

The Ten Commandments - Part 18: The Sabbath and Colossians 2:16 (8/20/2022)

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.cornerfringe.com/media/kxwxwh3/the-ten-commandments-part-18>

*Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserving the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliterate, English word. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.

Opening Videos: Various Christian Perspectives on the Sabbath

Dr. David Jeremiah:

Now, Paul said, "Because you've been forgiven, all your sins have been taken away." Don't get caught up in trying to add to that with your legalistic life. Verses 16 and 17, he says. "So don't let anyone judge you in food or in drink or regarding a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are shadows of things to come but the substance is of Christ." He says now that you're a Christian, don't get caught up in all the rules and regulations people want to throw on you so that you can prove that you're a Christian. There's none of that in the scripture, none of it.

Mike Mazzalongo:

To this day we have people lording over others what kind of festival that they need to attend. In regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon, oh what has it got here, or a Sabbath? A little more familiar, isn't it? We have groups within Christianity that say, "No, no, no, you need to worship God on the Sabbath, on the Saturday, the Sabbath because if you don't, you're lost. What does he say right here? No one is to be your judge.

Pastor John Miller:

Now, there were two areas I've already mentioned that the legalists were judging them, and they're common even in our day. They were the area of their diet and they were the area of their days. Even today, people will say that if you eat certain foods or don't eat certain foods, usually it's don't eat certain foods, and you worship on certain days, you're more spiritual, right? That's pretty common. And they tell you that it's not enough, just to be a Christian, you have to worship on this certain day or that you have to eat certain foods and follow dietary laws. So, the false teachers were imposing a mosaic legalism on the Christians in Colossae as a means of spiritual growth. Now, first of all notice the diet. It says in verse 16, in food or in drink. In my King James Bible, it says, "meat", but that's just a word referring to their food. So, it's a matter of what you eat and what you drink. It could be translated "in your eating" or "in your drinking". It's from the Old Testament mosaic law. In the Old Testament, Moses gave the people of Israel, notice who it was given to, Israel not the church, dietary laws. And notice it was the Old Testament, and they're not repeated in the New Testament, so you have to take that into consideration.

Dr. Robert Jeffress:

You know, as you look at the New Testament, it is clear that once Jesus was raised from the dead, the early church changed its day of worship from Saturday, the last day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week. Paul was saying all these Old Testament laws, they were simply a shadow pointing to Jesus Christ. And now that Jesus has come, there is no reason to go back and keep all of these Old Testament laws.

Unknown Speaker:

Fact number two: Those that do observe the Sabbath should not be in a position to judge those who do not. Colossians, chapter 2 says, "Do not let anyone judge you based on whether you obey the Sabbath or not."

John MacArthur:

And so, Paul says in verses 16 and 17, "Don't let anybody act as your judge, render a spiritual verdict on your life by some external measure such as food, or drink, or a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day." Don't let anybody judge you based on those kinds of things. If you will remember, Romans, chapter 10, you will remember Paul's clear assessment of the problem with the Jews. He says in verse 1 of Romans 10, "My heart's desire, my prayer to God for them, is for their salvation, but here's the problem, they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. They don't know about God's righteousness and they seek to establish their own righteousness and therefore do not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Here are the Jews, and they're trying to achieve righteousness; they're trying to earn heaven; they're trying to gain righteousness by what they do morally, religiously, ceremonially.

(End of Opening Videos)

Daniel Joseph:

Shabbat Shalom

We have to get to work. We have a lot to talk about today. The way I would articulate our experience today is we're going to get into some serious Sabbath apologetics. If you're paying close attention to that video, literally every one of those clips had to do with one specific passage in the New Testament.

That passage is Colossians 2:16-17 – **16 Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.** *(Emphasis added).*

Traditionally, this passage as you just heard has been understood in such a way that it's used as a proof text. In fact, I would argue, this is the foremost proof text to show that Christians today do not need to keep the Sabbath. They're under no obligation or requirement whatsoever; it's not necessary; and it doesn't stop there, it goes on.

The traditional understanding and what's being taught from the pulpits today is the following: that if in fact you cling to these things, and you attempt to say that these are required, you want to make a distinction between your ham and your hamburger, you want to tell people that it is an obligation to keep the Sabbath, it is necessary; you're not just a legalist, but you're actually denouncing Christ. Your radical observance of these things is a rejection of Yeshua Himself.

That's an incredible charge, when you think about it. It's an incredible thought. This whole concept of viewing anyone who keeps the fourth commandment of God, the Sabbath, as a legalist, is a serious charge. So, we will dig into this today because the stakes cannot be higher. Anytime you start saying the commandments of God are no longer required, with all due respect, it's a life and death conversation.

You need to investigate, no question about it, because one thing I know is when you go back to the garden, this is what the enemy did. The deceiver questioned the commandment of God, "No, it's not necessary for you to abstain from eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It's not necessary." So, anytime we get into a conversation like this, yes, it merits your undivided attention. So, with that said, we're going to dig into this.

