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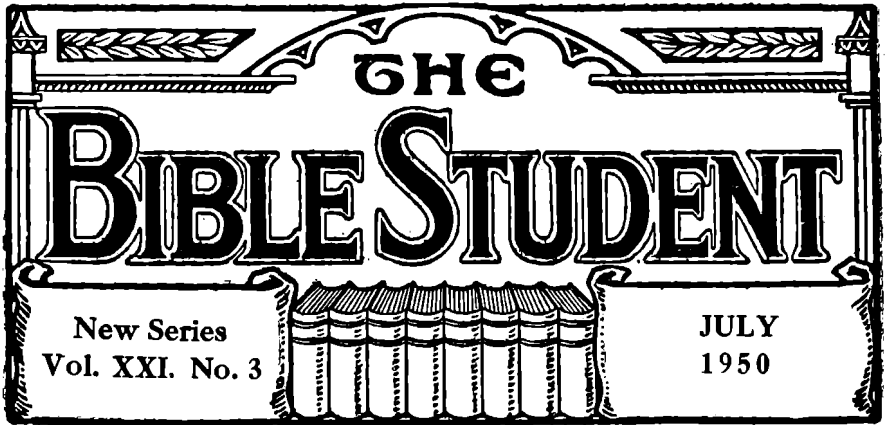
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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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*Editor:* A. McDONALD REDWOOD

# EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

## Chap. 2, verses 21-23

*mē hapse mēde geusē mēde thigēs* (Handle not, nor taste, nor touch.) Note the R.V. These prohibitions are apparently some of the requirements insisted on by the false teachers. Some of the leaders of the ancient church actually supposed these to be Paul's decrees—"thus making complete shipwreck of the sense"! (Lingtfoot).

### Verse 22

*ha estin panta eis phthoran tē apochrēsei* (all which things are to perish with the using) This indicates the apostle's verdict on these prohibitions; they are things which perish in the using and without any moral value, being merely material, quoting to this effect from Isaiah 29:13 (cp. also 1 Cor. 6:13; Matt. 15:17; 1 Tim. 4:3, 4). Note carefully the brackets include v. 21 and this portion of v. 22.

*kata ta entalmata kai diduskalias tōn anthrōpōn* (after the precepts and doctrines of men?) The thought returns to the prohibitions, which are not God's word but issue from the imaginations of mere men—whether Jewish or Gnostic. There is a striking parallel, as most commentators point out, between these words of Paul and those of Christ on defilement in Mark 7:7-23 (Matt. 15:17, 18). Even if some of the precepts were Mosaic, that dispensation was over having been fulfilled in Christ. (See the R.V. of Isa. 29:13; incidentally, the apostle quotes almost verbatim from Isaiah).

### Verse 23

*hatina estin logon men exonta sophias* (which things have indeed a show of wisdom,) "Which things", or better "which *kind* of things", is more general and inclusive than the phrase in v. 22 above, referring to the prohibitions of v. 21, and all else that may have belonged to the false system the apostle is combating. *Logos* here translated 'show', can also mean 'reputation'; more literally, "having a *talk* of wisdom" (cf. our phrase, "its all *talk*"—merely!). The implication is that their 'wisdom' lacked reality and substance, it was 'empty', though it had a certain glamour about it.

*en ethelothrēskeia kai tapeinophrosunē kai apheidia sōmatos* (in

will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body) *Ethelothrēskeia* occurs only here, but *thrēskeia* (religion in its external form) occurs in v. 18; Acts 26:5; James 1:26, 27 (see Note on v. 18). The prefix *ethelo* lays stress on the gratuitous, self-imposed character of the action, sometimes even implying the notion of conceit—a “parade of religiosity”.

For *tapeinophrosunē* see Notes on v. 18. The *third* item reminds us of the religious sects of Flagellants (13th and 14th cent.), who scourged their bodies to purify their souls. It is not the body that is to be blamed for the sins of the soul—a notion which completely misses the mark. The indwelling Christ is the power which transforms body, soul and spirit to manifest His glory even in this life. See 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Cor. 6:13; Rom. 8:13; 12:1; Phil. 1:20; 3:21.

