

YOU DON'T NEED WHAT THEY'RE SELLING

Colossians 2:16-23

¹⁶So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

²⁰You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹"Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"? ²²Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. ²³These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

Colossians 2:16-23 (NLT)

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

This week we confront the many errors of the false teaching that was seeking to capture God's holy people in Colossae and Laodicea. Our interest is to understand the false teaching of the day and to prepare ourselves to avoid capture in our day of similar error.

How does one keep others from condemning you for what you do (2:16)?

The Law of Moses contained certain dietary laws regarding eating and drinking. One such restriction was against eating things containing blood (*Leviticus 17*). It also regulated which animals were clean to eat and which were unclean (*Leviticus 11; see Acts 10:9-16*). It also gave instructions for those who had taken a Nazirite vow on what they could drink (*Numbers 6:1-4*).

It also taught that certain days were holy and prescribed new moon celebrations and Sabbaths. The passover was one such festival celebrated yearly (*Exodus 12:14*). We also find specific instructions for this and other festivals in the Law (*Leviticus 23*). Each month sacrifices were made for the beginning of a new month (*new moon – Leviticus 29:6*).

Since these are prescribed in the Scriptures, what gives the Christian the right to not observe all of these things?

In what way are these things "shadows" (2:17)?

What else were they to reject (2:18)?

Dr. Norman Geisler in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* says,

Some heretics who turn believers away from faithful service have a false humility, which is only “a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5) that is in Christ (Rom. 8:3–4). This artificial godliness of legalists was connected with the worship of angels which Scripture forbids (Ex. 20:3–4; cf. Rev. 22:8–9). In fact, legalism is a teaching inspired by fallen angels (1 Tim. 4:1) who as “elemental spirits” (Gal. 4:3, RSV) would bring men into slavery by their mystical meditations.¹

How did the false teachers justify demanding these (2:18b)?

Why should the Christian not worry about these rules (2:20-23)?

Tim Challies identifies *Seven False Teachers in the Church Today*:

1. The *Heretic* blatantly contradicts the essential teachings of the Christian faith.
2. The *Charlatan* is interested in the Christian faith to the extent that it can fill his wallet.
3. The *Prophet* claims to be gifted by God to speak fresh revelation outside of Scripture.
4. The *Abuser* uses his position of leadership to take advantage of other people.
5. The *Divider* uses false doctrine to disrupt or destroy a church.
6. The *Tickler* is a man-pleaser rather than a God-pleaser.
7. The *Speculator* is obsessed with novelty, originality, or speculation.

Where have you seen elements of these errors today?

¹ Norman L. Geisler, “[Colossians](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 678–679.