

Chapter 21: Knowledge in Ephesians and Colossians.



Since Gnosis is knowledge and Gnosticism is secret knowledge, the kind that mainly denies and contradicts all that is Christian and IN CHRIST; and since like Dr. Peter Jones so aptly points out how Gnosticism with paganism is a real threat to Bible studies; and since it is just plain essentials as knowledge is so important along with academics in our modern world, we should look at Knowledge in Ephesians and Colossians, and as time permits with other Scriptures of the Bible. (Also, this last chapter is the last chance to kill Gnosticism and Paganism, and that

primarily which with sound doctrine will eliminate these falsehoods of philosophy and theology as sound doctrines.)

Now, as "the time will come that they will not endure sound doctrine" (II Timothy 4:3,4) has flooded the world with unsound doctrines as "the time will come" has revealed itself in our church, churches, education and Bible world as "THE TIME HAS COME", the proof of the great apostasies presence is in the pudding of all the twisted, new, and variations of sound doctrine. Have you thought about the magnitude of what this Bible phrase is saying that Christians and church members, of course the rest of the world, just can no longer put up with or tolerate sound doctrine; that it is impossible for the church and churches to endure by continuing in sound doctrine. Dr. Mark Roberts who writes online at Patheos, who spent 17 years getting a PhD at Harvard, and worked under Lloyd Ogilvie the famous Presbyterian pastor and preacher, has written a book on Ephesians recently that he calls The Presence of God in Ephesians. (It would seem with a first reading of this book that without ever mentioning the word itself, in mind he has a complete devastation of Gnosticism by the truths of the book of Ephesians, for we know of his many writings online about the Gnosticism in the very popular book and movie of the Da Vinci Code.)

So where does all that pinned up energy of the intolerant masses go. It goes in a redirection away from sound doctrine to the unsound doctrine of itching ears teachings, and then being one themselves seeks out teachers of itching ears theology and philosophy like Gnosticism, paganism, and a lot of isms that ought to be wasms.

Dr. Roberts is a little heavy on the Greek (we like to listen to God speak in our native English language) on heavy on comparing with personal illustrations his own life with the message of Ephesians, but well worth heeding as he has weathered 17 years of liberal and unsound doctrines of theology at Harvard but also that many teaching years at Fuller Theological Seminary, being able with personal knowledge to tell of similar seminary students like Mrs. Pagel that in her quest for a same doctorate wrote the thesis on The Gnostic Gospels which later she turned into best-selling book.

21-1: Knowledge in Ephesians 1:17, larger context, and in the Colossians equivalent.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:17-20)

While the Passion Group can fill your imagination with the excitement of an internal spark within you that can bring out God in you, flood you with an excited crowd, loud music and dance, Paul and God’s word offer you here above a more sound way to gain inward knowledge of God and Jesus. To somewhat paraphrase it, the very God our Heavenly Father of the Lord Jesus Christ variety, can by answer to prayer and by His grace, give you the very SPIRIT of Him coming complete with wisdom and Bible revelation of the KNOWLEDGE of God. Granted it is not as simple as a song and dance which is more fun and instantaneous, as (1) the eyes of understanding must be enlightened, (2) you must come to realize, if not already, the fulness of the hope of His calling, (3) comprehend your heritage in the saints, the same saints to which the faith once for all delivered were the recipients, (4) and then the power of God available.

What is the Colossians equivalent? COLOSSIANS 1:9

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge [*epignosis*] of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge [*epignosis*] of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the

Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. (NKJV)"

Brian T. Huie very ably writes on line about this passage and brings in the Greek word studies from Wuest (If you have read from the Wuest expanded translations of the NT, you will appreciate this.)

"In this passage, Paul begins his attack on the Gnostic beliefs being promulgated to the Colossians. He does so with a few subtle statements that are easily overlooked if the context isn't recognized. Paul states that he and Timothy have been praying for the Colossians, asking God to fill them with knowledge, that they may be fruitful in every good work. In verses 9 and 10, the word "knowledge" comes from the Greek word epignosin. Of this word, Kenneth S. Wuest writes:

The word is an advance upon gnosis (knowledge) in that it denotes a larger and more thorough knowledge. It is a knowledge which grasps and penetrates into an object. It was a favorite word of the Gnostics who used it to designate the superior knowledge which they claimed as their exclusive possession. Paul prays that all the saints might become possessors of this knowledge, indicating that it was open for all to appropriate, not a secret mystery into which only a favored few could be initiated. (p. 175, vol. I, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, "Ephesians and Colossians")

As F. F. Bruce writes on the Colossian Problem (Gnosticism) and the cure of IN CHRIST:

"In the Christ hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 Christ is celebrated as the Agent of God in both creation and reconciliation. His agency in creation is attested by other New Testament writers; it is emphasized in the letter to the Colossians as part of the argument that those who have direct access to God through Christ and are united with Christ have no need to worship beings or forces, which, however powerful, are part of the created order which He brought into existence.

http://swartzentrover.com/cotor/E-Books/christ/bruce/ColossianHeresy/ColossianHeresy_04.htm

And:

*"In speaking of the ministry of reconciliation, Paul makes one statement which seems to envisage a much wider body than believers as being embraced in God's reconciling work: "God was in Christ reconciling a world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). The adverbial phrase "in Christ" modifies the periphrastic verb "was reconciling." Though the instrumental *evn* is used (instead of *dia*, to express agency), yet Christ is once again stated to be the Agent in God's work of reconciliation. The translation "a world" has been offered, rather than "the world," simply because the accusative *ko,smoj* lacks the article in Greek; it is not that one *ko,smoj* among several is the object of the reconciliation. The *ko,smoj* in question may be the world of humanity (as in*

John 3:16-17; 12:47) or it may have an even wider reference, like the creation which, according to Romans 8:21, is to "be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." But the analogy of Romans 11:15, where the "reconciliation of the world" (katallagh. ko,smou) is the sequel to Israel's rejection, suggests that it is the human family as a whole that is in view."

21-2: Knowledge in Ephesians 3:2-7.

1. Mystery of Christ in Ephesians 3.

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words; Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power."

2. And in Colossians:

COLOSSIANS 1:24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of his body, which is the church, 25 of which I became a minister[diakonos] according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, 26 the mystery [musterion] which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery [musteriou] among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to his working which works in me mightily. (NKJV)

3. Comment by What was the Colossian Heresy?

Here, Paul mentions another aspect of the Gnostic teaching, that of the divine "mystery" (Gr. musterion). In the religious cults of the Graeco-Roman world, this word literally referred to a religious secret that was confided only to the initiated, a secret rite. By his use of musterion, Paul is emphasizing that the teaching the Colossians had received about Christ was the true revealing of the long-hidden mystery of God. Conversely, Paul implies that the mystery the Gnostics wished to reveal to them was false.

21-3: Ephesians 3:10-21, the Manifold Wisdom of God.

Someone has said that wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge; well even it is the invisible Church as some lament as it goes beyond buildings, the knowledge of the mystery of Christ is applied concretely, not philosophically, by the people you see all over the world that have been called out from before birth to be members of this church of the firstborn written in heaven.

1. This Wisdom of God revealed, the eternal purpose of God.

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith (the way Christ does actually live or dwell in each human heart of a believer); that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. (And this is the fulness of the presence of God.)

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:10-21)

Today so many discouraging aspects are seen in the total body of Christ, what with the magnitude, extent, and the many manifestations of the gigantic apostasy of the Falling Away in local churches, in denominations, in theological and Bible schools; however from our perspective of believers, if indeed it is only seven thousand believer in each generation, we are grateful and realize that since about 33 A.D. or about 2000 years is going to place 14,000,000 new creations on the new earth, and this does not include the many more 7 K generations of the Old Testament. For eternity, you will not run out of people of many cultures, languages, and background of believers to visit. It is not that we as a body or temple of God for worship are going to be a small group.

2. In Colossians.

“COLOSSIANS 2:1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge [epignosis] of the mystery [musteriou] of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden [apokruphoi] all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge [gnoseos]. (NKJV)”

3. Comment by What was the Colossian Heresy?

The second chapter begins with Paul telling the Colossians that although he had not been to their city, he was aware that they were having problems and was concerned about them. Verse 2, which emphasizes knowledge (Gr. epignosis) and understanding, is another clue to the source of the problem the Colossians are experiencing. The Greek word apokruphoi, which is translated "hidden" in verse 3, literally means "a hidden thing, a secret." Paul here takes another subtle shot at the Gnostics, saying that all the "secret knowledge" the Colossians need is found in God the Father and the Messiah.

21-4: Again, it comes out of the clouds of the total church body, agreed to be invisible in one sense of the word but visible anytime one believer witness to faith in Christ. but comes down to the local churches of pastors and teachers. All the way from the heaven of the Ascended Christ down to a local pastor and teacher of a local church. And it happens more than the bad news we have heard recently of over 300 southern Baptist ministers, mainly in Texas, caught in sexual abuse and most often covered up.

1. Once again with the somewhat abstraction of the invisible church without walls we come down to the concrete in Ephesians of pastors and teachers.

