

LAW AND GRACE

**“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”
(John 1:17)**

How succinct! How clear! How simple! How profound! The law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Don't ever forget the difference!

There were, of course, laws before Moses. Abraham for example, kept all of God's requirements, decrees, commandments, and laws (Gen. 26:5) Yet nothing in the Scriptures is contrary to the clear cut distinction given to us in this text. Don't be distracted! The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The dramatic difference between these two is clearly seen in many passages of Scripture. One obvious example is John 8:1 - 11. In this passage we are told that a woman was brought to Jesus by men who said they caught her in the act of adultery (John 8:4). The law given through Moses was clear. **“You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14)**. The penalty for breaking this law was also clear: **“If a man commits adultery with another man's wife-- with the wife of his neighbor-- both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” (Lev 20:10)**. The woman's accusers stated the case correctly. **“In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” (John 8:5)** Are you ready for the answer? Like new wine it is indescribably sweet. Like new wine the old wine skins cannot contain it! The response of grace and truth is so revolutionary, and so different from the Law, that some will stumble trying to get around it. Let us, however, brace ourselves and face the inescapable reality, that law and grace are poles apart. The good news is that we have a choice between the two!

Before considering what Jesus said, please note that in this text the “law” is distinguished from “truth”. Truth came through Jesus, not the law. In fact, Jesus Who is the Truth, was crucified by law. The law tries to establish truth, but often fails. Even the testimony of two or three witnesses, as you know, does not guarantee truth. Jesus, Himself, was condemned by the testimony of two witnesses, but they were liars (Matt. 26:60).

Again, do not be distracted from the simple dichotomy of our text. The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Moses and the law are on one side, and Jesus, grace, and truth are on the other. The great gulf between these two is not easily comprehended. In fact, you have to be born again in order to see it (John 3:3). Moses and the law said that such a woman should die, but grace and truth let her live.

Initially, as you know, Jesus said nothing. Rather, He stooped down and began to write on the ground with His finger. No one knows what He wrote. Some have suggested that the all knowing Christ wrote the names of the men there who had also committed adultery. Their dishonesty was obvious. The law required “both” guilty people to be put to death in cases of adultery, but these hypocrites only brought the woman.

As these disciples of Moses continued to question Jesus, He straightened up and said: **“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” (John 8:7)** Having said this He stooped down again and continued to write upon the ground. Then, those who heard, began to leave one at a time, the older ones first. Finally, only Jesus and the woman remained. **“Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘woman, where are they? Has no-one condemned you?’ ‘No-one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’ ” (John 8:10-11)**

How beautiful! How different! How wonderful! How gracious! Let us all be thankful that while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

A PROPER USE OF LAW

“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.” (1 Tim 1:8)

Note that while the law was “given through Moses”, it originated with God. Moses prepared the tablets of stone, but the law was written by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18). Since God knows all things, He knew exactly what He was doing when He wrote the Ten Commandments. That’s why there has to be a proper use of law. As you know, God did not write the law to save us, but rather as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24).

Jesus said: **“It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt 4:4)** This is actually a quotation from Moses (Deut. 8:3). Obviously these words are inspired and are profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). Moses was inspired by God to write these words. Certainly they are important for us to study! So, Paul insists that while some have used the law in the wrong way, there is still a proper use of law.

Then Paul continued: **“We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers-- and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine” (1 Tim 1:9-10)** God made the law for unconverted people. They have hearts that are deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Christian people, however, have been made “righteous” by the blood of Jesus, and consequently the law was not made for them. They are new creations! They have new minds and new hearts (2 Cor. 5:17). God has taken away their heart of stone and given them a heart of flesh (Ez. 36:26). He has put His Spirit within them to cause them to walk in His way. Christians are therefore not “conformed” by outward pressure from the law, but are “transformed” by the power of His Spirit within (Rom. 12:2). That’s why Paul states unequivocally, that the law was not made for the righteous, but for sinners. The Bible word translated as “transformed” is “metamorphosis” from which we get the word “metamorphosis”. Just as caterpillars become butterflies, Christians also become new creations. Caterpillars are ugly and destructive, but butterflies are not. This is a beautiful illustration of conversion. Paul said it like this: **“Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” (Rom 10:4).**

THE REGULATIONS OF LAW HAVE ONLY AN APPEARANCE OF WISDOM

“Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.” (Col 2:23)