*ouk en timē tini pros plēsmonēn tēs sarkos* (but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh). This clause has given rise to considerable difficulties as to its exact rendering from the Greek text. There is some possibility of copyist's error. It is not necessary to our purpose to go into that discussion, and we can safely follow the findings of the majority of textual authorities as indicated in the R.V. text (e.g. Lightfoot, Radford, Moule, etc.). It is consistent with the whole context from verses 20ff. Three features of the false teaching are indicated: the officious parade of devoutness; an affectation of humility; and the merciless treatment of the body. But all this “entirely fails in its chief aim: It is powerless to check the indulgence of the flesh” (Lightfoot). The only true secret of victory over the fleshly nature is in Romans 8:13—it is “by the Spirit” in mortifying (putting to death) the deeds of the body.

### Chap. 3:1

There is no actual break in the subject here. The argument, as already pointed out (see Notes on v. 20), rests upon the assumption that the Colossians had “died with Christ from the elements of the world”. That is the negative aspect. The positive aspect here given is their being *raised with Christ* to an entirely new life in and with Him (vs. 1-4).

*ei oun sunēgerthēte tō Christō* (If ye then were raised together with Christ). The *if* is not conjectural but assumes the fact to be true; whilst the *oun* refers back to *apethanete* in v. 20. Their death and resurrection with Christ were divine facts, and pro-

vided the spiritual incentive to live in blessed union with Christ in the fulness of His "indissoluble life" (Heb. 7:17). In this unique union there could be no room for any such carnal and useless "means of holiness" as prescribed by the false teachers. "Ye *did rise*", aorist tense, pointing to a definite time, viz., their conversion; and only in a very secondary sense (if at all) to their baptism as the *picture* of the reality itself. (See Notes on ch. 2:12.)

*ta anō zēteite, hou ho Christos estin en dexia tou theou kathēmenos* (seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.) "Keep on seeking", present imperative (cf. Phil. 3:14, R.V. marg.). To seek in any other direction than where Christ is has its subtle temptations. To "meet the indulgence of the flesh" in whatever form, the *only* way is to keep looking-away to "the Author and Perfecter of faith" (Heb. 12:2; cf. Jude 20, 21; 2 Pet. 3:12).

The "things above" (*ta anō*) are viewed as all centered in the Person and place—"where CHRIST is. The R.V. punctuation is to be preferred, a comma after "is". Two points here—first, Christ's *presence* is *there*, where your true "Centre of gravity" resides and your real home is (Heb. 11:14; Gal. 4:26). Secondly, Christ is "seated at the right hand of God" (see Eph. 1:21). Moule beautifully comments: "The imagery denotes the repose and empire of the Ascended Christ, who has forever done the work of sacrificial offering, and now 'sits' to dispense the blessings He has wrought". Furthermore, *we also* are seated there with Him (Eph. 2:6; cf. Rev. 3:21). It was the profound sense of being intimately united to that ascended Lord there, that gave the martyr Stephen his boldness and indomitable courage in facing his enemies (Acts 7:55).

#### Verse 2

*Ta anō phroncite, mē epi tēs gēs* (Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth). Here also the tense is the same: "Keep on thinking the things above." "You must not only *seek* heaven; you must also *think* heaven" (Lightfoot). The repetition is for emphasis and also expansion of the previous "seek".

*Phroncin* implies the set determination of the thought life. It "denotes the whole action of the mind, i.e. of the affections and will as well as of the reason" (Sandy-Headlam on Rom. 8:5). It is in sharp contrast to the attitude of "those who *mind earthly things*" (see Phil. 3:19). And logically so, for "our citizenship

is in heaven" (v. 20) whence we derive our "manner of life" and thought (cf. Phil. 2:5; and cnt. Mark 8:33). The apostle's exhortation is as needy for us Christians today as ever, in view of the modern tendencies for "realism" and being "realistic" in parading the "sins of society" before the world by both the Press and the Pulpit. Christ ever drew the publicans and sinners to Himself for their cleansing and regeneration, never to parade their sins for the delectation of the Pharisees or His hearers.

