

a sermon from GALATIANS 5:1-6:

ON CIRCUMCISION AND KEEPING THE LAW IN THE CHURCH

Robert Baral
12/04/2007 AD

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I. A PRAYER

O LORD, convict us of our sins under Thy holy Law. Drive us to our knees before Thy holy judgement seat. Stir our hearts to cry out to Thee for Thy Mercy. Guide us to The Cross of Thy Son. Wash our souls clean. Look not upon the sins of Thy Church, but upon the righteousness of our Redeemer JESUS CHRIST. Bring us into Thy Kingdom on earth and in Heaven. Keep us in Thy Grace, now and for eternity. These things we pray. In the Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

II. A PROPOSITION

Let the faithful Jew keep all the covenantal Commandments of The Law of Moses as much as is humanly possible as a loyal son of Israel. Let the faithful Christian keep The Moral Commandments of The Law of Moses as much as is humanly possible as a loyal son of The Church. And as we seek to faithfully circumcise our lives before The LORD, may all men - Jew and Gentile - come to the saving faith that JESUS CHRIST is Lord and Saviour!

III. A SCRIPTURE – GALATIANS 5:1-6 – ONLY CHRIST AVAILETH ANY THING

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, CHRIST shall profit you nothing.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do The whole Law.

4 CHRIST is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by The Law; ye are fallen from Grace.

5 For we through The Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in JESUS CHRIST neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.¹

IV. THE QUESTION AT HAND – SETTING THE STAGE

The question at hand today is this: Should the faithful Christian keep The Old Testament Covenant of The Law of Moses to have their male children circumcised? This brings up very important questions for us as the saints of GOD redeemed under The New Covenant of Grace at The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST: How much of The Law of Moses should Christians keep? Let us make a beginning by picturing this scenario: We are living in Roman occupied remnant Israel in Jerusalem circa 50 AD, about the time Church tradition dates Saint Paul's Epistle to The Gentile Church in Galatia.² The Crucifixion of JESUS CHRIST has occurred within little more than a decade ago.

¹ 1, KJV, GALATIANS 5:1-6.

² 2, Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, "Chapter Eleven – The Epistle To The Galatians," p 479. "II. Date, 7." GALATIANS was likely written just before or shortly after The Jerusalem Church Council, presided over by Saint James, where the issue of circumcision and the keeping of The Law of Moses for Gentile Christians was decided, circa 49-50 AD.

Almost all “Christians” are Jews. We meet in the homes of local believers, but we also worship in The Temple at Jerusalem. We remain active members of our local synagogues. We confess JESUS as The Messiah fervently, but just as fervently keep The Law of Moses. To do otherwise would be unthinkable in the infant Jewish Church.

The infant Church was in fact perceived by the outside Gentile world, and within remnant Israel herself, to be a branch of the Jewish religion. Rome for instance granted The infant Church the same freedoms that it granted to the Jews. No one could tell the Christians apart from the non-Christians, for almost all were Jews living in Palestine. A young couple in the congregation, the house Church you are an Elder in, are confused. They have just had a beautiful and healthy newborn baby boy. They were planning on having the child circumcised according to The Law of Moses, but now waver.

This is because your house Church has just received a copy of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians and this couple was at the first reading of Paul’s Words, “For in JESUS CHRIST neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”³ The question of how much of The Law of Moses should keep in The Gentile Churches under the missionary hands of Paul and Barnabas has come to the attention of The Church Fathers in Jerusalem. As Guthrie observes, GALATIANS was likely penned by Paul “...after a skirmish with the Judaizers who were probably trying to influence The Judean Church...” Council that was wrestling with these issues.⁴ As an Elder in this Jewish Church, what do you counsel them?

V. WHAT THE LAW OF MOSES COMMANDS WITHIN THE OLD COVENANT

What is circumcision? Fausset defines it is “The cutting off all round of the foreskin (the projecting skin in the male member, the emblem of corruption..., of males, appointed by GOD as token of His Covenant with Abraham and his seed...”⁵ But let us go directly to The TORAH, specifically in GENESIS 17:9-14, where GOD gives This Commandment to Abraham. GOD directs that all males within His covenant people be circumcised. Whether by birth, conversion, adoption or purchase, there was no exception. To not circumcise brought with it fearful consequences: exclusion from the covenantal community; exclusion from The Covenant itself; the cutting off of that person from the nation; the cutting off of that person from life, both earthly and eternal! For circumcision was set as a requirement for members of The Old Testament Church for all generations, a Commandment that was never to be put away, a fleshly token of GOD’s everlasting Covenant with His people Israel.

