

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php



“The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light”

CONTENTS

	PAGE
MUCH SERVING	1
CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS	4
THE JOYS OF BIBLE STUDY	11
NOTES ON HEBREWS	17
WORD STUDIES IN THE FIRST PSALM	22
THE SECOND ADVENT	27
WORDS DESCRIPTIVE OF THE SECOND ADVENT	35
EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS	37
THE RECENT FINDS IN PALESTINE	43
THE BIBLE'S ORIGINS	46

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

made manifest, 'that each may receive the things done in the body', 2 Cor. 5:10" (Vine). In 1 Pet. 5:4 it may refer to a particular feature of the Judgment-Seat of Christ. In "Colossians 3:4 it refers to Christ's manifestation with all His saints to the world when He comes with them in glory for the overthrow of His foes and the setting up of His Kingdom" (Vine). It is only fair to state that some prophetic students would date this last *after* the millennial reign of Christ on the plea that "not once do we find this word ever used in regard to the Second Advent in any of its stages". But it is impossible to dogmatize, and the general understanding would seem to be that indicated above.

We can summarize the study as follows: First there is *erchomai*, or coming from heaven of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This brings about His presence or *parousia*, and inaugurates the period of the Parousia. The *apokalupsis*, the Unveiling, follows; and then the Epiphany brings to an end the Parousia period. Finally the universal manifestation of Christ, together with His saints, leading on to or inclusive of the "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

A. McD. R.

EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

Chap. 2. verse 15*

BY A. MCD. REDWOOD

Apek̄dusamenos tas archas kai tas exousias edeigmatisen en-parrhēsia thriambeusas autous en autō. (having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.) Every word almost in this difficult verse is in dispute among the commentators. It gives a vivid word-picture of the mighty triumph over spirit-forces effected on the Cross of Christ. But who wrought the victory—God or Christ? Exactly what was the victory and who are these spirit-forces? Such are some of the questions which arise and need a clear answer if we are to get the spiritual import of the verse in the context which holds it.

The following is in our view a clear and satisfactory elucidation

* The last instalment appeared in July 1949 issue.

of the verse, very kindly supplied by our esteemed contributor Mr. F. F. Bruce, of Sheffield University, at our special request. (A second interpretation, held by some eminent authorities in reference to *one* special point, is given in the footnote on page 39.)

Mr. Bruce first quotes the verse from two other versions as follows:

“He (i.e. Christ) rid himself of all the Powers of evil, and held them up to open contempt when he celebrated his triumph over them on the cross!” (*Twentieth Century New Testament*).

“And the hostile princes and rulers He (Christ) stripped from off Himself, and boldly displayed them as His conquests, when by the Cross He triumphed over them” (*Weymouth's Trans.*).

“These two versions”, proceeds Mr. Bruce, “in my judgment give the correct sense of this much-disputed verse. Its understanding depends in the main on three considerations: (1) The *subject* of the clause; (2) the force of the middle voice in the aorist participle *apekdusamenos*; (3) the *identity* of the “principalities and powers.”

“(1) Grammatically there is no indication of a change of subject in verses 13, 14 and 15. It is frequently held, however, that a change of subject from God the Father to Christ must be understood somewhere in verse 14 (at “hath taken it out of the way”, Lightfoot suggested). This is due to the fact that, while God the Father is certainly the subject in verse 13, the end of verse 14 and the whole of verse 15 apparently require Christ as the subject. But the action throughout is that of God in Christ; it is unlikely that Paul was conscious of any change of subject. “Perhaps the very ambiguity teaches us not to dissociate the work of the Father and of the Son” (T. W. Crafer in Gore's *Commentary*).

“(2) If we give due weight to the middle voice of *apekdusamenos*, we cannot be content with the view that it was the principalities and powers that were stripped, spoiled, or “robbed of their prey” (Knox). Nor does Moffatt bring out its force adequately in rendering: “he cut away the angelic Rulers and Powers *from us*.” The middle voice requires us to understand that He stripped them off *from Himself*. What this really means depends on the identification of these powers.