#### Verse 3

*apethanete gar kai hē zōē humōn kekruptai sun tō Christō en tō theō.* (For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.) "Died" is a definite past experience in time, viz. at conversion (see on v. 2 above, and on vv. 11, 12, 20 of ch. 2). *Zōē* = life in the ethical and spiritual sense; not *bios* (= course of life, natural life). This life is "in reality and inmost sense, the life of the glorified Head made present and powerful in His members by the Holy Spirit" (Moule). *Kekruptai*, perfect tense = a state of completion and a continuing fact. "With Christ", i.e. in intimate fellowship with Christ; so intimate that it is in essence a mystical union with Christ, transcending thought. Moule succinctly remarks: "The apostle's practical aim is to direct the Christians away from the visible, mechanical, routine of Pharisaic or Essenic observances to the secrets of (true) holiness which are as invisible to natural sight as is Christ Himself, in Whom they reside." He adds further: "What is 'with' the glorified Christ is 'in God', inasmuch as the Son is 'in the bosom of the Father'". (Cf. Jn. 1:18; 17:21, 23).

*En tō theō* is rare; only again in Rom. 5:11; 1 Jn. 4:15, 16 (absolutely). *En theō* in Rom. 2:17; Jn. 3:21.

#### Verse 4

*hotan ho Christos phanerōthē hē zōē hēmōn, tote kai hūmeis sun autō phanerōthēsethe en doxē* (When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.) The apostle extends the thought of the believer's present mystic life-union with Christ into the future aspect, when Christ will be manifested at His second coming. But he pauses a moment to reiterate, using an intenser phrase, the fact that *Christ IS life*. He is *OUR* life—even *now*. There is good authority for the reading "*your (humōn) life*", but it is generally accepted as a

copyist's error, and so the plural "our"—"the transcriber missed the point of Paul's inclusion of himself, 'my life as well as yours'—cp. the transition from *you* to *us* in ch. 2:13, 14" (Radford). In this connection see 1 Jn. 5:11, 12; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21.

This is the only reference to the second coming in this epistle, except the allusion in ch. 1:5. *Phaneroō*, "to manifest", has various applications with reference to Christ: At His Incarnation 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Jn. 1:2; and after His Resurrection, John 21:1, 14. In connection with His second coming, 1 John 2:28, which relates to the Judgment-Seat of Christ before which all believers will be 'made manifest' (see 2 Cor. 5:10). In 1 Pet. 5:4 it may refer to a particular feature of the Judgment-Seat of Christ. Here it no doubt refers to Christ's manifestation with all His saints when He comes to overthrow all His enemies prior to the setting up of His Kingdom. It will be "in glory", *His* glory—"the effulgence, visible and spiritual, of His Presence", in which also *His saints will share*, shall "be glorified" (cf. Rom. 8:17, 18, 21). "Then, the oneness of the members with their Head will be seen, in all its living power and wonder, and their perfect holiness will be discovered to be *all* 'of HIM' ". So "the sons of God will be *manifested* (Rom. 8:19) in respect of the nature and the greatness of their sonship" (Moule). Note the close proximity of "Ye" and "*with Him*" in this verse 4.

A.McD.R.

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### TIME

- Time is money—we have no right to waste it.
- Time is power—we have no right to dissipate it.
- Time is influence—we have no right to throw it away.
- Time is life—we must value it greatly.
- Time is God's—He gives it to us for a purpose.
- Time is a sacred trust—we must answer for every moment.
- Time is wisdom—we have no right to be ignorant.
- Time is preparation for eternity—we must redeem it.

—*Watchman-Examiner*