

Rudiments of the World

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"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances."
~ Colossians 2:20

When I was young, we had a copy of *"The Rudiments of Music"* in our home. It was an introduction to the subject of music, covering its basic principles. The book's title always gave me some insight into Paul's words, *"the rudiments of the world"* from these two verses in Colossians.

The Greek word used by Paul that is translated *"rudiments"* in the *King James Version* is Strong's Greek Lexicon #4747, *"stoicheion."* Strong defines it as, "something orderly in arrangement, i.e., (by implication) a serial (basal, fundamental, initial) constituent (literally), proposition (figuratively)."

Paul also uses *"stoicheion"* twice in Galatians where the *King James Version* translators render it *"elements."*

*"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the **elements** of the world" (Galatians 4:3).*

*"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly **elements**, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage" (Galatians 4:9)?*

The words translated “rudiments” and “elements” in the *King James Version* are a reference to the world’s spirit; the direction and course of the world’s system instilled in us since birth. They are the frame of reference from our former alienated existence from the life of God. They are all our early experiences and training related to how things are and should be. They are the world’s arrangement of things to “keep us in line.” They are our perceived notions and assumptions about life and what is important.

“*Stoicheion*” is the course of the world, the basic structure of the world systems – the religious system, the educational system, the value system, the governmental system, the social system – all of which are contrary to the life of God. It’s their principles, methods, and tendencies; their flow and their path. It is that which affects our attitudes, way of life, and mindset. It is anything that we have learned contrary to the life of God. It’s our worldly indoctrination before Christ; the old man’s element where he is familiar, and where he thrives “being in his element.”

Paul is referring to the old (former) man’s natural (carnal) way of looking at things; the world’s way of doing things. Yet it is all a mere shadow, void of reality.

As believers, this is that to which we *were* in bondage. It is our old ways, our former paths, back when the ruling spirit of the world dominated us, keeping us imprisoned to the worthless, vain, and empty principles (principalities) of this evil world-system; but we have been liberated from all of this by the very life and knowledge of God Himself.

Herein is the battle – this system continues to war against our souls. We must stand the ground of freedom from this world’s systems that God has given us, standing firm in the reality in which He has placed us. We must not allow ourselves to be taken hostage to these – we must not be brought back into bondage to them again.

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