

**Col 1:15-20** And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup> For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, <sup>20</sup> and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Paul's Prayer vs 9-14 – Spiritual Growth & its fruits

Oct 4 – The Glory of Jesus Christ – I didn't know who I was with

Oct 11 – Eternal Resume of God-Son – Jn 1:1-18; Heb 1:1-3

Oct 18 – Colossian Heresy – the reason for Paul writing 1:15-20

### **Understanding the Methods of the Forces of Evil**

**Important questions:** every person asks

- a. Does God exist? Is there a Creator?
- b. If yes, does He interact with His creation?
- c. If yes, what does His interaction look like?
- d. What happens when we die?
- e. Is there another life after this one?

**Important Decisions: What we believe** about any of these questions is the most important decisions that we make in life, determining our worldview – values, goals, priorities

- a. If we choose to believe yes about the God questions, it opens up many other questions that lead us into a spiritual life.
- b. If we choose to believe no on any of these questions it shuts down that entire pathway of discovery & directs focus back on our earthly life.

**Ex:** If there is a God-Creator who established universal laws then He has decided what reality is & we must adjust to His reality. If there is no God, then there is no established reality and we are free to perceive reality as we wish. We can dream up our idea of a better world and move the universal mind-set toward it.

- Pontus Pilate – what is truth? Is there any such thing as truth?
- Progressives: there is no God, no fixed reality, reality is created by the collective beliefs of all the people, persuading the people to adopt specific ideas about the universe will cause the world to change – Man centered.
- If there is no fixed reality then there are no tried & true principles that work in the world as it exists today – conservatism of any kind is holding to ideas that have proven to be valid, ie wisdom learned & passed down

The schemes of the devil are all designed to persuade mankind to reject God

Believe that there is no God, no afterlife, only biological units that die

- Believe religion is man made to comfort the weak & to control the masses
- Believe that religion is based on superstition & fear

Believe that man must make sacrifices & perform works to earn His blessing

- Systems that deceive mankind into earning his/her way to heaven causing them to reject the grace of God through Christ.

The first century was a time of scientific ignorance. They had very few science based explanations as to why the world worked the way it did. Many of them still looked to their made up Greek & Roman gods, observing the superstitions, rituals and sacrifices of their religions – Their gods were demons wanting to be worshipped, using these deceptions to direct man's fear & reverence toward themselves. Gnosticism was one of those religious systems that was designed to deny the reality of the God-Man as the Creator, as the legitimate sacrifice and Mediator. If Jesus wasn't true humanity, then He couldn't be our sacrifice or Mediator.

## **Intro**

- a. Paul is combatting the general 1<sup>st</sup> Century culture & philosophies that had evolved over centuries from Greek, Oriental & Jewish sources.
- b. Like all of the devil's schemes against Christians, the ideas being promoted in the Col. church attacked the person & work of Jesus Christ.
- c. A combination of Plato's form theory, Eastern mysticism & Jewish legalism was combined together into an intellectual system called Gnosticism (Knowledge).

- d. 1<sup>st</sup> Century Gnosticism like all non-biblical ideas in any period of history was rooted in Luciferian propaganda in the guise of religion or science.
- e. Mankind is caught in the war of ideas between God & His plan & Lucifer's plan that promotes living independently of God.
- f. Every different non-biblical philosophical system that has been developed throughout history has been designed to either directly or indirectly attack or refute some characteristic or truth about God & His plan.
- g. Lucifer & his forces are desperately trying to hinder or nullify anything about the plan of God & man's understanding of the plan.
  - A/C view proposes that God allows man to be given similar choices to those offered to the fallen angels.
  - Man's choices compared to the angels in similar circumstances demonstrate that angels could have escaped eternal punishment but chose to maintain their rebellion
- h. The Colossian heresy was another of a long line of attacks on God & His plan
- i. The cultural changes that we see in our own day are part of the same historical cycles that were occurring in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Worshippers**