“Regulations” have an appearance of wisdom. On the surface, they “seem” to be the solution to sinful behavior, but they are not. They only have an “appearance of wisdom”. The regulations referred to in the above text are: **“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” (Col 2:21)**. The law provided an almost infinite number of ways to become unclean. Please consider these warnings from Moses: **“... if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean--whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground-- even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty. Or if he touches human uncleanness-- anything that would make him unclean-- even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty.” (Lev 5:2-3)**

The word “unclean” occurs over 100 times in the book of Leviticus and the devastating nature of the problem is compounded by the fact that, by law, you could innocently become unclean without even being aware of it. That’s why the command to not touch, taste, or handle, made

sense to the disciples of Moses. Paul said, however, that these regulations were of “no value in restraining sensual indulgence”. Paul is right! Suppose, for example, I command you not to taste chocolate cake. Does that help you to not taste chocolate cake or not? You probably were not thinking about chocolate cake before, but now you are. This command has caused you to think about the very thing it forbids. The more I preach against chocolate cake, the more you think about it. Paul went so far as to say: **“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.”** (Rom 7:7-8)

Don't you see how seductive law is? It appears to be a powerful way to control men's lives, but it actually has no power to restrain sensual indulgence (Rom. 8:3). In fact, the law even stirs up our sinful nature. Please prayerfully consider these Scriptures about the way that law empowers sin!

- **“The law was added so that the transgression might increase”** (Rom. 5:20).
- **“For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.”** (Rom 7:5)
- **“For apart from the law sin is dead”** (Rom. 7:8)
- **“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”** (1 Cor 15:56)
- Please remember that the law was not given to save anyone, but was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24).

Even Moses, through whom God gave the law, knew that it wouldn't work to make men holy. He had seen the failure of law during his own life, and knew that the failures would grow worse after his death. Please consider these words of Moses: **“Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you have been rebellious against the LORD while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!”** (Deut 31:26-27)

Praise God! What the law could not do because of its weakness, God has accomplished through the grace and truth brought to us by Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:1 - 4). Rational people obviously prefer grace and truth to the law of Moses! That's why the Apostle Paul accused the Galatians of being irrational.

THE FOOLISH GALATIANS

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” (Gal 3:1)

There are at least two things that distinguish Paul's letter to the Galatians from his other writings. First, it is his only letter written specifically to a group of churches. His other letters were written to individuals like Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, etc., or to individual churches like the ones in Corinth or Philippi. This letter, however, is addressed “to the churches of Galatia”, that is, to all the churches in the whole country. It is his only letter written specifically to a group of churches. In the second place, it is Paul's only letter that does not have something good to say to those who received it. Even the troubled congregation at Corinth was praised because they were enriched and did not lack in any spiritual gift (1 Cor. 1:4 - 9). To the Galatians, however, he had not one good word to say!

Paul began the letter with a standard greeting, and then immediately accused them of accepting another gospel. He wrote: **“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the**

one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—” (Gal 1:6)
From reading the Galatian letter it is obvious what their problem was. They had begun with grace and truth, and then returned to law. How foolish! Paul wrote: **“I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing-- if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?” (Gal 3:2-5)**

The problem was indeed serious. Those who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ and have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).

EVEN MOSES WAS CONDEMNED BY THE VERY LAW HE GAVE

“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10)

Some have sarcastically said: “Which of the Ten Commandments do you intend to break?” Behind this question is the sincere belief that anyone who really wants to can keep the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, this is not true! Even Moses, through whom these commandments came, did not keep them. That’s why he was forbidden to enter into the Promised Land.

Remember! Moses had a unique relationship with God. When Miriam and Aaron criticized him God immediately came to his defense and said: **“Listen to my words: When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” (Num 12:6-8)**

As we have already said, however, even Moses did not perfectly keep the law, and was condemned by the very law he delivered. Here is the story:

- Early in their wilderness wanderings God commanded Moses to “strike” a rock so that it would bring forth water (Ex. 17:6).
- Thirty eight years later God commanded Moses to “speak” to a rock so that it would bring forth water (Nu. 20:8).
- Moses disobeyed God and “struck” the rock (Nu 20:11).
- Moses was therefore condemned for his disobedience and forbidden to enter into the Promised Land.

