***Mere Shadows

Colossians 2:18-19

COL-430***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1995)**

Well, as always, the Word of God is alive, and active, and powerful, and instructive. And while we know that, it is so easy to forget that. I was reminded of that all over again this morning. It always takes me a little off-guard when people come in and say, "Wow, now I see something. It got together – clarifying. And what a magnificent thing it is that God has been doing under grace, over against the pitiful system of the Mosaic Law.”

We are studying Colossians 2:16-17: "The Error of Legalism," number 42.

In Colossians 2:16, we pointed out, the apostle Paul warns the Colossians Christians not to be intimidated by the legalistic teachers, who were trying to impose the Mosaic Law way of life on them as Christians. Christians, furthermore, have the true circumcision, which is a spiritual act – an act of God the Holy Spirit, at the point of our salvation. This is the power of being freed from having to be a slave to the sin nature. The believer can choose to ignore that capacity. But the average Christian stumbles through life, doing the best he can, which is not very good, because he does not understand the spiritual power system. He's still trying to live as if he were back in the days of the Old Testament – trying to live as if he were under the Jewish system.

We also pointed out that in Philippians 3:3, the apostle Paul also dealt with legalism. He listed three things that should characterize a Christian who has experienced the spiritual circumcision – cutting off from the power of what the Bible calls the "flesh," the sin nature. These characteristics, in Philippians 3:3 are: we worship God by means of the Holy Spirit, not by means of human rituals. Secondly, we glory only in Christ Jesus, in terms of our salvation. We don't look to ourselves. We don't look to our church. We don't look to ecclesiastical organizations. We certainly don't look to our friends. And, number three is that we put no confidence in the sin nature (the flesh) for personal guidance daily. For the average Christian, this is the only way he knows how to make it. He is trying to make it as best he can, making decisions on his life. He does not know what it is to suddenly find God putting the thought in his mind: "This is what you should do." God will bring circumstances, and all of a sudden, bingo! The coral has been narrowed down: "This is the way you should go." And you suddenly find God saying, "Take this road. I'm going to make the provision for you. And the more you begin to work as somebody who is separated from the blindness of Satan's world, under the sin nature, the more you will find that kind of intuitive guidance.

Now, the reason for the condemnation of the Mosaic Law as a way of life for Christians (and it is completely condemned), is in Colossians 2:17. We direct your attention to that this evening. There, the apostle Paul now explains why he said what he did up in verse 16. What he said in verse 16 was that you no longer follow any of the food restrictions (clean or unclean foods), or drink restrictions of the Mosaic Law. You don't observe the festivals. You don't have the first day of the month as a holy day for holy activities. And you certainly don't go to church on the Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week.

**A Mere Shadow**

So, the apostle Paul, in verse 17, having said that, refers back to verse 16 with the words: "these things which." Here is the reason why he is so soundly condemning the whole Mosaic Law system as part of the Christian way of life. He said: "These things (such as he has given a few examples of, in verse 16) are a mere shadow." The Greek word for "shadow" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's "skia" (a mere shadow). This word refers to the faint outline of something which is being reflected. The shadow is thrown by some solid object, something of substance. But the shadow is not the reality. This word is used in the figurative sense of the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law kept throwing onto our understanding shadows about the coming Messiah Savior Jesus Christ. But the Mosaic Law was not the real thing.

When they sacrificed an animal, that wasn't the real thing. You weren't saved because you sacrificed an animal. But what that symbol represented (it pre-shadowed) the coming of Christ as the Savior Who would die for the sins of the world, as was symbolized by that animal dying in behalf of the of the sinner. That's the reality. But the Mosaic Law was a system of pictures. It was not the thing that you wanted to hold to your heart. What you want to hold is the person of Christ.

A shadow is temporary, so it's obviously inferior to the object that's casting the shadow. And Paul uses the shadow here in terms of foreshadowing. Everything in the Mosaic Law: all those rituals; all those holidays; all those procedures – all of these were foreshadowing what was to come in the plan of God for Israel in the world – how God was going to make it possible for people to go to heaven. And if He did not make it possible, there was no way that they could do it on their own. Salvation has to be the gift of God. And if people do not understand that salvation is a gift of God, what do they do? They keep trying and do the best they can. And when they know they're going to face God, how do they feel? Very uncertain: "I'm not sure that I'm going to make it; I'm not sure that I'm still saved; and, I'm not sure I'm still acceptable in the family of God."

