

Captive through Philosophy vs. Complete in Christ Col 2:8-15 (Part 5)

I. Introduction

A. I hate Preaching without Context!

1. So HARD to just DUMP a verse on you and give meaning without CONTEXT
2. We've been studying Colossians and have been AVOIDING an undercurrent of Jewish "ceremony"
 - a) Things that were problems for the Colossians (primarily Gentiles)
 - b) Brought on by a LONG HISTORY of Jew vs. Gentile HOSTILITY/ ENMITY/ANIMOSITY!
3. Other Problem with Colossians – Paul SUMMARIZES some CRITICAL concepts we have to understand in the NT that relate to the Jews.
4. He makes points that are simple / direct AND obvious to the readers – BUT DIFFICULT for us

B. One of those recently has been CIRCUMCISION

1. In v.11 we had to deal with:

[Col 2:11](#) and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;
2. NOW in V.13 we have:

[13](#) When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh,
3. TWO different Problems here!
 - a) V.11 – Judiazers trying to force Circumcision on Gentiles
 - b) V.12 – God's view of Gentiles as "uncircumcision of flesh"

C. I've concluded that the teaching of virtually every NT book needs to EXPLAIN the problems of

1. The Jew vs. Gentile HISTORICALLY
2. Gentile Predicament since Israel was God's Chosen Nation

D. I prepared my whole sermon on V.13-15 and decided it's not worth teaching without the CONTEXT of these two critical areas!

E. So, today, we are going to UNDERSTAND the problem of Jew vs. Gentile HISTORICALLY

F. Next Sunday: The Gentile Predicament since Israel was God's Chosen Nation!

G. Question! How many of you in this room...

1. Would BIBLICALLY call yourselves "Gentiles"?
2. Would BIBLICALLY call yourselves "Jews" ?
3. How many are something else!?...
4. As we go through this today, let's see which of you have the right answer!

H. Ephesians 2:11...

[Ephesians 2:11](#) Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands— [12](#) remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the

commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus establishing peace*,

I. So, what is behind all of this language?

1. Gentiles? Circumcision vs. Uncircumcision? Far off vs. Near?
2. strangers , no hope, etc...
3. broke down the barrier of the dividing wall...
4. We need some CONTEXT HERE!

II. EXTERNAL problems – GENTILES against the JEWS!

A. Let's go all the way back- to where it began!

B. Garden – JUST Adam and Eve -No nations, races, Jews, Gentiles!

C. NOT until Gen 10-11 do we get establishment of nations!

1. BUT NOT Jews / Israel!

D. Then we come to Gen 12 and God calls Abram

1. Out of Ur of the Chaldeans (Kuwait!)

Genesis 12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

2. Here we have the GREAT PROMISE – the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT!
3. God's going to form a nation from Abram!
4. God changes Abram's name to Abraham
5. And takes him to the land of Canaan and settles him there!

E. Move forward in time THROUGH the story of Joseph and his brothers

1. Joseph sold into slavery
2. Ends up IN EGYPT!
3. Story CONCLUDES with Joseph's FAMILY in Egypt and God begins to GROW His chosen NATION ISRAEL! – The HEBREWS, The JEWS!
4. Exodus opens...

Exodus 1:6 Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. 7 But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them. 8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. 10 "Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land." 11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more

they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. 13 The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; 14 and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all *kinds* of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

F. And – here FROM the VERY BEGINNING, God’s PEOPLE have PROBLEMS!

G. Of course – we all know the story of the EXODUS

1. God’s people DON’T LEAVE on GOOD TERMS with Egypt!
2. and then, they don’t make friends when they get to Canaan either - do they!
3. Why? GOD GIVES THEM LAND through the CONQUESTS of JOSHUA!
4. As we say – there went the neighborhood!

