

COLOSSIANS 2:14

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Colossians 2: *13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he [made alive] together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. 16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

Does the ‘handwriting of ordinances’ refer to the law of Moses, the Ten Commandments or all the law? How do we obtain the correct understanding? No doubt verses 16-17 are referring to the law of Moses, law of God, book of the covenant, or book of the law. (See Hebrews 10:1; Ex 24:4, 7; Deut 29:21; 31:24-26; Josh 23:6; 24:26). The ordinances are writings, but are they the same writings referred to in verses 16-17?

Observe the words of Jesus: **Lk 24:44-46:** *44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were **written**¹¹²⁵ in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the **scriptures**¹¹²⁴, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is **written**¹¹²⁵ ...* Jesus refers to what we call the Old Testament as divided in three sections, which are called scriptures¹¹²⁴. And in another place, Jesus said: **Jn 5:46-47:** *46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he **wrote**¹¹²⁵ of me. 47 But if ye believe not his **writings**¹¹²¹, how shall ye believe my words?* So the law of Moses is called scriptures¹¹²⁴ and writings¹¹²¹. Both underlying Greek words, *graphe*¹¹²⁴ and *gramma*¹¹²¹, have similar meanings of ‘thing written, document or letter’. The words appear to have been used by Jesus and the disciples interchangeable. (For *graphe* see Matt 21:42; 26:56; Lk 4:21; 24:27; Jn 5:39; 10:35; Acts 1:16; 8:32; Rom 4:3; Jam 2:23; 1 Pet 2:6; and for *gramma*, see Jn 7:15-16; Rom 2:27; 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6-7).

Both the ‘*graphe*’ and ‘*gramma*’ were considered to be holy. **2 Pet 1:20-21:** *20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the **scripture**¹¹²⁴ is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* **2 Tim 3:15-16:** *15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy **scriptures**¹¹²¹, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All **scripture**¹¹²⁴ is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:* **Rom 1:2:** *(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy **scriptures**¹¹²⁴)...* A ‘private interpretation’ would be one by other than the person who wrote or dictated the original writings. In the case of the Bible, the author is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, only the Spirit of God can instruct mankind in the correct understanding of the writings.

In Colossians 2:14, the handwriting of ordinances is the handwriting of *dogma*¹³⁷⁸. Dogma is used only five times. A second word appearing only once, derived from dogma and used in verse 20 of the same chapter, is *dogmatizo*¹³⁷⁹. Both words are rooted in the base of *dokeo*¹³⁸⁰, which means ‘to be of opinion, think, suppose, to seem, or seem to be’. So the basic meaning of dogma and dogmatizo is “what seems to be right”. Other meanings are opinion, resolution, or decree. Is either word ever equate *graphe* or *gramma* as scripture? Or, is either word ever referred to as being ‘holy’?

The following verses use dogma concerning civil ordinances. **Lk 2:1:** *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a **decree**¹³⁷⁸ from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.* **Acts 17:7:**

Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the **decrees**¹³⁷⁸ of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. The next verse refers to various interpretation and instruction resulting from meetings consisting of the apostles and elders of the church, and held at Jerusalem. **Acts 16:4:** *And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees¹³⁷⁸ for to keep, that were ordained²⁹¹⁹ of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.* Example of the ‘dogma’ to which this refers is: **Acts 15:28-29:** *28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.* “Were ordained” in English means “were taught.” However, the Greek word is *krino*, which means, in this context, “approved, selected, chosen, opinion,” a verb being in the perfect, participle. A better translation, therefore, would be “having been approved,” or “having been chosen” by the Apostles and Elders. In other words, it was ‘what seemed to be right’ at the time by not requiring the Gentile believers to keep the letter of the law, as did the Jews. It can be see here that *dogma* refers more to man’s opinions. (See study called Jerusalem Council).

