

COLOSSIANS: OVERCOMING SYNCRETISM THRU CHRIST
Part V: Christ's Sufficiency And Supremacy Over Jewish Legalism
(Colossians 2:11-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Recent research indicates that the average American adopts beliefs and practices from approximately nine distinct worldviews, what produces a jumble of often contradictory philosophies known as syncretism.
- B. The epistle to the Colossians handled a mixture of Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1690, "The Colossian Heresy"), so it applies to the syncretism we face.
- C. Colossians 2:11-17 presents Christ's Sufficiency and Supremacy over Jewish Legalism for our insight:

II. Christ's Sufficiency And Supremacy Over Jewish Legalism, Colossians 2:11-17.

- A. In Colossians 2:11a, Paul addressed the Jewish legalism in the syncretism that his readers faced, stating that believers are spiritually circumcised in Christ, having positionally put off the body of the sin nature.
- B. Paul's reason for starting to discuss Jewish legalism with the topic of circumcision was that the Judaizers kept trying to get Gentile Christians to be physically circumcised to be saved (Gal. 5:2; 6:12; Acts 15:1), what led to the Jerusalem council and its conclusion that salvation was by faith alone (Acts 15:6-29). Thus, it was essential that Paul immediately clarify that his readers did not need to be physically circumcised to be saved.
- C. However, God had instituted physical circumcision for Abraham and his seed long before the time of Moses, but the Judaizers had added that Christian Gentiles also needed to keep the Mosaic Law (Acts 6:9-14; Romans 7:1-14). Thus, Paul taught Christ's deliverance of believers from the rule of the Mosaic Law, Col. 2:12-17:
 - 1. Not only was the believer spiritually identified with Christ in His death to the sin nature (Col. 2:11), but he was spiritually buried with Christ in the baptism by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) and positionally raised with Him through faith in the Gospel unto newness of life, Col. 2:12; Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 677-678.
 - 2. We believers were once spiritually and positionally dead in our sins and the uncircumcision of the sin nature, but God positionally made us alive with Christ, having forgiven us all trespasses, Colossians 2:13.
 - 3. God then positionally canceled the written code of the Mosaic Law that had condemned us for our sin, for in Christ, the Mosaic Law was fulfilled (Romans 8:2), Col. 2:14a; Ibid., p. 678. Believers are positionally dead to the Mosaic Law in Christ, for He fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law in His life, having no sin, and He died to the Law on the cross when He bore our sins and died there, Col. 2:14b; 2 Cor. 5:21.
 - 4. Christ had also fully "disarmed the demonic powers and authorities (cf. 1:16; 2:10), triumphing over them (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14)" so that "believers are delivered from these evil powers which inspire legalistic rules about foods and festivals," Colossians 2:15; Ibid.
 - 5. As a result, we believers should let no one influence us to keep any part of the Mosaic Law, Col. 2:16:
 - a. Paul clarified that the Mosaic Law's commands regarding food and drink do not apply to believers, v. 16a. This truth is supported by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 and by God's teaching of Peter in Acts 10:9-16.
 - b. We are also free from the Mosaic Law's rules on holydays, new moon feasts and "sabbaths," Col. 2:16b. "Those who would bring Christians under the bondage of the Law make artificial distinctions between the 'ceremonial' and 'moral' law, and so they say the Sabbath has not passed away." (Ibid.) Seventh-day Adventists claim that the word "sabbaths" in Col. 2:16b refers to the Leviticus 25:1-7 **land** sabbaths that occurred every seventh **year**, but that the "**Sabbath Day**" rule of the Ten Commandments is still the rule for Christians. (Seventh-day Adventists believe . . ., 1988, p. 246, 248-254) However, the Greek text at Col. 2:16 uses the word **sabbaton** for "sabbaths" with no clarification as to whether Paul meant **land** sabbaths or Sabbath **Days**, and whenever **sabbaton** is *not clarified* by its *context* in the *New Testament*, it *always* refers to a Sabbath **Day(s)** or a **week(s)**, *not a land sabbath(s)* (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 746). Believers are thus **not** under the **rule** of *any part* of the Mosaic Law!
 - 6. Paul summed that the Mosaic Law was a shadow of the things to come, but the reality or "substance" (*soma*) is Christ. "A 'shadow' . . . is only an image cast by an object which represents its form. Once one finds Christ, he no longer needs to follow the old shadow," Bible Know. Com., N. T., loc. cit.

Lesson: *Christ is the body of what the Mosaic Law was a mere shadow, so since Christ has come, believers in Christ are no longer subject to any part of the Mosaic Law, for they are positionally complete in Jesus Christ.*

Application: *May we not yield to any pressure to be subject to the rule of any part of the Mosaic Law, for Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law in His life and He died to it all in our place on the cross, so we are complete in Him.*