H. THROUGHOUT the history of ISRAEL they were

1. EXTERNALLY attacked by GENTILES!
 - a) Sometimes sent by God for punishment
 - (1) Assyrians and the Northern exile
 - (2) Babylonian Exile
 - (3) Remember Habakkuk and God sending the Chaldeans!
 - b) Or Just raiders like Naaman the Syrian whom Elisha healed
 - c) But they all added to this PROBLEM between Jew /Gentile!
2. CONTINUALLY having GENTILE CULTURE forced on them!
 - a) Daniel – in Babylon – story of the food and training that Nebuchadnezzar TRIED to force on him (Daniel 1)
 - b) Intertestamental period –
 - (1) Alexander the Great CONQUERS the world and forces Hellenization on everyone!
 - (a) “Hellenization” =
 - (i) = Greek Language
 - (ii) = Greek Philosophy, society
 - (b) HAD HELLENIZATION forced on them by Antiochus Ephiphany!
 - (2) 167 BC – DESCRATES THE TEMPLE!
 - (a) Rededicates it to Zeus!
 - (b) Puts a statue of Zeus in the Holy of Holies!
 - (c) Sacrifices PIGS on the ALTAR!
 - (3) And
 - (a) Prohibits the observance of the Sabbath, Jewish Festivals and Holy Days!
 - (b) Outlawed reading of the Law of Moses and ordered all copies burned!
 - (c) Circumcision outlawed
 - (d) Penalty for disobedience = death.
 - (e) Bottom Line: FORCING Hellenization on the JEWS of JERUSALEM!
 - (4) Leads to Maccabean Revolt
 - (5) Could go on and on with the ROMANS who followed!

I. SO – EXTERNALLY the Jews were CONSTANTLY being CHALLENGED by the GENTILES BUT don't BLAME them for all the PROBLEMS!

III. INTERNAL Problems - JEWS against the Gentiles!

A. God CHOSE the Jews to be His people

1. Saw that when He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans.

Amos 3:2 "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth

2. Sovereign act to choose Israel
3. NOTHING to do with Israel or HOW GOOD or BIG they were as a nation!

Deut7:6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

Deuteronomy 10:22 "Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons *in all*, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

Isaiah 51:2 "Look to Abraham your father And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When *he was but* one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him."

- a) "BUT ONE!" - any reason for pride here?! NO!

B. God made Israel distinct AND He separated them - so world would NOTICE them

1. SO -world looks and says 'what's the difference?'

Deuteronomy 4:5 "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. 6 "So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' 7 "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? 8 "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"

2. AND -so different Jews won't be able to integrate with world!

- a) Because you'll never be able to get along with them because of the things that are so distinct
 - (1) Such strict clothing laws
 - (2) Dietary laws
 - (3) Marriage laws
 - (4) Worship laws
 - (5) Festival laws
 - (6) Land laws
 - (7) Custom laws
 - (8) Etc. – no way they could fit into another society
 - (9) So distinct rest of world had to take note of them! "they have a different god and their God has done this!"

3. God INTENDED PHYSICAL SEPARATION in the OT!
 - a) OT – Gentile HAD to BECOME a JEW to get to God!
 - b) What did Ruth say to Naomi?

Ruth 1:16 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.”

- (1) That was God’s way in the OT!
- c) In the Temple
 - (1) Court of the Gentiles! Right? As far as Gentile could go!
 - (2) A REAL WALL DIVIDING Jew and GENTILE!
 - (3) Had to BECOME a JEW to GOD
- d) When CHRISTIANITY CAME - couldn’t let this go!
 - (1) WOULDN’T ACCEPT that JUDAISM was DONE!
 - (2) No LONGER did the WHOLE JEWISH SYSTEM EXIST!
 - (a) ERASED at PENTECOST!
 - (3) In the NT – the JUDAIZERS were the ones who said YOU MUST BECOME A JEW FIRST and THEN BECOME a CHRISTIAN! (get there later!).

C. God CHOSE the Jews to be a CONDUIT

1. God never chose Israel to be COLLECTOR of His Grace ALONE
2. He chose Israel to be a CONDUIT / CHANNEL of HIS GRACE to the WORLD!
3. Looking forward to the Millennium

Zechariah 8:23 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” ’ ”

- a) Israel will FINALLY BECOME the CONDUIT and BRING MANY to CHRIST!
- b) “ten men” = 10:1 ratio of the number brought to Christ!
4. SO – JEWS were to be CONDUIT NOT A COLLECTOR of God’s blessing
5. God wasn’t BLESSING ISRAEL JUST for their own benefit
6. They were to pour through them His blessing to world!
 - a) Ps 106:2 who can speak of the mighty deeds of the LORD, Or can show forth all His praise?
 - (1) Answer: ISRAEL – THE JEWS!
 - (2) = vessel through which flow came
 - (3) God’s MEANS to God’s ENDS! SALVATION FOR ALL!

D. God has NEVER CHANGED

1. Great commission wasn’t new!
 - a) Jews were SUPPOSED to be DOING THAT ALL ALONG!
 - b) Differently then BUT still doing it!
2. Isaiah 57:19 Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near,” Says the LORD, “and I will heal him.”

