



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. – Matthew 15:9

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## Blue Joy

When I was a child one of the commonly-known brands of laundry detergent was Blue Cheer. It would be quite a few years before I knew that the term “Blue” was more than just a clever brand name and even longer before I understood how the blue did what everyone said it did.

Blue Cheer was, of course a blue-colored powder detergent. What I learned a few years later was that the blue helped your white fabrics look whiter. I didn't really understand why, it was just one of those things you accepted in life because you assumed someone smarter than you had figured it out and knew what they were talking about.

To fill you in on what I learned much later I'll have to give you a short lesson on additive colors. When you learned about color in grade school you were probably taught that the primary colors were red, blue, and yellow. The reason for that is that in school you worked mostly with pigments. Pigments work by absorbing certain colors of light, so that your eye perceives the colors that aren't absorbed. For this reason we call these subtractive colors.

And the “red, blue, yellow” bit was a bit misleading, because the actual primary colors used for full-color printing are magenta, cyan, and yellow. If you've ever seen the end of a box printed in full color you may have seen patches of these three colors. Magenta is a sort of purple-ish pink, cyan a kind of washed out light blue, and yellow what we actually think of as yellow.

Additive colors are those we deal with when shining colored lights to give a color

image, as when you watch a television. TV engineers know that the three primary additive colors are red, blue, and green. And all three of those colors look like the red blue and green we learned about in grade school.

How does that help us understand how bluing works in laundry detergent? What is the usual color of the dirt that stains our clothing? Brown earth, red and green food stains, and even yellows predominate. All of these are built from two of the three primary additive colors, red and green. In your color TV you get white when when you have a balance of the three primary colors.

So since the soil on your clothing has much fewer blues than it has reds and greens, adding blue helps restore the color balance and makes the clothes look whiter than they would without the added blue.

Interesting, you say, but what has that got to do with worshipping God? I'm going to engage in some symbolism to get where I'm going, but I think you'll be delighted at the destination.

We humans are stuck on this planet. It's the only inhabited planet in the universe, aside from heaven itself, to be contaminated by sin. Since we're born here to sinful parents we are naturally contaminated ourselves. And since the contamination is "earthly" we would expect it to be in earth tones, mostly browns.

Someone made a point about something I already knew, but this time around I remembered that bit about bluing. Actually, I came across it twice. Once was in an online Bible lesson, and about an hour later a Bible text used in the sermon at church reminded me of it. Let me quote the verse first.

I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim. (Ezekiel 10:1)

Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. (Exodus 24:9, 10)

What color is sapphire? With what was it compared? You see the blue? And the interesting thing about the passage in Exodus is that right after this God tells Moses to come up to him on the mountain where he would get the tablets of stone. Some interpreters suggest that the Hebrew says "the" stone, for which the immediate antecedent would be the pavement of sapphire.

In other words, in his interventions with the human race God wants to provide what is missing to make us “white as snow.” We have the reds and greens in our earthliness. When we add the blue of God's presence we get the balance of colors our eyes interpret as white.

As I say, this isn't literal, it's symbolic. And now let's look at another verse in the next chapter of Exodus. God told Moses to collect offerings for the tent temple the people were to build. Among the things they were to bring were gold, and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. In Exodus 28 we read that the garment worn by the High Priest was to be made with gold, and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn.

Now let's go to Revelation 17. Here is described for us a harlot, representing the false worship offered by worldly religion.

The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. (Revelation 17:4)

What's missing? Interesting, isn't it. She has all the colors the High Priest (who represented Jesus) wore except the blue. False religion teaches lies about God and therefore cannot provide its followers with the divine. represented by blue.

One last little note: You'll notice I titled this “Blue Joy.” The soap was called “Cheer,” but when we receive the cleansing God offers us, the result is joy, even in the midst of suffering. So let's earnestly desire the Blue Joy we can have if we believe the truth about God, trust him, and quit trying to save ourselves.

Elkanah

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