

CHRISTUS VICTOR!

Man fell in the garden, causing the human race to be plunged into a fallen existence. But the first Messianic promise foretold, *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"* (Genesis 3:15). The very reason Christ was manifested in human form was to rescue us through His blood from the Devil's clutches. Hebrews 2:14 says, *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."* In that same vein John tells us, *"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8). Before Jesus died on the cross, He declared, *"Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"* (John 14:30). The phrase *"and hath nothing in me"* means Satan has no hold on Jesus. Satan has nothing in Jesus and therefore has nothing in the believer who by faith has received Christ, because Christ is the victor over our sins and sin's demands.

1. Our sins were carried and buried (Colossians 2:11-13).

The outward sign of ancient Israel's covenant with God was the ritual of circumcision performed upon every Jewish boy on the eight day following his birth (Leviticus 12:3). Even though this was a requirement, it was still symbolical, God's goal is relationship with His people as illustrated in Romans 2:28,29: *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."* We see in Romans 4:11, 12 that Abraham received the rite of circumcision, but righteousness had already been imputed to him by faith as Genesis 15:6 tells us: *"And he (Abraham) believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."* In the Old Testament (Jeremiah 4:6) or in the New Testament (Acts 7:51) God was always after the true circumcision of the heart. Colossians 2:11 informs us that we have been circumcised in heart *"through the faith of the operation of God."* We therefore need no physician, rabbi or minister of this world to assure us of this relationship; we have it through Christ alone, who was in fact circumcised on the eighth day of His visit on earth (Luke 2:21). Everything about

Christ's coming to earth was for us and in our stead! *"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh"* (Philippians 3:3). Now we have an outward symbol of the faith that we have embraced: baptism (Colossians 2:12,13). It shows that when Christ died, we died; when He arose, we too rose. *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:4).

In Colossae, heresy arose that was a combination of pagan philosophy and Jewish legalism. Many were saying that the outward act of circumcision was necessary for salvation. Paul refutes that in verses 11 through 13 of Colossians 2. When Christ carried His cross, He took our sin upon Him and died the penalty. When He rose from the grave, He took us with Him, but left our sins in the tomb! As the children's song we sing says, *"Gone, gone, gone gone, yes! my sins are gone! Buried in the deepest sea; yes, that's good enough for me!"* Now we rejoice in the truth of God's declaration of Colossians 2:13c, *"...having forgiven you all trespasses."*

2. Our past is removed and Christ's power is proved (Colossians 2:14-15).

This passage begins by reminding us of the custom of placing the crimes of the sentenced man dying on a cross above his head. John 19:19 reads, *"And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."* This was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin for all to see (John 19:20). The Bible says in Exodus 31:18, *"And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."* God's accusation has been written in the law. If we try to stand justified by the law of God, we will find ourselves like Paul saying, *"For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me"* (Romans 7:11). *"...For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"* (II Corinthians 3:6b). In Colossians 2:14 Paul illustrates that it was our breaking the law that brought Christ to the cross and our accusations (the laws that we broke) were nailed to His cross as He died for us, in our place. Through His death, our penalty was removed, nailed to His cross and taken out of the way!

Should you go to Rome you will see The Arch of Titus which is a first-century honorific arch to commemorate the victories of Titus over Israel. Many arches used this as a model, the most famous one being Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France. When a conquering Roman emperor/general conquered a people, he would take the conquered leadership, such as the king, his court and soldiers and parade them through the city to show openly his unmitigated victory. Paul seized the idea this

custom conveyed and said this is what Jesus did when He died, was buried and rose again. Although Christ was paraded through the streets of the city of Jerusalem to His death on Calvary, it meant that Satan and his principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12) were, in essence, paraded afterwards for all the hosts of heaven to see that, in fact, Christ is victor! He fulfilled the prophecy of Genesis 3:15.

3. The shadows disappear in the Son's Light (Colossians 2:16-17).

Dietary laws were given to Israel to keep them separate from other nations. These were ceremonial laws. Notice the wording of Leviticus 11:9,10 eating "*unclean*" animals was an "*abomination to Israel*". It would be apropos at this time to remind ourselves that although ceremonial laws have been lifted, the moral laws of God are still to be followed. Human sacrifice as shown in Deuteronomy 12:31 was forbidden, as it was (and still is) an "*abomination to the LORD.*" Following occultic practices such as astrology and consulting the dead is abomination to the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:9-13). We live in a world that applauds "gender bending," i.e., taking the right to switch identities if you so desire; however this is considered "*abomination unto the LORD thy God*" (Deuteronomy 22:5). God is saying in Colossians 2:16 and Romans 14:2-4 that some people eat restrictively while others eat most everything. This ceremonial restriction is lifted according to the Jerusalem Counsel in Acts 15:28-29.

The Sabbath was a sign of the Old Covenant that was made with Israel as shown to us in Exodus 31:16-17 and Ezekiel 20:12. The New Testament never commands the Jewish/Gentile Church to observe the Sabbath; neither did the Old Testament command the Gentile nations to observe the Sabbath. In the New Testament we see in Acts 20:7 the disciples met and worshipped on Sunday. I do believe there needs to be a reverence for one day of the week to honor God and what better place to do this than on the first day of the week as the apostles did? What makes Sunday so precious is that it commemorates the greatest rest of all (even more than the rest from creation) when God finished the work of redemption for man through Christ and the cross. We, in turn, by accepting this finished work, enter into His rest (Hebrews 4:1-11).

In Colossians 2:17 we are told to move from the shadows that these ceremonies typified to the substance that is in Jesus Christ.

4. There are no substitutes for the Substitute (Colossians 2:18-19).

In these verses the Colossians are admonished, don't be fooled by the feigned humility of spiritual charlatans. They are warned, as we should be today, to stay away

from angel worship and any form of idolatry that moves us away from the truth found in I Timothy 2:5, *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*

5. All vice is conquered through the victory in Christ (Colossians 2:20-21).

In these four final verses Paul shows us the great shortcomings of legalism. We live in a world that says, "What the mind of man can conceive, he can achieve." In the matter of salvation and living a holy life, this doesn't work. God is not looking for great achievers; He is looking for great receivers (John 1:12; Acts 1:8). Legalism is the religion of human achievement. It is useless because it cannot restrain the flesh. Only *"...Christ in you, the hope of glory"* can do this (Colossians 1:27).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and features a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.