That is totally unknown in Scripture, whether Old Testament or New Testament. Salvation, because it was a gift from God, was irreversible, and you could not pay for it in any way. And what that gift was, was what the Mosaic Law, and all of its system and way of life for the Jews was foreshadowing.

So, this is a faint reflection. The Jew did not fully understand what you people understand. He didn't have the foggiest notion of some of the deep things of the Word of God. And certainly, he knew nothing about the church age. The church was never mentioned in the Old Testament. There was never any indication whatsoever of the super body of believers, from the day of Pentecost, to the day of the rapture, when we're taken out of here. There was no reference to that – a people who had the power of God working in them, because the Spirit of God indwells them. The Jew could never imagine that.

So, people who still carry on with all the accouterments of the Mosaic Law don't understand the contrast between law and grace. In your Bible, notice that "mirror" is in italics. That's the way they do when they're adding a word that is not actually in the Greek text, but they're trying to tell you that this was a faint image. "A mere shadow" means that it was just a faint image of the reality of what Jesus Christ was going to do once he arrived.

So, what it is referring to is the kinds of things that were a mere shadow (a mere reflection) of the things that he had talked about in verse 16. There were no more food and drink specialties; no more religious festivals, like Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles; no more first day of the Month – the new moon; and, no more going to Sabbath Day services on the last day of the week. It refers to the whole body of the Mosaic Law: Sabbath Day; giving to God on the tithing system; holy days; religious festivals; circumcision; and, the specialized priesthood. You didn't just walk up and talk to God. You had to go through a priest. Now, how is it different? You're your own priest. You represent yourself before God. There is no more specialized priesthood.

**Altars**

What about altars? Where would some of these churches (like the Roman Catholic Church) be, if you said that they couldn't use altars anymore? The system would collapse, because every Sunday, what do they do? Well, they sacrifice Christ again on that altar, with the ceremony of the Mass. There is nothing like that in Scripture. Where would even other Protestant churches be, that came out of the Reformation, if they didn't have the altar? Where would Martin Luther's descendants, in Lutheranism, be if you didn't have an altar up front? They'd be lost. Where do you get the altar from? You never get if from Christianity in the New Testament, but from the Mosaic Law.

I've had some of my relatives challenge me on that. I remember one man asked me, "Why don't you have an altar in your church?" So, I said, "Well, what is an altar for? Tell me that." He said, "For offering sacrifices." So, I said, "Well, what are we going to sacrifice on that altar if we have it there?" The book of Hebrews tells us that God made the sacrifice once for all, for the sins of all men, in Christ. There are no more sacrifices to be made.

**A Holy Temple**

Then there were the burning candles. There was the incense burning. And there were, of course, the animal sacrifices. And you had to have a temple building. And that temple building was a holy place. It had a sacredness to it. Is this gym a holy place? No? It is holy right now, because the people who are here are indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. So, in a very special way, God is dwelling in His temple. And in the New Testament, it tells us that the temple is no longer a building, but the body of every Christian. And when Mr. Gitchel, the last person to leave tonight, walks out of here, and sets the alarm, and turns the key in the lock, he isn't all that hot, but when he leaves, this place will have no holiness at all. What holiness is left, with Mr. Gitchel, goes out the door. This is not the Old Testament.

Now, all of a sudden, people who get very uptight about how you act in church, because this is a holy place – don't get so uptight about what they do in their thinking, and how they act in their personal lives out in the world, and where they go. They *are* the temple of God. Christ indwells us, and the Holy Spirit indwells us. That's the temple that we worry about.

**The Priesthood**

Then there are the clean and unclean foods and drinks, as well as priestly robes – access to God through the priest. Paul says, "These things are a mere shadow." It is not the reality. And these were all figurative things. And what was this representing? He said, "It's a shadow of what is to come." The Greek word looks like this. We don't make up these things. They are actually in the Word of God. And when we know these words, then we know what God thinks. This is of the coming. This is a future idea. The idea is the things that were to come. All the ritual system of the Mosaic Law was a picture of what was to come, foreshadowing what God was going to do for Israel in spiritual realities which were to arrive with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The things of the Mosaic Law were mere shadows of the spiritual realities which were to come in the future in the Person, and the saving work, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And after He arrived in Bethlehem, the shadows were at an end. The reality had come. When He had reached His maturity, at 30 years of age, He proceeded to His public ministry, leading to His full revelation on Palm Sunday that He was the Messiah Savior. And God had come to fulfill all the covenants. But the Jewish people, under the guidance of their benighted rabbis, rejected Him. And instead of accepting the Kingdom, it was postponed, and they killed their King. But with the arrival of Jesus Christ, and the provision of eternal life, the Mosaic Law is out, and no part of it remained. It's completely out of the picture. The Holy Spirit is contrasting the shadow of the Mosaic Law with what is to come. And what was to come was the person of Jesus Christ. That was the reality.

