# If Jesus, Then No One:Part 2

Colossians 2:16-23

4/12/2025

- 1. Biblical Dinner seats available and volunteer.
- 2. Community Good Friday, 6:00pm
- 3. Invite friends to Easter Sunrise Service 6:00am

### APPLICATION

Last week, in a moment of zeal, I made a statement that, while true, deserves more intentionality and thoughtfulness. I said, *"The government should not have a leash that is so tight it hinders the Church from doing what is right."* But I didn't take the time to clarify what I meant—and I want to do that today, not just for the sake of those outside the Church looking in, but for those within the Body of Christ who desire to think biblically and wisely about this issue.

Let me start here: I am not anti-government. I am not advocating for rebellion, insurrection, or disregard for the law. On the contrary, I believe God has established human government—*for the good of the people*—to punish evil and to praise that which is good, just as Romans 13 teaches. Of all people, followers of Christ should be the most respectful, law-abiding citizens in a society. We should model integrity, submission, and honor in the public square.

No Christian has the right to pick and choose which laws they follow based on their own whims or preferences. The Bible calls that lawlessness, and lawlessness is not a fruit of the Spirit—it's a

characteristic of godless people or false believers. God is not the author of confusion or rebellion, and His people should not be either.

#### But there is a limit to our obedience to earthly authority.

When any human government—no matter how well-intentioned seeks to restrict a Christian's ability to obey God or speak righteousness, it has stepped beyond its God-given bounds. And in that case, our allegiance is clear: *We must obey God rather than man* (Acts 5:29).

And that's why I believe the Johnson Amendment is an example of such an overreach.

For those unfamiliar, the Johnson Amendment—passed in 1954 prohibits 501(c)(3) nonprofits, including churches, from endorsing or opposing political candidates. On the surface, it sounds like a measure to keep churches from becoming partisan machines. But the reality is far more troubling. It grants the government the power, in some cases, to potentially lessen or even eradicate the Church's voice in shaping public policy and those who create it.

Let me be very clear: the Church is not a branch of the state. Christ —not Caesar—is the Head of the Church.

To hold a financial benefit—like tax exemption—over the Church as a kind of carrot to keep pastors from boldly speaking the truth, in my view, is demonically influenced. It's not neutral. It's strategic. And it has worked. It has made cowards of many well-intentioned pastors, who feel they must self-censor when they ought to be prophetic. For those who know me best, you know that this role is one I would naturally avoid or seek to escape at times. But things around us won't change for the good through silent abdication.

Scripture reminds us that pastors are called to be **watchmen on the wall** (Ezekiel 33)—those who see danger coming and cry out, warning the people. If the watchman sees the sword and does not

blow the trumpet, the blood is on his hands. But if he sounds the alarm, he has done his duty. Likewise, every pastor has a responsibility not just to shepherd souls, but to warn them—boldly, lovingly, and without fear of man.

Now, do I believe that there is a POTENTIAL danger FOR THE CHURCH'S SPIRITUAL PURITY AND GOSPEL FOCUS in mixing the worlds of political power with spiritual authority? Absolutely. No pulpit should ever be hijacked by, or sold out to, political pundits or ambitious politicians—of the left or the right. The Church is not the campaign arm of any party.

But there is a critical difference between *preaching politics* and *preaching righteousness*. And if a pastor feels convicted to call out a candidate or support one based on their alignment—or misalignment—with a biblical worldview, he should not have to fear the IRS more than he fears God. It's sadly ironic to me that this has to even be a discussion in a nation that was built on a biblical foundation. Noah Webster, a founding father (also known for a small work called the dictionary), once wrote, *"The Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed." The moral principles and precepts found in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws." Today he might be ostracized.* 

Some argue that Paul never involved himself in politics. I believe that's an argument made from either ignorance or oversimplification. Paul lived under a dictatorship—not a republic like ours, where the people democratically elect other people to govern themselves and create laws and policies that govern the land. He had no voice in Caesar's palace to shape policy. But if he did? I believe Paul would have leapt at the opportunity to see the gospel—and those who believe it—shape society through laws and principles that bring blessing and life. He certainly didn't shy away from confronting political powers or preaching the gospel to rulers when given the chance.

