

THE

HARVESTER

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

March 1989

No. 039

A LETTER FROM TEXAS

[Editor's Note: Due to limited space, only a portion of the following letter could be published at this present time. The sections which do not appear here, do not in any fashion take away from the subject at hand.]

The August 1988 issue of The Harvester carried an article entitled, "Which Side of the Cross Do You Live On?" I would like to respond to that article.

I strongly support the commandment given in Jude 3 to *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints"*. Therefore, the admonition to rightly divide the Word of Truth, 2 Tim. 2:15, is well taken. Christians must be sure that the doctrinal steps

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taken in pursuit of salvation is of Faith, Rom. 14:23, and that they consist of the Will of God for the Christian dispensation, Matt. 7:21.

Even though brother Tony Whiddon's efforts to steer us in this direction is commendable, I believe there are serious flaws in some of the logic applied, and I would like to address those ... For the sake of brevity I will paraphrase the brother's thoughts, being careful if possible to not misrepresent him in any way, for that is certainly not my intention. With this said I will now attempt to set forth the beliefs I believe the article contends for and examine them in the light of God's Holy Word.

1) The article states that ALL things in the Gospel books of Matt., Mark, Luke, and John are records of things that happened under the Law of Moses; that ALL Christ said in the Gospels does not apply to the Christian Dispensation but only that some parts which was not specifically applicable to the Old Law apply.

... My reply to item 1.

Perhaps bro. Whiddon misstated what he meant when he said, "The things written in all accounts of the Gospel are records of things that occurred under the Old Law, not the New." This is an incorrect statement since we find many things recorded in the Gospels which occurred under the New Law, ref. Matt. 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 21. These are all part of the Gospel account and all occurred after Christ's death on the Cross, therefore under the New Law.

Even if it was true that all things recorded in the Gospel books happened under the Old Law would that in itself prove they are not applicable to us today? Would the fact that God gave a certain law to the Jews keep him from

applying that same law or principle to us today?

We readily admit that every thing Christ said or taught while living under Moses' law does not apply to us today but even though Jesus spoke to the Jews about things pertaining to the Mosaical dispensation, would that prohibit Him from applying such principles to Christians?

What may be overlooked is that from the beginning of his creation, God instituted principles of right and wrong which are unchanged and that has governed man in all ages, under every dispensation and every law whether it be Patriarchal, Mosaical, or Christian.

The Law of Marriage is from the beginning of time. It has and will apply to man from the Creation to the Judgement and what Jesus said to the Jews about divorce and remarriage was governed by God's basic and perpetual principles, therefore are as applicable to Christians today as they were in the Jewish dispensation. This was what Jesus meant or was referring to when He said, "*but I say unto you*". Moses' law was simply the legal or technical application of God's will at the time. Christ's teaching in this connection was an application of God's eternal principles regarding the marriage relationship for all time.

I believe the principle Jesus applied in Matt. 19:9 is seen in Matt. 19:16 where the Rich Young Ruler asked what should he do to inherit eternal life? Please note: 1) This was under Moses' law, 2) was addressed to a Jew, 3) Jesus' answer was from the Law of Moses. Now does this mean Christians today are not bound by Jesus' teaching here on Murder, Adultery, Stealing, False Witness and Honoring one's parents? No, we are just as bound by Jesus'

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teaching here as any other scripture in the New Testament. Why? Because Jesus was applying God's perpetual principle of right and wrong in such matters and they have and do apply to all mankind from the creation unto the end of time.

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A REPLY FROM BRO. WHIDDON

I would first like to commend brother Phillips for the wonderful attitude that he displayed in his letter. It is a pleasure to discuss the scriptures with someone like this.

Brother Phillips, along with many others, quickly caught an error I made in the beginning of my article, "Which Side of the Cross Do You Live On?" I was clearly wrong when I said that "everything" in the gospels occurred under the Old Law. I deeply regret this mistake, and apologize to anyone that it may have offended or misled.

He points out an example in each of the gospels that occurred after the cross. These things are of course part of the New Law. From the title of my article it should be evident that I was trying to show that the cross is the "dividing line". The things that happened prior to the crucifixion happened under the Old Law.

But as brother Phillips correctly points out, this does not prove anything. Many things were carried over from the Old Law to the New. However, we can always find these items recorded somewhere after Christ's death.