Note this Scripture!: **“Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.” (Num 20:12)** The consequences of this act of disobedience were so serious that they are repeated over and over in the Scriptures. (See Nu. 27:12 - 14; Deut. 1:37; 3:26; 32:48 - 52; etc.) While the disobedience of Moses may seem insignificant to you, it was not insignificant to God. Remember, the very nature of law excludes grace. Here are some examples of punishment by law that provided for no grace:

- When the law was given the Levites were charged to kill brothers, neighbors, and friends and 3,000 died (Ex. 32:27 - 28).
- The inhabitants of Canaan were to be shown no mercy (Deut. 7:2, 16)
- The man who encouraged the worship of other gods was to be put to death without pity (Deut. 13:6 - 9).
- Murderers were to be put to death without pity (Deut. 19:11 -13).

- If a woman touches the private parts of someone other than her husband her hand was to be cut off without pity (Deut. 25:11,12).
- **“Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.” (Heb 10:28)**
- Etc.

Law without mercy may “seem” strong, but the Scriptures say it is “weak” and “useless”. (Heb 7:18). We still have reason to believe, however, that Moses was saved. Remember, he appeared with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Lk. 9:28 - 31). Remember, in heaven we will be singing the “song of Moses” (Rev. 15:3). Moses, however, was not saved by law. Nobody can be saved by law. **“Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.” (Gal 3:21)**

Moses was not saved by law, but like the rest of us he was saved by grace and truth! Remember, Jesus also died for the sins committed under the Old Covenant (Heb. 9:15).

THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE CHURCH

“Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.” (Acts 18:7-8)

The dramatic difference between law and grace is also seen by comparing the synagogue with the church. Jewish people worshiped in synagogues, and Christian people worshiped in churches. When the Jews at Corinth opposed Paul and became abusive, he went next door and started a church in the house of Titius Justus. Thus we have another illustration straight from the Bible about the dramatic difference between law and grace. The synagogue and the church were right next door to each other. The Jewish synagogue emphasized law, the church emphasized grace. The synagogue emphasized threats, the church emphasized promises. The synagogue emphasized fear, the church emphasized love. The synagogue emphasized “conformation” and the church emphasized “transformation.”

To show the absence of mercy in the synagogue, we need only to remember that public beatings were a part of Jewish worship. Jesus warned His disciples:

- **“they will flog you in their synagogues” (Matt. 10:17).**
- **“Others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town (Matt. 23:34).**
- **“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues.” (Mark 13:9)**
- **“But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons,” (Luke 21:12)**
- **“They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.” (John 16:2)**

Paul himself tortured Christians in the synagogues. He said:

- **“‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you.’ (Acts 22:19)**
- **“Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme.” (Acts 26:11)**
- Even there in Corinth the Jews beat the ruler of the synagogue: **“Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court.” (Acts 18:17)**

Unfortunately, all the beatings didn't work. In fact, the Bible states that the law was "powerless" to change our lives (Rom. 8:3). The whole concept of law was not designed to make men holy, it was designed to make them "guilty" (Rom. 3:19). Thus, after 1,500 years of law, the people were actually more sinful than when the law was first given. Jesus said: **"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are"** (Matt 23:15). While the law did not make men holy, it did make them hypocritical. When the law was given they took off their clothes and had an orgy before a golden calf. 1,500 years later they had learned to hide their sinful natures behind a thin veneer of self righteousness. Jesus said they were like white sepulchers that looked nice on the outside but inside were full of dead men's bones and everything unclean (Matt. 23:27). Aaron, the first High Priest, was a sinner, but not nearly as hypocritical as Annas and Caiaphas. They were High Priests, you remember, during the days of Jesus. Note what the Scriptures say about these Jewish leaders: **"The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death."** (Matt 26:59)

So, the church at Corinth, with all of its problems, was still much better than the synagogue. In the synagogue they were screaming from the pain of being beaten. In the church they were singing songs about being saved by grace. Please consider these inspired words of Paul to the church at Corinth: **"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way-- in all your speaking and in all your knowledge--because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."** (1 Cor 1:4-9)

HAGAR AND SARAH

"These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants."
(Gal 4:24)

Hagar and Sarah are also used in Scripture to help us understand the difference between law and grace. Hagar was a slave and represented the covenant of law that placed people in bondage. Sarah was free, and represents the freedom provided by the covenant of grace and truth. These two women and their sons are said to be an "allegory" of the two covenants (Gal. 4:24). The Greek word translated as allegory is "allegoreo". "Allos" means "other", and "agoreuo" means to speak in an assembly. An allegory is a teaching tool that describes one thing under the image of another. By understanding the difference between Ishmael and Isaac we gain insight into the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Ishmael and Isaac were half brothers. They had the same father, but different mothers. They were similar in many ways. Abraham begat both in his old age. God spoke to both mothers and prophesied about the future of both sons. Both sons were circumcised. Both became great nations. Both lived in the same part of the world. Both helped bury their father. Since both had the same father, it is quite possible that they were similar in appearance. We may also assume that both wore the same type of clothing, ate the same type of food, and had the same life style. If we saw them from a distance we might easily confuse one with the other.

