

The Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ (3)

The Law Nailed to the Cross

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This is now the third lesson that we have devoted to a study of the relation of the Law and the Gospel. Already, the Law has been defined as the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandment. Law, and the Gospel refers to the system of salvation in Christ. This is one of the most misunderstood teachings of the New Testament.

Last week we pointed out from the teaching of Jeremiah the prophet that the Law of Moses was only intended to be temporary. We studied his statement in Jer. 31:31-34 which shows that the Law of Moses was to be replaced by another law, namely the Law of Christ. Paul quoted this prophecy as having been fulfilled in Heb. 8:7-13. Then we concluded our study by reviewing the teaching of the apostle Paul in Ephesians, showing that the barrier, which Paul declared to be the Law of Commandments, was done away so that now Jew and Gentile may become one new man in Christ through the one body (Eph. 2:14-18). The Scriptures abound in statements showing that the Law of Moses has been done away. We would like to remind you that these passages apply not only to those that try to bind the keeping of the Sabbath day upon us, but they are equally as applicable to any of us that fail to find justification for our doctrine or practice in the New Testament, and therefore revert back to an abrogated law for their authority.

Colossians 2:13-15

The passage we shall study this week is another statement from the pen of the apostle Paul. This time, we are studying the letter written to the Colossian brethren. One of the problems confronting this church was that of intermixing Judaism and Christianity. Hence, Paul made the following statement unto them: "And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross; having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (2:13-15).

Notice that in this passage, Paul said that the bond written in ordinances that was against us hath been taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross of Christ. Of what was Paul speaking when he referred to the ordinances that were against us? He was speaking of the Law of Moses, or the old

covenant. As this same apostle addressed the brethren at Galatia, he taught precisely how the Law of Moses was against us. A lot of the people of Galatia, as are many people today, were trying to put themselves back under the Law of Moses. Paul taught them the impossibility of this by telling them that to go back under the Law of Moses, they would have to give up Christ. But he also declared to them that the Law was but a curse to them. He said, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). Having been redeemed from the curse of the Law, are we so foolish as to want to go back under it? We should praise God for the fact that no longer are we living under the Old Testament Law, but that we are now permitted to live under the Law of Christ.

We have seen that the Law was a curse to us, but why was it a curse? Fortunately, Paul went into detail to tell us why the law was a curse to man. In Gal. 3:10, he said, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." The Law was a curse to man because the very moment one failed to observe a single commandment of the Law, he was condemned. In discussing this very problem, Paul, to the Roman brethren, said, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). He said that all, both Jew and Gentile, had failed to live up to the rigid requirements of the Old Testament Law. In the passage in Gal. 3:10, he said that "cursed is everyone who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." So the Law shut them up under sin, as Paul said to the Galatian brethren in Gal. 3:22. It could only condemn them.

So when Paul comes to speak of the Law of Moses to the Colossian church, he called it the "bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us." This is but another way of saying that the Law was a curse to us. It condemned them. While we are on this particular phase of the Old Testament Law, it is important that we study another statement of Paul, showing why the Law was a curse to them. Already we have seen how he taught that no one lived up to the requirements of the Law. All were guilty of some infraction of the Law. But under the Law, there was no provision made for the forgiveness of sins. In Heb. 10:1ff Paul said, "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh." He was saying they cannot be forgiven under the Law. Why? "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." So when one violated the Law of Moses he was condemned, the blood of animals not being able to take away his sin, and thus he was under a curse.

Now with these truths in our minds, let us turn again to the passage with which we began. Paul said, "And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, and hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:13, 14). Already, having established that he was referring to the Law of Moses, what did Paul say about 'it'? He said it was blotted out. It was nailed to the cross. None of us have difficulty understanding what Paul was teaching in the Colossian epistle concerning the Law of Moses. We have correlated a number of other passages from Paul's writings to show that in this passage, as in the others to which we have referred, Paul was declaring that the Law of Moses was done away in the death of Christ.

With this thought fresh in our minds, let us merely cite the passage we discussed last week. It is very similar, both in words and meaning, to the passage we are studying this week from Colossians. He said, "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:13-16).

After Paul had made it clear that the Law was done away, he then exhorted the Colossians that they beware of those that would bind portions of Judaism upon them: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or a new moon, or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's." Even though these brethren had been taught that the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross of Christ, yet there were some that were bent on binding upon others the precepts of the Law. So Paul exhorted these brethren that they not permit any to come in and bind on them portions of a law that had been taken out of the way. They were not to be condemned (this is the meaning of the word "judge" in this passage) for failing to keep the Law of Moses, whether this failure consisted of the eating of meat, failing to keep a feast day, or whether it referred to one's trying to make it obligatory upon all that they keep the Sabbath day.

Many people today who meet on the First Day of the week refer to Sunday as the Sabbath day, but this is to misuse the word "Sabbath." The "Sabbath" refers to Saturday, the seventh day. Yet there are one or more religious denominations that maintain that we should keep the Sabbath day now. At the present, I can think of some two or three denominations that meet on the seventh day, the Sabbath day, rather than on the First Day of the week. Did

you ever hear a Sabbatarian comment on Paul's exhortation to the Colossian brethren in which he told them not to let men condemn them for not keeping the Sabbath day, for the Old Covenant was but a shadow of the good things to come?

They conveniently overlook this and many other similar passages of Holy Writ because they do not happen to coincide with their previously chosen religious theories.

Conclusion

Paul taught us that the Law was nailed to the cross of Christ, and therefore it is wrong for one to try to continue to bind it upon the citizens of God's Kingdom. For an illustration, let us consider this historical incident: At one time in the history of this land, we were subjects of the English nation. But today this land of ours is an independent and free country. It is no longer bound by the laws of the government of England. Suppose a man were to come along today who feels that we should not adhere to the laws of this land, but that we should continue to live under the laws of the government of England, inasmuch as we were one time under them. Or suppose, that he were to try to get everyone to live under both the law of England and the constitution of the United States. This would be both impossible and absurd.

Yet this land abounds in people, who, because man was once under the Law of Moses, think that we should continue to live according to the dictates of that Law, even though Christ died to give us the New Covenant. But there are myriads more who feel that inasmuch as man was once under the Law of Moses, and now lives under the Law of Christ it would be perfectly legitimate for us to choose that portion of either of these laws that best fits our religious needs as established by man. The majority of the religious denominations go back to the Old Testament for the authority for at least one part of their worship. You name the denomination, and I believe that it will be a simple matter to show what portion of their worship is taken from the Old Testament law. Remember that it was this Old Law that was nailed to our Savior's cross. We should daily thank God that we no longer live under the curse of the Law, but may participate in the blessings of Christ.