³ 1, KJV, GALATIANS 5:6.

⁴ 2, Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, “Chapter Eleven – The Epistle To The Galatians,” p 479. “II. Date, 7.”

⁵ 3, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, 834.01, entry “Circumcision.” Scripture cited by this source: DEUTERONOMY 10:16; JEREMIAH 4:4; GENESIS 17:10-14.

So Moses writes in GENESIS 17:9-14, “And GOD said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My Covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is My Covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of The Covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and My Covenant shall be in your flesh for An everlasting Covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My Covenant.”⁶

VI. THE SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AT THE TIME

We must recall here that this is a post-Babylonian exile return remnant Israel that is acutely aware of their father’s past unfaithfulness to The LORD and the recurring Divine chastisements that came upon the nation and people as a result. Assyria had wiped away the northern nation of Israel into the dust of time. Babylon had devastated Judah and Jerusalem, destroying even The Temple. The Persians had allowed the captive Jews to return to Palestine and rebuild The Temple, but their subjugation had remained. The Greeks had invaded and desecrated The Holy of Holies and corrupted the people, being driven out under the Maccabees only after a great national struggle.

Now the Romans had subjugated and occupied The Land of Israel. But at least the Jews still possessed The Land, albeit as prisoners in their own nation. And at least they were allowed to regulate their own religious affairs. At least The Temple still stood again. The Jews were determined not to loose these blessings of GOD again. They understood that GOD’s covenantal blessings upon them were contingent upon their covenantal obedience. The key to securing The LORD’s continued blessing and remaining in The Promised Land, even their continued existence as a people, was seen as resting in all Jews within The Covenant keeping all of TORAH Law by the individual, the family, the community and the nation.

Those Jews who believed in JESUS as The promised Saviour would have thus been a concern to non-believing Jews, not so much as to if they were right or wrong about His Messiahship, but if they would abandon The Law of Moses and lead other Jews to do so. The palpable fear would have been, if enough Jews became unfaithful to The Mosaic Covenant, then GOD would again bring chastisement upon the nation and exile upon the Jewish people from The Promised Land. Paul’s writing of GALATIANS was, as Guthrie offers on the traditional view, that The newly planted Gentile mission Churches outside of Palestine were being invaded by “...over-zealous Jewish Christians who were convinced that the sanctity of The Law [of Moses] must be maintained and circumcision imposed...” upon all Gentile Christian converts.⁷ For if converted

⁶ 1, KJV, GENESIS 17:9-14.

⁷ 2, Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, “Chapter Eleven – The Epistle To The Galatians,” p 483, paragraph 1. “IV. The Source of Opposition in The Galatian Churches.”

Christian Gentiles abandoned The Law of Moses, it could reasonably be feared that converted Christian Jews would follow suit. And the nation would die.

VII. LIFE WITHIN THE COVENANT JEWISH NATION REQUIRES OBEDIENCE

Jewish Christians were seen, by both other Jews and by the Roman occupiers, as still Jews. And as a Jew living in occupied Israel, no matter of what “sect,” we would be under covenantal obligation to keep The Law of Moses. This would certainly include circumcision for those who called themselves Jews, both then as now. The Jews who occupied The Promised Land circa 50 AD, since the return of the remnant of Judah from the Babylonian exile in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, beginning in about 510 BC,^{8 9} were very much conscious of three things: First, that their fathers had been chastised and expelled into exile by Gentile powers because of their lack of covenantal obedience to The LORD under The Law of Moses. Second, that their continued presence as a nation and people in The Promised Land was contingent upon their continued keeping covenant with The Almighty. Third, that if they were unfaithful to The LORD and their covenantal duties to Him, they could and would suffer the same fate of expulsion from The Land as had previous unfaithful generations.

