

COLOSSIANS 2:16-17 *Explained*

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By George Lujack

COLOSSIANS 2:16-17 (NKJV):

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Mainstream Christians often cite Colossians 2:16-17 in proclaiming that they should not be judged (rebuked) for consuming unclean creatures and for not observing the seventh-day Sabbath. Many Christians also state that it is legalistic for anyone to try to use God's 'abolished' dietary laws to restrain them from eating whatever 'food' they desire and that they can choose to observe the Sabbath on any day of the week of their choosing, or not at all. Modern-day mainstream Christians lack a fundamental understanding of who Paul was addressing in his Colossian epistle, the era in which he wrote it, and they believe that Paul's writings were addressed to non-law-abiding Christians. Colossians 2:16-17, when understood from its proper historical context and perspective, has a completely different meaning than what many modern-day mainstream Christians believe it to be.

Paul was addressing new Messianic Colossian converts who lived among the heavy influence of Babylonian, Greek, and Roman cultures (Colossians 1:1-2). The Babylonian, Greek, and Roman cultures of the time, which the new Colossian converts came out of, consumed all manner of unclean creatures, celebrated pagan holidays, and observed the first-day of the week as the Sabbath day. Paul was speaking to new converts who were keeping the dietary laws, God's festivals, new moon Sabbaths, and the seventh-day Sabbath. Paul was not addressing modern-day law-is-done-away-with Christians. Paul was instructing the Colossian converts to not be concerned with those who judged (mocked / ridiculed) them in eating food and drink according to God's dietary laws (Genesis 1:29; Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14), or regarding God's festivals (Leviticus 23), or new moon celebrations (Numbers 29:6), or the seventh-day Sabbath (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8, 31:15-16, 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12-14).

Mainstream Christianity later adopted Babylonian, Greek, and Roman cultures and pagan religious practices (including their diet, pagan holidays, and first-day Sabbath) unto itself. The Colossian believers whom Paul wrote to observed new moon celebrations in accordance with Scripture. Christians do not observe new moons, so Paul was NOT addressing modern-day mainstream Christianity in Colossians 2:16-17.

Colossians 2:16-17 are applicable verses to Messianic and Hebrew roots believers who often receive judgment (mocking / ridicule) from their non-law-abiding Christian brethren for observing the dietary commandments, God's feasts, new moons, and the seventh-day Sabbath.

A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME...

Many Christians misunderstand Colossians 2:16-17 and think it means that God's dietary laws and Sabbath were merely a shadow of things to come and now that Christ has come we no longer need to obey His dietary commands or observe the Sabbath day. Many people twist Paul's words to do away with God's perpetual laws (2 Peter 3:13-17).

Yeshua (Jesus) *had already come and gone* when the Apostle Paul wrote Colossians. Colossians 2:16-17 was not a prophecy concerning the Messiah (Christ) who had already come. Consuming proper food and drink, observing God's festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths *are still things that are yet to come* for the majority of people living in the world.

Yeshua (Jesus) plainly said He did not come to abolish the law (Matthew 5:17-19), and the law is proclaimed to be perpetual throughout Scripture, so Colossians 2:16-17 should be understood with the underlying precept understanding that God's laws are eternal.

COLOSSIANS 2:16-17 (NKJV) [WITH INTERPRETATION]:

Let no one judge [MOCK, RIDICULE] you in food or in drink [AS YOU OBEY GOD'S DIETARY COMMANDS – GENESIS 1:29; LEVITICUS 11; DEUTERONOMY 14], or regarding a festival [OF GOD – LEVITICUS 23] or a new moon [NUMBERS 29:6] or [THE SEVENTH-DAY] sabbaths [GENESIS 2:2-3; EXODUS 20:8, 31:15-16, 35:2; LEVITICUS 23:3; DEUTERONOMY 5:12-14], which are a shadow of things [OF THE AGE] to come, but the substance is of Messiah (Christ).

Believers who obey God's dietary commands, observe His feasts, new moons, and 7th day Sabbaths, which are not commonly followed in this world, are like a shadow of things to come... a shadow of how things *will be done* when Messiah (Christ) returns.

REVELATION 19:15 (NKJV):

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron.

When Yeshua (Jesus) returns, He is going to rule the world with a rod of iron. Then everyone who receives correction will obey His dietary laws, observe the seventh-day Sabbath, and celebrate His feasts. In this age, those who obey His dietary commands, observe the seventh-day Sabbath, and celebrate His feasts do so like a shadow of things that are yet to come. When His kingdom comes, believers who obey His food and drink laws, observe the seventh-day Sabbath, and honor His feasts will no longer be the shadow; they will be the substance of Messiah (Christ), they will be the norm.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

LUKE 11:2 (NKJV):

Yeshua (Jesus) said to them, “When you pray, say: **Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH as it is in heaven.”**

IT IS GOD'S WILL that we consume sanctified creatures for food and abstain from eating unclean creatures, according to His dietary commands (Genesis 1:29; Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14), to maintain good health and to prevent us from acquiring various bodily cancers, diseases, and plagues, so as to not be consumed by them (Isaiah 66:17).

IT IS GOD'S WILL that we celebrate and worship Him through His ordained feasts (Leviticus 23) and not through pagan holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

IT IS GOD'S WILL that we observe the Sabbath and rest from our labors on the seventh-day, which He sanctified at creation when He rested on the seventh-day after forming the Earth in six days during the creation week (Genesis 2:2-3).

God's will is not currently being done on Earth, even by most professing Christians. God's will *will be* done when Yeshua (Jesus) returns. When Yeshua (Jesus) returns to Earth, He will impose His laws and rule over man with a rod of iron. Those who willingly obey Him now, in matters of diet, festivals, and Sabbaths, are a shadow of things to come, the obedient first-fruits of His coming kingdom (James 1:18).