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

(Ephesians 4:10-16)

NOTE: Today with woman's lib and the feminist movement having invaded the body of Christ in local churches, the "sleight of men" must needs to be changed, as they also wish equality and are as guilty in many cases as the men, sins of the falling away knows no boundaries...changed to "sleight of men and women, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive..." Mrs. Pagel is an outstanding example with her doctoral thesis at Harvard Theological Seminary which became a best-selling book.

Mrs. Pagel is a sham to Presbyterians, to the orthodoxy of the Bible, to theological training, and primarily to the sound doctrines of the Bible. She reads and publishes all

these obviously unsound doctrines of the Gnostic Gospel with ample evidence to see why they were not chosen to be in the New Testament Canon, and then she tries to make them in a very hasty generalization to be a questioning of all orthodoxy, a new way of thinking for the new age. At a first reading of her bestselling book of The Gnostic Gospels, it was sickening to read from Thomas, Truth, Mary and the many other fake names such malicious toward Christ and God and the faith once for all delivered to the saints unsound doctrines; and further the right revered Mrs. Pagel had the nerve to offer he conclusion on the whole matter of the Gnostic Gospels in these words:

And yet they found themselves in revolt against orthodox institutions. An increasing number of people today share their experience. They cannot rest solely on the authority of the Scriptures, the apostles, the church-at least not without inquiring how that authority constituted itself, and what, if anything, gives it legitimacy. All the old questions-the original questions, sharply debated at the beginning of Christianity are being reopened: How is one to understand the resurrection? What about women's participation in priestly and episcopal office? Who was Christ, and how does he relate to the believer? What are the similarities between Christianity and other world religions?

That I have devoted so much of this discussion to gnosticism does not mean, as the casual reader might assume, that I advocate going back to gnosticism,--much less that I "side with it" against orthodox Christianity. As have imagined the implications of his accidental find. Had they been discovered 1,000 years earlier; the gnostic texts almost certainly would have been burned for their heresy. But they remained hidden until the twentieth century, when our own cultural experience has given us a new perspective on the issues they raise. Today we read them with different eyes, not merely as "madness and blasphemy" but as Christians in the first centuries experienced them-a powerful alternative to what we know as orthodox Christian tradition. Only now are we beginning to consider the questions with which they confront us.

Well, my goodness, it is hard to know what to say or how to start on such as Peter Marshall said, "If we stand for nothing, we fall for anything." First thing, this cannot be called scholarship to make such conclusions as "a powerful alternative to what we know as orthodox Christian tradition" with such fictitious offerings as from these Gnostics who even lied about the names like Thomas, Mary, and Truth. Then talk about Bible scholarship, it just is not there; and one wonders how she even got into the ministry. Who ordained her?

2. In Colossians 2:8.

COLOSSIANS 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe [ta stoicheia tou kosmou], and not according to Christ. (NRSV)

3. Bottom line on the false philosophy, theology, and heresies of Gnosticism.

Paul gets to the heart of the problem in verse 8. He warns the Colossians of the devious philosophy the Gnostics were promoting and labels their doctrines the traditions of men (see Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13), as well as the teaching of demons.

The Greek phrase ta stoicheia tou kosmou, translated as "the elemental spirits of the universe" above, has been interpreted in several ways. However, The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology states: "In the case of Gal. 4:3, 9 and Col. 2:8, 20 it is a disputed question whether or not the stoicheia tou kosmou, the "elements of the world", are angels, demons, gods, i.e., personified forces as taught by a certain gnostic heresy. Most commentators hold this to be the case . . ." (p. 452, vol. 2).

Of the Greek phrase stoicheia tou kosmou used by Paul, JNTC says, "Elemental spirits of the universe . . . both Jews and Gentiles, were slaves to them. Gentiles served these demonic spirits as gods. Jews, though knowing the one true God, were sometimes led astray by demonic spirits . . ." (p. 556). Clearly, this "philosophy" Paul refers to in verse 8 was contrary to Christ, being derived from human tradition and demonic influence.

NOTE: We dare not ignore the influence in the world and the church of these evil and demonic spirits, and the role they have and do play in the great apostasy today. They lunged forward in the Roman Vatican denomination about the year 1000 A.D. when they decreed the unsound doctrines of forbidding priests to marry and commanding to abstain from meat that God Himself had blessed, more world history on rebellion against God and what He wants in the world. In I Timothy 4:3 it is called "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils". It took until about 1929 for those same seducing spirits and doctrines of devils in Gnosticism like movements for an equal falling away in Protestant with the Scofield followers adding a secret rapture of theology to the Bible and other doctrines of devils like dispensationalism and millennialism.