or would we be surprised to learn that this verse actually validates the observance of God’s Festivals and Sabbaths for Christians today?

For more information on what you have just read see the book:

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