

SHADOWS

Scripture Reading: Read Colossians chapter 2



When you were a kid, did you ever make hand shadows on the wall like the bunny on the left? It's amazing how many different figures you can make with just your hands and fingers. You can make them seem to come alive on the wall. But they're just shadows. They aren't reality.

In the church at Colosse, there were false teachers who were trying to make shadows come alive too. They were teaching false doctrines about Christ, trying to diminish his deity and authority. They also sought to add to the gospel. Paul's letter to the church was intended to help them stand strong in the faith and not give in to the deceptive doctrines taught by the false teachers.

In powerful language, but with a gracious humility, Paul lays out the case for Christ in unmistakable ways, seeking to dispel the shadow of a diminished deity. He stresses Christ's uniqueness as the image of the invisible God, as the firstborn over all creation, as preexistent, and as the one who holds the universe together. He stresses Christ's supremacy as the head of the church, the beginning and firstborn from the dead. He affirms the centrality of Christ as the one through whom reconciliation occurs, not just for sinful humanity but for the entirety of the universe. He concludes by stressing Christ's sufficiency. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form. He is the head over all things, the one who, through his death, brought us back into relationship with God and defeated all the principalities and powers who were opposed to us.

Paul also challenged the shadows the false teachers were making on the walls regarding Old Testament practices. These teachers were trying to convince the Gentile Colossians to practice kosher laws with regard to diet, to celebrate the Old Testament religious festivals, New Moon celebrations and Sabbath Day observances. The shadows danced and danced but Paul turned off the lights for the teachers by reminding the Colossian believers that all those Old Testament practices are a *"shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."*

Hand shadows are fun to create and cause no harm. Paul's letter to the Colossians is a reminder that spiritual shadows are dangerous and can take us away from Christ.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: For fun, try to recreate the bunny hand shadow above. Let it serve as a reminder to stay away from spiritual shadows and cling to the reality found in Christ and revealed by Paul in Colossians (and the rest of Scripture!)

Take-a-way: *Old Testaments shadows point to the reality of Christ's light.*