

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS (2)

By Keith Greer

Moses' Law was still in effect. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." {Matthew 5:17} "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." {Colossians 2:14} Jesus came into the world to do His Father's will. He would not leave the world until everything written concerning Him was fulfilled. He came as God's remedy for mankind's sin—a once-and-for-all sacrifice {Hebrews 9:28}. Until Jesus drew His last breath, Moses' Law was still in effect. Jesus' last words as He hung dying on the cross were, "...It is finished." {John 19:30} God's wondrous plan of grace was complete.

The thief lived under Moses' Law. "So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God." {Romans 7:3,4} Remember, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. {John 1:17} While Jesus was on earth, He lived under the Law of Moses. He went to the temple on the Sabbath. He constantly taught all who would listen that He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. This fact cannot be denied—examine the record.

The testator must die before His will becomes effective. "It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation." {Hebrews 10:9,10} The time of reformation would occur at the death of the testator. "For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives." {Hebrews 9:16,17} The Lord's will could not take effect until He died. He was still alive when He spoke to the thief—thus, His will was not yet in effect!

The Old Law was nailed to the cross. "Or He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." {Ephesians 2:14-16} Earlier, we mentioned that the law was nailed to the cross. This is important. Moses' Law was given to a nation—Israel. It was a national law and was not for the Gentiles. This law formed a wall of separation between the Jews and Gentiles. Christ's death on the cross tore down that wall and placed the Jews and Gentiles on the same plain with regard to their salvation. The thief lived under the Old Law—not the law of Christ. The law of Christ requires baptism for two reasons—remission of sins and to contact His blood. {Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3,4} Christ did not shed His blood until He died—as He spoke to the thief, He was still alive.

Dear readers, why go to a thief for proof that your obedience is genuine and acceptable to God? What about the nine conversions in the book of Acts? Can we just dismiss them all so we can deny the necessity of baptism? I'm sorry, but we can't use the thief as an example! ***