

## **What Is The Mysterious Plan Of God**

### **Colossians 2**

**Do you wish you were more religious?**

**Many people believe that we church people want everyone to be more religious.**

**What if I told you that is not true?**

**False teachers told these Christians in Colosse to follow specific rules and regulations to be right with God.**

**What Does The Bible Say?**

I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. 2 I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is

Christ himself. 3 In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:1–3 NLT)

**The apostle Paul wanted the Church in Colosse to know it is not about religion but a relationship.**

**God's mysterious plan is Christ Himself (Colossians 2:2).**

**Religious people try to earn God's love by following rules.**

6 Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. (1 John 2:6 NLT)

**People who strive for a relationship know they cannot earn God's love; they want to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live like Jesus.**

**Following Christ is driven by affection for Christ, not fear of God.**

**So how does having a relationship with Christ work?**

**What Does The Bible Say?**

6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. (Colossians 2:6 NLT)

**You receive Him as Lord.**

**Some people believe that this is a two-step process. First, you receive Jesus Christ as Savior, then take Him as Lord. This belief is not true.**

**For Christ to be your savior, He must be your Lord.**

**Therefore, you either receive Christ as Lord, or you get nothing.**

**What is the best test to know if you follow Christ? If you feel bad when you sin.**

**Then you follow Christ.**

**Each day you are to lead your lives in deliberate submission to Jesus Christ's lordship.**

7 Let your roots grow down into him and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. (Colossians 2:7 NLT)

**Third, you grow roots in Christ.**

**How do you grow roots in Christ? You ask why?**

**Fourth, the more you understand that your salvation is based on what Christ did for you, not on what you do, the more thankful you will become.**

**A grateful believer is resistant to defection from Christ. But, on the other hand, a disgruntled, complaining, and whining Christian is easy prey for false instructors who are eager to supply “exactly what you’ve been lacking.”**

**How should we respond to all God’s blessings in Christ?**

## **What Does The Bible Say?**

10 So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority. (Colossians 2:10 NLT)

13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14 NLT)

### **Christ is all you need to be saved or right with God.**

16 So 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. 17 For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. (Colossians 2:16–17 NLT)

**The false teachers said the truly spiritual maintained a particular diet and correctly observed all the right holy days.**

**Because Christ has forgiven us and made us part of His family, Don't let other people judge you.**

**How Can You Obey:**

**First, once every week, affirm and encourage another believer.**

**Second, once a day, think of something you're grateful for and tell the Lord, "Thank You."**

**Third, morning, noon, and night pause and remind yourself, "I am complete in Christ."**

**Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves

has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

### **Additional Notes:**

The Talking Theology Segment is inspired by Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 150–167.

### **Explore:**

### **KEY TRUTHS:**

1. Believers Keep Growing in Faith, Trusting in Christ Alone and Rejecting False Teaching (Colossians 2:6-8)

2. God Gives Forgiveness and Spiritual Life Through Faith in Christ Alone (Colossians 2:9-15)
  
3. Believers Hold Fast to Christ and Reject Man-made Philosophies and Regulations (Colossians 2:16-23)

**HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the**

**Bible:** Paul likely wrote his letter to the believers at Colossae around AD 61- 62 while under house arrest in Rome. He continued teaching believers to obey all of Christ's teachings.

**Explore:**

False teachers confronted the Colossian believers with a confused mixture of Christian, Jewish, and pagan thought. Christ was part of this, but Jewish rites and practices found a



home within it, too, as well as pagan spirits and spiritual emissaries of various sorts. It rejected the purity of the gospel. It reserved enlightenment and spiritual fullness only for those who followed its way. Paul warned the Colossians about this error.

### **Believers Keep Growing in Faith, Trusting in Christ Alone and Rejecting False Teaching (Colossians 2:6-8)**

Paul used three different names or terms for the Savior in verse 6: Jesus, Christ, and Lord. He warned the Colossians not to see these terms as entities that worldly philosophy could separate. They were one and the same, and if Jesus is Lord, then a believer's life must reflect that.