Let's go back to the second century and get into a little bit of history. What we're about to see is really prolific. It's one of the earliest documents we have that directly relates to Colossians 2:16-17. I want you to see how early Christians in the second century viewed this passage.

The epistle that I want to take you to first is called the *Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*. This is estimated to be written about 150 A.D. to maybe 220 A.D. The church is still fairly new; it's still growing; it's exploding. Gentile Christians are pouring into the faith. Mathetes is not even a name; it's a title. In the Greek, it simply means "disciple". We don't know who really wrote this.

But this Mathetes has some interesting things to say in reference to Colossians 2. Listen to these words: **But as to their (the Jews) scrupulosity concerning meats, and their superstition as respects the Sabbaths, and they're boasting about circumcision, and their fancies about fasting and the new moons...** (*Emphasis added*).

There's no debate that the writer is specifically drawing from Colossians chapter 2. That much we are certain. Notice the tenor of these words: "**but as to the Jews their scrupulosity concerning meats**", meaning they make a distinction between ham and hamburger, between clean and unclean; "**and their superstition as respects the Sabbaths**" as the writer knew, they clung to the Sabbath. The tone is very unfortunate.

Getting into a little historical context, if you have ever studied the second century, you learned that there was a volcanic explosion of heresy that came forth. This was the very time when the *Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus* circulated. It was the very time, Marcionism exploded, of which Tertullian said had literally embittered the whole mass of the faith. Gnosticism came to the church. It was chaos in regard to heresy.

What you will notice when you connect all the dots on these heresies, whether you're talking about Marcionism or *Mathetes to Diognetus*, is that as Gentile Christians came into the church, they completely separated themselves from the Jews. They saw themselves as a separate entity and took a tone against the Jews and not a good tone, a very unhealthy tone. So, the very wall that Yeshua broke down, the enemy was building back up. Very unfortunate.

Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus – **But as to their (the Jews) scrupulosity concerning meats, and their superstition as respects the Sabbaths, and they're boasting about circumcision, and their fancies about fasting and the new moons, which are utterly ridiculous and unworthy of notice, – (Emphasis added).**

So, he gets into the meats, the Sabbaths, and the new moons. Look at what he says next: **which are utterly ridiculous and unworthy of notice**. These things that we read about in Colossians 2:16, the feasts, the new moon, the Shabbats, and making the distinction between clean and unclean are ridiculous and unworthy of notice. That is the strongest language you could possibly use. This is back in the mid-second century.

So, here's the deal. As you look at some of the commentators and preachers in the pulpits today, understand something; this stuff that we are hearing today is not new. This perspective goes all the way back.

Let me show you another second century church father, Justin Martyr, who has this work called *Dialogue with Trypho*, Trypho being a Jew. Justin records the dialogue he has with this Jew. In the midst of this dialogue, he says – **For we too would observe the fleshly circumcision, and the Sabbaths, and in short all the feasts, if we did not know for what reason they were enjoined to you, – namely, on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your hearts.** (*Emphasis added*).

Think about these words for a second. I know what Justin is doing. Very clever. He makes the statement that the only reason you were told to distinguish between clean and unclean, and to remember to keep the Sabbath holy was because you were filthy rebellious human beings, completely lawless. Justin Martyr is literally tying the Holy Sabbath to sin. I mean the chutzpah here! Blows your mind! But again, when you look at this type of commentary, are you now surprised at the kind of commentaries and sermons we hear today? Absolutely not.

Let me build upon this for you. I'm going to go to two extremes: I wanted to take you back to the earliest documents referencing Colossians 2, and now I will take you into modern day scholarship. What we're about to embark on, pay close attention, because guess what? the scholars matter. Just look at today and I can show you the influence that Mathetes and Justin Martyr have had on Christianity. Do not underestimate it.

The modern-day scholars today have a great amount of influence because they're rearing up pastors, and pastors are referring back to them and gleaning from their wisdom. Then the pastors take that information and bring it to the flock. Let me show you what some of the modern-day commentators are saying of which pastors today are drawing from.

This is the *Exposition of Colossians* by Hendriksen and Kistemaker, vol 6 – **What justification could there be for imposing upon converts from the Gentile world the observance of the Jewish sabbath**, – see it's not a Christian church thing; it's Jewish, the Jewish Sabbath – **when the bringer of eternal rest is urging everyone to come unto Him?** (*Emphasis added*).

Do you understand what he's proposing? He's making it look like you can either grab hold of the Jewish Sabbath or you can grab hold of Christ. If you grab hold of the Jewish Sabbath, then you're abandoning Christ; but if you accept Christ, you will abandon the Sabbath. This is what's being conveyed.

Exposition of Colossians, vol 6 continued – ... **the Old Testament regulations had served a real purpose. But now that Christ and salvation in Him had arrived, what further use could such shadows serve? Though it was not wrong for the Jew, trained from his infancy in the law, for a period of transition to**

observe some of these customs as mere customs, **having nothing whatever to do with salvation**, (Emphasis added).

