



**JESUS IS GREATER**

**February 16, 2025**

**Sermon Study Guide – Brian Bales**

**Jesus is Greater: *Don't Get Phished***

*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup> and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. <sup>11</sup> In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup> Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. <sup>20</sup> If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— <sup>21</sup> “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch” <sup>22</sup> (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? <sup>23</sup> 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. (Colossians 2:8-23)*

#### COMMENTARY

a. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy: The false teaching among the Colossians was marked by an emphasis on philosophy and empty deceit. Most of all, it was according to the tradition of men. It had the stamp of man on it, not God.

i. Peake says the best sense of the phrase cheat you is actually, “lead you away as prey.” It also had the ideas of robbing and plundering. “Their goods were the salvation they had received from Christ; and both the Gentile and Jewish teachers endeavored to deprive them of these, by perverting their minds, and leading them off from the truths of Christianity.” (Clarke)

ii. This philosophy that threatened the Colossian Christians was a strange eclectic mix of early Gnosticism, Greek philosophy, local mystery religions, and Jewish mysticism. The philosophy threatening the Colossian Christians was so dangerous because it was not obviously sinful and licentious. It was high-sounding and seemed highly intelligent.

v. The connection to early Gnosticism is clear from the way Paul brings forth his points.

- Gnosticism taught that God (as a Perfect Spirit) could not come into direct contact with the material world. Paul took care to point out that Jesus is God, and He came in the body of His flesh ([Colossians 1:19-22](#)).
- Gnosticism taught that since God could not have direct contact with the material world, that God Himself did not create the world, but He worked through lesser spirits or angels. Paul took care to show that Jesus was the creator of the world ([Colossians 1:15-16](#)).
- Gnosticism (and some forms of Jewish mysticism) taught that God did not deal directly with man and the material world, but that He dealt with the world through a series of mediators. Paul took care to show that Jesus did the work of reconciliation Himself ([Colossians 1:19-20](#)).
- Gnosticism (and some forms of Jewish mysticism) greatly esteemed these supposed mediators, and considered them angelic beings of a sort. Paul was careful to warn the Colossians that angels should not be worshipped ([Colossians 2:18](#)).

### A Life Application Study Guide

James 1:22-25 tells us to put into practice what we are discovering in God’s word.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

1. ***Don’t let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. (Col 2:8 NLT)***
  - Think of a time when you were persuaded to believe something that appeared to be legit and reputable but was actually harmful. Were you immediately able to discern the deception or did it take a minute?
  - What types of high-sounding philosophies do you see in your environment that sound good, but are not the Gospel and do not align with God’s word?
  - Why are these philosophies appealing to believe or follow? Which have you been tempted to accept as true?
  
2. ***The Sufficiency of Jesus – For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. (Col. 2:9-10)***
  - Sit with these two verses for a moment. What does it mean for Jesus to be the entire fullness of God?
  - How are you impacted knowing the *fullness of God* dwells in you?

- In Northern Va, we are tempted to always be in pursuit of something better and greater than what we have, and we may have fallen into the temptation to supplement Jesus. When are you tempted to look for something greater than Jesus and where does that temptation come from?

### 3. The Nonsense of Legalism

- The best lies always have a little bit of truth in them and the best phishing scams are the ones that have plausibility and are perceived to benefit us. Legalism can be defined as “actions that change us from the outside.” In other words, doing good things will make us good. Why is this easy to buy into and how does this discredit Jesus?
- What motivates you to do good? To get credits or points from God, or because of a grateful heart acknowledging His great love for us?

### 4. The Nonsense of Supplemental Mysticism

- True biblical mysticism is defined as the supernatural practice of accessing and experiencing God. How are we able to rightly access God today?
- If Jesus is true North on your spiritual compass, how is it possible to get off track?  
*For, there is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity —the man Christ Jesus. -1 Timothy 2:5 (NLT)*
- What are some of the messages from other sources that sound like plausible alternatives or additional ways that we can access God? What has this teaching, warned us against?
- How much more attractive is a teaching that comes from “a seemingly spiritual person” who appears wise, devoted, disciplined, and pious?
- When have you been tempted to follow a high-profile religious leader rather than Jesus? What were the results?
- As you consider today’s teaching look back to the Garden in Genesis where the enemy convinced Eve and Adam that what they had was not enough. The result was spiritual death and separation from God that only Jesus could restore. How will you let Him restore you today?

## WALKING IT OUT

Jesus is everything, and in Him, we are both full and free.

Because of the finished work of Christ, we are no longer enslaved to the empty philosophies, arbitrary rules, and high-sounding mystic lies of the enemy.

If you find yourself off track today, will you confess and ask Jesus to restore you?

Our true identity is far greater than we could ask or imagine - Christ in us, the hope of glory.