So The Words of the prophet in JEREMIAH 4:4 were very real to these people, “Circumcise yourselves to The LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.”¹⁰ The faithful Jew would consider reverently DEUTERONOMY 10:15-17, “Only The LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For The LORD your GOD is GOD of gods, and Lord of lords, a great GOD, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.”¹¹

So the faithful Jewish man in that time and place would be very conscious of the terrible consequences of what happens to GOD’s people when the spectre of “the forgetting of The Law and the infidelity to The Covenant” were found by The LORD to have corrupted His people: Chastisement. Exile. Death. But as The Catechism of The Catholic Church offers here, The Almighty is always at work in His people, even when He must correct and afflict us with the rod of correction. Always at work is “...The mysterious fidelity of The Savior GOD” Who restores and purifies us, even in the midst of our suffering. “In GOD’s plan, the [Babylonian] Exile already stands in the shadow of The Cross, and the remnant of the poor that returns from the Exile... [prefigures] The

⁸ 3, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, 2584.01, entry “Nebuchadnezzar.” Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC.

⁹ 3, Ibid., 741.02, entry “Captivity.”

¹⁰ 1, KJV, JEREMIAH 4:4.

¹¹ 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 10:15-17.

Church.”¹² Even so, GOD’s Old Covenant people had no wish to repeat another Exile. The pagan military occupation of their nation by the Romans was brutal enough.

So the faithful Jew, then as now, expressed his love and fear of GOD in the keeping of TORAH Law. He would know how The King of the universe delighted in his fathers when their hearts and lives were circumcised to Him. And he would recall the fate of his fathers when they were not. And he would rightly tremble in awe and reverence. He would then reason, “As their seed, if we as Jews wish GOD’s love and blessing upon us, we must keep ourselves in covenantal obedience to Him. We must not be stiffnecked before GOD like past unfaithful generations, for then we will loose The LORD’s blessings of His love and again be expelled from The Land. And we will never be delivered of Gentile occupation if we are not faithful to The Almighty. Our hearts within must be circumcised to GOD. And the token of this is our outward circumcision of the flesh, as GOD has commanded us in covenant through His servant Moses!”

VIII. EXAMPLES CIRCUMCISION IN THE INFANT CHURCH

So The infant Christian Church, mostly Jewish and mostly located in Palestine, had The Law of Moses and this clear covenantal Commandment given to Israel by The Almighty in The Law of Moses: circumcision. They still worshipped in the synagogues and went up to The Temple in Jerusalem. Though they rejoiced on The Lord’s Day for the resurrection of CHRIST, they still kept The Jewish Sabbath. They still recited The SHEMA, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD!”¹³ And they would surely have recalled CHRIST’s Words in MATTHEW 5:17-18, “Think not that I am come to destroy The Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from The Law, till all be fulfilled.”¹⁴ The Lord had not yet returned. The full Law was thus still in effect.

“And why not circumcise?” they would have reasoned. Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John The Baptist, had their child circumcised according to The Law of Moses. So we read in LUKE 1:59-60, “And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.”¹⁵ The Lord Himself - born as a Jew under The Jewish Law in the Jewish nation - was Himself circumcised. On the eighth day after His birth, Joseph and Mary had the infant JESUS circumcised according to TORAH Command. So we read in LUKE 2:21, “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of The Child, His Name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”¹⁶

¹² 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 710, p 205. “III. GOD’s Spirit and Word in The time of The Promises, [as] In Theophanies and The Law.”

¹³ 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:4.

¹⁴ 1, KJV, MATTHEW 5:17-18.

¹⁵ 1, KJV, LUKE 1:59-60.

¹⁶ 1, KJV, LUKE 2:21.

IX. BUT WHAT OF GENTILE BELIEVERS IN JESUS CHRIST?

But as for Gentile believers, The infant Church had already declared - or soon would - that they need not be circumcised, nor keep all The Law of Moses, in order to receive salvation in JESUS CHRIST. Certain Jews, possibly believing Jews from Jerusalem - even from the midst of the infant Jewish Church there - had gone to Gentile converts outside Palestine which Paul and Barnabas had planted, commanding them that they must be circumcised and keep all of The Mosaic Law in order to be saved in CHRIST. Saint Luke documents the history and resolution of this dispute, beginning in ACTS 15:1, “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”¹⁷ Paul and Barnabas withstood this counsel to the Gentile believers, but when it could not be resolved, went up to Jerusalem to present the issue for resolution to the Apostles and Elders of The Church, which sat under the direction of Saint James.¹⁸