Further, Paul recognized that although the Colossians had received Jesus as Savior and Lord, that was not the end of the matter. They needed to continue to trust and live in submission

to Him. This would help them grow strong in faith. Just as trees are difficult to move once their roots have taken hold, believers' active faith should keep them from wavering from the truth they had been taught. Such a well-rooted faith would produce thankfulness (verse 7).

Captive (verse 8) came from descriptions of pillage and kidnapping, such as when pirates attacked. Our thinking is not to be caught up in and dominated by the world's philosophies, but rather by Christ and the truth of His Word (2 Corinthians 10:5). Paul was not against all kinds of thought that we might term philosophy. He specifically denounced philosophy that was hollow and deceptive—promising freedom and enlightenment while producing slavery and darkness. He denounced that which depends on human wisdom and the principles of this world, rather than on Christ. We have an entire book of the Bible (Proverbs) devoted to wisdom—the true wisdom that comes

from God and living for Him. Old Testament or New Testament: godly wisdom involves godly living. They are inseparable.

Plato, Socrates, Stoics, and Epicureans are just a few of the ancient Greek philosophers or schools of philosophy. Just as we guard against physical dangers, we should also be aware of spiritual dangers, including the lure of spiritual sounding philosophy that leads away from Christ rather than to Him. We should pursue godly philosophy, such as we find in Proverbs and the rest of Scripture.

### **Explore:**

## **God Gives Forgiveness and Spiritual Life Through Faith in Christ Alone**

The false teaching that threatened the Colossian church combined Christian teaching about Christ with Jewish rituals and rules, as well as pagan, spirit-focused devotion. It promised a fuller understanding and spirituality for those willing to take

the extra step of following certain Jewish practices and for engaging various spiritual authorities.

Paul, on the other hand, insisted that salvation in Christ needed none of that. Indeed, Jesus Himself had attained that union between God and humanity that the world of pagan spirit devotion considered unattainable (verse 9). The Christian believer needed no fuller, more complete experience (verse 10). Jesus, who is head over all powers and authorities (including the world of pagan spirits), has given true fullness of life to those who are in Him. The Bible teaches that Jesus was fully God, yet fully human, not 50-50! Christian teaching calls this the incarnation, and it remains essential in a proper understanding of Jesus Christ.

Nor did Gentile believers need to adopt Jewish practices such as circumcision to prove how serious they were about obeying God. Jewish circumcision dealt only with the material body, anyway.

It did not protect against sin and death. In Christ, believers receive a better circumcision (verses 11-12). The resurrection of Christ testifies to this new spiritual circumcision's power and effectiveness.

We (the Colossians and us) were dead in sin. Nothing marked us as belonging to God in any way (verse 13). But God forgave our sins, making us alive with the risen Jesus. Had God held court before that point, He would have justly condemned us. But in union with Christ, it is different. God has erased or cancelled the record of our sin debt, setting it aside, nailing it to the cross (verse 14).

The Roman and Jewish authorities (along with the voice of the mob) condemned Jesus. Pagans spoke of other spirit powers and authorities. Paul insisted that whatever powers or authorities may exist in the world, whether human or spirit, God showed

His sovereign power over them all through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (verse 15).

We lack nothing in Jesus. He has provided us fullness in Him, and His Word is final. Whatever else may come, for young or old, we may be sure that whatever we need comes from Him, not through other people's ideas about faith, spirituality, or religion.

**Explore:**

Some scholars identify a common practice of the Romans to write out the laws broken by criminals who were being crucified and posting those offenses on the cross above the head of the condemned. If this is what Paul is alluding to, the entire law of Moses could have been nailed on the cross of Christ since it was broken in its entirety. Our sins were attributed to Christ when He died on the cross.

