



Morningside Church

Sermon Discussion Guide

Title: Headless and Heartless Religions

Date: June 9, 2024

Scripture Text: Colossians 2:18-23

Notes:

The Apostle Paul continues to address issues that the Colossian Christians are dealing with, primarily, the influence of a pagan culture on the church. The church must guard itself with the truth of God's word if it's going to successfully combat these influences. Paul addresses in his letter both the doctrine of Christ and the deficiency of cults. He addresses it through four "isms". 1) intellectualism (filtering truth through our own understanding), and 2) ritualism (religious activities with no relationship). In today's passage, we'll take a look at the final two, 3) mysticism, and 4) legalism.

I. Headless Religion (Colossians 2:18-19)

Mysticism is the belief that you can have direct experience with God apart from the Lord Jesus Christ and the revelation God has provided through His word. Nothing more and nothing less is needed. This is what He wanted us to know about Him. Mystics claim to have special knowledge of God, above and beyond what is written in the Bible. Characteristics of mysticism include false humility ([vs. 18](#)) and driven by experience (visions) and feelings ([vs. 18](#)).

- What is the problem of elevating experience and feelings over faith and doctrine?
- How can our experiences and feelings distract us from God's truth?
- [Col. 2:19](#) addresses the problem, they were "not holding fast to the head". Who is the *head*?
- What does it look like for someone to be disconnected from Christ?
- [Vs. 19](#) describes how the body's needs are supplied by the head and are held together by it. Instead of being driven by experience and feelings, the Christian is driven by sincere submission to Christ. Why are experiences and feelings such strong factors?
- What does it mean to filter our experiences and feelings through the Bible?

II. Heartless Religion (Colossians 2:20-23)

As a Christian, someone who has "died with Christ", we are set free from the bondage of the law. The purpose of the law was to show us we need a Savior. But if we aren't careful, we can voluntarily reassume the burden of the law (or any requirements which are beyond scripture), a.k.a. legalism. As such, we might judge others based on our criteria of what "makes a good Christian". This is because we may impose our convictions onto others, but instead should be focused on ourselves.



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- How would you define legalism?
- What are the dangers of adding to what God requires of His people to be obedient?
- What does it look like to impose your convictions on others?
- How can legalism affect the unity of the body, the church?
- Describe a time when you encountered legalism. How was it different than an encounter of edification, or encouragement, or even godly correction?

The problem is that the Colossians worship worldly things, put their hope in them, and not in Christ alone ... so that these rules have been cut off from the head, who is Christ, and thus have become the basis of a pseudo-religion and a sacrilege.

Ambrosiaster

It looked like humility to apply to angels, as if men were conscious of their unworthiness to speak directly to God. But it is not warrantable; it is taking that honour which is due to Christ only, and giving it to a creature. There really was pride in this seeming humility. Those who worship angels, disclaim Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. It is an insult to Christ, who is the Head of the church, to use any intercessors but him. When men let go their hold of Christ, they catch at what will stand them in no stead. The body of Christ is a growing body. And true believers cannot live in the fashions of the world.

Matthew Henry