These brothers may have seemed alike but they were radically different. The word "radical" comes from the Latin "radix," which means, "root." (This is the basis of our English word "radish," which is a root.) So these brothers were radically different, like slavery and freedom.

Judaism and Christianity are also similar in many superficial ways. Both the synagogue and the church were involved in similar activities. Both met each week and studied the Scriptures. Both were evangelistic. Both baptized their converts by immersion. Both sang psalms. Both had nothing to do with pagan idols. Both had high standards of moral conduct. Both emphasized the importance of prayer. Both had elders and deacons.

These two groups, however, like Ishmael and Isaac, were radically different. The Jewish synagogue was based upon the Old Covenant and law, and the church was based upon grace and truth. While one group was giving bad people a beating, the other was giving bad people grace and forgiveness.

Before Ishmael was born, Hagar was told: **“He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers.” (Gen 16:12)**

Every court of law is filled with arguments and hostility. This is the very nature of law. That's why Ishmael would live in hostility toward all his brothers. He and his mother represented the law. Take, for example, the commandment of the law to remember the Sabbath Day and to keep it holy. It sounds very simple, but it is not. This law raises the obvious question “what is work? Some say that to carry a burden on the Sabbath Day is work. But this only raises another question: “what is a burden? Scribal Law defined a burden as “food equal in weight to a dried fig, enough wine for mixing in a goblet, milk enough for one swallow, honey enough to put upon a wound, oil enough to anoint a small member, water enough to moisten an eye-salve, paper enough to write a customs house notice upon, ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet, reed enough to make a pen”—and so on. So the rabbis spent endless hours debating the meaning of the Old Covenant and the people were never quite certain which rabbi to follow. Simple procedures like moving a lamp, stitching a garment, wearing a wig, putting in false teeth, lifting a child, became the focal point of debate, controversy, and division.

That which is written in stone never changes. Our understanding, however, does change. Consequently, our understanding of law is in a constant state of flux. Human beings are seldom at the same level of knowledge and understanding. Sometimes we even learn new information that requires us to abandon previous positions about which we once felt confident. This is one reason why the Old Covenant, written in stone, will always be controversial.

Sarah and Isaac are much different and are an allegory of the New Covenant. Let us briefly review their story. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, God appeared again to Abram and renewed His promises. This time the promises were given in association with the covenant of circumcision, and the changing of names. Abram (exalted father) was given the name Abraham (father of multitudes.) Sarai (Jehovah is Prince) was given the name Sarah (princess.) The very essence of Isaac's birth involved the supernatural. From the human point of view Sarah couldn't have a baby. It had ceased to be with her after the manner of women (Gen. 18:11.) She was “past age” (Heb. 11:11.) She had a dead womb (Rom. 4:19.) She had wanted to have a baby all of her married life, and had failed. The very idea that she could conceive, after menopause, was preposterous. This idea, as you know, did not come from man, it came from God.

The name Isaac means “laughter.” Abraham laughed at the idea of his birth (Gen. 17:17), and so did Sarah (Gen. 18:12). Isaac also must have laughed when he inherited everything Ishmael had hoped for. As we have already pointed out, when Abraham died he left everything he owned to Isaac (Gen. 25:5.) The son of the bondwoman was not an heir with the son of the freewoman (Gal. 4:30.) This, as you know, is like Christianity. Our inheritance is like that of Isaac. It is both miraculous, and undeserved.

While Ishmael was arguing and complaining, Isaac was laughing. This is indeed a poignant allegory of the two covenants.