Nothing to do with salvation. In other words, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, one of the Ten Commandments given to Israel, has nothing to do with salvation. I struggle with this in the context of the following: the words of Yeshua in Matthew 19 when the young rich man asked, “**What must I do to inherit eternal life?**” and Yeshua answered, “**Keep the commandments.**”

Exposition of Colossians, vol 6 continued – it was certainly wrong to ascribe to them a value which they did not have, and try to impose them upon the Gentiles. Christians are being taught today that there's no value in the Jewish Sabbath, no value in making a distinction between clean and unclean, in the festivals, in Passover, or Yom Kippur. This is explicitly referring to Colossians 2.

Let me show you another response to Colossians 2 in *Opening Up Colossians and Philemon* by another scholar, Dr. Ian S. McNaughton, – Paul, who is saying here that believers are under no obligation to keep the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) now that the new covenant has come. This is a very simple assessment. People read Colossians 2:16-17 and walk away with, “We're not supposed to do these things. Christians are not supposed to bother themselves with these things.”

Dr. Robert W. Wall says In *Colossians and Philemon (The EVP New Testament Commentary Series)* – The list of these celebrations, which includes a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day is fairly typical. Since the list encompasses annual festivals (such as Passover or Yom Kippur), monthly meetings (such as the New Moon celebration) and the weekly observance of sabbath, it is evident that Paul's opponents required a rather comprehensive obligation. Moreover, within Judaism most of these celebrations were intended to help the community look forward to Messiah's deliverance of Israel from its suffering and to its entrance into God's promised shalom.

That's an interesting assessment because even this particular scholar recognizes that the festivals are prophetic in nature, and they proclaim Messiah's deliverance for His people. I agree with that.

Then we get to this: Continuing in *Colossians and Philemon* – Thus for the Christian to participate in these Jewish celebrations was tantamount to a denial of Jesus' messiahship.

Do you understand? This is what Christianity is being taught. Do you marvel when you tell a Christian friend, “I came into the knowledge of Torah. I have started keeping the Sabbath, the fourth commandment.”, and you see that look in their eyes saying, “Oh my goodness. What is going on here?” Do you want to know why they want to run the other way? It's the programming of them going on week after week and hearing message after message saying, “If you grab hold of these things, you are rejecting Christ.” So, all they hear as you tell them about the Sabbath, the Passover and not eating pork anymore is that you have denounced Christ. It's the only thing they hear. Why are they hearing it? You know why. You saw the intro video showing what's being preached and what the commentators are saying. This is why. We should not marvel at this.

This is the *Holman New Testament Commentary* – Apparently some in Colossae tried to convince the believers that spirituality was based on how well they observe certain codes of behavior. – This is the assessment of Colossians 2:16. – Paul mentions diets (what you eat or drink) and days (religious festival, New Moon celebration, Sabbath day). The false teachers said that the truly spiritual, maintained a particular diet and properly observed all the right holy days. What about this? Is the Christian bound to

a strict observance of diets and days? **No.** Two passages of Scripture make this clear (Hebrews 9:10; Galatians 4:8-11). – Both of which I go into detail in my Hebrew series and in my Galatians series. We don't have time to get into that today, you can reference it. – [Here in Colossians 2:17, Paul informs us that rule keeping is just a shadow: there is no real spiritual substance.](#) (*Emphasis added*).

There is no real spiritual substance to the Jewish Sabbath. You wonder why Christians aren't concerned about keeping it? It's because they're being told there's nothing of substance; it doesn't mean anything to the Christian who clings on to Christ.

So, this is the mantra. This is the commentary. These are the teachings that are going out. We need to appreciate them and understand where they're coming from. The question is, are they coming from a place that is accurate? Have they grabbed hold of Paul's true intent as he's speaking to the believers in Colossae? That's what we need to ask ourselves because we can look through the ages, through the different generations, and repeatedly this concept keeps getting perpetuated: there's no substance to the Jewish Sabbath; the Jewish Sabbath is not for the Christian church.

The one thing that I struggle with and that terrifies me is this question, and at the very least, I'm asking every Christian to ask this question, "What if that's the wrong assessment? What if these commentators, scholars, and early church fathers misunderstood what Paul was really saying? What are the implications of something like that? You cannot even calculate it. The further we get into this series; you'll understand what I mean by that. You will understand how serious of an issue this really is. As far as how the church has developed in mainstream evangelical Christianity, Colossians 2:16 and the traditional understanding of it, is one of the most influential passages in shaping Christianity today.

I want to see what Paul has to say. If Paul truly conveys that the Sabbath doesn't matter, it's not for the church, and for me to keep it I'm rejecting Christ, so be it. Then I'm not going to let go of Christ. Yeshua is everything! I want Him. But if that's not what he's saying, we better take heed because you don't start messing around with the commandments of God. You just don't do it.

I want to talk about a literary device known as an inclusio. It's just a fancy term for something that everyone utilizes in regular conversation. If you've ever sent out emails, at some point without even knowing it, you've utilized this literary device of an inclusio.

