

THE MINISTRATION OF CONDEMNATION AND DEATH

By Adam Mills

2 Corinthians 3:7-9

“But if the ministration of death, written [and] engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which [glory] was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation [be] glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.”

This much misunderstood passage and its context deals with BOTH the GLORY and the MINISTRATION of the ten commandments as that which has been done away and REPLACED with a SUPERIOR glory and ministration. The KEY to an understanding of this chapter that is consistent with the rest of Scripture regarding the law of God is in recognizing that it is the MINISTRATION (the entire Levitical/Mosaic system surrounding those tables within the ark of the covenant) rather than that which was MINISTERED (the Decalogue itself) which was “done away”. Paul does not teach that the ten commandments themselves have been made void (Romans 3:31), but rather it is God's purpose to write them in the hearts of believers. God has ALWAYS desired to do this for believers since the fall of Adam, and every believer who has yielded to the influence of the Spirit has experienced this very thing SINCE THAT TIME. This is the essence of the everlasting gospel - God doing for man what man cannot do for himself. Praise the Lord! The LETTER alone cannot do anything for us, save CONDEMN AND KILL. It is the SPIRIT who comes to bring the very Presence of Christ to us personally which enables the righteousness of that law to be fulfilled IN US (Romans 8:3,4). Therefore, the MINISTRATION of the Spirit far surpasses the former in GLORY because it is now Christ Himself who MINISTERS for us before the Father, having accomplished what the shadows foretold of Him on earth, and pursuing what the shadows foretold of Him now IN HEAVEN.

Paul explains how the commandments of God, addressed to a world full of naturally unrighteous beings (Romans 3:9-18) subjects ALL to the judgment or CONDEMNATION of God in its divinely ordained role of making each of us aware of the sin which is present within us (verses 19,20. see also Mark 7:20-23). He proclaims that this law “works wrath” Romans 4:15, and that although ordained to life, the commandment was found by him “to be unto DEATH” Romans 7:10. Christ proclaimed to Nicodemus that all who refuse to rely on Him for deliverance from sin are “CONDEMNED ALREADY” John 3:18. It is this same law, “written and engraven in stones”, which determines this fact, as it defines the ruling principles and foundation of the government of God (Psalm 97:2; 119:142,172; Romans 13:10).

Yet another way in which the former ministration as compared to the present is one of condemnation and death lies in the fact that under it actual DEATH occurred on a daily basis in the form of substitutionary animal sacrifices. Due to this fact Paul declares “there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.” Heb. 10:3,4. The continual round of sacrifices reminded the worshipers of their sin and condemnation, whereas, under the ministration of the Spirit we are promised a COMPLETE removal of sin and the memory of it (verses 16-18). Thanks be to God for His marvelous plan!