

**Death, Immorality, and Heaven: No. 9-A**

**“Two Mediators” – A Response to FR 297**

“Brother Cecil: There is much I'd like to say about this essay (No. 297) of yours, but my schedule is tight. I have said before, and I'll repeat it here: *If just one cardinal aspect of the Preterist's doctrinal platform is proven to be false, the whole platform collapses.* Note, please, I used the term “cardinal.”

“In your case, brother, that *one* flaw is found in your position that the old Jewish system did not end until about A. D. 70. For if this is correct, the early believers lived under two mediators, although Paul makes it plain that “There is one mediator between God and man, and He is Christ Jesus.” I have introduced this point previously, but I do not recall your addressing it. Take care and God bless.--- Signed.”

The sender of this note has questioned various points that I have presented before. I welcome and respond to most all of your notes and questions but I do not have time and concentration to write long answers and continued correspondence. Also, I can write an essay for the benefit of all as easily as writing a detailed answer to one person. Because the concept that the Law of Moses was destroyed/abolished/completely fulfilled at the Cross is indelible in the minds of so many, I am using the general content of my response to this good brother for this issue. I have dealt with this topic in at least five issues of FR – Numbers 39, 43, 173, 174, and 175. I will not reveal the identity of the responding brother because these are doctrinal, rather than personal, matters.

Even if we concede that the falsity of one cardinal aspect of the “Preterist’s doctrinal platform” proves it all to be erroneous as is dogmatically asserted, the MISGUIDED INTERPRETATION commonly advanced by others and this brother does not prove it.

To declare that the approved keeping of the Law of Moses ended at the cross is to deny Jesus’ plain declaration. At the outset of his ministry, Jesus projected the keeping of the Law into the kingdom of heaven which was initiated about seven weeks after the cross. Jesus declared, “*Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same 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*” (Matt. 5:19-NIV). I am not going to be so bold as to contradict Jesus and declare that Paul, James, and the Judean disciples were mistaken in keeping rituals of the Law even thirty years later! The very thought of me cherishing my interpretation so as to judge those saints who were under the supervision of the Spirit as being in error is preposterous. I understand better than they did! How ridiculous! Oh yes, I formerly thought and taught that because I listened to respected teachers instead of The Respected Teacher.

In this quotation in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was addressing Jews who were living under a combined civil-religious government required by the Law. It was administered

by the Levites with added civil laws by Rome. Jewish culture was built around this arrangement. Was this system outlawed the day after the crucifixion? Were all Jews throughout the empire in sin who continued to keep their Law the day after Pentecost? Did they sin by continuing their tithe tax supporting the civil-religious system? Such a system and culture could not be changed overnight.

The Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) forbade the binding of circumcision, which represented the Law, upon Gentiles, but there was no indication that Jewish believers should forsake it. After that, Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3). On his last trip to Jerusalem he “*cut his hair, for he had a vow*” (Acts 18:18). During this period Judean disciples continued to keep the law (Acts 21:17-26), but they were not doing it thinking that Moses was mediating their reconciliation. Paul was adamant that no one could look to the Law for salvation for that would have made Christ’s role as mediator unnecessary. That would make salvation by law instead of grace. But law-keeping as a matter of devotion and respect for their heritage was not forbidden. In the sixties of the first century the writer of Hebrews declared, “*In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is BECOMING OBSOLETE and growing old IS READY TO VANISH AWAY*” (Heb. 8:13). The covenant of law had been reducing to inactivity for over thirty years while the gospel message was expanding. It had not vanished but it was nearing that point in time.

Paul argued that keeping of days, food regulations, and circumcision were matters of indifference as far as salvation and fellowship were concerned (Rom. 14; Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 8:8; etc.). But he would permit no thought of salvation through the keeping of those things. Disciples today may circumcise, tithe, and observe special days and food restrictions if they do not look upon them as a pertinent to their salvation. Many of their legal governmental regulations were in the same category as those of our government. We sin if we refuse to pay taxes, ignore traffic regulations, or we violate laws pertaining to business. But if we keep all those things perfectly, we still cannot claim salvation through them. Law can bring sin but it cannot offer salvation.

The law was “*ordained by angels through an intermediary*” whom we understand to be Moses (Gal. 3:19-20). Rather than revealing the Law to each person, God delivered it through Moses. Paul also wrote, “*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all..*” (1 Tim. 2:5). Moses’ role cannot be defined as a true mediator in the same sense as the role Jesus filled. He did not mediate, that is, bring two alienated parties together, thus effecting reconciliation between God and men. He was only the deliverer of a law which had no power to reconcile by removal of guilt of sin. Violation of law could only add more guilt. The apostles filled a somewhat similar role as ambassadors entrusted with a greater ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21). Jesus was not a deliverer of law but one who took our guilt upon himself, thus eliminating that which separates us from God. So Paul could rightly say there was only one mediator – to reconcile us to God.

