

Problems and Solutions

“⁹ For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. ¹⁰ And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:9-10).

At the time of the writing of the epistle to the Colossians there were two basic syncretistic outlooks that prevailed in society. (*Syncretism is the social pressure on religions to compromise their distinctive beliefs in order to be in unity with the larger society.*)

The two elements of syncretism (both remain in this philosophy today)

1. PRAGMATISM - this is determining something's value based almost totally upon the practicality of its social application or the results produced. Therefore success becomes the measure of truth.

For instance, a central criticism of fundamentalism by New-evangelicals is that fundamentalism has failed to impact and change society. The reason fundamentalism has failed to change society is because society continues to reject the Biblical principles of fundamentalism and to choose worldliness over holiness.

According to the philosophy of PRAGMATISM, something is determined to be impractical if it does not fit into someone's lifestyle or social practices. Therefore, it is rejected. Today this would apply to such things as modesty in dress, social drinking and premarital sex. Each of these things would be considered impractical in today's society and therefore rejected as binding moral principles.

2. ZEITGEIST - this is the *spirit of the age*; the general intellectual, moral, and cultural climate of a historical era

This refers to the moral and social influences of the trends, thoughts and feelings of a society during a particular period of history. For instance, Jesus is accepted and approved of regarding salvation. In other words, it would be socially acceptably to trust in Jesus for salvation and eternal life, but His teachings would be considered *out of date* and insufficient to meet man's needs for the everyday decisions and practices of life.

In this philosophy, the teachings of Jesus (the Word of God) could never solve the problems of individuals and their social predicaments. In this philosophy, Jesus has a minor part in a person's life. It certainly could not be said that He is Lord. If this is the case, then logic presumes that man must meet mankind's social needs while Jesus was sufficient only to meet man's limited spiritual needs.

Historically Gnosticism has absorbed and incorporated various religious philosophies into its cultus. This is a continuation of ancient Henotheism. Conquering nations absorbed the pagan idols (gods) of the conquered nation, adding that god to their pantheon of gods. This was both pragmatic and generated the constantly evolving Zeitgeist (as it continues to do in modern times). What has the philosophies of Pragmatism and Zeitgeist developed into within the Christian community?

1. Ritual observances were both invented and adopted from other religious practices (both Jewish and pagan).
2. Asceticism demanded abstinence in eating certain foods and anything someone might find pleasurable (even sexuality between a husband and wife). This developed into Monasticism.
3. Experience became the measurement of what was spiritually correct. For instance: a priest professes to receive the *baptism of the Spirit* while praying the *Rosary* or a person is not completely *born again* until he/she has experience *speaking in tongues*.
4. *Magic* and the *magician* were introduced into Christianity. *Magic* was introduced in the form of the mystical conference of grace through an ordained priest (*the magician*) as he administered some religious ritual (sacrament). This is purely a notion of pagan origin. There is absolutely no biblical precedent for this idea.

Three resulting problems were created from all of this.

1. The problem of false religious knowledge (beliefs) that need to be corrected

There were two main influences of false religious knowledge. Apostate Judaism contributed to legalistic traditionalism and ritualism (Matthew 23:1-8). Paganism contributed to mysticism (*the conference of grace from the gods through the priest to those who participate in some religious ritual or sacrifice*).

2. The problem of people with false hopes of salvation

Initiation rites were common among mystical cults. A ritual washing (baptism) was common. When Israel began to adopt and incorporate pagan practices (Hellenization), circumcision was made into an initiatory rite.

Circumcision was intended to be a physical ceremony that was an outward sign of the incorporation of an individual into the covenant of God with the nation of Israel. It identified that individual with the distinctive responsibilities of that covenant (especially separation from the licentious practices of heathenism). Under pagan influence, (and later supported by the rationalism of Covenant Theology) infant baptism replaced circumcision as an initiatory rite into Christianity.

3. The problem of false concepts of morality and ethics

There was one solution offered to correct these three problems: the full acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus (Colossians 2:9-10).

1. The one solution to the problem of false religious beliefs is found in John 1:1-4 and 14. This solution returns individuals to *Sola Scriptura* (the Word of God alone) for the basis of faith (what to believe about God) and practice (God's instructions for life and practice).

“¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The same was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-4).

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Jesus is the focal point of all knowledge and truth and He is the source of all knowledge and truth. All knowledge and truth lead us to the Creator (Jesus Christ).

“¹⁶For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: ¹⁷And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17).

2. The one solution to the problem of people with false hope of salvation: Jesus is the only hope and means of salvation.

“⁶As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him: ⁷Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. ⁸Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. ⁹For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. ¹⁰And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: ¹¹In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: ¹²Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:6-12).

“⁴ And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. ⁵ Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? ⁶ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:4-6).

“⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, ⁹ If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; ¹⁰ Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. ¹¹ This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. ¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:8-12).

“¹ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. ² For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:1-4).

“⁸ But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; ⁹ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. ¹² For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. ¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:8-13).

3. The one solution to the problem of false concepts of morality and ethics

“¹⁴ Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the subverting of the hearers. ¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ¹⁶ But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness” (II Timothy 2:14-16).

“¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. ¹⁴ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; ¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:12-17).

When Jesus is Lord (Colossians 2:10), He provides spiritual, moral and mental completeness to the believer. His Word provides every answer to man’s moral predicaments and search for truth. The majority of people who reject Jesus Christ and His gift of salvation do so because they know He has expectations for change in their lives once they become Christians. What they are really rejecting is the Lordship of Jesus over their lives. They want salvation, but they want to live after the manner of the world.

In rejecting the Lordship of Jesus over their lives, they accept the lordship of sin and Satan over their lives. In fear of being imprisoned by strict moral restraints, they become imprisoned to their own lusts. The lordship of sin and Satan destroys lives and people with them.

When people say they want to be happy, it usually means they want pleasure (whatever it might cost). The price is usually borne by the people they use and abuse in their quest for that pleasure. Their pleasures become their prisons. Alcohol or other drugs, sex, money all become the gods they worship.

It all begins with one simple decision; rejecting the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives. That is not where it ends. It ends in pain and misery in the lives of everyone touched by this selfish pursuit after pleasure. This is where false religious beliefs always lead those deceived by them. There is freedom from the prison of false hopes and addiction to sin in Jesus Christ.

“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

“If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians
Chapter Nine
Problems and Solutions

1. Define Syncretism. _____

2. Give two elements of syncretism that influence today's society and define them.
 - A. _____

 - B. _____

3. List some of the practices that the above two elements have developed into within Christianity.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
4. What are the three problems that result from all of this?
 - A. _____

 - B. _____

 - C. _____

5. Give Scriptural evidence (references) why the full acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus is the one solution to each of these three problems.
 - A. _____

 - B. _____

 - C. _____

6. What is the real reason behind people rejecting the Lordship of Jesus over their lives? _____

7. When people say they want to be happy, what does that usually mean in regard to the Lordship of Jesus? _____

8. When people want happiness (pleasure) at the sacrifice of holiness, have they rejected the Lordship of Jesus over their lives? _____