

## COLOSSIANS 2:14-17 by Roger Walkwitz

Stumbling over certain verses in the Bible, including these in Colossians, is usually caused by one or more of several factors. 1) Those with a firm church-doctrine background do not want to admit that certain teachings are wrong, such as "the Law has been done away with in Christ," the "Old Testament versus the New Testament," "Law versus Grace," "the Church has replaced Israel," and more. 2) Failure to study the Context of any verse or passage, including the historical background. 3) Failure to check any translation with the original languages, as every translator has a certain "mind set" or agenda that might influence his translation in certain places, realizing it is impossible to make a perfect translation. 4) Failure to "think Hebraic, to think like they thought when the passage was written." This is in contrast with thinking Greek, which is linear (and usually thinking the Bible was written today), while Hebraic is circular. All 66 Books of our Bible were written by the Holy Spirit through Hebraic writers who were thinking Hebraic even while some wrote in Greek. For many of us, this is not easy to do.

Of the 66 Books, the Context for these verses includes the Ten Commandments, the Torah and the whole book of Colossians. Chapter 2 seems to indicate that this Book was **written to Gentile Believers in Yeshua** who had been visited by false teachers, seeking to upset their new Faith by referring to their former practices in paganism, traditions of men, rudiments of the world, things that would not normally bother Jewish Believers in Yeshua. Look at these verses in the ESV:

2:8-9. *Watch that there not be one robbing you through philosophy (human ideas) and empty deceit (lies of the enemy), according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world (cultures of the world), and not according to Christ, For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Truth is in Yeshua as written).*

2:18. *Let no one condemn you, delighting in humility and worship of the angels, pushing into things which he has not seen, being puffed up by the mind of his flesh without cause (occult practices common in paganism but warned against in the Torah).*

2:20-23. *If, then, you died with Christ **from** the elements of the world, why are you under **its** decrees, as living in the world? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, which things are all for corruption in the using, according to the "injunctions and teachings of men." (Isa. 29:13) Which things indeed appear to be a matter of having wisdom in self-imposed worship and humility, and severity in abuse of the body, but are not of any value with regards to gratification of the flesh (all of which are common in paganism, which includes Catholicism).*

So now we are going to think as Gentiles who have been born-from-Above, seeking to live the New Life in Messiah Yeshua along with Jewish Believers, together in the Good Olive Tree of Romans 11, remembering that we are a Community, the Body of Messiah. Salvation is an individual matter. So is Growth, call it Sanctification, but it is accomplished in the context of the Body. Our behaviors, Jew and Gentile, need to focus on the behavior of our Lord Yeshua, who said, "Follow Me," and of Paul who said, "Then

*whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things to the glory of God. Be without offense both to Jews and Greeks, and to the assembly of God. Even as I also please all in all things, not seeking my own advantage, but that of the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am also of Christ." 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 LIT*

A common misinterpretation of Col 2:14 is that the Torah was nailed to the cross, to go along with the false teaching that the Torah was done away with in Christ. We will solve this by Col 2:13-14 from ESV. *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it (our record of debt) to the cross.*

2:15. *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (I believe this refers to His Resurrection).*

2:16-17, LIT. *Then do not let anyone judge you in eating, or in drinking, or in part of a feast, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths, which are a shadow of coming things, but the body is of Christ.*

To understand these verses, we need to remind ourselves that these **are newly saved Gentiles, learning to live by Torah**, as Yeshua did, all the Apostles did, and our fellow Jewish Believers do, although you may not have any physically in your Congregation. These saved Gentiles came out of paganism with its many regulations and practices. The basic 4 are listed in Acts 15:19-21. *Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.*

Many Gentiles were turning to God, as recorded in Acts, attending Jewish synagogues each Shabbat to learn more. How should they live now? Rabbinic Judaism had for centuries required Gentiles to convert to Judaism "to have a place in the world to come." Judaism in those days (and today) was a mixture of Torah and Oral Torah which is recorded in the Talmud. Living by Torah is a delight for the Believer, as many passages in the Psalms record, but living by Oral Torah is an unbearable yoke, as Peter said, *Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke (Oral Torah) on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?* Acts 15:10. Converting to Judaism required obeying both Torah and Oral Torah. Even the Apostles believed this until God solved it by the quick conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10, which shocked Peter and the others, but caused great rejoicing once they realized that conversion to Judaism and Oral Torah were never part of God's plan.