Certain Pharisees who believed on The Name of JESUS as The Messiah within The Jewish Church held that all Gentiles who are saved in CHRIST must in effect also become Jews and keep The full Law of Moses. But Peter arose and disputed this, Paul and Barnabas then presenting their case for Gentile believers to not be required to become also Jews to secure their salvation in CHRIST.¹⁹ Saint James then declared the counsel of The infant Church in ACTS 5:19-20, “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to GOD: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.”²⁰

X. IS PAUL’S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS ALSO FOR JEWISH CHRISTIANS?

Now we sit there, as Elders in this infant Jewish Church in occupied Jerusalem, with a copy of Paul’s Letter to The Gentile Church at Galatia arrives in our midst. It is read to the congregation. This young couple now comes up to us, asking if they as Jews should keep The Mosaic Commandment to have their newborn son circumcised. They’ve taken notes and cite Paul’s Words in GALATIANS 5:1-6, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, CHRIST shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do The whole Law. CHRIST is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by The Law; ye are fallen from Grace. For we through The Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in JESUS CHRIST neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”²¹

¹⁷ 1, KJV, ACTS 15:1.

¹⁸ 1, KJV, ACTS 15:2.

¹⁹ 1, KJV, ACTS 5:5-12.

²⁰ 1, KJV, ACTS 5:19-20.

²¹ 1, KJV, GALATIANS 5:1-6.

If, though we are saved in CHRIST but still keep The Law of Moses, does this mean that we are in bondage? In bondage to what? We are all circumcised men of Israel. Are we then excluded from salvation in CHRIST? Is The Law of Moses then nothing but debt and bondage? Is JESUS The Messiah, the Jewish Saviour, then not for those who are faithful Jews? Are we then outside The Mercy of GOD? Are not some men justified by The Law of Moses, while we are justified by The Grace of CHRIST? If we as Jewish Christians obey also The TORAH Law, are we then denied The Spirit of The Living GOD? Do we then have no faith or love for The Almighty?

As an Elder of The Jewish Christian Church, we would answer, “My dear young brother and sister in CHRIST, GOD forbid! Let us look at The Scriptures together, and then you as faithful believing Jewish parents will see that you are to go and have your baby circumcised according to The Mosaic Covenant. But for Gentile believers, this is not required. But what is required of all men, both Jews and Gentiles, is that they confess and believe on The Name of JESUS CHRIST for the forgiveness of sins and for eternal life! But what is the grounds for this course of advice to these young and vulnerable Christians? Let us look further.

XI. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW OF MOSES?

Here then is the issue this young Jewish Christian couple no doubt labored under – now that we are saved in JESUS The Messiah, is Paul now declaring that men should abandon The Law of Moses as of no further value? GOD forbid! As The Catechism of The Catholic Church observes, The Old Law’s moral standards for all of mankind “...are summed up in The ten Commandments.” They “...lay the foundations for the vocation [of righteousness] of man fashioned in The Image of GOD; they prohibit what is contrary to the love of GOD and neighbor and prescribe what is essential to it.” They are “...a light offered to the conscience of every man to make GOD’s call and ways known to him and to protect him against evil.”²² The Commandments of GOD “...denounce and disclose sin” in men before GOD and show us our desperate need for His Divine Grace, preparing the penitent sinner “...for conversion and faith in the Savior GOD...” at The Cross.²³

Paul does not say that The Law of Moses is of no value. GOD forbid! On the contrary, he declares The Law serves to teach us that which is good from that which is evil; to convict us of our sins before GOD; to direct us to see that we are dependant upon GOD’s Grace alone for our salvation; that we require a Redeemer to be bought back from the penalty of our sins under The Law; to guide us to The Cross of JESUS CHRIST. But keeping of The Law does not justify a man’s soul before The Almighty. Only by GOD’s Grace are we justified.

²² 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1962, p 529. “The Moral Law, II. The Old Law.”

²³ 4, Ibid., # 1963, p 530. “The Moral Law, II. The Old Law.”