To the American Church today, I believe Paul might say: *You have liberty to speak. You have the right to shape laws. You can vote. You can run for office. You can endorse truth. Why are you silent? I believe the general apathy and indifference of the Western church in the public sphere would be a great shock to him.* 

To be clear, I'm not advocating for abandoning our tax-exempt status, nor am I trying to be obstinate or attract unnecessary attention from the government. On the contrary, I believe it's a good thing, and I'm grateful we live in a nation that has recognized the benefit of allowing the church to operate with less financial burden. It encourages generosity. It empowers the Church to do more ministry and charity without unnecessary financial constraints. It's a wise policy that benefits communities and reflects a proper recognition of the good the Church does.

But it must never become a tool of coercion.

If a government ever uses law, tax or otherwise, to restrict the free exercise of religion or the freedom of speech—especially in the pulpit—it is violating the very First Amendment it claims to uphold. And the Church must be willing to say: *"Keep your benefit. We'll keep our boldness."* 

Money and political acceptance are not the Church's idols, but truth is the Church's mission.

We are the salt of the earth. If we lose our saltiness—if we go silent, bland, afraid—what good are we?

The Church of Jesus Christ must not be silent when truth, righteousness, and goodness are on the line. We must not trade courage for comfort, righteousness for relevance, or truth for popularity. We are called to speak the truth in love, even when it costs us. And sometimes—especially when it costs us. AW Tozer rightly stated, <u>"A scared world needs a fearless Church."</u>

History is full of Christians who have lost their **lives** for their unwillingness to stay silent or bend to cultural pressure; are we not willing to lose our **likeability**? Or perhaps even some financial benefit?

So, if I may restate my words from last week with more clarity:

The Church cannot allow the leash of the government to tighten so much that it chokes out the voice of righteousness. We must honor the law, respect authority, love, and serve our neighbor as we keep the gospel at the forefront of our mission. But we must also always reserve the right to speak as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, whether in private, public, or political life—even if the kingdoms of this world protest.

Because our allegiance is not for sale.

*Our message is not for rent.* 

And while our earthly honor is given to Caesar, our mission does not bow to him.

Today is Palm Sunday. It's rarely framed this way, but Palm Sunday was an incredibly political event. Zechariah declares,

""Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey."

At the cross, the title given to him by Pilate was "King of the Jews." Jesus is a King. That Palm Sunday, His Kingly authority was rejected by His people, but ultimately part of God's plan to bring forth His kingdom in the hearts of men and women who would bow, submit, and trust in His sacrifice, inviting Him to rule and reign within their hearts and through their lives. Is Jesus the King of our lives? The King of our church? Do we welcome His kingdom and His rule above all others? Maybe for some, the question is, "Have you received His forgiveness and salvation in your life?"

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[Col 2:11-23 NKJV] 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. 18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. 20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22 which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

#### APPLICATION

• Congratulate Kim Miller and Jennifer Kerns on their victories for the school board.

# <u>The message's title today is: If Jesus, Then</u> <u>No One: Part 2</u>

### ILLUSTRATION

We will look again at our **outline image** to get a big picture of today's passage.

- Paul wants to further contrast what we have in Jesus versus what we might try to find in man-made religious exercises. Remember, in Colossae, they were facing errant doctrines from Judaizers who wanted to add Jewish tradition and law to the religious requirements of faith in Christ, as well as gnostic heretics who wanted to subject believers to rituals and practices outside of Jesus.
- In verses 11-15, Paul lays out several key items that Jesus has accomplished on our behalf. In verses 16-23, he tells us the implications of those things in relation to what man-made religion tries to do to us.
- Jesus has: Circumcised our hearts, buried our old nature, raised us to a new creation, forgiven us of all guilty actions, removed our legal guilt, and defeated our spiritual foes! Sounds like great news! Sounds like everything we would ever need!

