



**SESSION OBJECTIVE: COLOSSIANS 2:9-15**

To understand the internal, spiritual work that Christ does in us when we are born again.

## Changed

It's not uncommon today to buy a movie (either a blu-ray or those ancient "DVD's") and to get an additional disc in the package with some, "behind the scenes," footage. Directors and producers have figured out that at least some people are interested in all of the unseen work that goes into putting out a quality film. What you see on the screen is not everything that is happening. Behind the scenes, there is a lot of work being done that is vitally important to the final product.

One of the marked distinctions between Christianity and every other world religion is the inward spiritual reconfiguration that takes place when one is born again. A sort of, "behind the scenes," work that Jesus does that we don't visibly see while it is happening. Christianity is a faith proposition. We place our faith in the Gospel, that we are broken and sinful, but that God made a way for us to be forgiven and reborn through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. However, in the midst of this faith proposition, there are some spiritual events that take place inwardly that really set apart the Christian experience.

Colossians 2:9-15 spells out these inward spiritual events. We are, "filled in him," (v.10), "circumcised by a circumcision made without hands," (v.11), "buried with him in baptism," (v.12), and, "made alive together with him" (v.13). But what does all of this mean? Let's walk through it, and the other portions of this text, together.

## Careful Wording

Verse 9 reads, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” This is Paul’s way of affirming a couple of different things about Jesus.

### **HE IS GOD**

For starters, Christ is fully God. The, “whole fullness of deity,” means that every aspect of Godness is found in the man Christ Jesus. The word, “fullness,” is the Greek word πλήρωμα (plērōma), and it means, “that which is filled.” It brings to mind a glass that is being filled up to the point at which there is no room left for filling. Jesus is the full embodiment of God, such that it is appropriate to refer to Him as God.

### **HE IS NOT ALL THERE IS OF GOD**

The wording is careful, however, so as to not indicate that apart from Jesus there is nothing else. Paul recognizes even here that there is one God who exists eternally in three distinct persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Paul is careful to say what he is saying without giving room for his opponents to twist his words against the truth.

### **“Modalism”**

One popular heresy today is that of modalism (also known as *Sabellianism*, an early-third-century trinitarian heresy named after the theologian Sabellius). Modalism teaches that rather than God existing in three distinct persons, He exists as one person who has three different modes of manifestation. He comes as the Father to create and bring the law, he moves to the Son for redemption, and then to the Spirit for empowering believers. The problem with this is multifaceted. The Father speaks audibly regarding Jesus in several instances in the Gospels (Matt. 3:17; Lk. 9:35; Mk. 9:7), and Jesus speaks of the work of the Spirit (Jn. 3:8). The three distinct persons of the Godhead interact with one another in one Divine economy. Paul demonstrates careful wording in this passage so as to not be misunderstood. Jesus embodies the fullness of God, but he is not all there is of God.

## The Work of Jesus

The following verses spell out the work of Jesus in the inner-spiritual parts of believers when they come to faith. Verse 11 begins with, “In Him.” In other words, it is only born-again believers in Jesus Christ that can identify with these next few verses.

### **CIRCUMCISED**

The first thing we are told is that we have been, “circumcised with a circumcision made without hands.” This is literally an, “unhandmade circumcision.” This term, “unhandmade,” is only used 2 other times in the entire New Testament. Mark 14:58 says (speaking of Jesus), “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands (unhandmade).’” The inference here is that Jesus will not just be raised in an ordinary body but a heavenly or glorified body. The other place we find this word is in 2 Corinthians 5:1, where Paul says, “For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Once again, the tent reference is a reference to the human, temporary body, and that when we die we will inherit heavenly, glorified bodies.

The presence of this word indication that It’s not a physical circumcision, but one that happens inwardly. This harkens back to the circumcision that Jews practiced as the first step in following the obligations of the law. In fact, it was required by God as an introduction into the covenant family of God (Gen. 17:9-14). Likewise,

introduction into the new covenant requires a kind of circumcision as well. Some of our Reformed friends draw a correlation between circumcision and infant baptism, but Paul's contention here is slightly different. It is not an infant baptism corollary, but a spiritual circumcision which leads to believer's baptism (explained in the next point), or as Paul says, "a circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11). In the same way that physical circumcision involves the removal of flesh (the foreskin), the spiritual circumcision involves, "the putting off the body of the flesh," as well (the sin nature). We are marked by Christ as one of His own, and enter into covenant with Him, not based on work we have done but work He has done to us.