## **Explore:**

What role does the Law play after Christ? Was the Law not a good thing? Certainly, it was. Paul discussed this at length in Scriptures such as Galatians 3 and Romans 7. The problem was that the Law was never designed to be an instrument of salvation. It was rather an instrument of condemnation. It showed us how far off the mark we were. It had no power to bring us closer to the mark itself. Christ suffered the Law's ultimate condemnation—death—on our behalf. Believers emerge from that experience—the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—as triumphant. The Law would have condemned us. It led to its own ultimate conclusion: death. But it was powerless to go beyond. Jesus, on the other hand, went as far as death and beyond, paying the debt that had previously condemned us. The debt is paid, and future bills that Satan may throw accusingly against us can be put to rest. There is nothing left to pay.

## **Explore:**

### **Believers Hold Fast to Christ and Reject Man-Made**

#### **Philosophies and Regulations (Colossians 2:16-23)**

The word for judge or disqualify in verse 16 is the idea of umpires or referees in a sporting event. They look at the play and determine if everything was by the rules. In this case, people were setting themselves up in judgment over some of the Colossians. They claimed these Colossians failed to be as spiritual as they were—as evidenced by the Colossians' lack of participation in special festivals or Sabbaths. Well, I always attend the new moon festival and follow every Sabbath. Paul put the Sabbath (representing all the ceremonial law) in its place, so to speak: its purpose was to prepare us for the reality, for Christ (verse 17).



Other enemies of the gospel formed their judgments on the basis of visions and dreams. Let me tell you what God told me last night, me the humble servant. Paul saw right through their spiritual pretensions. In reality, such people were proud, not humble, puffed up with idle ideas, not spiritual substance (verse 18). In fact, such people had no real connection to Christ, the head of the Church. Connection to the Head brings proper growth to all parts of the body (verse 19).

Verses 20-23 make it even more clear: The people of Christ have no need for extensive lists of prohibitions (Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch!). Those are principles of this world, not principles of the kingdom of God. As with all human commandments, they fall short of their goal in real life. They fail. Indeed, they appear to be spiritual, but they are of no use before God. Proper discipline of the body for the purpose of not being mastered by it is not at all the same as an imposed

asceticism that seeks to generate spiritual benefit. As with all Satan's inducements, the result is not up to the advertisement.

It is important to distinguish between spiritual disciplines: "In our family, we pray before meals. We read Scripture and pray together before bed" and asceticism: "You fast one morning a week and pray for fifteen minutes before work? That's nothing! I fast an entire day and pray for an entire hour!" Asceticism leads to pride and indulgence eventually.

Paul's teaching here did not mean there are no sins to avoid and resist or godly things to pursue. There are clear "do's" and "don'ts" spelled out in Scripture. We obey these while avoiding man-made rules and regulations. The Bible's pure gospel message produces neither asceticism nor sinful living.

### **Explore:**

Salvation does not come through religious works or asceticism or unbiblical mysticism. God offers salvation and forgiveness

through faith in Christ alone. Encourage parents and grandparents to discuss this key truth with family members.

**Explore:**

Some at Colossae blended angelic/spirit worship in with their Christian beliefs. They looked down on those who clung only to Christ and did not join in with them in their Christless worship. They pretended to be humble servants to whom God sent special intermediaries with special revelation. In practice, putting any intermediary between Christ and the believer is the very opposite of humility. It sets aside the sufficiency of what Christ has done. Paul struggled hard against such prideful conceits.

**Explore:**

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or

her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ- followers. When they do,

Heaven will rejoice!

**Question 1 of 5**

Why is adultery treated as such a grave sin? What far-reaching effects does it have?

**Question 2 of 5**

What are some man-made rules, philosophies, and traditions that some people or groups claim are necessary for the right standing with God?

**Question 3 of 5**

Explain how God's mysterious plan is to know Him.

**Question 4 of 5**

How should we respond to all God's blessings in Christ?

**Question 5 of 5**

Why should the Bible be the final word and authority for all believers?