What is an inclusio? An inclusio is when a writer or a speaker makes a statement utilizing a particular idea and particular words, and then he goes on and talks about some things, and then he makes that very same statement again. It's the same idea sometimes using the exact same wording. When someone makes the first statement, then talks about other things, and then makes that last statement, the first and last statements, an inclusio, are like a pair of bookends that frame up everything that is inside. The inclusio holds up the contents inside of them. They bring organization and order. It's framed up. This is how an inclusio works.

The only reason I mention this is because there is an inclusio in Colossians 2. I'm pointing this out because inclusios are about context. We cannot attempt to create doctrine, which is inconsistent with scripture, based upon a verse or two, without looking at the broader context. You can get yourself in a lot of trouble.

For example, in Luke 14:26, Yeshua says – ²⁶ **If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.** – you'll never inherit the kingdom of God.

Think about that. This verse is totally contrary to everything else we read in Scripture. So, if I take this verse, hating my mother and father, out of context, I would be a mile off. I would be doing the exact opposite of what I'm supposed to be doing, which is honoring my mother and father and loving my wife as Christ loved the church.

With that said, I want to take you to the first bookend, Colossians 2:8. This is where we will begin and where we're given good context. Colossians 2:8 – ⁸ **Beware lest anyone cheat you**

Who is Paul referring to? He's referring to the same people Yeshua and Peter warned us about. Yeshua said, **“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”** (Matthew 7:15). Peter says, **“There were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.”** (2 Peter 2:1). And Jude talks about how **“certain men have crept in unnoticed.”** (Jude 1:4). One thing, we can all get on the same page with is that Paul is dealing with false teachers. Traditional Christianity recognizes that the issue was that false teachers amongst the believers.

Now Colossians 2:8 – ⁸ **Beware lest anyone cheat you** (*Emphasis added*). The word “cheat” in the Greek is *sylagōgōn, συλαγωγῶν*. It means to plunder, to take captive. Paul is saying to beware lest you, by this false teacher preaching falsehood, be taken away captive. So, it does matter. There is an issue here. This is not one of those situations where it doesn't really matter if you accept their teachings or reject them. No, the difference is you're going to be taken captive. So, Paul has my attention.

Paul continues and tells us how these men accomplish this. Colossians 2:8 – ⁸ **Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit** (*Emphasis added*).

I want to spend a little bit of time here because this is where we get the first impact of context. It would be a mistake if you looked at this and said, “Oh, they're going to cheat us through philosophy. Oh, he's dealing with mystical pantheism. We're in a Greek context now because we know philosophy is attributed to the Greeks. The Greeks have blessed us all with their philosophy, right?” I mean, this is where the term comes from.

Listen to me carefully. This is not the context in which Paul is using “philosophy”. It is explicitly used in a Jewish context. It is important to know that other first century Jews use the term “philosophy”, the very same term Paul uses here in the Greek, explicitly in a context of the Jewish faith.

Josephus does the same thing. Look at these words by Josephus in *Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 2.119* – **For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews.** Who is he talking about? He goes on: **the Essenes, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees.** These are philosophical sects.

So, when Paul says, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy”**, I want you to understand, this is not in a Greek context; it is explicitly in a Jewish context. That will be irrefutable the further we get into this and that will make sense.

Colossians 2:8 – **⁸Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy an empty deceit, according to the tradition of men,** (*Emphasis added*). This is so important; you should never forget this. This phrase, “tradition of men”, whether in the Greek or English is never used in an equation of the commandments of God. In other words, to be equated to the commandments of God. They never represent the commandments of God. Never!

We have plenty of examples in the New Testament. I'll give you one right off the bat. In Mark 7:8, Yeshua is coming up against the Pharisees. He rebukes them and says – **⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many such other things you do.** Notice, Yeshua contrasting the concept of the commandments of God against the tradition of men. I will also point this out: This “tradition of men” in Colossians 2:8 in the Greek is literally identical, down to the inflection in the Greek, to what Yeshua is talking about.

So, you need to stop right here. As we're looking at the first part of this book and in the inclusio where we're getting our context, understand what is on the table is not the commandments of God; what is on the table is the traditions of men. That is going to radically change how we process this situation.

Paul continues, and I'll just reread this again – **⁸Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy an empty deceit, according to the tradition of men.** Now, we're going to see a Pauline-ism. And what do I mean by a Pauline-ism? It is a very Jewish thing. Yeshua did it too, in Matthew 9. Paul makes a statement using a specific phrase, and then he reiterates that exact same idea using different words. He does it a lot. It's a Pauline-ism. It's just how he does. But in so doing, there's a benefit to the audience. The audience gets a better, deeper comprehension.

Here is an example: Colossians 2:8 – **⁸Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy an empty deceit,** – pay attention – **according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ** (*Emphasis added*).

In other words, please listen carefully, Paul says “according to the tradition of men” and equates that to “according to the principles of the world”. The tradition of men are the principles of the world. They're not deriving their information, their ideas, from Christ. They don't get it from Yeshua; they get it from within themselves. It is a principle of the world. This will be more important the further we get into this.

