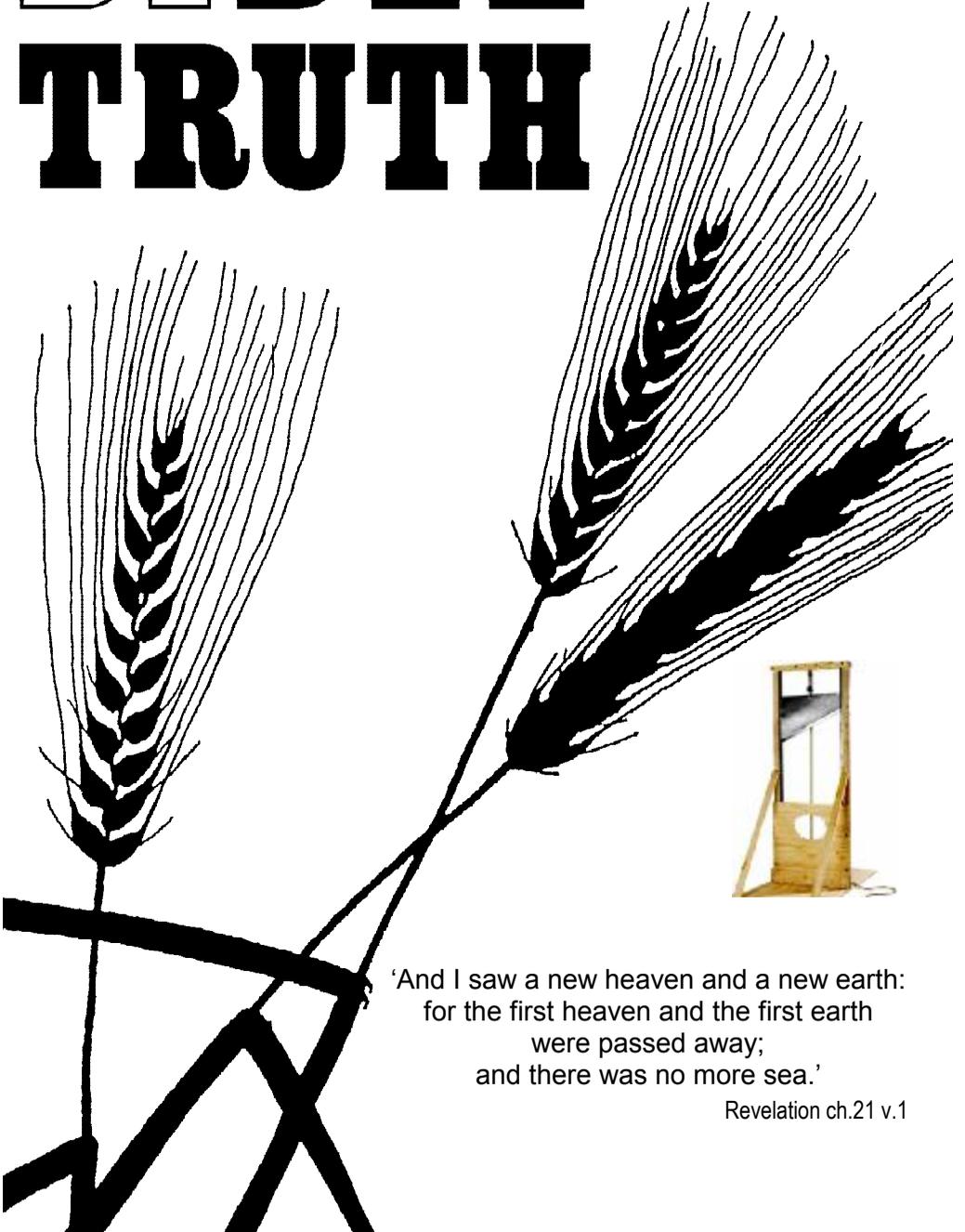


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'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth:
for the first heaven and the first earth
were passed away;
and there was no more sea.'