So, in verse 17, these things of the Mosaic Law were a mere shadow of what was to come. But what is the Holy Spirit leading up to? He's leading up to this contrasting word "but," when He says, "But the substance." And the word "substance" is "soma," which actually means "the body." The body is the real thing. It refers to the reality which is casting the shadow of the Mosaic system. And the Mosaic Law system is nothing but shadow land, and not the real thing. The substance is the real thing.

Well, what is that real thing? It says that it: "Belongs to Christ." The Greek word is "Christos." And remember that the word "Christ" means "the Anointed One." The Old Testament kept speaking about "the Anointed One," or "the Sent One." The word "Messiah" means "the Sent One." The anointed one is "Christos." Here was "the Anointed One." He finally came. And was He anointed to do? He was anointed to fulfill all the symbolic pictures of the Mosaic Law with the reality of spiritual experience.

So, the Lord Jesus Christ, before His incarnation, was out there, through the Mosaic Law, casting shadows through these religious rituals that they practiced. The whole Mosaic Law system is a shadow. And the coming Lord Jesus Christ was the One who makes the shadows.

Again, as I pointed out this morning, what good is a picture of a person that you're in love with when that person is standing in front of you? Why are you standing there hugging the picture instead of hugging the reality that has appeared? Well, you would say: "Who would do that?" Well, that is all the people who are still trying to live under the Mosaic Law, because the Reformers did not separate Israel and the church. The devil confused these magnificent men. They never got that straight. So, they have been imposing on their descendants, trying to fit the Mosaic Law into these Reformation churches.

So, when you go into these churches that have descended from the reformers, what do you see? You see the altar; you see the pastor up there with his robes; you see the candles; you get a sense of the incense; the liturgy is there; and, the going back and forth.

I heard a lady today who had been employed in an Episcopalian church, which, of course, is a Catholic church without the pope. And we were discussing the reality, because she was going into a different situation. And she said, "I had my fill of all the symbols, and all the routines, and all the monotonies, but the reality was not there." Well, it was tough. She said, "I spent ten months in that operation, and now I'm ready and moving on to the reality. And it was not a pleasant experience." What was she talking about? She was realizing that these people were still playing Mosaic Law. And the pitiful thing is that the people who lead those groups have never seen the difference between the magnificent church power system and the poor, do-it-yourself, Mosaic Law system.

So, the true spiritual (real) qualities of God are never to be found in the Mosaic Law. Christ was a substance. The Mosaic Law was transitory all along. And now that Jesus Christ has arrived, you don't need the picture anymore. The Mosaic Law is superfluous. It's no longer in force in the church-age. The Mosaic Law shadows have no binding force on the life of the Christian, and it should not be practiced. That's all Paul is saying.

"These things, which I referred to in verse 16," Paul says, "as samples, are mere shadow of things of the Mosaic Law. And they are prefiguring things which were to come of spiritual realities. But the substance of those realities belongs to Christ. He is a reality now. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ in His grace way of life (order of things) in the church age – that's the reality which the earlier Mosaic Law ordinance pointed to. And this we no longer need. We don't need the shadows anymore.

**Emotions**

Now, the false teachers in Colossae were denying all that. They were telling people: "No, no, no. You have to keep the ritual life system of the Mosaic Law, and you have to play this game. You have to try to pretend that these shadows are the real thing." Now, when people do that, and when people are in congregations where you only get the shadow, and not the real thing of doctrine, what are you going to do? You're going to get emotional. The whole charismatic movement is one emotional orgy, because they do not have the mind of God through the expository preaching of the Word of God. They have nothing to fall back onto except emotion.

So, the whole service is geared to kick up your emotion; and, to give you a wonderful, good time. But when you walk out that door, the devil is gleefully rubbing his hands, waiting to bring you down. Will you have the capacity: the manhood; the womanhood; or, the substance to stand up? Usually you don't.

