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## Study Page: Col. 2:20-23

If With Christ You Died

Reading Colossians 2:20-23

*"If with Christ you have died"* is a reference to their conversion to Christ. These Christians in Colossae are reminded of their choice to leave sin (die to it) and become followers of Christ. Romans 6 teaches, one dies with Christ in baptism (See also Col. 2:12). So here (Col. 2:20), Paul takes their attention back to that initial act of dying with Christ. The implications of that act needed to be considered as they were tempted and being deceived by false teachers.

In that initial act of obedience, they died with Christ "to the elemental spirits of the world." In conversion, they separated themselves from the worldly, the earthly ideas and ambitions, the human wisdom now being pushed in their face by false teachers.

The main question of this text is – **if you have given up those earthly elemental forms and patterns, why now – *as baptized believers* – would you go back and let men**



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### **subject you to human religious regulations?**

"If you died with Christ, as, of course, you did," for you were buried with him (see on verse 12 above) and you were raised with him (verse 12 again; also 3:1), then you have also in that very act made a complete break with all such rudimentary instruction that bases its hope upon anything apart from Christ and fulness of salvation in him.

The false teachers at work in Colossae had developed (or received from their religious forefathers) a set of rules they were imposing and pushing. Paul is telling the Christians in Colossae, *you are complete in Christ! You died to those things.*

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“Do not handle?” “Do not taste?” “Do not touch?” These human precepts were worldly, perishable and human in origin. They referred to things “that all perish as they are used.” **If you have died with Christ in baptism (2:12), you have walked away from such human religious regulations.**

*“These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.”*

The religious rules and regulations men invented and pushed – might look impressive. But the system was self-made – that is, made by the user (the creature) rather than the Creator.

Asceticism is a system of thought (man-made) that treats the body severely, assuming this has some deep spiritual benefit. False teachers in Colossae were pushing this, but Paul is clear: “...they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.”

So, how do we get out of sin and into fellowship with God? How do we develop long-term self-control? Where do we find

wisdom for good living and with solid hope as we face death?

**In Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” (Col. 2:3).**

1. Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 6: Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*. New Testament Commentary (130). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.