Revelation ch.21 v.1

Reckoned Among the Lawless

By Pastor Jory Steven Brooks



Christ and the Law

How ironic it is that our modern churches teach that the moral laws of God are abolished, for this is the very same false argument that the Pharisees used against Christ!

A reading of Christ's words relate the following.

‘Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.’

Luke ch.22 vv 36-37

The word ‘transgressors’ is a translation of the Greek ‘anomon’, based on a root word meaning law. The literal *Concordant* translation of v.37 says, ‘... And with the law-less is He reckoned’.

This same Greek word appears in Matthew ch.24 vv 11-13.

‘And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.’

The literal translation says.

‘... And because of the multiplication of lawlessness, the love of many shall be cooling.’

Do we not see this happening today as immorality abounds and Christian love and charity fades in our society? That this was an especial symptom of the end times in which we now live may be seen in the following verse.

‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’

Matthew ch.24 v.14

Why did our Saviour in the first passage above counsel to buy a sword, and in the second passage refer to the element of survival to the end, unless the multiplication of lawlessness made personal defence of one's home and property a basic necessity?

But did not Christ break the Law of God concerning the Sabbath? We hear that argument today, and it is not a new accusation.

‘At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.’

Matthew ch.12 vv 1-2

Christian readers who are unaware of the details of Mosaic law fail to realize that the Pharisees were engaging in Scripture twisting, for Deuteronomy ch.23 v.25 states that reaping is allowed on the Sabbath when using the hands without a sickle. The Jews were no doubt aware of this fact, for their own Talmud (b. Besa 13b) states that grain could be plucked on the Sabbath day.

It is especially sad to hear Christians even today echo this false accusation that Christ was a transgressor of the law, because He could not qualify as our sin-bearer and Saviour unless He lived a perfect, sinless life. Yet Christ is ‘reckoned among the transgressors’ even by His admirers who see in this accusation the proof they seek to overturn the necessity of moral laws for believers today.

Stephen and the Law

It is instructive that the Christian martyr, Stephen, is put to death with the accusation of lawlessness — that Christ's teachings disallowed the Law of God.

The Book of Acts gives us this account.

‘And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.’

Acts ch.6 vv 8-11

What did they mean by the expression, ‘blasphemous words against Moses and ... God’? They were not really accusing Stephen of vilifying Moses' character nor of denying God's existence. What they were really asserting was that his Christian faith overturned Moses' law. This was a false claim, as this Scripture passage goes on to show.

‘And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, And set up **false witnesses**, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:’

Acts ch.6 vv 12-13

Yes, ‘false witnesses’ were claiming that the Christian faith denied the validity of the Law under the New Covenant. It was and is a false accusation, and those teaching it today are also ‘false witnesses’ even though they may be Christians or even Christian ministers.

Verse 14 is enlightening as to what Stephen and the early Christians were in fact teaching concerning the Law of God.

‘For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall **change** the customs which Moses delivered us.’

Like false accusers today, Stephen's accusers were using 'spin'. Since there is a change in the Law under the New Covenant adding a focus on the heart, they claimed that Christians were denying the Law altogether!

Paul and the Law

The Apostle Paul is also portrayed by the modern church as being a stalwart opponent of God's Law, yet he stated in Romans ch.3 v.31, '... we establish the law:' and in Romans ch.7 v.22, 'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man'. It was actually Paul's false accusers who hung the 'antinomian' label on him, as we notice when the Apostle Paul was brought before the judge, Festus.

'... the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. While he answered for himself, **Neither against the law of the Jews**, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, **have I offended any thing at all.**'

Acts ch.25 vv 7-8

Festus testified concerning his examination of Paul,

'Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition ...'

vv 18-19

The Jews assumption that Paul was denying the validity of the law of God was mere superstition then, and it still is today.

Christians and the Law

Where does this place believers – you and I – in our Christian walk today? Are we also reckoned among the transgressors? Will we stand and accuse our Saviour of lawlessness? I pray that we will examine our hearts and search the Scriptures to see the continuing role of Divine moral law in our lives and the life of our company of nations. The alternative is to continually worry about surviving to the end, for the only true substitute for law is the lawlessness which we see so prevalent in Western society today.