**There are No Shadows in Christianity**

So, there are no shadows in Christianity: shadows of priests; shadows of altars; shadows of candles; shadows of sprinkling holy water; shadows of holy days; shadows of festival days; shadows of material sacrifices; or, shadows of circumcision. And it wasn't bad enough that they tried to hang on to the Mosaic Law. The Roman Catholic system has made religious regulation after regulation on the basis of the authority of the pope. That cannot even be found in Scripture. But they have been added as more shadows, and increasing, in the process, the spiritual darkness that has descended on people.

**The Shadow**

So, tonight, to try to illustrate this more directly, I thought that I'd like to walk you through a little bit of what we mean by "the shadow." Where better than the sacrificial system. How many sacrifices were assigned to Israel? All of this, in the book of Leviticus is spelled out in detail. God ordered this in a very orderly fashion: animal sacrifices; meal sacrifices, and, grain sacrifices. What did all this mean? Was it just meaningless rituals? No, it was shadow. You cannot have a shadow unless you have a substance of reality behind it.

Well, actually, in Leviticus chapters 1-7, we find the Jewish people were given five distinct sacrifices that they were to make, in their worship of God. These sacrifices were designed to portray symbolically the Person and the work of Jesus Christ as the Jews Messiah Savior. These sacrifices were not the real thing. The book of Hebrews says, "You were not saved by the setting of the blood of bulls and goats, but by the precious blood of Christ shed upon the cross. Those animals were those shadows. Christ was a reality which they portrayed. The sacrifices of the Mosaic Law system could only be offered to God through the special Levitical (specialized) priesthood.

**The Priesthood**

The family of Levi was the priestly family. And through the line of Aaron came the high priest. You didn't just walk up to God, to deal with your sin, and to worship. You were not a priest. You had to go through a priest. How does it how does it work out in the Roman Catholic system? Yep. That's it. Do you want to go to God? You go to the priest. He is your avenue into the presence of God. When the Roman Catholic pope wants to bring judgment upon a society, like sometimes the whole nation, because they are in disobedience to his command, he puts the country under interdict. Do you know what interdict means? It means: no more mass; and, no more priestly demonstrations. And a terror of fear would descend upon a country. People were afraid: "I'm going to die, and it won't be a priest there to give me that last piece of bread soaked in the wine for my extreme unction, to wipe out the last possible sin, in order to diminish my time in purgatory. And the pope could bring a nation and rulers back into line without any trouble. Once he put them under interdict, they couldn't approach God.

Is that in Scripture? No. But under the political system, that's the way it worked. The system of the Levitical sacrifices: the whole rituals; the altars; and, the priesthood – this was for the Jews. It was not for Christians, and it was not for gentiles. It was part of Judaism, not of Christianity.

**The Levitical Sacrifices were not a Means to Salvation**

The Levitical sacrifices, however, were not the means to salvation. That's what had happened by the time Jesus arrived. The whole thing had degenerated to where they thought that, if they went through the motions, they were making it with God. So, please, before we talk about the sacrifices, let's make very clear that they were shadows, and that they were portraying certain realities, and, in themselves, they had no capacity to save.

Sometimes you find in a system like Roman Catholicism, the worst kind of criminals, hoods, mobsters, and gangsters, and they are all good Catholics. What are they counting on? They're counting on the fact that they'll walk up to that altar; get that little wafer that is the body of Christ; and, get the wine which has been converted into His blood by the magic of the priest. And if they eat that, they've been told: "Your sins will be forgiven." They are eating the shadow. Now, Jesus said, "You will eat My body, and you drink My blood. But He was speaking of that in the spiritual sense that you assume the blessings of His sacrifice when you trust in Him as personal Savior.

Please note Acts 13:39 on the business of the sacrifices. The apostle writes: "And through Him (Christ), everyone who believes is freed from all things from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses." The Law of Moses could not free me from my moral guilt. The Law of Moses could not secure forgiveness for my sins. Yet, through Him (through Jesus Christ), for somebody who does nothing but believe the truth that He has died in your place, you are freed by accepting Him as a Savior from all of your moral guilt and condemnation, which, no matter how many rituals you perform, you could never be released from.