 Religion tries to: Paul contrasts the transformative work of Christ with the futile efforts of man-made religion. While Jesus offers us liberation and redemption, religion often seeks to judge us in legalism, cheat us based of our reward in Christ, subject us to bondage, and deceive us with counterfeit forms of humility and superficial knowledge that do not lead to true spiritual growth. Instead of embracing the freedom found in Christ, religion imposes burdensome regulations and rituals that only serve to bind us in chains of obligation.

🟠 MAIN POINT 🛛 1

## Then No One Can Judge You

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[Col 2:16-17 NKJV] 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

## Don't let men judge you:

Let Christ judge you, for He is the ultimate righteous judge who examines the intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Allow the Holy Spirit to convict and guide you, for He is the one who leads us into all truth (John 16:13). Let the word of God be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path, for it is living and powerful, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Do not be swayed by human regulations and self-imposed

standards that seek to impose guilt or shame upon you. Salvation is a gift from God, received by faith through grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9).

- Do not let legalistic individuals burden you with regulations about diets, devotion, or days of observance. The Apostle Paul warns against being judged by human standards in matters such as these (Colossians 2:16).
- Remember, legalism seeks to establish human standards to measure one's relationship with God. It falsely claims that righteousness can be achieved through adherence to dietary laws or observance of certain rituals. However, true righteousness and favor with God come through faith in Christ alone (Romans 3:22). Let your focus be on Christ and His finished work on the cross, for in Him alone can true salvation and acceptance be found (John 14:6).

#### APPLICATION

Today, there are still movements that want to convince you that unless you are embracing and adhering to Jewish customs and Mosaic commands, you are not a complete Christian.

[Gal 2:4 NKJV] 4 And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),

 I've seen the results. Many people who sincerely love Jesus are now walking in condemnation and fear because they don't feel like they are measuring up if they celebrate Christmas or don't observe the Feast of Tabernacles; walking around condemned if they ate a pork sandwich or drank a cup of coffee!

- Christ came to ensure that you can walk in freedom! Not in sin. There are sinful things we should avoid as a result of God's Grace. That's not legalism, that's holiness. But we are free from trying to earn God's favor through man-created religious standards. One of the many issues Jesus took with the Pharisees is they mixed up the two:
- [Mat 15:9 NKJV] 9 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

APPLICATION

## Shadows or substance?

Jesus is the substance, the practices and traditions are the shadow.

Shadow - an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object.

[Heb 10:1 NKJV] 1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

Some people bore when they read Leviticus - Deuteronomy. While I understand that most of the imagery and language is difficult for us to relate to, a deeper look reveals that everything done under the legal system of worship had some foreshadowing of what Jesus would accomplish through His life, death, and resurrection.

# I. From *Leviticus* – Christ in the Sacrificial System

1. The Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1)

- Christ as the all-consuming sacrifice, wholly pleasing to God (Ephesians 5:2).
- Represents full consecration; Jesus offered Himself completely.

#### 2. The Sin and Guilt Offerings (Leviticus 4–5)

- Christ bore our sins and our guilt (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- These sacrifices required innocent blood—foreshadowing Christ's substitutionary death.

#### 3. The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)

- The high priest (Aaron) points to Christ our Great High Priest (Hebrews 9).
- The two goats: one sacrificed, one sent away—Jesus is both our sacrifice and the one who removes sin far from us.

## II. From Numbers – Christ in the Wilderness

Numbers shows Christ as the guide and sustainer of His people in their sojourning.

- 1. The Bronze Serpent (Numbers 21:4-9)
  - Jesus directly applies this to Himself (John 3:14–15).
  - Sin judged, but healing by faith—an image of the cross.

#### 2. The Rock That Was Struck (Numbers 20:8–11)

- Paul says "the Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4).
- He was struck once for our salvation; Moses striking it again violated the type.