We will get to the heart of this inclusio. Let's jump ahead to verse 16 and put this together. Colossians 2:16 – **¹⁶ So let no one judge you** (*Emphasis added*).

Who are these men that Paul is concerned about? It's the false teachers who are coming into the church. This is not the world. Paul is not concerned about the world. He's concerned about false teachers within the body of Christ.

Continuing in Colossians 2:16 – **¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,** (*Emphasis added*). What is the context? What is the concern? The tradition of men. That's the context. That's what is on the table. Paul comes out and says, “Let no one judge you in these things.”

Let's get into some historical context. In the New Testament, we have evidence that some of the Pharisees became believers in Yeshua. They entered into the faith and joined themselves to the

apostles. What do we know about these Pharisees? We know that some of these Pharisees who confessed Yeshua as Lord caused dissension in the body of Christ. We know this for a fact from reading Acts 15. Remember, the Pharisees were teaching that unless a Gentile was circumcised, they couldn't be saved. We know that despite Paul fighting against them and bringing this to the apostles in Jerusalem, the highest court in the land, that even after the apostles rendered their decision, the teaching didn't stop. It was the believing Pharisees and those who subscribed to their ideology who were catapulting that. We know it even continued after that because in the book of Galatians it was still being perpetuated.

What is my point? This is important. My point is that there were believing Pharisees embedded in the church that were very much clinging on to things that were not accurate. They didn't have the understanding of scripture that the apostles had according to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Was this impactful to the church? Colossians 2:16 is proof that it was because the people that brought this type of judgment came from the Pharisaical sect.

Let me let me build on this. We will just keep peeling layer after layer back. Let's return to Mark 7. Check this out: when the Pharisees brought judgment on the Gentiles, the apostles themselves had already experienced the same judgment by Pharisees.

Mark 7:1-2 – ¹Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem, Yerushalayim. ² Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, unwashed hands, they found fault. – The Pharisees judged the apostles of Yeshua because they did not wash their hands before they ate food. It's interesting. What did Paul say? “Let no one judge you in food or and drink.” This is exactly what the apostles themselves experienced by these Pharisees. Did judgment come through the commandment of God, through Torah? Or did it come according to the tradition of men?

Mark 7:3 – ³ For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders (Emphasis added). – Now keep in mind that things weren't written contemporaneously when Mark put his epistle together; they were written with hindsight and clear vision. Notice, he doesn't say that judgment is based upon the commandments of God; no, they're holding the tradition of the elders, which are never equated to the commandments of God. There's a distinction made all through the New Testament of the traditions of men, the tradition of the elders, and the commandments of God. And yet, this is what they were doing.

Then it says in Mark 7:4 – ⁴ When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. (Emphasis added).

Again, what is Paul saying in Colossians 2:16? Let no man judge you in food or in drink. This just begins to peel back a layer of your understanding of the historical context of what actually existed in the first century. This is important. Pharisees were sons of Pharisees who were sons of Pharisees. You do not know how intense the call was to be a Pharisee and what it meant to them. It was their identity. They lived and breathed it.

In Philippians 3, Paul renounces all things. He was a Pharisee, and he renounces that for his knowledge in Christ. He totally let all that go. But to a Pharisee, it's everything. When you embed that into your children for generation, after generation, after generation, the traditions become higher than the

commandments of God. They place such a heavy importance on them. That is the historical context. That's reality. Even today, Orthodox Jews do that.

Mark 7:5 – ⁵ Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?” (*Emphasis added*). They were aghast! Now today, you may laugh. You may think this is ridiculous. You would be so wrong. You have no idea what this meant to the Pharisees. They were thinking, how dare they not do this!

To give you some perspective, I will read some commentary from the Talmud. The Talmud is the jurisdiction of the rabbinical law. I want to show you how serious this was in the first century and what it meant to these Pharisees.

This is from: Every Man's Talmud (The Major Teachings of the Rabbinic Sages) by Abraham Cohen – Foremost among the essentials of a well-cared-for body is cleanliness. It is not merely next to godliness, but a most important part of it. To wash the hands before touching food was strictly enjoined. – In other words, it was commanded.

Every Man's Talmud continued – “Sanctify yourselves” (Lev xi.44) – i.e. washing your hands before the meal; (Emphasis added).

You need to understand something about rabbinical law, the oral law. They quote Leviticus 11 from the Torah, “sanctify yourselves”, but then the rabbis add their interpretation of what that means: wash your hands before the meal. So, when you read Leviticus 11:44 and the Lord says, “sanctify yourselves”, the rabbis say that means to wash your hands before the meal, although the Torah doesn't say that. They lay the rabbinical enactments on top of the commandments themselves. That's what happens.

Every Man's Talmud continued – “Sanctify yourselves” (Lev xi.44) – i.e. washing your hands before the meal; “and be ye holy” (ibid.) – i.e. washing after the meal (Ber 53b). (Emphasis added).