Notice Romans 3:20. Paul says, "Because by works of the Law, no flesh will be justified in His sight. For through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." OK, let's look at the words: "Because by the words of the Law." That's the rituals of the Mosaic system, or anything you add to it of your good works: "No flesh." There, the word flesh is used as a human being: "No human being will be justified." "Justification" means that God declares you to have absolute righteousness. That makes you as good as Jesus Christ in the sight of God. If you do not have absolute righteousness imputed to your credit, you cannot go to heaven. You have to be as perfect as Christ.

**Justification**

So, justification is giving you the righteousness of Christ in His sight. So, when God sees you, He sees you as perfect, beautiful, lovely, and right, as His Own Son. Through the Law, what does it do to us then? It gives us the knowledge of sin. It's a mirror. No matter how you may think of your appearance, until you look in the mirror, you don't have the story. And then when you look in the mirror, you look at yourself, and you may say, "Ah, heaven is good." Or you may say, "Good heavens." But it will be one or the other, because what did you do? You looked in the mirror, and it reflected the reality. That's what the Mosaic Law did.

Notice Romans 3:28: "For we maintain that a man is justified (declared absolute righteous) by faith, apart from the works of the law." Do I have to explain those words to you? They're the same in Greek as they are in English? No person becomes absolute righteousness in the sight of God by any works of the Mosaic Law. It is only by faith. Faith in what? In Jesus Christ as your substitute on the cross in death. Galatians 2:16: "Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law, since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." Jews do not believe this verse to this very day. They reject this clear statement. They believe that if they keep as much of the Mosaic Law as they can, they'll make it with God.

What are the Jews trying to do now? They're trying to get things together to re-institute the ritualistic system, including the animal sacrifices (the whole ceremonies), and they're trying to rebuild their temple. Well, they are going to do it? It won't happen until we're gone to heaven (as the church), and the antichrist takes over, and he protects them from the Arabs. And for three years, he gives them everything they need to rebuild their temple, and all the accouterments; all the utensils; and, all the priestly robes. They're all sitting in Jerusalem tonight. They're all worked out. And the rabbis have all studied, and worked out on paper, the procedures for doing the rituals (the ceremonies). All they need is the place to do it.

Why is that? It' so that when they die, God will take them into heaven. Paul says, "A man is not justified by the works of the Law (the Mosaic Law). But he is justified by having faith in Christ Jesus. Even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law, since by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." And when that Roman Catholic opens his mouth, and the priest, who has just converted this bread into the body of Christ, and this wine into the blood of Christ, he is doing exactly this. He is going by a legalistic game to try to get salvation. He's doing the same thing that the Jews were doing with the Moses law.

Then there is Philippians 3:9. Paul says that he has suffered many things for Christ. Verse 9: "That He may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, derived from the Law (a righteousness built upon my doing the rituals), but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." It is very tricky to be saved by faith. You would think that would be self-evident. But in churches, even those who understand this, Satan is so clever. He does everything he can to keep you from being saved by faith, which is trusting in Christ.

So, what do preachers say? "Those of you who would like to be saved, please raise your hand." That's a work, immediately: "Those of you who would like to be saved, please walk down this aisle; come up front here; and, join our church." That's a work. And they may have just explained the gospel. Then, when they get to the clincher, the bottom line, you must personally abandon yourself to Jesus Christ, and trust Him, because He said, "I died for you. I paid the price. And if you accept that, then you will be saved." Yet, that is so confusing.

One of our men this morning said that he had heard Billy Graham on TV, and he was inviting people, after the service, to come forward. Now, this is an evangelistic meeting. You have people from everywhere. And the gospel has been preached, and they've been told what to do with it – to accept Christ as Savior, but they need to be personally dealt with. There are questions in their mind, and that's the purpose of the Graham meetings. And they're going to be holding them soon in Dallas, to be able to understand what's going on. And our man this morning said that he was happy to hear that Dr. Graham said, "Now the fact that you came forward in this meeting does not give you salvation." And that needs to be said. Your physical, public move is not going to give you salvation. But it can be the entree – to sit down with somebody who can clarify what may be in doubt in your mind. And that should always be said, exactly like that.

So, it's on the basis of faith in God. In Hebrews 10:3-4, we see that the sacrificial system was not the real thing. It was all shadow: "But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year-by-year. Then verse 4 says, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." The Jews, by the time Jesus came, thought that if they did the sacrifices, that ritual act was there entree into salvation. But it was just a ritual. It was a shadow.

So, the Levitical sacrifices provided visual aids for spiritual instruction, and people learn through these rituals. Abraham understood that. Abraham, we're told, believed God, and he was declared righteous. He didn't think that the sacrifices he was making were the basis of his salvation. He knew that they were only shadows of a reality to come.

