

The Death Of The Custodian

Many of you have read Carl Ketcherside's "*The Death of the Custodian*" and your life has not been the same since. If you were like me, you were taught the difference in the old and new covenants from childhood. You knew how to identify and differentiate them. But if you were like me, when you read this little book, you learned that you did not know the basics of their identity and differentiation previously as you had thought.

Is the New Testament a code of laws which the professing Christian must follow? If not, what about the commandments of Jesus?

Because of the great enlightenment it offered me, I reprinted the book a few years ago with permission of Carl's family. Now I have just received another printing. My sincere desire is that each of you read it, for I still see so many misconceptions being promoted that this book can clarify. It may enrich your understanding of the Bible more than any other book you have read.

For you who are unfamiliar with this message, I am copying below several beginning paragraphs of Chapter 8 titled "*The Time of Reformation*" to introduce you to the style and clarity of the writing of Carl Ketcherside. He begins:

"In a wonderful treatise contained in three chapters of Hebrews (8, 9, 10), the writer summarizes what he had previously written about the superiority of the new covenant over the old. He begins the section with the words, '*Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum*' (KJV). Twice in this limited framework he refers to the promise of God through Jeremiah, that He intended to make '*a new covenant*' (8:8-12; 10:15-17). Of special significance is the catalog of observances and ordinances under the '*old covenant*,' which were '*imposed on them until the time of reformation*' (9:10).

"The next four words are, '*But Christ being come.*' The covenant of law was temporary and transitory. It was to exist only until the time for the great change had come. It was a time of reformation, which was to be ushered in by the coming of Christ. He was to be "*the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises*" (8:6). It is this '*better covenant*' which creates and cements our relationship to God, and we should turn our attention to God's revelation concerning it with a great deal of eagerness.

'The advent of Jesus to the earth constituted the watershed of human history. Jesus is the '*Great Divide.*' He is the '*new covenant*,' the Word of God, which became flesh and '*dwelt among us, . . . full of grace and truth.*' All who receive Him receive of the fullness that is in Him. They become partakers of grace and truth. '*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*' (John 1:17; KJV).

The casual reader may overlook the profound significance of this statement. The law was given by Moses. The medium was not the message. Moses was not the law. The law was external to Moses. It was even written by another and handed to him. The law outlived Moses. It survived his death. But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. They were not given by Him as the law was given by Moses. He was full of grace and truth. When Jesus came, grace and truth came. These constituted His '*fullness*,' His nature, His essence.

"Law is always external. It is always imposed from outside. It can never make man good. It can only make him wish he had been good. The coming of Jesus brought an end to law as a basis of anyone's relationship to God. Law, as a written code, was suspended and superseded by grace and truth. We are no longer governed by a written code. We are not under law, but under grace.

"Jesus did not simply eliminate the law of Moses as a futile manner of attempting to secure righteousness. He did away with the '**law principle.**' **He did not substitute one written code for another.** Instead of giving us a law, He gave himself. It is not by trust in deeds of law, but by faith in Him as a person that we secure and sustain a right relationship with the Father. Law has gone and faith has come. Moses stands in history as the giver of law. Jesus stands in history as the giver of life!

"Law confines, restricts, and inhibits. It is a police power that keeps man down by keeping him under. It is a prison compound in which man is shut up. It is a custodian charged with guarding him and delivering him safely to his destination. No man is free under law. Law and liberty are antithetical to one another. The role of law is described in poignant terms in Galatians 3:23-26. Obviously, Paul is here speaking of the law given by Moses, the law that was announced 430 years after the covenant made with Abraham (3:17). But what he has to say will apply to any written code, as we shall see.

"Paul uses the expressions '*before faith came*' (v. 23) and '*after that faith is come*' (v. 25). The period '*before faith came*' is identified as the time when men were kept under the law. The word '*kept*' means guarded, or under surveillance, as by keepers of a prison. Certainly there were men of faith under the law but there is a difference between men coming to faith, and faith coming to men. The first is a personal trust in God. The last is a principle of justification in Christ, which came as a historical event. That faith had not come while man was under a written code. He was '*shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed*' (v. 23).

"If the law was helpless to justify, or make men righteous, what was its function? The answer is simple. '*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*' (v. 24). Unfortunately, this rendering in the King James Version can be misleading because of the meaning we attach to

'*schoolmaster.*' We think of such a person as a teacher in school, but that is not the meaning of the original at all.

"The word '*paidagogos*' was applied to a trusted slave who was made the guardian of a boy and charged with his upbringing. When a lad in a Roman or Greek household reached a certain age he was consigned to the keeping of such a slave. That slave was expected to control and direct the boy's life, regulate his conduct, and supervise his behavior until he reached the age of puberty. The word literally means a '*child-conductor.*' Our best English equivalent is '*custodian.*'

"The law was like a custodian, to guard and guide God's people until they were safely delivered to Jesus, so they could be justified by faith in Him. After faith came we '*are no longer under a custodian.*' If we are under another written code, we are under a custodian. If we make the New Covenant Scriptures a code of laws we constitute them a custodian. It is one of those very Scriptures which here declares that we are no longer under a custodian. We are not in custody, we are in Christ. **The custodian is dead.**"

We will end the quotation there, asking a pertinent question: Are you depending upon to a dead custodian -- the principle of law -- to lead you to Christ? Read this book to find comforting and assuring answers.

In order that many may afford this book of 152 pages, we have kept the price at a nominal \$5.00 per copy. If you cannot afford a copy, we will send one without charge as our resources permit. Please add \$1.50 for mailing any order under \$30.00. Above \$30.00 postpaid. It is in large, easy-to-read font.

After reading this book, many have ordered copies for their family members, their friends, or their elders. Others have used its twelve chapters for classroom discussion. Through you, may God continue to use the works of his devoted and humble servant, Carl Ketcherside, for the building up of his body in love.

(Cecil Hook; April 2002) []