- a) Near and far off had to do with geographical location of the temple
 - (1) When temp was built in Jerusalem Jews by proximity were called “near” and Gentiles were beyond borders of Israel and were called far off
 - (2) This became a spiritual designation because the Jews were also spiritually near to God
 - (3) Jew = one who is near / Gentile = “one who is far off”
- b) Sshould’ve all listened to God in Is 57;10 – peace to both!
 - (1) God always had Gentile salvation – Jews didn’t
- c) In the Millenium God is going to make everything as it SHOULD’VE BEEN in the Old Testament!

Zechariah 6:15 “Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD.” Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God.

Micah 4:1 And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. 2 Many nations will come and say, “Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths.” For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 3 And He will judge between many peoples And render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they train for war.

That’s when: Zechariah 8:23 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” ’ ”

(1) Christ will be DRAWING all NATIONS and JEWS will be helping!

- 3. Yet -Jewish rabbinic teaching tells story of Rabbi Eleazer – Gentile woman comes and asks “bring me near” -“No you can’t” and shut the door in her face!

E. But instead of seeing themselves as a conduit / channel and witness it became an excuse for selfish, carnal, self-glorification and pride.

- 1. God HAD BLESSED THEM!
 - a) SET them up IN the land of milk and honey
 - b) They saw God SWALLOW up the Egyptian army
 - c) Had “plundered the Egyptians” that night of their wealth
 - d) THEN God GAVE them Canaan through Joshua!
 - e) Don’t you think you’d get a little prideful if all you had to do was march around a city and the walls fell down!
 - f) GOD gave them Canaan!
 - g) AND all THAT WAS IN IT – left by the inhabitants!
- 2. BUT – instead of seeing it for what it was SUPPOSED to BE – a WITNESS to the WORLD of HOW GREAT GOD IS!
 - a) They saw it as HOW GREAT THEY WERE!

b) AND – DIDN'T WANT TO SHARE IT!

F. Jews became proud - loved the difference / celebrated the difference and elevated themselves as-if better than everyone else

1. Over time mountain grew BETWEEN JEW and GENTILE until there existed no relationship at all!
 - a) Just bitterness and hatred
 - b) Shouldn't have been!

G. IN the END - Israel failed and was set aside!

1. They kept ceremonies / rituals but forgot their GOD!
 - a) They DIED SPIRITUALLY
 - b) became a veneer – just the EXTERNALS
 - c) no HEART for God- no message to SHARE!
 - d) Just celebrated ritual / ceremony a point of pride
 - (1) AND the LEADERS got GREEDY
 - (2) MADE it into a BUSINESS
2. Example – Jonah –
 - a) God: go preach and they'll be converted!
 - b) Jonah – I can't stand some Gentile getting in on my God
 - c) So he jumped on the boat, got swallowed up by big whale and it vomited him out
 - d) "No wonder – a prophet like that would make anything sick!"
 - e) Finally - obeyed, preached, city repented and then went out on hillside and said he couldn't stand it and wanted God to kill him!
 - f) "Gentiles getting converted!" Nauseating!
 - g) Shows HOW LOW Jews had FALLEN
 - h) I hate the Gentiles! I don't want to share my God with them!

IV. TIME OF JESUS CHRIST!

A. By the time of Christ

1. Bad had gotten worse
2. AND – Jews were OCCUPIED – LIVING UNDER Gentile rule!
3. Jew and Gentile basically hated each other!
 - a) Jews thought Gentiles were created by God to use as fuel in hell!
 - b) Wasn't even lawful to aid a Gentile mother delivering a baby because you'd be bringing another Gentile into world
 - c) Jews wouldn't go through Samaria! Went around! Jn 4 was a shock!
 - (1) They shook Samaritan dust off their feet when forced into Samaria and returning
4. If Jew married Gentile they held a funeral
5. Gentiles looked at them as conquered slaves, enemies of human race, and WEIRD too with their lifestyle!
6. Pilate to Jesus!

[John 18:35](#) Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? ...

a) UTTER DISGUST and CONTEMPT toward Jews!

V. BUT THEN CAME the CHURCH!

A. God NEVER CHANGED the GREAT COMMISSION!

1. ALL WERE to be SAVED
2. Jew AND Gentile

B. BUT CHANGED His METHOD – the ECONOMY

1. Don't have to BECOME a JEW
2. The EXTERNAL and INTERNAL SYSTEM (Judaism) is now COMPLETELY INTERNAL.

C. Eph 2:14 “dividing wall” of the temple is GONE! – No more separation of people who are near and people who are far!

1. V.13 far off (Gentile) and near (Jew)
2. In Christ wall is shattered – thrust of 2:11-22
3. V.1-10 redeeming everyone by grace through faith
4. V.11-22 making everyone one in Christ.