“(3) That the principalities and powers here are hostile spiritual forces is hardly to be doubted. The heresy which Paul is refuting in this epistle envisaged the divine plenitude (*pleroma*)

as distributed through a succession of angelic intermediaries interposed between heaven and earth, so that it was very attenuated by the time it reached men. [As this heresy combined Jewish with pagan features, it is quite probable that these angelic intermediaries—the lords of the planetary spheres—were in it identified with the angels through whom the Law was mediated.*.] But Paul insists that the *pleroma*, far from being diffused through these forces, is completely embodied in Christ. As for these spiritual forces themselves, the spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenly realm (Eph. 6:12), Christ stripped them off from Himself as they beset Him and clung to Him with hostile intent while He hung upon the Cross. Having grappled with them there and flung them away from Himself, He then exhibited His mastery over them as the victorious Roman general drove his conquered captives before him in his triumphal procession.

“Here then are two cogent reasons urged by Paul why homage should not be paid to these elemental powers. Firstly, the divine plenitude does not reside in them, but completely in Christ. Christ is ours, and we find our fulness in Him. We have no need of these other alleged intermediaries. Secondly, these powers were openly vanquished by God in Christ. Why then pay to the vanquished the divine honours that are due to the Conqueror?”

C. Warning against Practical Error.—Ch. 2: 16-23.

The apostle now proceeds to make practical application of the subject he has been dealing with in the preceding sub-division (i.e. verses 8-15); first, in regard to definite errors (vs. 16, 17), and then in reference to doctrinal questions (vs. 18, 19), in the

* It is of some interest perhaps to state that Alford, Peake, and a few other authorities relate the “principalities and powers” with the “angels through whom the Law was ordained” mentioned in Galatians 3: 19 (and cf. Acts. 7: 53). In support it is argued that this view is in keeping with the other references in this epistle to similar “powers” (1:10; 2:16), and not necessarily evil. Also that the Law having been abolished by the cross involves the “despoiling” of those “powers” by which it was ordained (“they are fallen potentates”—Peake). Finally, this would act as “a powerful polemic against the worship of angels”, which is the error the apostle proceeds to refute in verse 18. But this interpretation is rejected by Ellicott, Lightfoot and a majority of conservative scholars. It appears to us entirely out of line with the whole context and tends to obliterate the essential distinction between evil and good “principalities and powers” referred to in entirely *different* contexts. See our Notes on ch. 1: 16 and 2: 10.—Ed.

reverse order to the preceding. In both appeals he warns against any encroachment upon true Christian liberty. We have here, therefore, the very heart and centre of the practical counsels of the Epistle, warning against the two most pressing dangers besetting the church. The first is the substitution of a shadow for the substance; the second is the preference of inferior angels to the Head.

Verse 16

Mē oun tis humas krinetō en brōsei kai en posei (Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink). *Oun* refers back to the argument of the preceding verses concerning the cross being death to the law and the triumph over the powers of evil. *Mē tis*, as in v. 8 (where see notes) would seem to point to some particular person who was causing or inciting all the trouble in the church. But, says the apostle, "let not anyone", whoever he may be, impose his will upon you. *Krinetō* means more correctly, "take you to task", or "call you to account". The present imperative with *mē* forbids the habit, and urges to cease doing it, for the obvious reason that having been delivered from the law you are lifted out of the sphere of all such questions. (Cf. Rom. 14:3, 4, a close parallel; see also 1 Cor. 10:29).

Brosei en posei="eating and drinking", not just food and drink, which would be *brōma* and *poma*, as in ch. 9:10 (also 1 Cor. 10:4). "The kingdom of God does not depend upon, or consist in, eating and drinking" (Rom. 14:17). It was *asceticism* imposed as an obligation rather than ritual cleanness that was in the apostle's mind. The distinction is important because it brings out the question at issue, viz. the ascetic principle on which the abstinence was based, going far beyond what even the Jewish traditions prescribed. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4:2, 3). The believer has been delivered from all such bondages.

en merei heortēs ē neomēnias ē sabbatōn (or in respect of a feast day or new moon or a sabbath day:). These allude to the feasts regularly observed by the Jews: "feast day"=holy-day, one of the annual Feasts, as the Passover; "new moon", one of the monthly feasts; and the weekly Sabbath. The plural *sabbata* is always used in the N.T. of the single day (except Acts 17:2). (Cf. 1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; Hosea 2:11, etc.). These were divinely prescribed for the Mosaic economy, but for the Christian they had been done away. Paul admonishes the Galatians for turning back to these "weak and beggarly rudiments"

or elements (*stoicheion* = elementary principles, the mere 'A B C'), in contrast to the fundamentals of divine revelation (see Gal. 4:9-11; Heb. 5:12). He says not merely "do not observe these days", but more: "Do not let anyone make such matters a basis of judgment as regards your state and standing in Christ. Deny the right of anyone to judge you in this manner."