Jesus, the mediator of reconciliation, was himself subject to the Law that Moses delivered / mediated! That consideration should make this whole point moot.

Jesus was the mediator of Samuel, Elijah, David, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and all the righteous of ages past who served under Moses! They had no means of reconciliation to God in their time. They were still confined to the hades world alienated from God, still not given immortality and yet to be raised and called into judgment for their good and evil deeds. Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). Jesus had not opened the way into heaven until after he, as High Priest, took his sacrifice into the Holy of Holies and returned in confirmation of it. His sacrifice mediated reconciliation between God and men.

Happily, Paul informs us, *“But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, etc.”* (Gal. 4:4-5). From the treasure-filled Chapter 9 of Hebrews, we read of his securing eternal redemption. Then the conclusion: *“Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.* (9:15). Jesus took their appointment with death and judgment in their stead, thus they were then reconciled to God. Being reconciled, they were given immortality, no longer having to wait in the unseen world. They benefited from both mediators – Moses and Jesus. The early disciples who had died in those last days and slept in death were also given immortality at the return of Christ.

I was taught in youth that the Sermon on the Mount was a sort of constitution of the law of Christ and his coming kingdom, and that he was replacing points of the Law with his own new teachings. Such concepts fly in the face of Jesus and contradict his very own statements introducing his Sermon in Matthew 5:17-20. Even the Beatitudes are not generalities addressed to you and me but they were preparing the Jewish hearers for the reception of the kingdom and the great upheaval of change from the earthly kingdom to the spiritual kingdom. In similar manner, as the change from slavery in Egypt to a new nation required forty years of development, so there would be a comparable development period in fully transforming from an earthly kingdom to the spiritual kingdom. The two kingdoms overlapped until the national destruction. The Law did not cease to save after the Cross or Pentecost for it had no power to save at any time.

After his plain statement that he did not come to abolish/destroy the Law, we begin in his next paragraph to explain that Jesus is stating new laws of his own! He was not stating new laws of his own which would over-rule Moses! He was explaining the true meaning of the Laws which the Jews were failing to grasp because of traditional interpretations. His explanations were not laws for us today. He emphatically told them (Jews, not us) to continue keeping those laws in order to be called greatest in the kingdom *“till heaven and earth passed away.”*

In Matthew 24 Jesus indicated that this upheaval of heavenly bodies would be at his soon return, and John saw it in vision (Rev. 21-22) at the consummation of their age when the old system was fully succeeded by the new. The practice of the Law ended when their

whole system was obliterated and redemptive history of reconciliation to God was finished. I have dealt with these points repeatedly.

During this interim of overlap, a Jewish disciple could continue to keep the Law -- even its rituals. The believing Jew could now see the real meaning of those rituals as being typical of Jesus whom he had now embraced. He could eat of the Passover lamb with greater awe as he now realized that Jesus was the true Lamb and that the bread and wine of the Passover pictured the body and blood of their Savior in the Lord's Supper. They could participate in those rituals for enrichment of meaning rather than for justification just as we may participate in the Communion for enrichment of meaning rather than for justification. We are not justified by "Christian rituals" but by Jesus accessed by faith. The Law pointed to Christ. It still pointed to Christ even more convincingly for the Jew who accepted Christ, the one true mediator.

It is disturbing that the respondent chose to steer away from the powerful, irrefutable points of the essay and chose such a weak objection to dismiss them. Some claim to be "partial preterists." Everyone who believes in the predicted incarnation is a partial preterist. So that does not say much. But to contend that Jesus must yet come again at a presumed end of time, raise the dead, bring everyone into a universal judgment to give account for their good and bad works, and to then receive pronouncement of being saved or rejected -- that says a lot!

Futurist views indicate that Jesus, our Mediator, has not yet brought anyone into reconciliation with God. That lack of reconciliation has prevented all from entering into the heavenly relationship. That would mean that all were consigned to the hades world until after a universal day of judgment. That means that no one has been raised from the dead -- no one! Heaven is still unpopulated. Man is still alienated, for he must await judgment. His sins are still held against him. He must answer to God for his guilt. Because sin alienated him and those sins must still be accounted for, man is still alienated. Jesus' work of reconciliation is not yet accomplished. Maybe in promise but not in reality, you may say. As a futurist, is that really what you believe? You cannot believe that Jesus is yet to accomplish these things and logically deny these glaring inconsistencies.

The all-important question is: Are we reconciled to God, or will that perfection of redemption be delayed until another return of Christ in the indefinite future?

If any of you choose to continue holding to such futurist beliefs, so be it. You can still be my brother in Christ. []

(Cecil Hook; January 2006)