So Paul writes in GALATIANS 3:22-28, “But The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of JESUS CHRIST might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under The Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto CHRIST, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of GOD by faith in CHRIST JESUS. For as many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST have put on CHRIST. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in CHRIST JESUS.”²⁴

Scofield observes exactly these things, as to why The Almighty gives us The Law of Moses, because “...Men had been sinning before Moses, but in the absence of Law their sins were not put to their account...”²⁵ So The Law convicts each of us personally of our sin-guilt before The LORD. Before The Moral Law in particular, no man can claim before GOD and man that he is righteous. As Paul declares in ROMANS 3:19-20, “Now we know that what things soever The Law saith, it saith to them who are under The Law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before GOD. Therefore by the deeds of The Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by The Law is the knowledge of sin.”²⁶ The Law “...was to the Jews what the pedagogue was in a Greek household, a ruler of children in their minority, and it had this Character... until CHRIST...” should come to redeem men from the sentence of The Law of GOD, which is separation from The LORD and death.²⁷ So Paul says in GALATIANS 3:23, “Wherefore The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto CHRIST, that we might be justified by faith.”²⁸

XII. GALATIANS DECLARES THE PURPOSE OF THE MORAL LAW OF MOSES

The Moral Law of Moses is not given to justify men before GOD, but to convict them of their sinfulness, their need to repent and their need of GOD’s Mercy. It is the atoning payment for our sins that is the question. The animal sacrifices under The Law of Moses were not in themselves mechanically ever the source of our justification, but rather our contrite hearts and broken souls before The holy Creator’s judgement seat. But we, being flesh as well as spirit in this life, are given by GOD things to do in the flesh as well as the spirit for the forgiveness of our sins. King David was certainly no rebel against The Law of Moses, but yet he cries out in PSALM 51:16, O LORD, “...Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering.”²⁹ How can this be?

²⁴ 1, KJV, GALATIANS 3:22-29.

²⁵ 5, Scofield KJV Bible, GALATIANS 5:19, note 1, The purpose of The Law of The Moral Law, p 1244.

²⁶ 1, KJV, ROMANS 3:19-20.

²⁷ 5, Scofield KJV Bible, GALATIANS 5:19, note 1, The purpose of The Law of The Moral Law, p 1244.

²⁸ 1, KJV, GALATIANS 3:24.

²⁹ 1, KJV, PSALM 51:16.

As The Catechism of The Catholic Church says, "...GOD gave The Law as a 'pedagogue' [i.e., schoolmaster or tutor] to lead His people towards CHRIST. But The Law's powerlessness to save man deprived of The Divine 'likeness,' along with the growing awareness of sin that it imparts, enkindles a desire [in the righteous humble man] for The HOLY SPIRIT. The lamentations of The PSALMS bear witness to this" hunger of the upright man confronted with his own sinfulness before The Almighty.³⁰ The cry of all GOD-fearing men in all times has always been, "O GOD, wash me and make me clean of my sin-guilt by Thy Grace!"

So David cries out to The LORD in PSALM 51:1,6,7,17, "Have mercy upon me, O GOD, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. [For] The sacrifices of GOD are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O GOD, thou wilt not despise!"³¹

Where once the imperfect blood of animals sacrificed within the Tabernacle and Temple worship of The Old Covenant was to spur men on to fall on their faces before The Almighty in repentance, designed to show us that sin has a cost – separation from GOD and death. So we read in HEBREWS 9:19-22, "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to The Law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of The Testament which GOD hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both The Tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by The Law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" of sin.³²

But it was not the blood of the sacrificed animals themselves which brought forgiveness of sins of the penitent sinner before GOD. Nor was it any strict outward obedience alone, if devoid of an inward broken and contrite heart and soul, which brought about the forgiveness of sins by The LORD. We might well hear GOD saying, "Look at this animal that is dying in your place. It cost you from your labour and wealth to purchase a substitute for yourself. Look as its blood is shed on the altar for your sins! This should have been you because of your sins against Me, your breaking of The Covenant with Me, your rebellion against My Law which I gave you through Moses! But because I am merciful and love you, My Grace is upon your soul, and I do now wash you clean of your iniquity and sin-guilt!"

³⁰ 5, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 708, p 204. "III. GOD's Spirit and Word in The time of The Promises, [as] In Theophanies and The Law."

³¹ 1, KJV, PSALM 51:1&17.

³² 1, KJV, HEBREWS 9:19-22.

