

“RIGHTLY DIVIDING”

PART FOUR: NAILED TO THE CROSS

We have previously shown how the Law of Moses served a useful purpose both for the children of Israel who lived under the law, and for Christians today who learn from it. An interested student might ask honestly that if the Law was so useful, what happened to it. He might wonder why we do not continue to live under that law today. We suggested previously that the law was inadequate and only suggested greater things to come. Let us explore that in a little more depth and show that that the old law was actually eliminated by Christ himself.

The Hebrew writer declares in chapter 10:1 that the law “*can never, with those sacrifices...make the comers thereunto perfect.*” Of those sacrifices he says in verse 4 that “*it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.*” The writer also explains that a new sacrifice was offered that was superior to the bulls and goats which were continually offered. That superior sacrifice was Jesus. Of his coming he writes, “*he taketh away the first that he may establish the second*” (Hebrews 10:9). In the very next verse he declares the sufficiency of the death of Christ when he writes: “*we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (Hebrews 10:10). Said differently in verse 14, “*for by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.*” So we see that Christ’s intent was to take away the first law, that is, the Law of Moses, so that he could establish a second, the Law of Christ. Inasmuch as the plan of Salvation was crafted even before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), and Jesus was always a part of the plan, we may correctly conclude that the Law of Moses was never intended to last forever.

The proper system of spiritual law today is that of Christ, not Moses. The Apostle Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that the law of Christ was being written in their hearts, not on some tablet of stone (2 Corinthians 3:3) which is a clear reference to the Ten Commandments given at Sinai (Exodus 20). Notice carefully the contrast cast by Paul between the Law of Moses and of Christ:

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. (2 Corinthians 3:7-11)

The old law, described as “ministration of death” was in fact glorious. After all, it was given by God and was part of his purpose. But its glory never compared to the glory of the “ministration of righteousness” or the law of Christ. If there remains any doubt that the Old Testament was removed as our authority, note that last verse. “[T]hat which was done away” clearly contrasts with that which remains, the law of Christ or the New Testament. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes specifically that Jesus blotted out “*the handwriting of ordinances that [were] against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross*” (Colossians 2:14). While we honor the Old Testament and study it deeply, it no longer sets the standard for our lives today. Its time has passed according to the plan of God.

Our honest student might next ask us when this transition occurred. When did the Law of Moses come to a halt and the Law of Christ begin? We should also recall that the so-called Patriarchal system was still in effect for the non-Hebrew world and so we should also consider when all of this came to a halt as well.

No one lived under the Christian era until after the death of Jesus. Consider Hebrews 9. Here, the author explains how that the tabernacle and its services were a symbol of things to come. He specifically considers the similarity between the High Priest and Jesus (Hebrews 9:8-14). Notice how it was that Christ was able to enter the most holy place and make his sacrifice. It was by his own blood (Hebrews 9:12) that he entered and obtained redemption for sins. He continues by showing that it was by death that Jesus obtained the promise of eternal inheritance for us (Hebrews 9:15). He further shows that death must come to the person who pens a testament else that testament is not in force. Since Jesus is the “*author and finisher*” of that testament (Hebrews 12:2), it is perfectly logical to conclude that the Christian Age, governed by the New Testament of Christ, began at his death. All persons prior to his death worshipped either under the Law of Moses, if Jewish, or under God’s Patriarchal system. And, all Jewish persons living after his death became immediately subject to the Law of Christ. Non-Jewish persons, Gentiles, would not come under the Law of Christ until the time of Cornelius in Acts 10. This conclusion has enormous implications for our lives and worship today as we will see next.

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NEXT WEEK: “RIGHTLY DIVIDING” – PART FIVE: SO WHAT?