- a. Mankind is fully capable of conjuring up false ideas to explain the origins, structure & purposes of life, totally apart from any demonic intervention.
- b. Designed with an internal vacuum demanding to be filled, God made mankind as worshippers – who/what we fill the emptiness with is who/what we worship.
- c. The point is that having been corrupted by AOS, we all become idolaters by attaching our need to any/all things other than God to fill our hearts.
- d. The subjects and objects of philosophical speculation are normally focused on the challenges of filling the emptiness in the heart of man
  - What is the purpose of life – is there a Creator or only an evolved creature
  - What is happiness, where can it be found & what is required to have it.
  - What is love, where can it be found & what is required to have it
- e. Lucifer takes full advantage of our vulnerable, needy souls by offering many types of alternate strategies for purpose, love & happiness.
- f. Lucifer's goal is to persuade man to adopt the same ideas that he did that caused him to sin and caused him to reject whatever options God offered him

## First Century Gnosticism – The Colossian Heresy

1. **Gnosticism derives its name from *gnosis*, meaning knowledge & refers to a philosophical system claiming to possess superior understanding of God, the creation & the world.**

- a. This came primarily from those who had adopted or were attracted to Hellenistic systems of philosophy.
- b. It was an attempt to reconcile different branches of philosophy with both Jewish & Christian theology.
- c. The believers who accepted these false ideas also rejected the biblical principles taught through the apostles – there was no bible.

2. **A defining concept which must be understood is the word “syncretism” meaning to combine different systems of thought seeking to unify them into a cohesive whole.**

- a. Under the ancient influence of “The Logos – the unifying structure of the universe” first century thinkers tried to unify all the different systems of thought into one grand, unified system of superior knowledge.
- b. Those who possessed this superior knowledge (the elite) saw themselves having a superior understanding compared to the common folk.
- c. By seeking to combine all the ideas into a cohesive whole, the Gnostics missed the whole point that Christianity is totally exclusive

3. **Gnosticism was a major Satanic attack on the 1<sup>st</sup> century church.**

- a. Combined Greek philosophy, legalistic Judaism with oriental dualism to form an apostate syncretism, combined into one system & covered with a veneer of Christian vocabulary.
- b. Plato’s Form Theory – made a distinction between physical matter and the realm of immaterial ideas & concepts.
  - Over time, the theory was widely accepted as reality, evolving into viewing all matter as corrupt & evil while all spirit & concept was pure
  - Under this superior knowledge God could not directly create the universe without connecting Himself to evil matter.
- c. Legalistic Judaism – turned teaching rituals of the Law into a works system
  - The commands intended to expose man’s depravity & need for a savior
  - Ritual visual aids taught the Messianic plan of grace salvation

- Promises to A/E, Noah, Abraham & David clarified the person of Messiah
  - d. Oriental Dualism – good & evil are equal, eternally pulling on each other
  - Moral Relativity – no such thing as divine good
4. **The purpose of Gnosticism was to deny the deity & humanity of Christ.**
    - a. If all physical matter is evil, then God who is pure cannot come in contact with evil physical matter.
    - b. If all physical matter was corrupt & evil the God-Son could not have joined Himself to a human body made of physical matter.
    - c. Gnostics said He was either a phantom ghost or an illusion – imagine what that does to Christ as the perfect human sacrifice & as our Mediator.
    - d. Under Gnostic assumptions, neither the Hypostatic Union nor the sacrifice of perfect humanity was possible.
  5. **God used the false thinking of the day to motivate Paul & later John to write the biblical record that develops our understanding of Christ.**
    - a. Gnosticism caused Paul to develop technical vocabulary to describe the resume of GS & the principles and the mechanics of the Christian way of life
    - b. The Gnostics claimed to possess superior *gnosis* – knowledge, Paul explains that the Christian faith is built on *epignosis* – knowing beyond knowledge
  6. **With the physical being corrupt, 2 schools of thought developed, one based on the ascetic trend and those with the lascivious trend.**
    - a. Ascetic – do the do's and don't the don'ts to gain God's favor
    - b. Lascivious – the material is corrupt & irredeemable, just do what you want
    - c. The error of Platonic Form Theory was widely accepted as truth, deceiving many people, even the church.
      - The progressive error in today's thought makes many assumptions that are opposed to biblical truth.