We can hear Matthew Henry, standing there with us in The Jerusalem Temple explaining the ministration of The Old Covenant at work before our eyes, “From the particular method that was taken by Moses in the ratification of The First Testament, which was not done without blood... All men by sin had become guilty before GOD, had forfeited their inheritance, their liberties, and their very lives, into the hands of Divine justice; but GOD, being willing to show the greatness of His Mercy, proclaimed a Covenant of Grace, and ordered it to be typically administered under The Old Testament, but not without the blood and life of the creature; and GOD accepted the blood of bulls and goats, as typifying The Blood of CHRIST; and by these means The Covenant of Grace was ratified under the former dispensation...”³³

XIII. A MORE PERFECT SACRIFICE MADE ONCE FOR ALL AT THE CROSS

Here is what CHRIST does for us, justifying our souls before The Father, that He should see the righteousness of His Son and not our unrighteousness, as in HEBREWS 9:23-28, “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For CHRIST is not entered into The Holy Places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in The Presence of GOD for us: Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So CHRIST was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”³⁴

Matthew Henry observes that the blood and water of sacrificed animals sprinkled in The Holy Place and upon the people by Moses now at The Cross of JESUS CHRIST become for us “... The Blood and Water that came out of our Saviour's pierced side, for justification and sanctification, and also shadowed forth The Two Sacraments of The New Testament, Baptism and The Lord's Supper, with scarlet wool, signifying the righteousness of CHRIST with which we must be clothed, the hyssop signifying that faith by which we must apply all... [For it is] only through The Blood of CHRIST, which procures the remission of that iniquity that cleaves to our holy things, which could not have been remitted but by That atoning Blood” of GOD Incarnate on The Cross on our behalf!³⁵

How is The Son of GOD become The perfect Atonement for all those who believe on Him and confess His Name as Lord and Saviour? If The Law of GOD convicts us of our sins before His holy Presence, how does the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of JESUS CHRIST justify the believer, whether Jew or Gentile? Paul answers in GALATIANS 3:11-14, “But that no man is justified by The Law in the sight of GOD, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And The Law is not of faith: but, The man

³³ 6, Matthew Henry Notes, HEBREWS 9:15-22, II.

³⁴ 1, KJV, HEBREWS 9:23-28.

³⁵ 6, Matthew Henry Notes, HEBREWS 9:15-22, II.

that doeth Them shall live in them. CHRIST hath redeemed us from the curse of The Law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through JESUS CHRIST; that we might receive the promise of The Spirit through faith.”³⁶

XIV. RESOLUTION FOR BOTH GENTILE AND JEWISH CHRISTIANS

Scofield observes that “The Mosaic Covenant” within The TORAH is composed of 3 parts: The Moral Law; The Social Law; The Religious Law. The First, commonly known as The Ten Commandments found in EXODUS 20:1-26, express “the righteous will of GOD” for the moral conduct of men’s lives. They are universally incumbent upon all mankind, no less upon Christians than upon Jews. The Second, as found in EXODUS 21:1-23:13, governed “the social life of Israel.” They may serve as a model for what should also be within the Christian community and society. The Third, as found in EXODUS 24:12-31:18, governed “the religious life of Israel” around first The Tabernacle and then The Temple.³⁷ The Old Testament system of animal sacrifices having ended with the final destruction of The Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD, they are not incumbent upon The Church.

The question is, in which category are we to place circumcision? Clearly, The Moral Law, embodied in The Ten Commandments, are incumbent upon all Christians and Jews to keep. Indeed, they are incumbent upon all men in all ages in all places to live by. They are said to be engraved upon the hearts and embedded within the consciences of all men. They are the standard against which the acts of our lives are judged by The Creator. The Religious Law of The TORAH were written for the Israelite covenantal nation for national Israelite worship. The Tabernacle and Temple no longer exist, and have not, since 70 AD.³⁸ They are not incumbent upon The Church or any Christian nation. As to if what is called the reconstituted nation of Israel in Palestine today, if it claims to be the nation of the Jews, then it is incumbent upon them to resume. But national reconstituted Israel today claims to be a secular nation, itself an oxymoron.

The conclusion must then be to place circumcision under The Social Law of The Mosaic Covenant. As a token of covenantal faithfulness before GOD and man, those who identify themselves as Jews are obligated to obey The Mosaic Commandment to keep circumcision. The issue is not if a man believes and confesses that JESUS CHRIST is the Messiah, The Son of GOD, or denies that He is. The issue is not Christian or non-Christian, but Jew or Gentile. The Church in The New Testament has long declared that Gentiles are not required to keep The full Law of Moses, such as circumcision, but most certainly The Moral Law. Jewish religious authorities from The Old Testament on have long declared that those identifying themselves as Jewish are required as keep as much of The Law of Moses as is humanly possible. In either case, if we love GOD with all our heart, mind and strength, can we dare to do any less?

³⁶ 1, KJV, GALATIANS 3:11-14.

³⁷ 5, Scofield KJV Bible, EXODUS 20, note 1, “The Mosaic Covenant,” p 95.

³⁸ 3, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, 1947.30, entry “Jerusalem.”

XV. IN CONCLUSION

Circumcision then, as Wycliffe comments here on GALATIANS, is not a means of salvation, but a mark of The Old Covenant. In the case of Gentile Christians, circumcision "...could only signify a deliberate attempt to create merit by adopting a legalistic position and seeking righteousness by works. In the beginning, circumcision had no such connotation, for with Abraham it was a sign and seal of the righteousness which he already had by faith." To take on circumcision, the mark and seal of The Law of Moses under The Old Covenant, as a legalistic external "badge of merit" before GOD does not profit the salvation of the recipient in and of itself. Taking on this mark places the Gentile Christian "...under obligation to do The whole Law" as an additional means of justification before GOD. Thereby, this means "...to leave the ground of Grace in CHRIST... in favor of the lower and impossible ground of self-righteousness..." by keeping The Law, which no man is capable of doing adequately to justify his soul before GOD.³⁹

Whether Jew or Gentile, let us pray for the day when, as Saint Paul writes in GALATIANS 6:14-15, "But GOD forbid that I should glory, save in The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."⁴⁰ Keeping The Moral Law of Moses flows from a heart that is circumcised towards The LORD. Outward fleshly circumcision is a token and sign of one who is within The Mosaic covenantal people of GOD. In the same way, The Sacrament of water baptism of the Christian marks outwardly as a token and sign of one who is within The Christian covenantal people of GOD.

Forgiveness of sins, fellowship with The Almighty and salvation has always been by His Grace – not by anything that men might do or not do, no matter how good the works themselves. Saint Paul declares boldly that that salvation is at The Cross of JESUS CHRIST and there alone. So Paul looks forward to the day when, as he writes in PHILIPPIANS 2:10-11, "That at The Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST is Lord, to the glory of GOD The Father.

What would we tell this young Jewish Christian couple who wrestle in Jerusalem in 50 AD as to if they should keep The Law of Moses and have their newborn infant baby boy circumcised? By all means, keep covenantal faithfulness with GOD as Moses has commanded! And keep your hearts circumcised before The LORD all the days of your lives. Love The LORD your GOD with all your heart, mind and strength. And love your neighbours as yourselves. For this is what our Lord and Redeemer JESUS CHRIST has taught us, as has Moses,⁴¹ in The Two Great Commandments.⁴² The outward token of

³⁹ 7, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, GALATIANS 5:2-4, p 1294-1295. "IV. Paul's Gospel Practiced. 5:1-6:15."

⁴⁰ 1, KJV, GALATIANS 6:14-15.

⁴¹ 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:5-6, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our GOD is one LORD: And thou shalt love The LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy

our obedience to The Almighty as Jews is the circumcision in our flesh. But our salvation is by The precious Blood of The Son of GOD, and in Him alone.

Let the faithful Jew keep all the covenantal Commandments of The Law of Moses as much as is humanly possible as a loyal son of Israel. Let the faithful Christian keep The Moral Commandments of The Law of Moses as much as is humanly possible as a loyal son of The Church. And as we seek to faithfully circumcise our lives before The LORD, may all men - Jew and Gentile - come to the saving faith that JESUS CHRIST is Lord and Saviour! As Paul declares to us in GALATIANS 5:6, “For in JESUS CHRIST neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”⁴³ In The Name of GOD The Father, Son and Holy Ghost. AMEN.

might.” LEVITICUS 19:18, “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am The LORD.”

⁴² 1, KJV, MATTHEW 22:36-40, “Master, which is The Great Commandment in The Law? JESUS said unto him, Thou shalt love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is The First and Great Commandment. And The Second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On These Two Commandments hang all The Law and the prophets.”

⁴³ 1, KJV, GALATIANS 5:6.

XVI. REFERENCES

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