

THE PREMINENCE OF CHRIST

Lesson 6: Hollow Philosophy

Colossians 2:8–10

- I. **The warning:** The apostle Paul warned his readers to avoid the emerging philosophy that was infiltrating the Lycus Valley and undermining the preeminence of Jesus Christ (*Colossians 2:8*).
 - A. This emerging philosophy had two bases: 1) human tradition, which means that it was man-made, and 2) “the basic principles” of the world, which is the Greek word *stoicheia*.
 - B. The basic meaning of *stoicheia* is of items in a row, but it may be used in *Colossians 2:8* for spiritual intermediaries, which some believed created and control the universe.
 1. The ancient Greek philosopher Plato believed that spirit was good and matter was evil, so God could not have created the universe. Instead, demiurges or intermediate beings, like angels, actually created the physical world and now govern it.
 2. *Colossians 2:10* refers to Christ’s preeminence over all spiritual forces in the universe, whether real or imagined.
 - C. Key elements in this man-made philosophy can be determined by analyzing the internal evidence in Paul’s letter to the *Colossians*.
 1. *Colossians 2:8*—a love of wisdom and secret knowledge, which was essential to transcend the physical realm into the spiritual sphere
 2. *Colossians 2:16*—Jewish laws and ceremonial rituals, which was probably an attempt to restrain the flesh
 3. *Colossians 2:18a*—the veneration of angels, which was probably an attempt to call on them for help as intermediaries leading to God
 4. *Colossians 2:18b*—the pursuit of visions, which was an attempt to gain enlightenment and become one of the elite
 5. *Colossians 2:20b–21*—asceticism (self-denial), which was an attempt to break the hold of the flesh and overcome the power of intermediary spirits
 - D. Therefore, this first century, emerging philosophy was an eclectic mishmash of traditions and man-made beliefs, which undermined the preeminence of Jesus Christ.
- II. **The reason:** Jesus Christ is preeminent as the God-man and the One Who has filled the spiritual vacuum in our lives (*Colossians 2:9–10*).

Next week: Thanksgiving