

QUESTION: Doesn't Colossians 2:16 indicate that we need no longer keep the dietary laws of the Bible, nor keep the Sabbath, and the holy days of Leviticus 23? A reading of this passage will prove you wrong in your doctrinal teachings.

(Letters containing variations of this question are frequently received at Bethel.)

COLOSSIANS 2:16

by Elder Jacob O. Meyer

ANSWER: Colossians 2:16 apparently presents an obstacle so serious that many people will not observe the Law of Yahweh because of it. They usually read the passage only superficially, and then out of context. Consequently they assume that in this passage the Apostle Paul declares the Law of Yahweh to have been annulled when the Messiah died. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Let us examine the entire passage of Scripture by inaugurating our reading right at the beginning of chapter 2. This is known as adhering to the context.

Paul expresses his concern for the Colossian brethren and for those who are living in Laodicea, as he opens the chapter. Since we are living in the Laodicean age today this passage could conceivably have been addressed to the people living in our time! Please review briefly the passage dealing with the Laodicean assembly in Revelation 3:14-22. Now prove the application from Colossians 4:16-17. The Laodiceans were

lukewarm and not very zealous for Bible truth.

We may observe this identical trait in the majority of people today as they drift along in religious organizations with nebulous doctrines and a lukewarm spirit, only interested in maintaining the status quo. Paul declared that he was teaching the pure truth of Elohim, in whom is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Paul warned the brethren of the Colossian Assembly to beware of anyone deceiving them with persuasive speech, or as the **King James Version** renders, "enticing words." Is not this warning us to be aware of the manner in which we should be reading the Bible today? We must read it and apply it for ourselves and take a literal interpretation for it whenever possible. We must believe that the authors of the Bible were not seeking to confuse people as they delivered the Words of Yahweh. Multitudes of books have been written about the Bible and everyone seems to be reading them—instead of the Bible!

How many people are sincerely reading the Bible itself? The warning of Paul stands just as applicable today as when he wrote this book.

Paul continues in verses 6 to 7, by urging the Colossian brethren to remain steadfast in the Messiah just as they have received Him. He tells them to become rooted and grounded in the Messiah as they have been taught. Obviously we must not neglect to recall that Yahshua taught His people to obey the Law of Yahweh (Matthew 5:17-20). Yahshua was the sacrifice for sin (the term is defined in the Bible as the transgression of the law, 1 John 3:4). He was not sent to do away with the Law of Yahweh, but to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice so that we would not need to die for the transgressions we have committed.

Meditate on this fact (and Matthew 5:17-20) for just a moment. It will be a turning point in your life—if you grasp this momentous truth! Yahshua the Messiah came to CONDEMN SIN in the flesh.

***Almighty Yahweh
has sent to earth
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Remember that sin is the transgression of the Law (Romans 8:3-4). The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Therefore the message of Yahshua the Messiah, is calling His disciples to obey Yahweh and keep His commandments, while He offered Himself as the acceptable sacrifice for the sins of those who seek to live for the heavenly Father. Almighty Yahweh has sent to earth His Holy Spirit in the Name of Yahshua the Messiah to raise the True Worshipers to a life of obedience to His Word and to give them the mind of Elohim.

This was the plain teaching of Paul. It was not that the Law of Yahweh was done away with when the Messiah died!

Now we read verse 8, ***“Take heed lest there shall be anyone that makes spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after the Messiah.”*** It should be obvious when we scrutinize this verse that it is speaking about worldliness, doing that which is motivated by the spirit of this Babylonish world as opposed to the way

of Yahweh, that is, in the keeping of His Law. “Philosophy” is defined in the dictionary as. “A study of the processes governing thought and conduct: investigation of the principles that regulate the universe and underlie all reality.” “Empty deceit” is translated in the **King James** Version as “vain deceit.” Deceit is defined in the dictionary as “the act of deceiving or lying, a lie; dishonest action or trick.”

Therefore, what Paul meant us to understand was that empty lies or shrewd tricks to deceive the people of Yahweh, relate to the spirit of the world controlled by Satan the Adversary. The final point in the triad of worldly things noted by Paul in this verse is the “traditions of men.” Traditions of men can be defined as “the handing down of customs or beliefs orally from generation to generation over a long period of time.” They are the customs of MEN that have NO foundation in the Bible, the Word of Yahweh. Each one of these three liberalizing characteristics will lead people away from Yahweh and His Kingdom way of life. Paul urges the Colossian brethren to avoid being influenced by the spirit of the world following their baptism into the Messiah and having received Yahweh’s Holy Spirit.

“...after the Messiah,” here we find yet another great truth! The spirit of the world is converse (opposed) to the Messiah and His doctrine. Verse 9 reads, ***“For in him dwells all the fulness of the majesty on High bodily.”*** Ask yourself the question, “What was the Messiah teaching and what did He stand for in His earthly ministry?” It has been expressed for us so perfectly by the Apostle Peter when he wrote in 1 Peter 2:21-23. ***“For to this were you called: because the Messiah also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that***

judges righteously.” Yahshua Messiah clearly taught, advocated and practiced keeping Yahweh’s law.