#### 3. Manna in the Wilderness

- Jesus says, "I am the bread from heaven" (John 6:32–35).
- Daily sustenance, sufficient and miraculous—just like Christ.

## III. From *Deuteronomy* – Christ the Prophet and Covenant Mediator

Deuteronomy anticipates the heart-level covenant fulfilled in Christ.

- 1. The Prophet Like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15–19)
  - Explicitly fulfilled in Christ (Acts 3:22–23).
  - Moses delivered the Law; Christ delivers grace and truth.
- 2. The Blessings and Curses (Deuteronomy 28)
  - Christ became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).
  - He bore the covenant curse so we could receive the covenant blessing.
- I wish I could have been on the road to Emmaus when Jesus opened the law and the prophets, and from the beginning taught the scriptures as they related to and revealed Him!

#### **JJ** QUOTE

— Pastor Josh

Leviticus through Deuteronomy isn't just the background of redemption—it is a canvas God painted in types, symbols, and shadows to

# prepare the world for the Lamb who was slain. The Old Testament is not preaching rules—it's preaching a Redeemer concealed, now revealed.

So the question is, why would people want to hold tightly to the shadows of the Old Testament practices when they could grasp everything they were pointing to in Jesus? It's like clinging to an outdated map for directions when you have a GPS system readily available. Just as the GPS provides accurate and direct guidance to your destination, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and rituals, leading us directly to God's ultimate plan of salvation.

## **IMPORTANT Note:**

Now, people who don't want to be confronted by their sin will often use the "Don't judge me" argument, sometimes even referencing this verse. This is where it's important to understand context.

• Paul is not saying we shouldn't judge between righteousness and unrighteousness according to God's word. No, what the Bible warns about is self-righteous judgment based on your own preferences or traditions. This is what Jesus was talking about when He said:

## SCRIPTURE

[Jhn 7:24 NKJV] 24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

🏠 MAIN POINT 🛛 🕄

## Then No One Can Cheat You

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[Col 2:18-19 NKJV] 18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

This is the second time Paul warns the believer about being cheated of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge they have in Christ.

- Vainly puffed up in their mind People are drawn to extracurricular knowledge and wisdom. Instead of digging deep into Jesus, they'd much rather consume themselves with spiritual conspiracy theories. They're far more concerned about the book of Enoch than obeying the clear commands of Christ. They want to talk like experts on the subject of angelic power while neglecting the power of Jesus to make them holy, bold witnesses.
- Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 8 that *"knowledge puffs up."* The fleshly mind is filled with pride, the more we think we know about spiritual things. But what good is our knowledge if it's not connected to the head who is Christ?

- False humility is a real thing! There have been times, especially in my younger Christian years, when pride masqueraded around like humility. Becasue of my own insecurities and need for affirmation, I would slip into conversations how much I read my Bible, how late I stayed up praying, how much I did for another person. What grace God has had in putting up with me! I basically broke every one of Jesus' principles about praying in secret, giving in secret, fasting in secret, and doing good without tooting my own horn!
- But false humility should break our hearts when we see it in ourselves, but there are those who delight in it!

# False humility - an expression of self-deprecation with the intention of self-exultation.

*worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen -*The spiritual world is intriguing, without a doubt. But it amazes me that people want to seek knowledge of the unseen outside of what God has chosen to reveal.

- One look at YouTube and you'll find all the modern gnostics consumed with angelic beings, gnostic and non-canonical books, and gospels that tingle one's supernatural longings and interests.
- Jude speaks about the audacity of false teachers when it comes to their proclaimed understanding of the unseen realm - [Jde 1:9-10 NKJV] 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" 10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.

and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.  True spiritual growth does not come with consuming extra-biblical knowledge, it comes through holding fast to Christ Jesus. In, Ephesians Paul speaks in a similar way:

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Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV) [15] but speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ, [16] from whom all the body, being fitted and knit together through that which every joint supplies, according to the working in measure of each individual part, makes the body increase to the building up of itself in love.