GOD FOUND FAULT WITH THE COVENANT OF LAW

“For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.” (Heb 8:7)

As we have already pointed out, laws written in stone did not make men holy. In fact, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the law was the power of sin (1 Cor. 15:56). Consequently, God decided to write a new covenant. This time the covenant would not be written in tablets of stone, nor on pieces of paper, but in the minds and hearts of believers. Please consider: **“The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant "new", he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and ageing will soon disappear.” (Heb 8:8-13)**

THE NEW BIRTH AND THE NEW COVENANT

“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’ ” (John 3:3)

On the third day God created living things that reproduced by means of seeds (Gen. 1:11). Each seed reproduced after its own kind. Apple seeds produced apple trees, pear seeds produced pear trees, etc. Even human life comes from seeds. It is both interesting and significant to note that the first time Jesus is mentioned in Scripture He is described as the “seed” of woman (Gen. 3:15). Every seed has a specific genetic code that produces a specific form of life. That’s why Jesus said to Nicodemus that he had to be born again (John 3:1 - 8). Flesh gives birth to flesh and spirit give birth to spirit (John 3:6). If Nicodemus wanted spiritual life he had to receive it from a spiritual seed. So do we! It is not an option, if we want to enter into the Kingdom of God, we MUST be born again. Our physical birth came from a physical seed that contained the “deoxyribonucleic acid” or DNA of our parents. Our spiritual birth gives us the DNA of our Spiritual Father. Our physical bodies will die, but spiritually we can live forever.

Peter reminded his readers that Christians are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Pet 1:23) This spiritual seed places God’s nature within us. Just as a physical seed gave us the “image” of our earthly father, conversion gives us the “image” of our Heavenly Father (1 Cor. 15:49). The Kingdom of God is spiritual, that’s why it cannot be inherited by flesh and blood. Even though the product of of being born again is spiritual, it is very real. In fact, Christians are even called “new creations” in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

If God has written His laws in your minds and hearts the transformation of your life will be obvious. Here are some of the ways the Apostle John describes those who are “born again”.

- **“If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him” (I Jn 2:29).**
- **“No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God” (I Jn 3:9).**

- **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.” (I Jn 4:7).**
- **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well” (I Jn 5:1).**
- **“for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (I Jn 5:4).**
- **“We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (I Jn 5:18).**

John, the Apostle, who wrote these inspired words is the same man who wrote that the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

A MERCIFUL PRIEST

“For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” (Heb 2:17)

Priests under the law of Moses were forbidden to show mercy. Remember, those who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy (Heb. 10:28). Those who approach the throne of grace, however, obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb. 4:16).

Moses came from the tribe of Levi (Ex. 2:1). Even before the law was given Levi displayed no mercy in killing every man in the village of Shechem (Gen. 34:25). When the law was given, it was the Levites who killed 3,000 brothers, friends, and neighbors (Ex. 32:27, 28). One major role of a priest under the law of Moses was to kill sacrificial animals and birds. The number of daily sacrifices was greatly exceeded on special occasions. For example, when Solomon dedicated the Temple, the Mosaic priests killed 22,000 cattle, and 120,000 sheep and goats (1 Ki. 8:63). It is easy to see how a priest who was constantly killing innocent animals and birds would become calloused and without mercy.

Jesus, however, is a different kind of priest. He is a merciful high priest. As you know, He could not be a priest under the law of Moses, because he came from the wrong tribe (Heb. 7:14). We are repeatedly told in Scripture, however, that Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10: 6:20; 7:11, 15, 17, 21). Please consider:

- There is no record that Melchisedec ever made any blood sacrifices. Jesus didn't make any animal sacrifices either. The only blood He shed was His own.
- Priests under the law of Moses died, but because Jesus lives forever He has a permanent priesthood. (Heb. 7:24).
- Priests under the law of Moses were sinners. Therefore they had to first make sacrifices for themselves, and then for the errors of the people (Heb. 9:7). Jesus was different from these priests because He had no sins (Heb. 7:26).
- Because Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec through his ancestor Abraham, the Scriptures conclude that the priesthood of Melchisedec is superior to that of Levi (Heb. 7:4 - 10).

ONE DAY OF GRACE OR EVERY DAY OF GRACE

As we have said before, under the law of Moses there were many ways a person could become unclean. Please consider:

“Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean-- whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground-- even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty.” (Lev 5:2)

“If anyone touches something unclean-- whether human uncleanness or an unclean

animal or any unclean, detestable thing-- and then eats any of the meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people.” (Lev 7:21)

“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any man has a bodily discharge, the discharge is unclean.’” (Lev 15:2) The following verses teach that anything this unclean man touches, also becomes unclean. This included his bed, chair, saddle, clay pot, etc. Obviously, a devout Jew could touch something unclean, and become unclean, without even being aware of it.