Now reread this passage slowly and notice how it harmonizes perfectly with what we are studying here in Colossians chapter 2. Yahshua Himself said in John 14:23-24. ***“Yahshua answered and said to him, If a man loves me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him. He that loves me not keeps not my words: and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me.”*** Notice how John chapter 14 minutely explains that Yahshua is the fleshly manifestation of the Father so that He revealed the will of Almighty Yahweh who is invisible to the sight of the human eye. It should be very obvious now to each reader what the Messiah taught in His earthly ministry and what He stood for in His sojourn with men. Yahshua the Messiah clearly taught a return to keeping the commandments of Yahweh and this was His message to His disciples and to the world. Nowhere can we ever find that He called for rejecting the way of life founded upon the keeping of the commandments. Consequently, we can only conclude that if we follow after the Messiah we will obediently try to obey His Words. Paul urged the Colossian brethren to follow the Messiah and to turn away from the spirit of the world which leads one to pursue the ways of the flesh (Romans 8:3) by showing how a human being can live righteously in His human manner of life.

We shall continue to quote from Colossians chapter 2 ***“And in him you are made full, who is the head of all principality and power: in whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Messiah; having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him***

through faith in the working of Yahweh, who raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:10-12) Obviously, this passage in meant to enlarge upon the foundation that Paul had begun to construct in teaching the Colossians a great lesson. He shows that those who have accepted the Messiah and His shed blood will be circumcised in heart when they throw off the body (sins) of the flesh at their burial in water baptism. When we are rained from the water of baptism we have been begotten again into a new life through the Holy Spirit of Yahweh. This should cause us to set our affections upon things in the heavens, changing our goals from an earthly pursuit to the spiritual. Since Yahshua is the head of the Body and the leader of His people, we must obey Him and follow His example in our lives, patterning ourselves after His example. He revealed how a human being could live a spiritual life while still in the flesh. Therefore He is our pattern, our example.

“And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the torture stake; having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:13-15)

Paul emphasized the fact that the people who have trusted in the Messiah have been forgiven their sins by the blood He shed at His death. We have been given new life through the Holy Spirit of Yahweh that was given to us at baptism into Yahshua’s Name. He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. People have assumed that this meant the Law of Yahweh, but such a conclusion is incorrect as we shall see.

Yahweh’s Law was not against us! It was given to us for our own good! ***“And Yahweh commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Yahweh our Elohim, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day.”*** (Deuteronomy 6:24) ***“To keep the commandments of Yahweh, and his statutes, which I command you this day for your good?”*** (Deuteronomy 10:13) Note the context for these verses. Obviously then, from reading these passages, we must conclude that Paul could not have been referring to the commandments of Yahweh when he was writing this passage of Scripture. Remember also that this book was being written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit which will only be given to those who obey Yahweh (Acts 5:32).

Paul was speaking about the sacrificial law in this passage and this is obvious when you read and meditate on what is being said. Yahshua nailed these ordinances to His tree. What was nailed on the tree of the Messiah? Clearly, not the Law of Yahweh which will stand forever! Nailed to the tree was the sacrifice of the Messiah Himself for our sin! Yahweh’s sacrificial lamb was nailed to the tree of Calvary, not the law. Sin is the transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4) .

The term ordinances is #1378 in the **Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible** Hebrew lexicon. It is defined there as “a law (civil, ceremonial or ecclesiastical)” Did Yahshua come to destroy (annul) the moral Law of Yahweh? Matthew 5:17-20 shows that He did not come to destroy the Law. He came to save men from their sins (Matthew 1:21). He came as the Passover Lamb who shed His blood that removed the sins of the world (1 John 1:36).

What was nailed to the tree of Yahshua? It was the SACRIFICE FOR SIN and this sacrifice was LEGISLATED IN THE CEREMONIAL LAW! How truly obvious to us when we read this passage and meditate upon it, harmonizing it

with other Scriptures. Now do you see this wonderful truth for yourself? It was actually the sacrificial law that was a burden to the people because they had to bring offerings annually to atone for their sins. ***“Which is a figure for the time present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshiper perfect, being only (with meats and drinks and diverse washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation.”*** (Hebrews 9:9-10) The ceremonial, sacrificial law, stood against the best interests of the people. Since now the Messiah has come and perfected a sacrifice, once for all (Hebrews 9:28), the animal sacrifice law is set aside and a spiritual sacrifice must be observed. The animal sacrifices were acceptable to Yahweh as a substitute for the person who sinned, only until the Son of Yahweh could come to this earth and die for us as our sin offering. This is known as the time of reformation (Hebrews 9:9-10).