The fact that God gave a law to the Jews certainly would not prevent Him from applying it to Christians. But what did prevent Christ from doing so before His death was Matt. 5:18, *"... till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."* The cross was the final fulfillment. It was at that time that the Old was gone and the New could begin to be taught. If Christ taught anything "new" (to the Jews) then He violated His own words. If some of the things He taught were meant to be part of the New Law, how do we know which ones, unless they are recorded after His death? You might ask why Christ could not have taught the Law to the Jews and still have taught "new" things to non-Jews, without contradicting Himself in Matthew 5:18. He might could have, but He wasn't allowed to do this either. Matthew 15:24 shows us that He was sent only *"... unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"*. He was sent as a sacrifice for all mankind, but was sent to teach only the Jews. It was never intended for Him to teach prospective Christians.

Brother Phillips, I believe, tries to distinguish in some ways between a "law" and a "principle". I would like to go slightly more in depth with this. A principle is something that applies to everyone, regardless of when or where they live. A law, on the other hand, has certain restrictions. A law may be restricted to a certain time period, a certain group of people, or both. Such things as murder, stealing, lying, adultery, etc. have never been right. There are basic principles that we all recognize that forbid these. Even if God gave

us a law that did not explicitly forbid these, we would still know they were wrong. But such things as keeping the sabbath day, keeping the passover, observing the Lord's Supper, baptism, etc., are laws because they do not have universal application.

There are indeed things which Christ taught before His death that have been valid since the creation, and continue to be valid today. But these are principles, not laws. The beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) are eternal principles. Many other things in the "Sermon on the Mount", and elsewhere in the gospels are principles. But any laws that He taught must, of necessity, belong to the Old Law.

Brother Phillips correctly points out that God's marriage law is from the beginning, as Christ Himself pointed out in Matthew 19:4-6. But one thing Brother Phillips forgot to point out is that God's original law made absolutely no provision for divorce. The subject was never mentioned until the time of Moses. How then, could it be eternal? What Christ taught in Matthew 19:4-6 was eternal (Genesis 1:27; 2:24). But what He taught in Matthew 19:8-9 was not. He even said so in verse eight, "... *but from the beginning it was not so*". Notice that He didn't even mention divorce until the Jews questioned Him about the Law of Moses in verse seven.

God told us in Malachi 2:16 that He "... *hateth putting away*". And God's mind does not change as to what is good and bad, or what He likes or hates. "*For I am the Lord, I change not ...*" Malachi 3:6; "... *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*", James 1:17. I hope that when Brother Phillips said, "Moses' law was simply the legal or technical application of God's will at the time", that he was not saying that God approved of divorce because

Malachi obviously said He doesn't. And Malachi said this while the Law of Moses was still in effect. Yes, God did "allow" it, but does this mean that He liked it or approved of it? God "allowed" His only begotten Son to suffer and to die a most horrible death, but do you think He liked what happened to Him? Of course not. But it was necessary to accomplish the salvation of man. There are many things in the Old Law that God did not approve of, but He found them to be necessary in order for Israel to perform its primary function: To bring the Messiah into the world. The Law of Moses was simply a tool to at least partially control a very stubborn and unruly people. But it was never meant to be a perfect reflection of God's will for man, as the New Testament was (James 1:25).

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IN MY HANDS

I went to the funeral parlor a while ago and paid respect to the earthly remains of an old acquaintance. Some thoughtful person had placed in her hands a well worn Bible. It looked fitting and symbolic. I could see how her face used to shine as she would walk with her Bible and say, "Bless the Lord!" Yes, it was most appropriate.

Later, I was thinking: What if someone put the thing that seemed most appropriate in our hands after we died? Would it be: a cigarette--a bottle--a fishing pole--a set of car keys--a deck of cards--a knob from the television set--a worn Bible--or a Bible not worn at all? I just wonder ... !

--Copied.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
March 10-12 (F-Su)	Pleasant Grove Church near Alex City, AL 7:00 pm	Douglas Farmer (Pisgah, AL)
March 12-14	Valley, AL -Series on Eldership-	Harry Cobb (Birmingham, AL)
March 17-19	Godby Road Church Atlanta, GA	Chris Melton (Valley, AL)

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Who was so anxious to speak that he was like bottled-up wine?
2. How old was Noah at the time of the flood?
3. Whose taxes did Jesus pay?
4. What do you spare that indicates you hate your son?
5. After Aaron's staff blossomed, what edibles did it produce?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who inspected the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings? MOSES (Exo 39:43)
2. How many times did Balaam beat his talking donkey? THREE TIMES (Num. 22:28)
3. Did the owners of the donkey taken for the triumphal entry ask why it was being taken? YES (Luke 19:33)
4. What does Job declare cannot be rebuilt? WHAT GOD TEARS DOWN (Job 12:14)
5. In the book of Esther, what happened to the ten sons of Haman? THEY WERE ALSO HUNG (Esther 9:13)