

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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The Taken Away Law

Barry O'Dell

Approximately 600 years before the birth of Christ, Jeremiah recorded a promise from God: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31). Jehovah went on to reveal that this “new covenant” would be different from the covenant He made with Israel when they came out of Egypt (Jer. 31:32). It would be a law written on the hearts of men and that would be taught to men (Jer. 31:33-34). There is no question as to what is being promised by God when this passage is understood with other passages like John 6:44-45 and Hebrews 8:8-12. The book of Hebrews was written to proclaim the superiority of Jesus Christ and

“... Hebrews was written to proclaim the superiority of Jesus Christ and His new covenant...”

His new covenant to other periods of Biblical history and law. Chapters one and two show from Scripture that Jesus is superior to all the angels of God.

Chapters three and four show that Jesus and His “rest” is superior to Moses and the Promised Land of Israel. Chapters five, and seven through ten, reveal that Christ is superior to Melchisedec (the Patriarchal Age), Levi (the Mosaic Age), and that Christ’s tabernacle (the church) is superior to the “worldly sanctuary” (Heb. 9:1). Finally, Hebrews 10 reveals that the sacrifice of the body of Christ (10:5-7) is superior to the offering of the blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 10:3).

There was nothing “wrong” with the Law of Moses, as God was the author. In fact, Paul wrote of the Old Law, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12). Paul wrote that the problem with the Law of Moses was that it revealed the nature and consequences of sin, but that it did not offer the perfect sacrifice for sin (Rom. 7:7; Heb. 10:2-3). The problem was that Israel, with whom God had made the covenant, refused to keep the covenant (Heb. 8:8-9).

The Bible is very easy to understand when discussing these issues. The Law of Moses was given to the Israelites when they came to Sinai after being redeemed from Egyptian captivity. In fact Moses wrote, “The Lord our God made a covenant with us (Israel) in Horeb (Sinai). The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deut. 5:2-3). Paul wrote that man is “dead to the law by the body of Christ” (Rom. 7:4). The law to which he is referring can only be the Law of Moses because of Romans 7:7: “...the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet.’” Deuteronomy 4:13 and 5:22 state that God wrote that Law upon tables of stone. Paul wrote of that Law, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross” (Col. 2:14). As he did in Romans 7, Paul clarifies what that “handwriting of ordinances” was in Colossians 2:16-17 when he referred to “the new moon, Sabbath days, and the shadow of good things to come.” As in Hebrews 10:1, those thoughts can only refer to the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses.

Jesus and His covenant do what Moses and his covenant could not. “But in those sacrifices (Law of Moses) there is a remembrance again made of sins every year” (Heb. 10:3). This is why Jesus took on flesh and dwelt among us. Paul wrote, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). In Galatians 3:24-25 we read that “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” and that now “we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” The wonderful blessings of being in Christ Jesus by being baptized into Christ are then traced all the way back to the promise made to Abraham as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. The seed that would bless all nations of the earth is Christ (Gal. 3:16). Because of God’s plan and Christ’s execution of that plan, man now has a perfect sacrifice that has been offered once for all (Heb. 10:12-13). Man is now able to be an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17; Gal. 4:7). As Paul wrote, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

That Which Is Abolished

Andy Brewer

In Exodus 19 “Moses went up unto God, and Jehovah called unto him out of the mountain” (vs. 3) and was given a law that would alter the landscape of that nation forever. The law that Moses received and gave to the people was one that governed their lives civilly, socially, physically, internationally, and spiritually. But the Old Testament itself spoke of a time when that law would be taken out of the way and replaced by something that would be better and eternal (Jer. 31:31ff).

It was that very idea that Paul addressed in 2 Corinthians 3. Paul had already spoken about the differences between the old and new covenant in terms of the old being a “ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones” (vs. 7) and the new being a ministration of the spirit and of righteousness (vs. 8-9). But then he said this:

“Seeing then that we have such a hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ” (vs. 12-14).

It’s interesting that he used the word “abolished” to describe that old covenant because those Jews in New Testament times still very much bound themselves to it.

“We have been placed under a better covenant that has been enacted upon better promises.”

to the burnt offerings, and even the ten commandments have been blotted out and nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). We have been placed under a better covenant that has been enacted upon better promises (Heb. 8:6). But why was that old covenant abolished and replaced in the first place?

The first covenant was intended to be temporary while the second is intended to be eternal. Comparing the

two the Hebrews writer said that “if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second” (Heb. 8:7). So the first covenant was imperfect for man’s ultimate need, which is redemption. That doesn’t mean that God is imperfect, it simply means that He designed that covenant with a specific purpose and only intended for it to be temporary. The second, though, will last forever (Mat. 24:35).