The next two verses should be read in combination to remain in context (continuous text). If we do this we will discover a magnificent new understanding.

Notice Colossians 2:16-17, ***“Let no man judge you therefore in meal, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or a new moon, or a sabbath: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body of the Messiah.”*** Let us analyze this passage so that we can obtain a much better understanding of it and learn that it will in fact, prove Law keeping rather than a no-law doctrine.

Paul says, ***“Let no man judge you . . . “*** Who on earth should be placed before the heavenly Father Yahweh and His legislation? Who on earth, which man, would presume to impose his human wishes above those of the supernatural Creator and His written Law of Yahweh? There are plenty of men who would presume to do this, but in point of

fact, no human is powerful enough to do so.

For example, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church could be cited which admits to changing the weekly worship observance from the scripturally sanctified and established seventh day, to the first day of the week. Therefore, they keep Sunday in opposition to the Word of Yahweh, they tell us. We must serve and obey Yahweh rather than men (Acts 5:29), human interpretation and authority notwithstanding. If the Roman Catholic Church, or any other religious organization for that matter, makes rules and regulations contrary to the inspired Word of Yahweh, then we must uphold the sacred Scriptures above all of the commandments and doctrines of men. Why should the daughter of religions (churches) follow a mother who teaches them to sin?

No one may rule over the Body of the Messiah except the head and that is Yahshua. He has given us His Word and outlined the organization that He wishes to lead in His assembly.

We are therefore in submission to Him and His Word. That is His message to the world, as found in Matthew 5:17-20. We allow **NO MAN** or **NO ONE** to rule us or judge us in anything! We shall judge ourselves in accordance with the expressed Word of Yahweh (1 Corinthians 11:31-32). We fear Yahweh and not men. ***“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of Yahweh.”*** (Matthew 4:4)

Notice also the future tense of the verb employed here to show that the keeping of the festivals, new moons and Sabbaths still ARE (even now in our own time continue to be) shadows of things to come. They depict some momentous event in the plan of salvation ***still future***, even at the time Paul was writing! Therefore the shadow of things to come was not even then fulfilled in the Messiah, several decades

after His death, resurrection, and ascension on High. The fulfillment WILL BE CONSUMMATED when the Messiah returns and Yahweh’s Kingdom is established on earth as it is in heaven, which we can see from Hebrews 4:3-11, relative to the Sabbath (see especially verse 9). Contrary to popular belief, the meaning of the Sabbath has not been fulfilled in the past, but it will be fulfilled in the seventh day, the Millennium or the 1,000-reign of the Messiah on earth. The festivals, sabbaths, and new moons are still very much binding, and their meaning continues to be prophetic.

Notice in verse 17 of Colossians chapter 2 the last clause, ***“... but the body [is] of the Messiah.”*** The reason for joining the two verses together in context as they should be, is to show that the entire passage comprises one complete thought. The word “is” does not even appear in the text. The meaning of the phrase then is that we shall allow no one to judge us. No outsider who does not have the Holy Spirit of Yahweh shall rule over our thoughts or conduct. Yahweh and His Word are supreme! The Body of the Messiah will judge righteously and they will be keeping the law of Yahweh (Revelation 12:17 and 14:12). Please read 1 Corinthians 6 also. They will submit themselves voluntarily to the rudiments Word of Yahweh.

No one (no human being) unbegotten by the Holy Spirit shall be allowed to judge in the Assemblies of Yahweh, but the Body of the Messiah shall keep the Law of Yahweh and judge its members righteously by using the sacred Scriptures as their standard.

Do you realize what you have clearly seen in this passage of Scripture that has been for centuries MISUSED to teach the annulment of Yahweh’s law? You have seen the exact converse—the opposite is true! Paul urges us to keep the Law of Yahweh even more directly and absolutely now than previously because we have been circumcised in heart by Yahshua the Messiah

when we were baptized and raised to life through the Holy Spirit! ***“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of Yahweh.”*** (1 Corinthians 7:19) Read this verse again!

Just one additional word on “ordinances.” If you read the remainder of the chapter you will discover that the ordinances here are defined as: ***“(All which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed [served as] a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.”*** (Colossians 2:22-23) Obviously Paul is contrasting the commandments and teachings of men with the spiritual worship that we voluntarily offer in the Messiah. The commandments and teachings of men lead the people of the world to keep Christmas, Easter, and other worldly holidays that are not found in the Bible. These are the rudiments (elementary principles) of the world. The commandments and teachings of men declare that the Law of Yahweh has been done away with when the Messiah died! All of these commandments and teachings of men are CONTRARY to what Almighty Yahweh Himself has said in His Word. Whose teachings will you believe, Yahshua’s or men’s? The choice is up to you! ***“...But as for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh!”*** (Yahshua 24:15) The author asserts the same! Will you join the spiritual Israel who will serve Yahweh in His Kingdom? ■