There are many more verses in the law of Moses that describe how a person can inadvertently become unclean. That’s why the devout Jew lived a life of fear and uncertainty.

THERE WAS, HOWEVER, ONE DAY IN THE YEAR WHEN EVERY JEW COULD FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD! THAT WAS THE DAY OF ATONEMENT!

Jewish confidence came on the Day of Atonement, not because of what the person did, but because of what the high priest did. On that day the high priest entered into the presence of God to make atoning sacrifices for himself and for the errors of the people. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was busy ministering all day long.

Here is a brief resume of what the high priest did on the Day of Atonement. The primary source for this information is Lev. 16:

- He bathed.
- He dressed in holy garments of white linen.
- He offered, or presented at the door of the tabernacle a bullock for a sin offering for himself and his house.
- He presented at the same place two goats for a sin offering for the congregation.
- He cast lots on the two goats. One of the goats was to be sacrificed, and the other was to be let go in the wilderness.
- He sacrificed the bullock.
- He passed from the court, through the holy Place, and into the Holy of Holies with a censer and incense, and filled the space with a cloud of smoke.
- He returned to the court for blood from the bullock and passed again within the veil to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and seven times before it.
- He returned to the court and killed the goat upon whom the lot for sacrifice had fallen.
- For the third time he returned to the Holy of Holies and did the same with the goat’s blood as he had done with the blood of the bullock.
- He purified the outer part of the tabernacle by the sprinkling of blood and placed some of it on the horns of the altar of incense (Ex. 30:10).
- He returned to the court and placed the blood of the bullock and goat upon the horns of the altar of burnt offerings and sprinkled it seven times.
- He offered to God the remaining goat, laid his hands upon it, and confessed the sins of the people.
- He consigned the goat to a man who was to take it to the border of the wilderness and release it.
- He bathed and changed his linen garments for the regular high priest’s clothing.
- He sacrificed two rams as burnt offerings for himself and for the people.
- He burnt the fat of the sin offering upon the altar.
- He saw to it that the remainder of the sin offering should be burnt without the camp.

Obviously, the high priest was busy all day long. Those who knew what he was doing were filled with confidence. Their high priest was ministering in the presence of God on their behalf. Their sins were being forgiven because of what He was doing. On other days they might not be certain of their salvation, but on this day they had reason for confidence.

Unfortunately, this blessed period of grace and confidence only lasted one day. But while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Please consider:

- **“Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives for ever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” (Heb 7:23-25)**
- **“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Heb 9:11-12)**
- This means that we are not just saved by the death of Christ, but we are also saved by His life (Rom. 5:10). Just as the high priest interceded for the people one day of the year, Christ ever lives to make intercession for us every day of the year.
- **“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (I Jn 2:1-2)**

LISTEN TO JESUS

Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration and spoke with Jesus. Peter was there and wanted to build three shelters, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Peter was wrong! God once spoke to His people by the prophets, but now He speaks to them through Jesus (Heb. 1:1). Therefore God interrupted and spoke to Peter with a voice from heaven: **““This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (Matt 17:5)**

You do have a choice! You can listen to Jesus!

How simple! How profound! How wonderful! How liberating!

How happy we ought to be to listen to Jesus rather than to Moses and the prophets.

Remember, Jesus actually fulfills the law. Jesus actually makes clear the message God gave to Moses and the prophets!

So, when you are confused and don't know what to do, listen to Jesus! When you are trapped by your own sins and do not know which way to turn, listen to Jesus! When you are discouraged and ready to quit, listen to Jesus! **YOU WILL NEVER REGRET LISTENING TO JESUS!**

- Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).
- All judgement has been entrusted to Jesus (John 5:22).
- Furthermore, we will even be judged in the last day by the Word that Jesus has spoken (Jn. 12:48).
- It is because of Jesus that we can come boldly to the throne of God to obtain mercy and help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).
- Jesus is our Great High Priest and ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).
- Jesus has promised that whosoever confesses Him on earth, He will confess before the Father who is in heaven (Matt. 10:32).
- Jesus has promised that anyone the Father gives to Him he will not cast out (John 6:37).
- **LISTEN TO JESUS! HIS GRACIOUS INVITATION COULD NOT BE MORE CLEAR!**

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:28-30)

For further information please contact: