

The Messianic Movement Versus the Sufficiency of Christ

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[0 : 00] Our brother will be speaking in this Sunday school hour on the Messianic movement versus the sufficiency of Christ! Colossians 2.13!

God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us.

He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

And his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He's lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belong to it, do you submit to its rules?

[1 : 52] Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. These are all destined to perish with use because they're based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom with their self-imposed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Since then, you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lusts, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry.

Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived, but now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator.

[3 : 27] Here, there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

So much the word of God. Come, Brother Baruch, and preach to us. Good morning to you, sisters and brothers. I really am grateful for this opportunity to renew fellowship with you and to give you my wife's thanks and mine for your prayers, for your encouragement, and for your support.

I'd really rather speak of Christ than of the Messianic movement, but it is the Messianic movement that will give me occasion to speak with you of Christ, just as the issues that were facing the Colossians gave Paul occasion to speak of Christ.

It seems like we're never satisfied unless we think we can attribute something to ourselves. God may do 99%, he might do 99.9%, but so we insist in our foolish pride.

Surely we must do something that will clinch the matter, that will secure our salvation, that will achieve our sanctification, that will assure us of glory.

[5 : 01] And this is the problem that Paul faced in most of the letters he wrote. Think of it.

In the letter to the Galatians, he's responding to the idea, well, it's fine that you believe in Jesus, but it isn't enough. What you now need is to follow Jewish custom.

Or think of his letter to the Corinthians. It's fine that you believe in Jesus, but it's not enough. You now need this special experience and these special giftings of the Spirit. In Colossians, he deals with a kind of hodgepodge of ideas.

Colossae was situated in a place which exposed itself because it was a thoroughfare, or situated on a thoroughfare from the east to the west. It became a place which was exposed to many eastern influences.

And a kind of a mysticism, which later developed into a full-fledged heresy called Gnosticism, had lodged itself in this city. Together with that, there was the Jewish influence.

[6 : 20] Now, mysticism assured one of a kind of immediate spirituality, a kind of a fascinated contact with the other world. And Judaism had, particularly in those days, the appeal of being an ancient religion.

Nowadays, ancient things, unless they're 25 years old or longer, aren't interesting. We want the new fridge, and the new tie, and the new car. It's the new thing we want.

But in those days, I think they were saner days, people appreciated not the elderly, but the older. The more ancient, the more reliable it was thought to be.

And Judaism certainly had the claim to being ancient. What is more, after all, the faith of Jesus had something to do with the Jewish faith, with the Old Testament.

And so, when these two ideas were brought together, you had a kind of a hodgepodge, a kind of a mixture of mysticism and Judaism and the worship of angels.

[7 : 32] And there was also this idea that was taken from Greek philosophy that the material world, the physical world, was crass.

It couldn't be spiritual. And that true spirituality had to do with releasing ourselves from earthly reality and attaching ourselves to heavenly matters.

And this led to the idea that because the earth was so crass, it was contra-spiritual. And therefore, God, the Most High God, could not have created this earth.

He would have nothing to do with material things. And so, there was, as the Colossians were taught, a kind of a graduation of divine emanations, each one lower than the other.

So that, at the top of the ladder, you had the Most High God. And as you descended from deities to angels to finally the Demiurgis, a kind of a demigod who was really evil because he was the one who made the world.

[8 : 43] And so, one needed to escape from earthly realities in order to ascend this spiritual ladder and achieve the highest level of spirituality possible.

And so, the Colossians were told, well, it's fine that you believe in Jesus. It really is. But it's not enough. Now, what you need to do is climb this spiritual ladder.

And you do that by a worship of angels, by relieving yourselves of attachment to earthly matters, strangely enough, through Jewish ritual.

And so, the Church was divided in the minds of these teachers into two parts. the mundane, everyday Christian, folk like me, and then the super-spiritual folk like you.

And there were these two classes, which reminds me, so that I'm not chuckled out, I better make sure that I finish on time. And so, the Church was divided into the elite and the commonplace, and somehow, Jewish Christians were considered to be almost naturally part of the elite because they knew all the rituals and so, it was said of them, at least in Colossae, that they also were aware of this mystery, this spiritual ladder.

[10 : 26] And so, there are a number of words that are kind of key words in this theory of the Christian life that Paul takes and uses them, redeems them for the Gospel.

The word, for example, body, which of course is something fleshly, very crass. the word fullness, this graduation of deities was called the fullness.

And we will see, I hope we will see, I will try to show you that Paul takes these words and converts them. He enlists them in the service of the Gospel.

First, I'd like to draw your attention before we even come to the passage we're supposed to discuss. I hope we'll get to it. I'd like to draw your attention to how Paul builds up to the point where we are supposed to begin.

Paul writes to the Colossians and says in chapter 1 that he is thrilled and he gives God thanks because he had heard of their faith in Christ and the love which they have for all the saints.

[11 : 48] Now, this word all is very important in the argument. It's not just that they have love for the saints. It's that their love is inclusive.

It's all the saints, whether they're Jewish or Gentile, whether they're part of the elite or they're commonplace. So-called elite, so-called commonplace. If all was not important, you could simply take it out and read I hear of your love for the saints.

But that is not the point that Paul makes. Indeed, he goes on to talk about the fact that the gospel is declared in all the world.

he prays that they will in verse 9 onwards, they will be filled with the knowledge of God's will with the kind of spiritual wisdom and understanding that will enable them to walk in a manner which is worthy of the Lord.

He is telling them that real spiritual understanding of the truth will lead to a certain kind of life of necessity.

[12 : 58] Real spiritual truth isn't the kind that entertains our minds and inflates our hearts. It is the kind of truth that shapes our lives and makes them more godly and teaches us this kind of love for all the saints.

Paul wants them to know the mystery of God's will and we'll come to that word mystery in a moment.

That was another one of the words that the heretics liked to use. He then goes on to speak of Jesus and Jesus of course was his great love.

I hope it is yours. I pray that it will be mine as well. And he wants to give them a picture of the fullness of Christ so that they can compare this magnificently indescribably glorious one with what the heretics are offering.

He tells them in verse 15 that this Jesus is the image of the invisible God. This is Jesus the man who walked on earth an image of the the image of the invisible God by sorry by him and for him all things were created.

[14 : 29] So what Paul has done he's already by way of intimation said forget this idea of a fullness which separates the most high God from the earthly crass demigod who created the earth no all things were created by him who is the image of the invisible God and all things were created for him.

And then he says he is before all things. That was in the summary Paul's point.

You see when we divide the church into Jew or Gentile or elite and common place or anything else we are not putting Christ before all things.

We're putting whatever else is separating us. Jewish tradition being a slave or a freeman or whatever else it may be.

And no Paul says Jesus is before all things and the whole purpose is to make sure in verse 18 that he will come to have first place in everything.

[15 : 46] So Paul is already directing their mind away from those distinguishing heretical marks to Christ. And he's saying anything which does not make Christ first before all things which does not accord him first place in all things is in the best circumstances questionable.

In verse 19 he takes this idea of the fullness and he says it pleased the father that in him all the fullness this whole supposed graduation of deities all of the fullness dwells in him.

In other words Paul is telling them that there is not an inkling of deity that is not in Christ. And therefore there is no room to think in terms of a separation of the most high God from this earthly world.

This material world is not unspiritual. I remember the days when my early Christian walk I thought it was unspiritual to eat ice cream.

I'm glad I have been redeemed from that. This was the idea that they had in mind. That it was unspiritual to enjoy the material things of the world.

[17 : 19] Whereas we are told by the word of God that God gives us all things richly for our enjoyment. it. So I can lick ice cream and give God praise at the same time and there is no contradiction between the two.

As long as the ice cream is good. Paul goes on to talk about his own circumstances in which he is now under physical guard in Rome awaiting the decision of Caesar and he says that this is a stewardship which was bestowed on him for their behalf so that he might declare the word of God verse 29 what is the word of God the mystery hidden from past ages and generations but now manifested what is that mystery the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles now my translation put it right it's not among the nations it's among the Gentiles in other words among the non Jews that was the mystery it's it's not some kind of esoteric experience the mystery is that God purposed from the beginning of the world to incorporate all your love for all the saints the gospel has been preached to every creature under the sun the mystery is that

God intended to incorporate in Christ all Jew and Gentile slave and freeman male and female he has already said that he prays that they will have a knowledge and a spiritual understanding that will enable them to walk as they ought to walk in other words to conduct themselves as they ought to conduct themselves here is the will of God Christ among you among the Gentiles the hope of glory and that's why I question the translations that translate verse 27 which says Christ in you rather than among you because he's not talking about the presence of Christ in individual hearts he's already talked about the mystery which is Christ among the Gentiles and it is among you you the Colossians now there was a Jewish community a small

Jewish community in Colossae but the majority of the Colossians were not Jewish nor were the majority apparently in the church and here the mystery is now manifested to his saints Jews and Gentiles worshipping God together with no division with no separation there is no elite there is no common place there are just Christians and therefore he says that verse 28 onwards that we're busy trying to establish every man and teach every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man once again this all perfect complete in Christ perfect complete super spiritual whatever you want to call it but how is this completion to be achieved in Christ not we achieve it in Christ but through Christ in

Christ from Christ for all things were made by him and for him and through him and therefore in chapter 2 verse 8 he says see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men according to the basic principles of the world rather than according to Christ he is saying you're engaged with Jewish ritual these are the most basic things they're not the heightened spirituality these are the fundamental basic elementary matters of the world rather than Christ they stand over and against Christ now why would they stand over and against Christ were not many aspects of Jewish tradition commanded by God in the Old Testament yes and that was definitely true in

[22 : 00] Paul's day far less true nowadays because the Judaism of today and most of the practices of Judaism have no root in the Bible but then they were much closer well they stand in contrast to Christ when they are used to shunt him somewhat aside so that they could come alongside him they stand in contrast to Christ when they promise us what we can only have in Christ and what is only given to us by the virtues of Christ rather than our virtues our ritual keeping and so he is setting these basic fundamental first steps of the spiritual life over against Christ and saying to them you're going back to baby days you're going back to deal with childish things rather than growing in Christ verse well let me go back to one more thing that

I forgot to mention when he spoke of the fullness he then tells us for example in where are we now yes in verse 9 of chapter 2 in him once again going back to this matter of fullness in him all the fullness of deity once again he could have said fullness all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form now he is driving the point home he's as it were sticking it into the craw of the heretics this Jesus who walked on earth who burped when he was a baby and needed to have his tushy wiped who perspired under the Palestinian sun and whose feet became dusty from Palestinian dust in him bodily all the fullness of deity dwells that is a fantastic statement and it joins heaven and earth it completely undermines the view of the heretics and then he makes specific reference to some of these

Jewish matters he says for example in verse 11 in him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands in other words with a spiritual circumcision a real circumcision the kind of circumcision that really counts one that it was made by God himself a circumcision made without hands having been buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead so this baptism does not in and of itself accomplish anything it is through faith in him who trusts in the work of God who raised Jesus from the dead and without faith baptism is merely getting wet but when we have faith in the working of God that baptism is more than just a symbol it is more than just an act that a baptizer and a baptizee undergo it is an act of God buried with him into death risen into what

Paul calls in Romans newness of life verse 13 when you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh he made you alive together with him so yes you were uncircumcised you were Gentiles and as Gentiles you knew nothing of God nothing of the ways of God and you were not partakers in any sense of any of the covenant blessings but you have been circumcised with this circumcision not made with hands and therefore you are partakers of covenant blessings here Paul has erased the difference in Christ between Jew and Gentile he'll make the statement later on you might recall in chapter 3 verse 11 in whom there is neither Jew nor

Gentile male or female bond or free here he is laying the grounds for that but then he does something very interesting and here is the point that we often neglect to note when we're reading the scriptures you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh he made you alive together with him you are of course the Gentiles but then he says heaven forgiven us Jews and Gentiles all our transgressions so what Paul is saying is that we Jews have no advantage in this matter over Gentiles we have trespassed too and we too are along with you forgiven having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which was hostile to us he took it out of the way he nailed it to the cross when he disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them through

[28 : 04] Christ rulers and authorities rulers and authorities Jesus conquered them all he vanquished them all he's above them all they're all subject to him and then Paul uses this picture of the triumphal parades that a victor in a Roman army would have if it was a significant victory he would be allowed to have this very special parade in which he would it was called a triumph he would march into Rome at the head of his armies and his captives with chains tied behind his chariot and those of their other captors following in train Jesus is the mighty victor he is above them all therefore for that reason no one is to act as your judge in regard to kosher food or drink or respect to a

Jewish festival or to a new moon or to the Sabbath days if my friends in the messianic movement only had a larger view of Jesus they would not be occupied with these elemental things of the world they would be occupied with him because he must be in our church life and in our private lives before all things he must be primary in everything and therefore there is no one who can set himself up and require of us with regard to what we may or may not eat or drink be it ice cream or kosher food all things are sanctified by the word of God in prayer nor shall we be engaged with a festival and a new moon and a Sabbath day now there are those who will come and tell us but you can understand the Bible better if you actually go through this Jewish ritual!

no no you can't in fact to some extent you'll understand the Bible less and that is because well let me take an example how many of you have been to a Passover seder?

a number of you by the way I did look at my clock but I forgot when I began so when am I supposed to end? a little after quarter after okay we'll end at a quarter!

after people are told and those of you who have been a seder will confirm this that you will now understand what our Lord did on that last night before he was betrayed and you will understand communion better correct?

[30 : 56] but it's a load of baloney because most of the Passover ritual practiced by Jews today did not even exist in those days our Lord did nothing of it there are simply rabbinic symbols many of which nobody knows where they came from or where they're going if you want to understand your Bible better all you need to do is study it it's all in the Old Testament it's all there you don't need a rabbi to enlighten you he's in darkness himself you need the word of God you need the spirit of God and you need the willingness to put your nose to the ground to the grind and work at it that's all that's all that's necessary those three God's word God's spirit and God's servant working hard to try to understand the word of God so don't let anyone judge you of these you're already circumcised don't let!

they are only a shadow of which the reality or the substance is Jesus now why on earth would we want to trade the reality for a shadow the substance for a mere nothing the more light there is the less shadow there is but the more light there is the more Christ there is and so Paul is protesting against this idea that somehow one can achieve a higher level of spirituality by displacing Christ with Jewish traditions let no one defraud you he says of your price by engaging in the kind of self abasement and the false humility don't eat don't touch don't taste I thought we were supposed to be more spiritual then why are we so engaged in material issues don't touch don't taste

Paul was in love with Jesus he had good reason to be we should be in love with Jesus we have good reason to be in him everything is to be found and all these other efforts while they give an appearance of religion and of self abasement they are in fact of no use to overcoming fleshly indulgence On the contrary they are in fact a form of fleshly indulgence And therefore if you have been raised and the if here is not an if of doubt it's an if of contingency that's why the translation read I believe it was the MIV says since since you have been raised up with Christ keep seeking the things which are above where

Christ is seated at the right hand of God set your mind on things above not on Sabbaths and festivals! For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God and when Christ shall appear you will appear with him in glory What is that compared to everything that Judaism could offer us?

Just a closing word here glory It's become one of those words that I relish I taste it I thrill over it glory is the summary of our salvation all have sinned and come short of what?

[34 : 58] The glory of God sin has robbed us it has distorted us it has contorted the beautiful image of God in which we were first created but those whom the Lord foreknew them he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son what is that if not glory and therefore Paul says that all those whom he thus predestined he called he justified he also glorified and therefore Paul as he goes on in Romans and says something similar to what he is saying here in Colossians he says in Romans if I remember correctly 15 7 receive one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God not for the glory of God but to we have been received to the glory of

God when Christ appears we shall appear with him in glory we shall be beautified with his beauty sanctified with his sanctity justified with his justice made to be like Jesus or as John puts it when he will appear we will be like him because we will see him as he is and everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure and so to be honest I forgot to look at my notes but so what is Paul telling us he's telling us that no one Judaism the rabbis messianic Judaism whatever no one can offer us anything that is not to be found in

Christ and much of what is to be found in Christ can be found nowhere else let's pray oh god you've given us a glorious savior and a glorious salvation and a glorious hope and a glorious encouragement to live as we ought a glorious support as we labor so to do help us never to turn our backs to that glory to engage our hearts and our minds with the basic things of this world warm our hearts to love Jesus your son our magnificent savior and grant him to be primary in everything in our lives this we ask in his best name amen