

Was God's Law Abolished by Jesus Christ's sacrifice?

Ephesians 2: 14- 19 KJV

¹⁴ For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; ¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; ¹⁶ And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: ¹⁷ And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. ¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Comments:

We should always consider the context in which difficult to understand scriptures are written to help get the correct meaning of the writer. The book of Ephesians is the collection of letters from Paul sent to the Christian church of God in Ephesus for instruction and guidance. The port city of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) was an important large commercial, cultural and pagan religious center with a population of about 250 to 300 thousand in the first century AD. It was established around 1000 BC as an ancient Greek city and was annexed by the Romans in 133 BC. There had been a Jewish community in Ephesus for over three hundred years when Paul the Apostle visited Ephesus around 53 AD. The church of God in Ephesus included Jews and Gentiles and had difficulties in unifying themselves and keeping separate from the surrounding pagan culture. Gentiles often required Jews to live in separate areas because of their differences. Through the years animosity or enmity developed between the two peoples, so laws and rules were made among each group regarding the other group. Such as Jews did not allow their sons and daughters to marry or associate with Gentiles. If one of them did marry a Gentile, they were considered to have married a dog. Jews would not eat anything touched by a Gentile and Jews referred to Gentiles as the uncircumcised. This term was meant to be derogatory such as the way David called Goliath "you uncircumcised Philistine". The Gentiles also had much animosity toward the Jews. The Jews were allowed to observe the Sabbath by the Romans and were exempted from conscription to the Roman army because they wouldn't fight on their Sabbaths, but the Gentiles were not exempt. The Gentiles made many false accusations against the Jews such as having hatred of their fellow men, and some even believed the Jews sacrificed a Gentile to their god every year.

Some of these old prejudices, suspicions and animosities were creeping into the Church of God so Paul wrote this letter to bring peace, understanding and unity to all the members, both Jew and Gentile. Paul is not referring to God's law and commandments having been abolished because God's righteous law and His commandments do not cause enmity between people. The Greek word used for ordinance is dogma which means "a public decree". It is only used in the New Testament to mean laws imposed by men because of something that seems to be true to them, not laws from God. He is referring to the civil laws, rules and regulations created by Jews and Gentiles because of their differences and mistrust of each other due to the enmity between them. Christ's death in His flesh existence effectively abolished those civil laws (in public decrees) and rules causing enmity between Jews and Gentiles making them each a new man in Christ. Not being Jew or Gentile but both

together being a new type of man in Christ without hatred or prejudice toward each other or anyone else. Gentiles were now fellow citizens with Jews in Christ and all being of the household of God.

Also consider the following scriptures supporting the previous comments about the Ephesians. In Ephesians 1:15 Paul states: ¹⁵ **For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people,** ¹⁶ **I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.** So, the church in Ephesus had a reputation early on of loving all God's people which included Jews and Gentiles. Then attitudes about their differences must have changed because in Revelation 2 Jesus commended them for their deeds and their perseverance but declared they no longer had that "first love". Revelation 1: 3-5 NIV **"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:**

³ **You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary.** ⁴ **Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.** ⁵ **Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.**

And Jesus Christ Himself said this about God's law and commandments in the sermon on the mount: Matthew 5:17-20 NIV ¹⁷ **Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.** ¹⁸ **For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.** ¹⁹ **Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.** ²⁰ **For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.** Furthermore, Romans 3:31 KJV states: **Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

God's law and commandments are still valid today for instruction in God's righteousness and defining sin, and we need to keep them written in our hearts and be obedient to God. If we confess our sins to God and repent by turning away from our sins, we are free from God's penalty for sin which is death (the second death or eternal death) and we are then under God's grace (freely given undeserved forgiveness of sins). Romans 6:14 NIV **For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.**

Revelation 14:12 KJV **"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"**