**The Jewish Offerings**

There are five basic offerings which are included for the Jewish people.

1. **The Burnt Offering (Propitiation)**

There was, first of all, the burnt offering. This offering was teaching the doctrine of propitiation. "Propitiation" is the word used to describe God's righteousness and His justice being satisfied toward the sinner. Until God's justice is satisfied, He must condemn you. And His justice cannot be satisfied toward you until your sin penalty, which is death, has been paid. Jesus Christ, Who had no sin, did that.

So, in the burnt offering, the doctrine of propitiation is being taught with the emphasis on the work of Christ in salvation. When that offering was burned, it was a symbol of the fact that Christ gave Himself to be the Lamb of God for the sins of the world.

1. **The Meal Offering (Propitiation)**

Secondly, there was a meal offering. This also taught the doctrine of propitiation. But the emphasis now was on Christ as a Person: His senselessness; and, His implacability. The burnt offering symbolized that He died. The meal offering symbolized that He was sinless, and therefore qualified to die.

1. **The Peace Offering (Reconciliation)**

Then the third offering is a peace offering. This one teaches the reconciliation between God and man – the removal of the wall of sin.

The bird offering; the meal offering; and, the peace offering all voluntary. These three were voluntary, and they all portrayed a great spiritual truth. And these three sacrifices are described as a sweet odor unto God in heaven.

However, there were two others. These were not voluntary. These were obligatory.

1. **The Sin Offering (Temporal Fellowship)**

One was the sin offering. This had to do with the doctrine of temporal fellowship in dealing with your unknown sins. How do you deal with your sins? How do you deal with the fact you have not lost your salvation, but you have ruptured your fellowship with God the Father. You confess it to Him. The Jew did that confession through this in offering. And there were all the details on how to proceed with this particular offering, and what you could sacrifice. This teaches the doctrine of temporal fellowship with your unknown sins. How does that how do we deal with it? 1 John 1:9: "If we confess (admit) our sins to God the Father, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." He is faithful. He'll do it every time, no matter how many times you've been guilty. He is just – He's not blowing it off. Christ, His Son, paid for it: "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if we confessed it, and then (that kicky line) and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That is the sin offering picture: "I don't even remember that I did it. I'm not even aware of it. Nevertheless, sin is sin, and it breaks my fellowship with the Father. But when I deal with the sins I know, then that covers my unknown.

1. **The Trespass Offering**

The second offering, which was obligatory, was also for fellowship. It's called the trespasser offering. This teaches the doctrine of temporal fellowship, and dealing with your known sins. So, the sin offering dealt with my unknown sins. The trespass offering dealt with the Jews' known sins. He broke a commandment – a moral law. He came to the priest, and he brought the trespass offering. And all the routines and rituals for this were laid out. And even in that process, there was the picture of Christ, and of Christ, and of Christ – all over again.

The burnt offering; the meal offering; and, the peace offerings were voluntary. They were a fragrant odor to God. The sin offerings and the trespass offerings for temporal fellowship was not a sweet over to God, and it was compulsory.

Now, this information about the person and work of Jesus Christ was spoken by God to Moses at the door of the tabernacle. On Mount Sinai, he got the moral code – the ten commandments. But at the door of the tabernacle, Moses would come, and sit down, and he would begin writing. And God would give him the procedure of all the Mosaic Law rituals. And Moses understood that this was all shadows. This was all symbols. And he understood that this was picturing what God was going to do for Israel when the Messiah Savior would arrive.

There was one other factor. You not only had to perform these sacrifices, and there were detailed rituals on how you would do it. And it was according to your monetary position. If you are a person of means, you could offer a bull. If you were not quite so wealthy, you could offer a sheep or a goat for the burnt offering. And if you were a poor person, you would offer a bird: the pigeon; or, the dove. And the details for all of these are prescribed in in the book Leviticus. But they all represented what Jesus Christ had done. And that's all it was.