So, when the rabbinical Jews that are trained in the Talmud read in Leviticus 11 – be holy because I am holy, they understand that means they have to wash after the meal because that is what they've been taught. So, you have the interpretation of the rabbis coming on top of the commandments.

Every Man's Talmud continued. Then we get to the point. – Whoever eats bread without first washing his hands is as though he had sinned with a harlot. Whoever makes light of washing his hands will be uprooted from the world (Emphasis added).

When you read Mark 7 in its historical context and how judgment came against the apostles, you need to know that these rabbis were fuming inside. They were aghast! It was disgusting. What the apostles did was a total abomination! They totally rejected the commands of the elders. They were in total breach. They deserved to die. That's the context. This is what we're dealing with.

Every Man's Talmud continued – Whoever eats bread without scouring his hands is as though he eats unclean bread (Sot. 4b). A person who despises the washing of the hands before a meal is to be excommunicated (Ber 19a). There is even a benediction prescribed for the purpose, viz. – And they give the benediction – ‘Blessed are Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands’ (ibid.60b). (Emphasis added).

The only problem is, that benediction is found nowhere in the Torah. It's a rabbinical enactment laid on top of the Torah. It's an invention of the rabbis. It's their interpretation of how you're going to keep the Torah. In fact, rabbinical Judaism stands on the point that none of you can understand the Torah. It is impossible for you to understand the Torah outside of the oral Torah, or we say, outside the rabbis.

And yet we read in scripture – **no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God**. (1 Corinthians 2:11). In other words, the only way I can truly extract the truth from the Torah is if I confess Yeshua, the Messiah, and He sends His Holy Spirit to me. There's no other way of interpretation. It's a very different perspective than the rabbis have.

Every Man's Talmud continued – **The cleanliness applied also to vessels used during a meal. 'Rinse the cup before drinking and after drinking'** (Tamid 27b). (*Emphasis added*).

Do you understand what Paul is saying: **Let no one judge you in food or in drink?** Do you have the historical context? When Paul says, **"...according to the traditions of men"**, who are we talking about? We are talking about rabbinical enactments being heaped up by believing Pharisees who valued this because their father valued it, and their father valued it. It was a form of piety. The rabbis keep Talmud. They keep Mishna. They do these things. They study Gemara because they want to get close to God.

So, it would be natural for a Pharisee to think that these pagan, heathen Gentiles need guidance: here's what you need to become pious, and here's what you need to do to get closer to God. This is a very real situation in the first century. Unfortunately, we were completely missing the historical context.

Let me give you some additional perspective to how much weight was placed upon the rabbis. *Midrash Sifre* – **Even if they (the Rabbis) instruct you that your right is left, or left is right, you must obey them**.

Reality doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if you say that my right hand is my right. If the rabbi says that it's your left, then you have to say, "Okay, it's my left." The rabbis have a tremendous amount of authority. I'll flat out tell you that if I tell you that your right hand is your left, you can go out the door. That's nuts. The authority is Yeshua! Amen. He's the authority. Either I line up with Him, or I know you good people will leave, and I'm good with that. That's why we're all here.

Sanhedrin 11:3a – Listen to this. – **A more strict rule applies to the teachings of the scribes than to the teachings of Torah**. This is their own writing! I'm not making this stuff up. I'm not trying to at all pick on rabbinical Judaism. This is not my point today. I'm not looking to pick a fight. I'm looking to give you historical context, so you can appreciate what Paul is concerned about.

Think about what Yeshua said in Mark 7 – ⁸ **"For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men** – And look what it says in *Sanhedrin* 11 – **A more strict rule applies to the teachings of the scribes than to the teachings of Torah**.

Midrash, Pesikta Rabbati – **A person must not say, 'I will not keep the commandment of the elders because they are not from the Torah.'** – you must not say that – **The Almighty says to such a person, 'No, My son!** – which you won't find anywhere in the Torah, but this is what they say – **Rather all that they decree upon you, observe! As it is written, 'According to the instruction which they teach' (Dt 17:11).** – They're trying to quote from Deuteronomy 17. That doesn't work. It's completely out of context. You'll

see that this goes way beyond that context as we continue – **Even I (God) must obey their decree, as it is written, 'You will decree, and He will fulfill it.'** (*Emphasis added*).

Think about this. A person must not say, "I'm not going to keep the commandment to the elders because they're not from the Torah." They also say that even God Himself, must obey them. And it makes you wonder, "Who's God here?"

So, as we read this and it says, "**Let no one judge you in food or in drink**", the context is explicitly, "**according to the traditions of men**", which Paul, by the way, was more familiar with than anyone. And the apostles themselves had received condemnation. They were judged because they did not follow the rabbinical enactments. They did not follow rabbinical law.