WWJD - what would Jesus do? is a good slogan but watching those who say it reveals a zeal without knowledge or obedience to Scripture. We want to do what Yeshua did and taught, therefore, what was Yeshua's menu and therefore our menu, what we eat and drink? We follow Leviticus 11 and related passages, recognizing that the Creator knows what is good for His creations. He has another reason as well: His family members live a

different lifestyle deliberately as part of our Witness for Him. We leave behind the elements of the world and its menu, and actually live more healthy.

In 2:16, "*Then do not let anyone judge you*" means primarily those Gentile companions left behind, who do not understand or accept your new Faith in Yeshua and the new Life Style that goes with it, which include your Menu, Celebrations, Relationships, your life 24/7, family, community, employment and free time. Critics also include those still in Judaism who are following Oral Torah, who do not like to see Gentile Believers following "their Torah," a bit of pride for being the Chosen People, which they are.

The phrase "in respect of a holyday/feast day" or "with regard to a festival" are poor translations, so I have quoted above from the Literal Translation, "*or in part of a feast*" to give the accurate meaning. The word "feast - heortays" always refers to a Moed, or Appointed Time in Leviticus 23, most especially to Passover. Since the Resurrection, the Messianic Congregation/Ekklesia of Jewish & Gentile Believers would be celebrating Passover wherever they lived, as there was now no need to go to Jerusalem to sacrifice a lamb at the Temple to eat. Yeshua Himself was "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." So Messianic Believers would only symbolize the lamb at the Seder by a dried shank bone of a lamb, and designate the Matzah as the lamb based on what Yeshua said at the Last Supper, Luke 2:19. "*And he took bread (matzah), and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is (represents) my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'*" This breaking is #4 in the 15 part sequence of every complete Haggadah for Passover.

This new practice is clearly only "part of a feast/Passover" and would be criticized by those in Judaism, but do not listen to their judging you. After the Temple was destroyed in CE/AD70, even those in Rabbinic Judaism adopted the Messianic practice, as we find in all Haggadot today.

The Messianic Ekklesia into which the newly saved Gentiles had been incorporated might also be celebrating the New Moon each month. This practice is not so common today, but probably was at the time Colossians was written, as it is part of Torah. This Ekklesia would also be meeting on Shabbat, each Saturday of every month, for Bible study and group worship. This would also be criticized by former companions, as the pagans of that time did not have any particular day for their religious practices. They criticized Jews of being lazy by taking off Saturday from work and the week-long Appointed Times of Passover/Unleavened Bread and Sukkot. Most laborers were slaves in those days and had to work every day. Pagan owners made their own schedules. The temples of the fertility gods and goddesses were open all the time. Those who wished to worship their chosen god or goddess would bring their animal for sacrifice, and then participate in the approved homo or hetero sex, animal sacrifice and the pagan eucharist or lord's supper, as given in Acts 15:20. They were not confused by any Sunday observances, as there were none in Bible times.

Furthermore, the newly saved Gentile would be learning the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, each commandment upsetting his former life style. In

relation to the Colossians passage, the 4th Commandment would be very specific - don't let anyone judge you as you express your love for the Lord by meeting with Him and the Ekklesia on Shabbat, as He said in Exodus 20:8-11. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

To "remember" is to re-enact each time, putting yourself fully into the celebration, not just a mental nod of recognition. He would also notice that these "Ten" cannot be changed by anyone. They are permanent for all people for all time, since God Himself wrote these with His finger on tablets of stone. Exodus 31:18. *And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.* Who would even dare to change any of these? Well, the Catholic Church did and all churches have followed. By the way, there is no "church" in the Bible. "Church" comes from Kuriakon in every good English dictionary, not Ekklesia as church theologians falsely claim and therefore no church practices in the Bible, except as heresies creeping in. See my article on "When did the Church begin?" [www.Walkwitz.com/Roger](http://www.Walkwitz.com/Roger)

2:17. Some people think that we do not need to follow any of the above practices because they are only "shadows." They want to follow the "real thing." Sorry to disappoint them, but the real "things" are all in heaven, like the Tabernacle and Yeshua. We are told to follow the shadows because they accurately show "the things to come," which I would imagine every professed Believer is interested in, including the Return of Yeshua in bodily form. All we have today are "shadows," because we live by Faith not by sight, or as Paul said, we look through a cloudy glass or into a foggy mirror. We do have Truth today in these shadows while details will be made clear in His time.