Verse 17

Ho estin skia tōn mellontōn, to de sōma tou Christou (which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's). Some read *ha* (pl.) instead of *ho*, but in either case the reference is to the *entire* ritual not merely some parts here named. *Skia* = "an image or outline cast by any object" (Lexicon); in itself unsubstantial and without significance apart from that which produces it. Under the old dispensation everything was a "shadow" of what was to come with the coming of Christ, it was in fact a "foreshadowing". This double meaning is brought out in Heb. 10:1 and 8:5. "The Colossians were grasping at the shadow and losing the substance", the spiritual blessings *now* available in Christ. Moule helpfully points out that "the Epistle to the Hebrews is a large apostolic expansion, so to speak, of this sentence; giving us at full length the assurance that the Mosaic ordinances were adjusted with a Divine prescience, to the future of the Gospel; and that the fulfilment of their true import in Christ abrogates their observance."

"But the body is of Christ"—"He is the Fulfilment, the shadow-casting Substance, because it *consists of* Him in His redeeming Work" on the cross and in the present. It is not His glorified body, nor merely the Church as such, nor its ordinances, but "His atoning sacrifice, His Gift of the Spirit, His Rest" (Moule); and, of course, *every* spiritual blessing *included* in these great realities.

Verse 18

Mēdeis humas katabrabeuetō (Let no man rob you of your prize). The verb is extremely rare, only here in the N.T., and twice only in profane literature. It is compounded with the noun *brabeion* = an athletic prize, used twice only in 1 Cor. 9:24 and Phil. 3:14. This again has its difficulties as to the exact meaning. Some consider the phrase is used of an attempt on the part of the false teachers to rob the Colossians of a merited prize.

If we accept this meaning it is necessary to be clear on the meaning of 'prize'. What is the prize? It cannot be *eternal life*

(as Moule views it), for that is *not* a prize conditioned on merit, it is a *free gift* of God (Rom. 6:23, R.V.). It must be the reward of faithfulness, testimony, or service; e.g. the "crown of righteousness", the reward of a holy and righteous walk on earth (2 Tim. 4:8); the "crown of glory" for those who faithfully shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:4); "the crown of life" granted to a life of consistent endurance and victory over temptation (1 Cor. 9:25-27; James 1:12; Rev. 2:10).

But there is another and possibly better meaning. This is based on the fact that "the Greek verb represented by the whole phrase 'rob of a prize', though derived from the word *prize* in 1 Cor. 9:24, Phil. 3:14, had ceased to refer to a prize, and come to denote an unfair or unfavourable decision of a judge in any matter." The phrase would therefore mean "let no man condemn you", or as A.V. margin, "judge against you". This would suit the parallelism of verse 16, "Let no man *judge* you. . . . "let no one *condemn* you". Radford states further, "It is the censorious criticism of verse 16 carried to the point of an arbitrary condemnation by self-constituted authorities who laid down rules of conduct and perhaps threatened to excommunicate the non-compliant" (cf. Diotrephes in 3 John 9, 10). This view (advocated also by L. Williams, Abbot, Peake, Griffith Thomas etc.) appears to us more consistent with the whole sense of the context.

Then follow four clauses distinguished by the four Greek participles describing some of the other features which characterized the heretical teachings.

thelōn en tapeinophrosunē kai thrēskeia tōn aggelōn (by a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels). The Greek means literally "willing in humility", but the construction is very uncertain and gives rise to a variety of opinion. Two main interpretations are, (a) joining "willing" to the preceding verb, and so reading "let no man condemn you willingly (or of set purpose) in humility", etc. (cf. 2 Pet. 3:5). This gives a very close parallel to the construction of verse 16 (Moule, Radford, Darby, *et al.*). Others (Lightfoot, L. Williams) consider it is a Hebraism = "finding delight in humility," etc. The only real objection to this is that no other example is found in the N.T. There are other alternatives we need not go into which are reflected by the variety of renderings in the several N.T. versions. Our own choice is more towards (b), which incidentally is that adopted by Maclaren, Griffith Thomas, Garrod, etc.