

# Explore the Bible: The Gospel's Freedom

October 19, 2021

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Nov. 7 focuses on Colossians 2:16-23.*

Jim Jones, the religious leader of the People's Temple, was responsible for the mass murder and mass suicide of 909 members on Nov. 18, 1978, after he moved the church from the United States to Guyana in an effort to create an alternative religious society. At the onset of establishing the church, everything appeared to be centered on Christ. Unfortunately, it became abundantly clear to millions around the world that Jim Jones preached a gospel mixed with false teachings unrelated to Scripture.

Most churches may not experience false teaching to this cultish degree, but there are false teachers who arise within the church. We read about one in particular in 2 Peter 2:1—"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who brought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves." Peter continues in the passage to warn the believers that many will follow their 'way of truth' while exploiting and condemning the believers (vv. 2-3).

Every church leader must be equipped to teach truth according to Scripture and quickly correct teachers who teach their opinion or any other teaching unrelated to Scripture. Paul begins to address the false teachings in the Colossian church in this lesson. He warns the church to remain in the faith taught to them from the beginning and not be led astray by false teachings.

# Guard Your Worship (Colossians 2:16-19)

Paul is concerned about the believers and urges them to be strong in their beliefs and not let false teachers judge them in matters of what to eat or drink or question whether keeping the rituals of the Jews were necessary for salvation (v. 16). Many will seek advice from all kinds of sources, including vain philosophy.

One example is found in Paul's sermon to the Gentiles in Athens. Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious" (Acts. 17:22). When Paul scanned the area, he noticed idol objects of worship as well as an altar with an inscription "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" (v. 23). Paul preceded to preach Christ as the only true and living God with results of some being saved.

To the young preacher Timothy, Paul gives this warning: "The Spirit clearly says at in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

Even now, there is a great falling away from the church and from God. Many children who were brought up in the church, who were taught biblical standards in the home, and who lived out their faith in the world have left the church. *How do we guard ourselves and children against the false teachers?*

Jesus speaks to the crowd on the mountain and tells them: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matthew 7:15-16). Watch out for teachers who rise above the knowledge of God and

do not demolish arguments or take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthian 10:5). They teach a message about a God who is all right with human opinions. However, we worship the God of Scripture, the God of all truth. The truth of the matter is the teacher must speak the truth to our spirits, to our souls and watch out for fruit.

Our worship is not given to angels. Neither do we need to worship angels to gain access to God. We worship God, and God alone. While in the wilderness with Satan, Jesus reminded him, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only' (Luke 4:7-8).

## **Guard Your Life (Colossians 2:20-23)**

*What does it mean to belong to the world?* In some churches, snake handling is observed. Poisonous snakes such as rattlers and copperheads are held by members during worship service. According to the members, handling the snakes is a voluntary act of worship based on the Scripture: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mark 16:17-18). They believe the snakes represents demons and that God will demonstrate his powers through true believers as well as protect them from evil attacks. If the person is bitten or becomes ill from the poison, all is attributed to lack of faith or lack of Holy Spirit.

Believers cannot lose touch with Christ. Christ is the head of the church and everything else is under his authority. Remaining in relationship with Christ is the answer to growth and maturity as we guard our lives from false teachings.

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