

A Lawless Time

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It's no secret that many "Christian" folks don't believe baptism has anything to do with salvation despite New Testament verse to the contrary. And many imaginative arguments are put forth. One being about those who died between the cross and Pentecost. The argument is usually made from Col. 2:14 which speaks of the Old Testament law being fulfilled and taken away. So, if the church didn't begin until Pentecost, and the old law was no longer in effect, what happened to those who died between the two events. Were they saved without being baptized? The lengths some will go to deny the divine record.

There was a period of time between the death of Christ and the preaching of this message of salvation in Acts 2. As Luke began his writing of Acts, he noted that Jesus had been with the disciples for 40 days before his ascension (Acts 1:3.) Because Pentecost occurred 50 days after the Passover Sabbath, we know in fact that there was a fifty day period between the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the time that the gospel plan of salvation was preached for the first time.

No one can have two laws at the same time. We cannot have a law that says it is alright to walk down the sidewalk and then, at the same time, have a law that says we cannot walk down the same sidewalk. Looking in a political sense, we have a 1st amendment to the U.S. constitution that gives Americans the right to free speech. If congress makes a law that limits free speech, without repealing the 1st amendment, then there is confusion and lawlessness will result. A change of law is affected by removing the first, and then enacting the second to take its place. Statutorily, the first must remain in effect until the second law becomes binding. If not, chaos would result.

This is exactly the procedure the Lord followed. "Then he said, Behold I have come to do your will O God. He takes away the first that he may establish the second" (Hebrews 10:9.) So, there was the removal of the first law (the law of Moses) so that the second law (the law of Christ) could be enacted. The Hebrew writer went on to point out, "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. 10:10.)

The law of Moses was built around a year-to-year observance. "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year after year, make those who approach perfect" (Heb. 10:1.) The day of atonement sacrifice for sin had been offered in August of the year prior to the Lord's death and was not due again until the following August after the Lord's death. The events of Acts 2 took place on the day of Pentecost (around the end of May or first of June) well before the next day of atonement. In other words, any Jew living at the time of Acts 2 (or before) would have still been keeping the law of Moses. And they would still be judged by it until they heard of the new law in Christ made known by means of preaching (Romans 10:15-17.) The Gentiles had their own law to be judged by until the preaching of Christ could reach them.

In Acts 1:25, Judas was said to have gone "to his place." I think Jews and Gentiles during this period went to their place based on the law they were under. But now we have had Christ fully proclaimed and He said to be baptized. We should be concerned with that.