Colossians 2:16 – ¹⁶ **Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival a new moon or sabbaths...** There are two things Paul brings to the table that he is concerned about. The first thing he's concerned about is food and drink. It's diet. I don't want anyone to judge you in regard to your diet. The second thing is the feast as a whole, the Moadim, God's sacred holy appointed times. In the Torah, you can read about the Passover, Shavuot, Yom Kippur, and the seventh day Sabbath; all of these God Himself ordained.

The Sabbath is the fourth commandment. Everyone in Israel at the time at Mt. Sinai heard the majestic voice of the Lord speaking, "**Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.**" And guess what? I kid you not, an entire tractate in the Babylonian Talmud is devoted to the Sabbath. It would take me six months to go through all the rabbinical enactments, all the rabbinical applications, and the laws being heaped upon man. Yeshua says, "**They bind heavy burdens, ... but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.**" (Matthew 23:4).

Again, I want to give you some scriptural support, so we will look at the historical context in regard to the Sabbath where the rabbis were judging the apostles.

Matthew 12:1 – ¹ **At that time Yeshua/Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain to eat.** ² **And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"** (*Emphasis added*).

The judgment was coming: they did something that's not lawful; it's not pious; it's not holy; and it's not righteous. What did the apostles do? They went through the grainfields. They stood among standing grain and plucked them with their hands and ate them. I want to be very clear on what the disciples did not do: they did not harvest on the Shabbat. They did not put the sickle to the grain. They did not do this. That would be a very different situation. All the disciples were doing was working the kingdom and they came into standing grain and were hungry. Is it a sin to grab food, put it to your mouth, and eat? It doesn't even say they went off and cooked it. They rubbed the grain in their hands, and they ate it. Is it a sin? You can't find that anywhere in scripture. To the rabbis, yes, it is sin: that's not holiness; that's not honoring the Sabbath. Judgment was brought against them.

In John 5, there was a man there with an infirmity of 38 years. He was totally incapacitated. This infirmity was so bad that he couldn't walk or move; he was bedridden. Yeshua came to him, healed him, and told him to pick up his mat and walk. What did the guy do? He listened to Yeshua and picked up his mat and walked.

Check this out in John 5:10 – ¹⁰ **The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.”** (Emphasis added). – Says who? The rabbis. But what did Yeshua say?

Do you understand the whole focus of Paul? The focus of Paul is that Yeshua is our Rabbi. We come under His yoke. Don't allow yourself to be judged by the pharisaical mindset, by the pharisaical Judaism. That isn't grabbing hold of Christ; that's letting go. This is what Paul is talking about.

Luke 13:10-12 – ¹⁰ **Now He – Yeshua – was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.** ¹¹ **And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.** ¹² **But when Yeshua saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “Woman you are loosed from your infirmity.”**

Luke 13:14-16 – ¹⁴ **But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, – he was angry – because Yeshua had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.”** ¹⁵ **The Lord answered him and said, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound –think of it–for eighteen years be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?”**

Do you ever wonder why we see so many examples of Yeshua setting people free on the Sabbath? You might be thinking, “Yeah, to get under the rabbi's skin.” Well, that was just a bonus. It's amazing to me that Yeshua captured the very spiritual significance of the Sabbath day of which some commentators tell us that there is no spiritual significance. What is the Sabbath about? It's about deliverance; it's about being set free. So, there's a reason why we keep seeing Yeshua heal on the Sabbath. It's magnificent. It's absolutely beautiful.

But those who do not draw from the well of Christ, from the mind of Christ, give in to the principles of the world according to the traditions of men and make judgments that they should not be making. This is what we see happening.

As we look at Colossians 2:16 – ¹⁶ **Let no one judge you in food or in drink or regarding ... sabbaths.** Understand it was a problem. This was a real problem that the apostles themselves went through.

In Colossians 2:17, Paul continues – ¹⁷ **which are a shadow of things to come....** That's called prophecy. There are still aspects of Passover that have not been fulfilled yet. The sacrifice, the shedding of blood of the lamb has been, but there is going to be a Pesach meal where all of us will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and eat. That is coming.

There are significant aspects of Rosh Hashanah, the hidden day, the day of resurrection. This day is the day of the coming of the King, Yom HaMelech. This is future. This is prophecy.

Let me ask you, where things are prophetic and things yet to come, is that text valuable, may I say, commandments that God has commanded us to observe like the Sabbath, does that have value? There's no debate on that. It has a practical application even now.

Colossians 2:17 continued – ¹⁷ **which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.**

“Substance” in the Greek is “*sōma, σῶμα*”. It means “body”. In fact, Paul uses this very word multiple times in Colossians for “body”. Do you know what it explicitly refers to and how Paul uses it in this very book? It’s the church. Listen to me because Paul is saying that these are a shadow of things to come, but the body, the church, is of Christ. In other words, the church has a Rabbi. The church is of Yeshua. We are supposed to be drawing from Him.

Yeshua said, “**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.** – We are supposed to draw from Him – **For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**” (Matthew 11:28, 30). We come under His yoke, no one else's.

Yeshua said, “**My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me.**” (John 10:27).

Yeshua said, “**Whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.**” (Matthew 7:24).