**99** QUOTE

— Spurgeon

"A church that is only united in itself, but not united to Christ, is no living church at all. You may attain to the unity of the frost-bound earth in which men and women are frozen together with the cold proprieties of aristocracy, but it is not the unity of life."

🏠 MAIN POINT 🛛 🕄

Then No One Can Subject You

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[Col 2:20-22 NKJV] 20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22 which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

Notice Paul gives another picture of death and resurrection:

 You died with Christ, but you're living in this world - this is to encapsulate the mindset every believer should carry. You are dead and alive at the same time! You are wanted, "Dead and Alive..."

## **JJ** QUOTE

— Pastor Josh

# Man-imposed religion seeks to revive things that need to die. Jesus seeks to put to death things that are hindering abundant life.

False teachers often exhibit a desire for power and control over others, seeking to manipulate and dominate their followers. They may use deceptive tactics to gain the trust and submission of their audience, leading them astray from the true teachings of the Gospel. Throughout history, we have seen examples of individuals who have abused their positions of authority within religious contexts, exploiting the faith and loyalty of others for personal gain. It is important for believers to be vigilant and discerning, measuring all teachings against the unchanging

truth of God's Word. As Christians, our ultimate authority is God Himself, and we are called to submit to His will above all else.

- Sometimes, we will be good about not letting others subject us to these things, but Paul warns us not to subject ourselves! Sometimes, we can be our own worst enemy. In our desires, sometimes sincere desire, to find favor with God, or even worse, puff ourselves up in pride, will subject us to man-made rules in order to find identity, purpose, and wholeness. This is a dangerous trap that leads to becoming consumed with all the wrong things rather than with Christ.
- Jesus told the Pharisees that they were more concerned with the outward "Do Nots" than the righteous "Dos" that come from the heart:

	SCRIPTURE
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Matthew 23:24 (ESV) [24] You blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel!

Matthew 15:2-3 (ESV) [2] "Why do your disciples disobey the tradition of the elders? For they don't wash their hands when they eat bread." [3] He answered them, "Why do you also disobey the commandment of God because of your tradition?

#### **JJ** QUOTE

— John McArthur

# "The greatest enemy of spiritual growth is selfrighteousness."

Paul tells us that all these outward rituals deal with things that are passing away.

• Your clothing, your foods, your traditions and holidays... they are all fading and passing away.

Some might ask, "Well Josh, does that mean the shadows have no value?" I would say, "No, shadows can have value as long as you treat them for what they are.

 If you're acting like a religious Peter Pan (image of Peter Pan), chasing the shadows to attach to yourself as if its the substance, you will be misusing it. But if you appreciate a shadow for what it is, something to remind you of Jesus, and point you to the worship of Him, then you have the freedom to do so as long as you don't use that freedom to bring others into bondage to your rules.

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Romans 14:4-8 (NIV) [4] Who are you who judge another's servant? To his own lord he stands or falls. Yes, he will be made to stand, for God has power to make him stand. [5] One man esteems one day as more important. Another esteems every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. [6] He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks. He who doesn't eat, to the Lord he doesn't eat, and gives God thanks. [7] For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself. [8] For if we live, we live to the Lord. Or if we die, we die to the Lord. If therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's.

☆ MAIN POINT 4

## Then No One Can Decieve You

SCRIPTURE

[Col 2:23 NKJV]23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

In other words, the ultimate deception is that religious practice outside of God's transforming grace is enough to give you the substance of righteousness. They aren't. They will give you nothing more than the appearance of righteousness.

**JJ** QUOTE

— Pastor Josh

The indulgences and desires of the flesh will never be quelled by outward religious activity.

# Conclusion

It's rightly said that there are two main religions in the world: *religion based on what you do in the flesh, and religion based on who you are in Christ. Where do you stand today before God?* 

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV) [8] for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, [9] not of works, that no one would boast.

Song at end of service!