

Eph. 2:13-16 (WCF 19:2-4) “Ceremonial and Judicial”

For the Children: Sometimes people use “illustrations” to explain what they are saying. Ministers often do so in sermons. The Lord Jesus did so with His Parables. One thing is compared to another, to help us understand. Many things in the OT were given to help God’s people understand what the Lord Jesus would do to save us – the Temple, the priests, the sacrifices, circumcision, and so on. Only God’s people, Israel, cared about those things. The rest of the world did not. So the Jews and the Gentiles did not get on well together. However, when the Lord Jesus came, those OT illustrations were replaced by *Him*. If Gentiles believed in Jesus, they could know God and be part of His people. **Questions:** How did Jesus make Gentile believers right with God and with Jewish believers? What are “ceremonial” and “civil-judicial” law? Has Jesus put an end to all of God’s Law?

Introduction:

First Point: Peace by the Blood

- 1) Alienation and Enmity: The Gentiles were in the OT largely “far off” - alienated from God, Israel, and the covenants (v. 12). They were dead in their sins (vss. 1,3). The Jews were “near” – they had God dwelling in their midst In the Temple, and His Word to teach them. See Is. 49:1, Ps. 148:14.
- 2) Brought near by the Cross: The OT also promised that one day God would bring peace to those far and near (Is. 57:19 with Eph. 2:17 and Acts 2:39). This was accomplished by Christ and His blood i.e., His sacrifice on the cross (v. 13). Thus He Himself is our peace (v. 14). He abolished the enmity by taking the punishment we deserved and fulfilling God’s Law for us. Now believing Jews and Gentiles have ready access to God through Him
- 3) A New Humanity: The cross also ended the enmity between believing Jews and Gentiles. The 2 groups are now one - one body/church and one “man” (v. 14-16). His death “broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.” There was a literal walling off of Gentiles in the Temple. But behind that, there was mutual hatred, as well as laws re ceremonial purity that made Gentiles unclean to Jews. One cannot justify such divisions against those who have been accepted and saved by God
- 4) Brought Near by Faith: “In Christ” (v. 13) means “in union with” Him, i.e., by faith. His blood is the ground of our nearness, faith is the instrument that joins us to Christ and His benefits. Again, it is hard to justify divisions against those who share exactly the same faith in God – as Eph. 4:1-6 argues. See also Gal. 3:26-28

Second Point: Peace by Abolition of the Law

- 1) Peace by Abolition of the Law: Christ also brings peace with God, and peace between Jews and Gentiles, by abolishing the “law of commandments contained in ordinances” (v. 15). He did not come to abolish the “moral law” (Mt. 5:17). Even with the moral law, He kept it perfectly for us, and paid the penalty for our breaking of it. This makes it clear that sinners are saved by grace not their own law-keeping. But the main reference here is to the end of the ceremonial law, as the parallel in Col. 2:16-17 shows
- 2) Ceremonial and Civil-Judicial Law: The ceremonial law involved OT “types” of Christ, and of NT realities (WCF 19:3). They still teach us about spiritual principles, but their practice ended because Christ fulfilled them (Col. 2:17). Similarly, the OT laws governing Israel as a nation ended when Israel ended its role as God’s special nation. But again, underlying moral principles remain in force (WCF 19:4). Ceremonial and civil-judicial laws divided Jews from Gentiles. The latter were not circumcised, they were contaminated by unclean foods. They were not part of the “body politic” of Israel. But Christ has ended this separation by fulfilling these laws and establishing a new, spiritual Israel
- 3) Sharper Relief: This throws into sharper relief the things that really do matter: Christ, His blood, and faith in Him; obedience to the moral law by a united people full of gratitude for the gift of salvation. See Col. 3:1f

Conclusion: