

Complete in Jesus



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Colossians 2:1–7; Isaiah 61:3; 1 Corinthians 3:6; Colossians 2:11–23; Hebrews 1:3.

MEMORY VERSE: “Some people may tell you that it is wrong for you to eat or to drink certain things. Or they make rules about special festival days, about new moons, or about the Jewish days for rest. Do not agree with people like [the same as] that. Rules like that are only like shadows of real things that would happen later. But now we have what is real, Christ [Jesus] himself!” (Colossians 2:16, 17, EASY).

DO PEOPLE ASK YOU why you keep the Sabbath? Maybe they used this week's memory verse as “proof” against keeping it. But Colossians 2:16, 17 isn't about the 4th commandment. The verse is really about false teachings in the church. What were those false teachings?

First, the false teachings are the ideas of men, not Bible truth (Colossians 2:8).

Also, the false teachings involve keeping Jewish holidays and circumcision. Circumcision is when the tip of the male sex parts is cut off to show that a man belonged to God. The false teachings also included Jewish rules about being clean and food rules (Colossians 2:16, 21).

The false teachers were religious people. They cared about Bible truth. But they didn't understand the Good News about Jesus. This week, we'll understand why. We also will learn why the memory verse is not talking about keeping the 7th day Sabbath.



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THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (Colossians 2:1–7)

Job asked, “ ‘But where can anyone find wisdom? Where can we get understanding?’ ” (Job 28:12, ERV). Paul answers: in Jesus. Jesus has “everything that makes people wise. He helps people to know the true message that God had hidden” (Colossians 2:3, EASY; compare 1 Corinthians 1:30). If we have Jesus, we have everything. Jesus helps us to “know in a more perfect way about God’s plan” (Colossians 2:2, WE). God shows us His plan to save us in Jesus.

Read Colossians 2:1–7. What is Paul’s reason for writing his letter to the Colossian church?

The Greek word “*paraklēthōsin*” means to “be encouraged” (Colossians 2:2, NIV) or “to become strong” (Colossians 2:2, EASY). Paul wants to help church members understand the dangers of false teachings. Paul also wants to help join together the church in Christian love. Paul believes that his letter will help do those things.

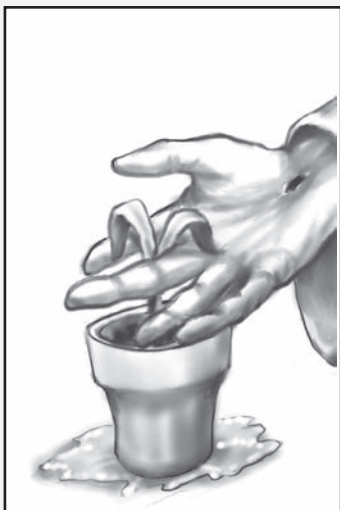
Paul praises the Colossian church members for “living and working well together” and for continuing “to trust Christ [the Savior] strongly” (Colossians 2:5, EASY). Paul is happy to see that the church has strong leadership. Often, people think that church leadership is about business only and not about worship. But Paul understands that church leadership and worship are connected. Paul believes there is a correct way to lead the church in worship (read 1 Corinthians 11). That’s why Paul was careful to tell Timothy and Titus how to choose church leaders (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Strong leaders help the church to grow. Strong leaders also respect God’s wisdom and Bible truth. These leaders share God’s wisdom and Bible truth with other people.

Paul’s fellow workers shared the correct teachings with the Colossian church. That’s why the Colossian church was strong in the faith. They supported their faith with Bible truth. When we follow Bible truth, we will be protected from false teachings.

How did strong leadership in the past make your spiritual life grow strong? How did strong spiritual leadership change your worship experience for the better?



Strong leaders share God’s wisdom and Bible truth with other people.

GROWING IN JESUS (Isaiah 61:3)

We become connected to Jesus when we accept Him as our Savior. We also follow His teachings. Then we “grow up in him” (Colossians 2:7, WE), the same as a plant.

Colossians is all about how to live the Christian life: “You received [accepted] Christ Jesus as Lord. So keep on living your lives in him” (Colossians 2:6, NIV). When we accept the truth, we accept a real Person (Jesus), and not just a set of teachings. At the same time, when we accept Jesus, we also accept all His teachings (read Ephesians 2:20).

Also, when we accept Jesus, we die to self. We give our lives completely to the living Jesus.

Jesus is the Living Word. The Living Word cannot be separated from the Written Word (the Bible). For sure, we can know Jesus only from the Bible. The Bible teaches us how to live in Jesus. We allow Bible truth and the Holy Spirit to lead us in everything we do and in every choice we make.

In Colossians 2:7, Paul uses a symbol that compares Christians to plants. Paul says, “Let your heart be planted in” Jesus (WE). We become connected to Jesus when we accept Him as our Savior. We also follow His teachings. Then we “grow up in him” (Colossians 2:7, WE).

Read Isaiah 61:3; Matthew 3:10; Luke 8:11–15; and 1 Corinthians 3:6. How do these verses help us better understand the plant symbol? What does this symbol show us about our faith as Christians?

Paul talks about the two types of plants that Christians can choose to be. The first plant is the same as the Christians who are the same as “Good Trees” and “The LORD’s Wonderful Plant” (Isaiah 61:3, ERV). These Christians continue to grow in the Lord. They hold onto Jesus and His teachings. The second plant is artificial or fake. The plant looks real and alive. But it is really lifeless or dead. When we follow human teachings and man-made rules and ideas, we become the same as slaves (Colossians 2:8). Jesus made us free from sin. But we can become slaves again (Galatians 5:1; compare Acts 15:10).

When we accept false teachings, we reject Jesus. Why? Because false teachings separate us from the Good News about Jesus. When we accept false teachings, we are accepting human ideas over Bible truth (read Galatians 1:6–9). Christians in New Testament times were in danger of making this mistake. We are, too, if we’re not careful.

NAILED TO THE CROSS (Colossians 2:11–15)

What Bible truth does Paul want the Colossians to understand? Read Colossians 2:11–15 for the answer.

How often do we see people use Colossians 2:11–15 as a reason not to keep the 7th-day Sabbath?

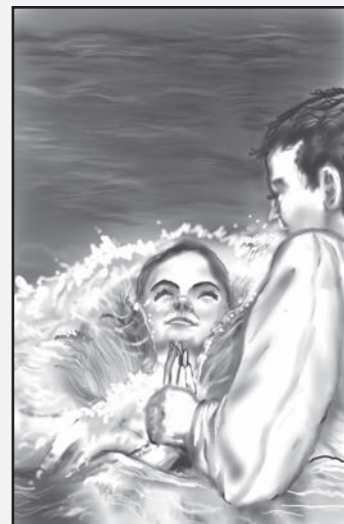
Two explanations will help us understand these verses. First, things “were written against us in the laws” in the Old Testament (Colossians 2:14, WE). We can compare these things to the writing Pilate hung on Jesus’ cross (Matthew 27:37; John 19:19, 20). Second, Moses’ laws about offerings and being “clean” (read Deuteronomy 31:24–26) were nailed to the cross.

When we look at Colossians 2:14 and the other verses around it, we can see that Colossians 2:14 is talking about the law of offerings.

Paul also says Jesus “Christ himself has circumcised you, to show that you belong to God” (Colossians 2:11, EASY). To be circumcised means that the skin on the tip of the male sex parts is cut off. Paul uses being circumcised as a symbol to show that God “cut off your old nature [self] which made you do bad things” (Colossians 2:11, EASY). Paul connects this change of heart and mind with baptism. When we are baptized, our old self dies with Jesus. Then we come back to life as a new person (Colossians 2:11, 12). Paul explains: “At one time, you were dead in your spirits. . . . But now God has caused you to become alive with Christ. He has forgiven us for all the wrong things that we have done” (Colossians 2:13, EASY).

Look again at “the things that were written against us in the laws” (Colossians 2:14, WE). These words come from a word in the Greek language that means legal orders. These orders can come from the government or the church. The only other time that Paul uses this Greek word is to talk about the laws for offerings and other rules (Ephesians 2:14, 15). This law is the same as a wall of separation between the Jews and non-Jews. In Colossians 2, Paul wants us to understand that the non-Jewish Christians don’t need to worry anymore about keeping Moses’ law about the animal offerings. Also, they don’t need to get circumcised or keep the laws about being “clean.”

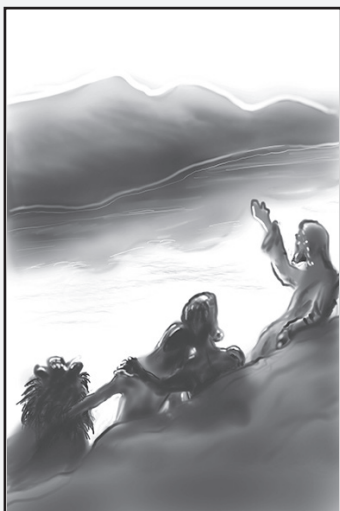
So, we can see that Paul isn’t saying that God nailed the Ten Commandments to the cross. Elsewhere, Paul says we sin when we break the Ten Commandments (Romans 7:7).



When we are baptized, our old self dies with Jesus. Then we come back to life as a new person (Colossians 2:11, 12).

A COPY OR THE REAL THING? (Colossians 2:16–19)

Read about the man-made rules in Colossians 2:16–19. What is the problem with these rules?



God started the Sabbath in Eden before sin happened or the first offerings for sin were made.

Colossians 2:16–19 gives us a lot of information about a problem in the church. The problem was between the Jewish Christians and the non-Jewish members (Colossians 2:13). The members of the Colossian church were mostly non-Jewish. The Jewish Christians said that the non-Jewish Christians needed to follow man-made rules. But Paul said these rules weren't necessary.

Colossians 2:16 gives us a list of Jewish rules. Many Jews continued to follow these rules after they joined the church. Some of these Jews worshiped angels or were filled with pride. During His work on earth, Jesus warned the Jewish religious leaders about the pride in their hearts (read Matthew 6:1, 5, 7, 16). So, the problems that Paul saw in the Colossian church were nothing new. Paul saw the same problems in churches elsewhere.

Because so many Christians today misunderstand Colossians 2:16, let's look at it carefully.

The word "so" (Colossians 2:16, ERV) tells us that Paul is finishing his thought from the verses we just read. Paul said that Christians didn't need to get circumcised. You will remember that being circumcised meant that the skin on the tip of the male sex parts is cut off. Jews were circumcised to show that they belonged to God. Paul says that being circumcised wasn't important. A new heart was the thing that mattered (Colossians 2:11–15).

Paul also talks about food and drink in Colossians 2:16. These things are talking about the meal and drink offerings. The Israelites brought them to the temple.

In Colossians 2:16, Paul talks about special holidays. These holidays help us remember Hosea 2:11. Hosea 2:11 also talks about special feasts, religious holidays, and sabbaths (also read Leviticus 23:11, 24, 32).

Paul tells us that all these rules and special days are "like [the same as] a shadow that showed what was coming" (Colossians 2:17, ERV). These special days showed us the future work of Jesus (read 1 Corinthians 5:7 and 1 Corinthians 15:23). God started the Sabbath in Eden before sin happened or the first offerings for sin were made. So, the Sabbath commandment didn't come to an end after Jesus died on the cross.

LIMITS AND RULES (Colossians 2:20–23)

**What advice and warnings did Paul give the church?
Read Colossians 2:20–23 for the answer.**

Paul says that we don't need to follow the laws for animal offerings anymore. These things showed us the work that Jesus came to do. After Jesus died on the cross, these laws were no longer needed.

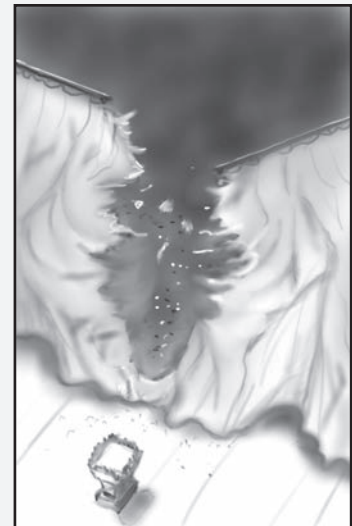
So, Christians (including Jewish Christians) no longer needed to follow these rules. God gave His people a visible sign that these laws were no longer needed. The sign was a hand from heaven that tore the temple curtain. This curtain separated the Most Holy Room from the Holy Room. What if we continued to follow these rules for animal offerings after they were no longer needed? Then we would show that we cared only about this life, and were not members of God's kingdom.

We hope for a new "sky and a new earth. That is what we are waiting for. That will be a home for everything that is good and right" (2 Peter 3:13, EASY). At that time, God promises to make everything new.

The Jewish religious leaders added extra man-made rules to Moses' laws (read Mark 7:1–13). All these rules became a problem. They didn't help Christians' faith grow strong. They became the same as a heavy load. Some Christians like to do things that make them feel better than other people. That's bad enough. Worse, these same people may think they can somehow earn everlasting life with all the special things they do and the rules they follow.

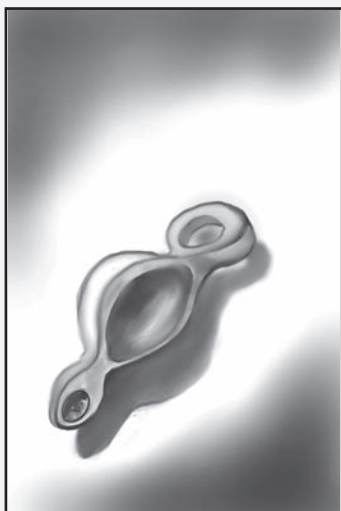
In the past, many Bible thinkers made the mistake of trying to do the work of the Holy Spirit. They replaced the Holy Spirit in other people's lives. These Bible thinkers tried to tell people what the Bible taught. But that is God's job. Jesus is the truth. He showed Paul and other Bible writers what to say.

Jesus works "for us" and "in us." What work did Jesus do for us at the cross? What work does Jesus do in us now? Why does the work that He does in us now depend on the work He did for us at the cross?



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“For many people the Bible is the same as a lamp without any oil. These people accept false teachings that confuse them.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “In New Testament times, men tried to destroy faith in the Bible. How did they do that? With man-made rules and human ideas. Today, Satan tries to do the same thing. He tries to get people to accept false ideas. That’s why for many people the Bible is the same as a lamp without any oil. These people accept false teachings that confuse them. Then they misunderstand Bible truth. False ideas destroy faith in the Bible. These false ideas cause people to stop believing that the Bible is God’s message to us. When people accept these false ideas, the Bible can’t control human lives or make them better. When people believe the dead can communicate with us, they replace God’s law with self. They believe they can do whatever they want. They can sin. They believe that sin is freedom. They believe that they no longer need to answer to God.

“Christians will meet people who teach these things. The apostle Paul warned the Colossian church against these false teachers. People will say that the Bible teaches that we can communicate with the dead. But we must not accept these teachings. Christians must take a strong stand for Bible truth. We must keep our eyes on Jesus. We must reject all ideas that don’t agree with His teaching. We must think about Bible truth. We must believe that the Bible is the voice or words of God. When we read the Bible, God is talking to us. Then we will know and learn the wisdom which comes from God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 474, 475, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Paul says, “All of God lives fully in Christ [Jesus] (even when Christ was on earth). . . . He [Jesus] is ruler over all rulers [angels and demons] and powers” in heaven and on earth (Colossians 2:9, 10, ICB). What do these things mean? Also read John 1:1; Hebrews 1:3; and 1 Peter 3:22 for the answer.
- ② Many Christians use Colossians 2:14–16 to show that we no longer need to keep the 7th day Sabbath. What problems come with using these verses to say that?
- ③ In the quote above, Ellen G. White wrote that we must believe “when we read the Bible, God is talking to us.” Why must we protect ourselves against anyone or anything that would cause us to lose our faith in the Bible?

PRISON OR DEATH

After Rene went to church on Sabbath for six months, his boss told him to come to his office. The boss said, “The other accountant doesn’t have your skills or know-how. Can I ask you a favor? Can you work for at least one hour on Saturday?”

Rene remembered his prayer for the past two years. He prayed, “God, if You help me go to church on Saturday, I will keep the Sabbath holy until I die.”

Rene shook his head no. “I cannot.”

His boss said, “You must. Only for one hour. What time is your church?”

Rene answered, “8:00 a.m. to noon.”

His boss nodded. “Then come in the afternoon. You can come at 1 o’clock.”

Rene said, “But it’s Saturday.”

His boss said, “It’s OK.”

Rene said, “It’s not OK with me.”

Rene’s boss looked at him long and hard. His boss said, “The choice is yours.” Then he left his office.

Six weeks later, the boss talked to Rene again. He asked, “What is your final decision? You must work this coming Saturday. If you don’t, I don’t know what I will do.”

Rene knew he worked in a country that wasn’t nice to Christians. Christians didn’t have permission to live their faith. Rene heard about people getting punished for their faith. Some people were thrown in jail, and other people were killed.

Back home, Rene prayed. “Lord, I have a lot of problems. Do you want me to die here?”

Three days later, Rene went to church on Sabbath. He lived in an apartment that was in the same building where he worked. As Rene left the building, a fellow worker asked, “Will you be coming into the office today?”

Rene said, “I will not come.”

Rene had a company cellphone. He turned the phone off. He didn’t want the phone to track or follow him when he went to church.

Rene’s boss did come into the office during the daytime on Saturday. The boss usually came into the office only on Saturday nights. But that afternoon, the boss made a surprise visit to the office. He called Rene many times that Sabbath. But Rene didn’t answer because he turned off his phone.

Later, the coworker told Rene, “The boss behaved the same as the devil. His eyes were very red. He looked as if he wanted to eat you alive! He may want to send you to prison. Please don’t get us into trouble, too.”

Read more about Rene next week.

INSIDE *Story*



“Can you work for at least one hour on Saturday?”



Rene Tucaldo