The first covenant only covered man’s sins while the second is able to redeem them. The Hebrews writer dealt with this fact extensively, particularly in Hebrews 10:1ff:

“For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect . . . But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (vs. 1-4).

What the law did for sin was only temporary. Sin was covered, but still present and had to be dealt with again each year. However, Jesus’ covenant with man offers total redemption (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 10:10).

The first covenant was a law of division while the second is intended to unite. Writing to Gentiles, Paul reminded them that once they had been “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). There was an acknowledged division that existed between Jew and Gentile and it all centered around that old covenant which had been given to the Jews. But even though that was their past, Paul reminded them that their present and future was rooted in the fact that “now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2: 13). That division no longer exists because Jesus came and broke down that wall of partition and abolished the law that made them two (vs. 14-16). Through Him they were made one.

So does Moses’ law contain any authority for us today? No, because it has been abolished. Moses has been overshadowed and now we serve the perfect Savior and the Son of the living God (Mat. 17:1ff Col. 3:17).

Andy preachers for the Phillips Street church of Christ in Dyersburg, TN

Reconciled in One Body

Cary Gillis

Writing to Gentile Christians, Paul says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). “All spiritual blessings” are **in Christ**. There is a singular point of access to the blessings of the Father (Jn. 14:6).

“There is a singular point of access to the blessings of the Father.”

“The commonwealth of Israel” was God’s chosen physical people (Eph. 2:12). As proud children of Abraham, they knew the promise – the promise of the Messiah. This people always had a hope of the coming Messiah who would set them free and usher in a glorious age. This was different than all others, the Gentile nations, who had no such hope (Eph. 2:12).

When the gospel of Christ went out, it went “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). The Jews were the first to embrace and the first to reject the gospel. In Galatians 3, Paul defines the spiritual value of biological descendancy of Abraham as “zero.” The seed of promise was not the nation of Israel, but was the singular seed – Christ – that came through that nation (Gal. 3:16). The chapter ends with this declaration: “And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). Members of physical Israel had to become members of the spiritual “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Otherwise, they were cut off (Rom. 11:20-21). Gentiles also had to become members of the spiritual Israel. There was no way for the Jews and the Gentiles to be reconciled to God separately. They both had to approach God through the one “way” (Jn. 14:6). They both could only be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8). God’s plan for Jews and Gentiles was that Jesus “might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross” (Eph. 2:16). In chapters 1 & 2 of Ephesians, Paul nails down some specifics about this “one body.”

First, this “one body” was planned in eternity. God had “chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). He had “predestined us unto

adoption” (Eph. 1:5). In Christ “we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined” (Eph. 1:11).

Second, Paul defines **WHO** the “one body” is. The eternal plan was “that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him” (Eph. 1:10). God reconciles us to Himself “in one body by the cross” (Eph. 2:16). Jesus’ body on the cross was the “Lamb of God,” the once for all sacrifice for sin (Jn. 1:29; Heb. 10:10).

Third, Paul defines **WHAT** the “one body” is. He says that God gave Jesus “to be head over all things to the church, which is His body” (Eph. 1:22-23; cf. Col. 1:24). If we are reconciled to God in one body, then that body must be the group of people who are saved – the church.

Fourth, Paul tells us who is in the “one body.” Paul says that we are brought near to God “by the blood of Christ” and “reconciled...in one body by the cross” (Eph. 2:13, 16). Those who are united with the death and blood of Christ enter into the one body. In Romans 6:3, Paul reminds the Roman Christians of this union: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Further, Luke records that those who “gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Then he says that “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). The work that Christ accomplished in His death is a work into which God intends for us to enter. Once we do that, God adds us to the body of Christ, the church, through which we are reconciled to Him.

Finally, Paul tells us who will remain in the “one body.” In Ephesians 2:20, he says that those in the one body are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone.” As long as we remain faithful to Christ and His teachings, and faithful to the teachings of the apostles and prophets, we will remain where God has placed us – within the one body.

Cary preaches for the Bridge Avenue church of Christ in Weslaco, TX



JULY & AUGUST 2016 CONTRIBUTORS

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- AM Worship - 10:45
- PM Worship - 6:00
- Wednesday Night Class - 7:00

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 4. Giving - I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7-8.
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- The Churches of Christ**
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 2. A Biblical name - Rom. 16:16
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