The last verses to consider concerning the topic of discussion: In Colossians 2:14 the dogma is said to be *that was against us, which was contrary to us.* Ephesians 2:15 says: *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances¹³⁷⁸ ...* The underlying Greek word for ‘enmity’ means hatred. Would God give written instruction that was ‘against, contrary or enmity’ toward His people? The scriptures say God is merciful, and He changes not. Then why would He do such a thing? I believe the answer lies in the following: **Col 2:20-22:** (with parenthesis left out) *20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances¹³⁷⁹ ,... 22 ... after the commandments and doctrines of men?* Notice that the *dogmatizo*¹³⁷⁹ is after the “commandments and doctrines of men”, described as “will worship” & false “humility” in verse 23, but it neglects the “body of Christ”, which is His church (Eph 1:22-23). In other words, what was nailed to the cross was the opinions of men, or THEIR interpretation of the holy writings - interpretations which were written instructions.

How was the *handwriting of dogma* nailed to the cross? **Jer 11:1-4:** *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Hear ye the words of this covenant... Cursed be the man that obeys not the words of this covenant, 4 Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God...* God’s instruction was to obey His voice to keep the law. Applying the letter only, the Jews had their own interpretation of the law which excluded those not born a Jew as being unclean. However, a Jew is spiritual (Rom 2:28-29) and the law is spiritual (Rom 7:14). The letter of the law is to be understood through the eyes of the Son of God. This is the righteousness according to the Spirit to which Paul refers in Rom 8:4. Therefore, don’t let anyone judge you according to their interpretation of the letter of the law (Col 2:16-17). It is a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of the faith (understanding) of Christ. **Rom 8:2:** *For the law of the Spirit of life (the Father’s understanding) in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (man’s understanding).*

The Seventh Day Sabbath: Does “sabbath days” in Colossians 2:16 refer to the “seventh day sabbath”? First, “days” is a supplied word. However, because it is strongly implied, “days” was added by the translators. Also, “holy day¹⁸⁵⁹” means “feast”. Notice three things mentioned here: **Col 2:16:** *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink (offerings), or in respect of [a feast], or of the new moon, or of the [sabbaths]:* The Greek word for “sabbaths⁴⁵²¹ is of Hebrew origin. It comes from the same word used in Ex 20:8 - sabbath⁷⁶⁶. Here are some Old Testament verses that would influence the writing of this verse:

Eze 45:17: *And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel...* This verse lists meat & drink offerings, feasts, new moons and sabbaths in the same order as Col 2:16. **Eze 46:1, 3-4:** *Thus saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looks toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the [day of the] sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened... 3 Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons. 4 And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD in the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. [Hebrew] There can be no doubt that in these verses “sabbaths” is plural for “seventh day sabbaths”. The continual and burnt offerings were also offered on the seventh day sabbath (Num 28:9-10). Look at one more verse: [Original](Supplied)*

2 Ch 2:4: *Behold, I build an house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shew bread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel. Based on the preceding, it is reasonable to conclude that “sabbaths” here and in Colossians 2:16 are referring to the seventh day sabbath. (Cf also 2 Ch 8:13; 31:3; Neh 10:33 & 1 Ch 23:31). Therefore, let no one judge you because you do not keep the sacrifices, feasts days or the seventh day sabbath according to the traditions and understanding of man. All are only a shadow of good things to come. Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship and false humility, but they neglect the body of Christ. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. (Heb 7:19).*

It was man’s interpretation of the law that condemned the Son of God to die on the cross. And it is the "old man" that keeps coming up with ways to keep the law. Thus denominations need creeds and church manuals when not listening to the Spirit of God. Then they take their creeds, their own understanding, and judge others by it. In this way they reject the voice of God and crucify Jesus just as surely as did the Jews. Jesus Christ killed the old man on the cross. In type, He nailed all of man’s understanding and opinions to that cross. Therefore, *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. And ...now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* (Rom 6:6; 7:6). **Phil 2:5:** *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: AMEN!*