The problem was that, even back in the book of Isaiah, God the Holy Spirit said, "Let Me make something clear. Do not think that these mere external rituals are going to get you forgiveness of your sin. Please listen. In Isaiah 1:11-17, God says, "'What are your multiply sacrifices to me?' says the Lord. 'I've had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle, and I take no pleasure in the blood of bull, lambs, or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts. Bring your worthless offerings no longer. Incense is an abomination to Me. New Moon, the Sabbath, and the calling of the assembly. I cannot endure iniquity in the solemn assemblies.'" What were they doing? They were a bunch of hypocrites. They were coming with this these offerings to God: "Oh God. Here I am. I really love you. And I'm a nice guy." And inside they had mental reservations about the will of God. They were reinterpreting (adding) to what they had been told. And they were actually resisting what God had for them. They were hypocrites.

The Lord was saying, "Isaiah, you tell them that I don't want their sacrifices. I don't want their goodwill. I don't want their niceties. Do we have that in Christianity today? Well, yeah. Paul talks about the hypocrite within the Christian community who thinks that if he goes through the motions, he is somehow in favor of blessing with God.

Verse 14: "I hate your new Moon Festival (the first day of the month), and your appointed feasts (tabernacles and Pentecost). And they have become a burden to me? I'm weary of bearing them. So, when you spit out your hands in prayer, I'll hide my eyes from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood." So, don't stand up there, and hold your hands up, and say, "Oh Lord, I'm speaking to you, and I'm approaching you because you're not approaching Me. You're not coming in Spirit and in truth. You're making the symbols the real thing. And the symbols are nothing.

So, what should they do? Verse 16: "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean. Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek justice; reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan; and, plead for the widow." Now, how can you be more explicitly clear than that? It is not the ritual that counts. It is the heart condition behind it.

Please notice Hosea 6:6. Again, God says to the Jewish people: "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice." God said, "I want you to be loyal to Me. And the way you're loyal to Me is that you play square with the moral code. You play square with the will of God. Integrity – that's the most precious thing the child of God has. And the integrity of the United States is going downhill rapidly, because people have been in the Word of God, and they're no longer instructed in the deep things of doctrine. Therefore, integrity is everywhere being trampled underfoot. People thought they could be free of the restrictions of Scripture and the moral code. And now, some people said, "Fine. I'm free now. I'm going to cheat and steal your investments. I'm going to lie to you about how well your stocks are doing. I'm going to get rich while you're playing the fool, because I don't have to worry about my integrity.

Hosea's 6:6 says: "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." Uh-oh. God says, "I don't want your offerings in the box. I want you here in church, where you have a chance to be treated with respect; with expository preaching; and, with a preacher who has prepared, and knows what the Word of God says, and has the gift of trying, to explain it to you. And you're there to get my frame of reference. If you have that, you'll make it. Go ahead. Play the bunco operation in the big churches, with all the lolly-gagging, and all the carrying on, and all the smiles, and all the patting on the back. But you're not going to go anywhere in the blessings of God in the long run."

We have one more that is not in the ritual, in Amos 5:21-27. The same principle is again enunciated to God's people. The Lord says to Israel, in all their sin, and all their going through the motions of religion: "I hate and I reject your festivals." They would say, "Yeah but you gave us these festivals. You told us to observe Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles." God says, "Yeah I did, but not the way you're doing it. It had a spiritual meaning, and you have prostituted that: "I hate and I reject your festivals; nor, do I did delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings, and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take them away from Me."

All of these voluntary offerings to express fellowship with God – He said, "I don't want them. I know what you are in your hearts, and in your conduct. Take away from Me the noise of your songs." Oh boy. What about the poor charismatics. That's what their songs are like. They are very, very noisy. And they have only one line that is always repeated. Take away from me the noise of your songs. I'll not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Did you present Me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for 40 years old, O House of Israel. You also carried along your Sikkuth (your king), and Kiyyun (your images), the star of your gods, which you made for yourself.

He says, "I just brought you out of Egypt, and you're making a golden calf. And here are all these gods of Egypt that you slipped along with you, out of the country. And you're still thinking: 'Maybe you should be nice to those gods.'" Religion is out there, people. And so many Christians find themselves where they suddenly think: "Wow, this is a nice church climate," but all they have got is their emotions making fools of them.

Finally, verse 27: "'Therefore, I'll make you go into exile, beyond Damascus," says the Lord, Whose name is 'the God of hosts' – the God of armies. You go ahead and play your deceptive games. But I'm going to punish you, and discipline you, while you do all the Mosaic Law rituals, which is not the reality, and you ignore what the Savior stands for. I will discipline you, and you will become slaves of all the sin nature of other people, such that you have brought down upon yourself. I'll go sit with you.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

[**Back to the Colossians index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/colossians.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)