### ***BAPTIZED***

After having been spiritually circumcised, we identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus through the ordinance of baptism. Baptism reflects our death (going into the water), burial (being under water, hence baptism by immersion), and resurrection (coming out of the water). Baptism also reflects our escape from God's judgment against sin (1 Pet. 3:18-22). Baptism reflects the cleansing nature of salvation, the new life we receive in Christ, and the pardon from condemnation we have been given in Him. It is not merely, "turning over a new leaf," or something you do to feel better about yourself. It isn't a spiritual reset. It is a command of God that represents some deep and profound spiritual realities that have taken place the moment we were saved.

### ***MADE ALIVE***

Finally, verse 13 says that those who, "were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands" (Col. 2:13-14). It is not merely that we have been given a second chance, but a new life! Paul says elsewhere that, "Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).

This is an important reality that takes place when we are reborn, and one perhaps that sheds light on why it is impossible to lose your salvation. The whole premise of salvation is that without Jesus, we are all spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1; Jn. 5:25; 2 Cor. 4:3; Rom. 8:6). We have no capacity to make any spiritual decisions because we are spiritually lifeless. The action of Jesus to circumcise our hearts, spiritually speaking, awakens us and draws us to Him, and He gives life to us. It is then and only then that we are able to walk in faith. Take note of the fact that nothing in this passage suggests that we are responsible for anything to this point. We can't be. We are not capable of making spiritual decisions if we are spiritually not alive.

### ***NAILED TO THE CROSS***

The debt that stood against us (Rom. 6:23) is forgiven in Christ. Christ takes the bill, now marked "paid in full," and nails it to the cross that He Himself hung on. His sacrifice before the Father was sufficient to make payment for the sins we have committed. While we never possess what it takes to make forgiveness of sin, Jesus does.

Beyond that, His actions, "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him" (Col. 2:15). Jesus' sacrifice was enough to disarm and put down the demonic forces led by Satan against His people. The enemy of God, while still powerful for a time, no longer possesses the kind of power he had prior to the cross. Jesus struck a damaging blow (Rev. 12:3-9); the fatal one has yet to come (Rev. 20:10).

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Colossians 2:9. Who is, “him” in reference to? What dwells in Him? Why is this worded this way? (Hint: See above notes)

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2. Read Colossians 2:10. Who is, “him” in reference to? Is it the same person from verse 9? What does it mean that we are, “filled in him?” What does it mean that he is, “the head?” (Hint: See Col. 1:18-20)

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### Day Two

1. Read Colossians 2:11. What kind of circumcision is this talking about? Read Genesis 17:9-14. What correlations are there between Old Testament circumcision and, “the circumcision of Christ?”

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2. Read Colossians 2:12. How is baptism described or portrayed in this passage? How should this impact our practice and understanding of baptism?

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### Day Three

1. Read Colossians 2:13. What state were you in, according to this verse, prior to faith in Christ? What does Christ do to remedy this, according to this verse?

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2. Read Colossians 2:14. How does Jesus make us alive according to verse 14? What imagery is used here to describe his work?

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### Day Four

1. Read Colossians 2:15. Who are the, “rulers and authorities” here? (Hint: See Col. 1:16-17)

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2. Read Revelation 12:3-9; 20:1-10. How do these two passages correlate to Colossians 2:15?

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## Week 7 Discussion: Baptism

In Colossians 2:12, Paul paints a picture of how baptism corresponds to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Through baptism, we are connecting ourselves to Jesus' work. In other words, baptism is the outward display of the inward work of God. Talk as a group about the importance of baptism, and discuss your experience. If you have never been baptized, talk about why.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever been baptized? If so, when and where? If not, why?
2. What is brought to mind when you witness someone else being baptized? Is it a blessing to you?
3. How important is baptism? Should every believer be baptized? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think some people are opposed to being baptized? What reasons are typically given to avoid being baptized?
5. If you have never been baptized, but want to be after this discussion, contact Derrick Bledsoe and schedule it. You can be baptized even during COVID, and we can film it and stream it as a part of our services so the church body can celebrate with you.

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus is fully God, and one person of the Triune Godhead.
2. Jesus does some, "behind the scenes" work on our hearts when we come to faith in Him.