D. Jew vs. Gentile PROBLEM didn't just “GO AWAY” at Pentecost – A LOT of “baggage” remained as people had lived this way ALL THEIR LIVES ...

1. This problem HAD to be ADDRESSED!
2. Romans 1 and 2
 - a) Paul brought BOTH Jew and Gentile UNDER THE CONDEMNATION of God!
 - b) SPOKE at LENGTH about ALL THE privileges of the JEWS
 - (1) AND how they had ABUSED THEM!

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

(2) You guys DIDN'T GET IT!

3. Colossians 3:10 ... put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.
 - a) In Christ all the barriers come down!
 - b) No castes, classes, races, destination, uniquenesses, - all equal in Christ!
4. And Eph 2!
 - a) To win battle of unity in the CHURCH took God's clear statement of what is right!
 - b) There was Real bitterness between them in early church

E. Acts 10 – Conversion of Cornelius – ROMAN CENTURION – FIRST GENTILE convert!

Acts 10:34 -35 Opening his mouth, Peter said: “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

- a) Peter: I finally UNDERTAND Duet 10:17! – God IS NOT PARTIAL toward JUST THE

JEWS!

- b) Peter finally understood this passage when he saw first Gentile come to Christ!

Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

(1) Holy Spirit given to Gentiles also!

2. Acts 11:15 – as Peter recounts he is still amazed!

Acts 11:15 “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as *He did* upon us at the beginning. 16 “And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ 17 “Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as *He gave* to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?”

- a) V.17 who was I to stand in God’s way?
b) His first response had been to resist!

F. But some Jews of Jerusalem heard this and got upset!

1. Cant’ go Gentile to Christian
2. Have to become a Jew first! – Gentile – Jew – Christian!
3. Had to be circumcised , keep law!

G. Example - Paul goes into Galatia and wins them to JC

1. Goes back each time during 3 journeys
2. But behind Paul came people saying “you can’t be Christians, enter into new covenant”
 - a) You can’t come from Gentile to new covenant
 - b) You have to become a Jew first! Get circumcised! Keep law of Moses
 - c) Then, if qualify as a Jew then you can become a Christian
 - d) Judaism = step 1! Gentile can’t bypass step !
 - e) Lay down whole big legalism trip
3. Paul writes whole book of Galatians to say
 - a) “don’t let them do that to you!”
 - b) If someone preaches another gospel let them be accursed!
 - (1) Christ is all!
 - (2) Gal 5 – don’t be entangled with yoke of bondage again!
 - (3) JC has made us free from that! Don’t listen!
4. Those people had been committed to Judaism so long they couldn’t see anyone coming in another manner
 - a) Led to MORE animosity between Jew and Gentile!
5. So early church had to deal with this! And they did! →

H. Acts 15 – do you have to become a Jew to become a Christian or not?

1. v.1 Judaizers run into Paul and Barnabas!

Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

2. Let’s go to Jerusalem AND SOLVE THIS!
3. Got everyone together! James, Peter, Paul, Barnabas – APOSTLES and ELDERS (v.6)

Acts 15:7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 “And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”

4. v.12 Paul / Barnabas tell of gentile salvation
5. Council decision – GENTILES don’t have to become a Jew FIRST!
 - a) Don’t TROUBLE those Gentiles!
 - b) Just don’t do things that will offend Jews!

Acts 15:20 ... things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

6. BUT – even after this COUNCIL – more trouble!
 - a) AND amongst the APOSTLES!
 - b) That’s HOW HARD this issue was!

I. Peter goes to Antioch! (Acts 2:11)

- a) Fellowships with ALL the SAINTS
- b) EVEN Eating with Gentiles
2. THEN Jews arrived – Party of Judaizers
 - a) They wanted everyone to get circumcised - Keep the Law!
 - b) Peter separated himself fearing them
3. Peter left the Gentile fellowship and stood with Jews
 - a) And SUDDENLY they had a split church
4. Paul: Galatians 2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

Galatians 2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

- a) Paul –CUT IT OUT
- b) You know better!

J. Hopefully this QUICK SURVEY INTRODUCES you to WHAT a BIG ISSUE this was!