Who is your master? Who is your rabbi? This is what Paul is getting into. The church is of Christ. That's where we will draw our lessons, our teachings from. We will follow Yeshua who is the ultimate Rabbi.

Colossians 2:18 – Paul continues – ¹⁸ **Let no one cheat you of your reward,** – In the Greek, “cheat you of your reward” simply means “Let no one rule against you”. – **taking delight in false humility** (*Emphasis added*).

This is the whole concept of Matthew 23, where Yeshua talks about the false humility that the rabbinic sages, who do not follow Him and confess Him, possess. He says, “**You cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside, they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.**” – full of sin. The inside of the cup is disgusting. **You are like whitewashed tombs. On the outside, you appear pious.** You can embrace what you would portray as true godly humility— **but inside you're full of dead men's bones.** It's total lie. It's a fallacy.

Colossians 2:18 – ¹⁸ **Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels** (*Emphasis added*).

“Worship of angels” in the Greek is “*thrēskeia tōn angelōn, θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων*”. The reason I mention this is because “*thrēskeia*” means religion. Do you understand? It says, “religion”. It's never translated worship. This is the only time in the New Testament *thrēskeia* is translated as worship, at least in the New King James. It's religion, and that is the term you want to think about as we read this.

The religion of *angelōn* which is simply in the Greek, *angelos*. This is a reference to “a messenger”. It can be used of angelic beings and also of earthly beings. John the Baptist was an *angelos*. Paul himself was likened to an *angelos*. King David in the Septuagint was likened to an *angelos*. It refers to a “great one”. So, this is being said in almost a facetious way: the religion of great ones. From Matthew 23, we know the rabbis walk around and broaden their phylacteries. They make sure their robes are elegant. They love the best seats and the best places. They love to be called rabbi. They love it.

This whole thing is dripping in a Jewish context.

Colossians 2:18 continued – ¹⁸ **Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.** (*Emphasis added*). This is because they don't have the mind of Christ. It's according to the basic principles of the world and not the mind of Yeshua.

Colossians 2:19 – ¹⁹ **and not holding fast to the Head,** – the Rabbi, He is to teach us – **from whom all the body, *sōma*, σῶμα** – meaning the church – **nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments grows with the increase that is from God.**

This is the conclusion. This begins our last bookend. Colossians 2:20 – **Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world** – which Paul directly equated to the traditions of men. If you died with Christ, He is your Messiah and your Master – **why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations.** It doesn't say the commandments of God. It says regulations.

Paul defines regulations in the next verse in Colossians 2:21-22 – ²¹ **“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”** ²² **which all concern things which perish with the using-according to the commandments and doctrines of men?** It has nothing to do with the commandments of God. This is about rabbinical law.

Colossians 2:23 – ²³ **These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.** (*Emphasis added*).

I kid you not, when you're up to your eyeballs in spiritual warfare, and you're hanging by a thread, and you want to fight, these little rabbinical enactments in the Talmud are not going to help you:

- The fact that when you wake up, you have to put your right shoe on, but you can't tie it. You have to put your left shoe on, then you can go back and tie your right shoe.
- The fact that when you get up, your hand can't touch your body until you first wash your hand because if you do, you deserve to have it cut off.
- The fact that you must make sure you get your pre-cut toilet paper for Shabbat.
- The fact that you must ride the Shabbat elevator on the Sabbath.

I kid you not, when you're in spiritual warfare, none of those things are going to help you. But this I know; the Word of God will.

The commandments of God are powerful, right? **“Where the word of a king is, there's power.”** (Ecclesiastes 8:4). **“Thy Word is a lamp unto thy feet and a light unto thy path.”** (Psalm 119:105). It gives me light, so that I don't stumble. **“The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.”** (Hebrews 4:12). You need that for war. This is how we fight our battles. Amen.

Listen to Peter speaking to his Jewish brethren. 1 Peter 1:18 – ¹⁸ **knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,** (*Emphasis added*). – It has no power. All the teachers have no power, but the teachings of Yeshua bring eternal life. All the power is in Him.

Titus 1:14, Listen to what Paul says to Titus, a Gentile Christian – ¹⁴ **not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.** He doesn't instruct Titus to turn away from the

commandments of God; he says to turn away from the commandments of men. Don't put yourself under that. Don't allow them to bring judgment on you.

Paul framed up an inclusio that exists in Colossians 2 where your first bookend begins in verse 8 and ends with verses 20-23. There's no ambiguity here. The only thing on the table is the traditions of men, the commandments of men.

I think about pastors, many of which don't know any better because they've been taught what they've been taught, because that person was taught by this person, and you can see all the way from Mathetes on down, that this has been cyclical. It's a cycle of insanity; it is a cycle of deception.

My hope is that Christians will challenge what they're being taught, read the Word, put the Word to the test, and put their teachers and pastors to the test to make sure that they're not going to be found deceived in the end. We do this because Yeshua did warn us: **if it were possible even the elect would be deceived.** Well, you got an eye full of that today.