

BICOG

What is the “Ministration of Death”?

By Peter Salemi

Peter Salemi-BICOG

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What is the “Ministration of Death”?

Is the Law of God “done away” by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3? Or does it prove the exact opposite? An examination of these verses reveals what is really “done away”

The Apostle Paul speaking to the Corinthian Church said that God, “...made us able ministers of the New Testament; *not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*” (2 Corinthians 3:6). What does the New Covenant consist of?

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, *that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:*

“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; ***which my covenant they brake***, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

“But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, ***I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.***

“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

(Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:8-9). The New Covenant consisted of the Law of God written in their hearts, not on tables of stone.

How is the Law of God written on one’s heart? Paul earlier said, “*Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*” (2 Corinth 3:3).

In Romans he says “...because the *love of God* is shed abroad in our *hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*” (5:5). The Love of God is his commandments (see 1 John 5:3). The epistle was the New Covenant, the Law of God written on the hearts of converted people “ministered” by the Apostles of Christ. It was written by the Holy Spirit of God. After one is baptized, one receives the Spirit of God, and enters the covenant with God (see Acts 2:38).

Is this anything *new*? Or was this God’s intent all along?

The Apostle Paul spoke of the circumcision of the heart, he said, “But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:29). In the Old Testament God wanted the same thing in the days of Moses, “Circumcise therefore the ***foreskin of your heart***, and be no more stiffnecked.” (Deut 10:16).

God from the beginning wanted this to be so, “O that there were such ***an heart in them***, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deut 5:29).

“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in ***your heart and in your soul***, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.” (Deut 11:18).

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The Law of God will forever always be “spiritual” (Romans 7:14). The law was always meant to be written on the hearts of men. Israel during the days of Moses, did not obey the law of God. They were unconverted people who died in the wilderness and did not see the Promised Land. It was their children who inherited the land, and their hearts were right in God’s sight (see Deut 1:35, 39; Joshua 5).

God said through Isaiah speaking of the days of Moses, “But they rebelled, and *vexed his holy Spirit*: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them.” (63:10). They rejected God, and so the law was written on stone and not their hearts. Even though they were Israel, it was in name only, not in deeds.

“not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life”

What does Paul mean by the statement above? What is the meaning of “not of the letter”? Many believe it means the “letter of the law,” meaning keeping the law by physical action only, for a physical people Israel. But the “law is Spiritual” (Rom 7:14), so what does he mean?

Paul gives us the answer clearly in Romans the second chapter, “And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, *who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?*”

“For he is not a Jew, which is one *outwardly*; neither *is that* circumcision, *which is outward in the flesh*:

“But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and not in the letter*; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.” (vv.27-29). Paul says those of the “letter” “transgress the law.” They are of “the flesh.” These are the carnal minded, “For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

“Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: *for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*” (Rom 8:6-7). Those of the “letter” DO NOT keep the law of God. Paul said he by the letter, the outwardly, transgresses the law of God which is what sin is (1 John 3:4).

In Romans the seventh chapter the Apostle Paul again writes, “For when we *were in the flesh, the motions of sins*, which were by the law [of sin], did work in our members to *bring forth fruit unto death*.

“But now we are delivered from the law [of sin], that being dead wherein we were held; *that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*” (Romans 7:5). Paul spoke of two natures in man, the law of God, and the law of sin (Romans 7:25). What law brings “fruit unto death”? The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). So what law is Paul speaking of? THE LAW OF SIN! (see Romans 7:23).

Paul recognized the two natures in man, the spirit of God in him to serve the law of God, and the old sinful nature that served the law of sin, which is breaking God’s law. So we conclude as Paul does, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; [newness of spirit]; but with the flesh the law of sin [oldness of the letter].” (Romans 7:25).

Paul said “letter killeth.” The carnal fleshly mind kills you.

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Paul said the “wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23).

That sin, “bring forth fruit unto death.” Sin itself, the very result and consequences of sin kills you.

God when he comes to judge the world, those who do not repent of sin will be put to death by the lake of fire.

But the “spirit” those that keep God’s law “giveth life.”

Paul said, “*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*”

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

“*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*”

“Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: *for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*” (Rom 8:4-7). So Paul is basically saying here that they were ordained ministers of the New Covenant given to a people who have the spirit of God in their hearts, and obey the law of God being carved in their hearts and minds as opposed to Moses who gave the law to the Israelites but they received it not “mixed with faith.” They were a carnal minded people unconverted, so the law was written on stone, and not their hearts.

The Israelites when they received the law of God at Sinai did not have faith, meaning they did not keep the law of God in their hearts and minds. Paul said, “For unto us was the gospel preached, *as well as unto them*: but the word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*” (Hebrews 4:2). This law was given to Israel and they were not converted, but were still a fleshly unconverted people. Paul said they were made ministers of the New Testament not ministers of a carnal minded sinful people like in Moses’ day. The churches were converted members that had God’s spirit and the law in their hearts and minds, the Israelites in the Old Testament did not.

Why is it called the “Letter”?- A true Israelite is one not just in *name*, or parentage, but of obedience to God. Notice what Jesus said, “Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no *guile!*” (John 1:47). True Israelites do not live in sin, but keep the law of God.

John the Baptist said the same thing, “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” (Matthew 3:9). It is not just enough to be *called* a son of Abraham.

Jesus told the Jews, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” (John 8:39). If they were truly Abraham’s children they would live the way Abraham did, by keeping the law of God (Gen 26:5). Instead they were sinning, and were children of the Devil, and not the children of Abraham (see John 8:41, 44).

Paul said the *same* in Romans, “And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature [Gentiles], if it fulfil the law, judge thee [the Jews], who *by the letter* and circumcision dost transgress the law?”

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“For he is not a Jew, which is one *outwardly*; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

“But he is a Jew, which is one *inwardly*; and *circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit*, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (2:27-29). Many people believe that the “letter” means the “letter of the law.” Meaning keeping the commandments of God outwardly and literally, but inwardly your attitude is against the law of God. This is nonsense. Mind and body work as one. Your body does what the mind intends. Notice a few important points:

First, nowhere in the Bible does it say “the letter of the law.”

Second, notice the “letter” has to do with the Jew “outward” and the circumcision “outward” meaning the “appearance” (Gr. *Phaneros Strong’s #5318*) of the person, what you see on the outside, which is a Jew (his race) and his circumcision showing he is a Jew.

Third, God always wanted Israel to be circumcised of the spirit (Deut 10:16), to be true children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not just by race, but by “works.” This was nothing new to Paul.

Lastly, those of the “letter” “transgress the law” they are *not* keeping it. It does not make sense to say those who are keeping the “Letter” of the Law are *transgressing* it. Body and mind work as one, “For as the body without the spirit is dead,” (James 2:26). This is a contradiction.

The word “Letter” is “gramma” (Strong’s #1121).

Barnes Notes says, “The word ‘letter’ properly means the mark or character from which syllables and words are formed. It is also used in the sense of writing of any kind Luke 16:6-7; Acts 28:21; Gal 6:11, particularly the writings of Moses, denoting, by way of eminence, the letter, or the writing; Rom 7:6; 2 Tim 3:15.”

Vines expands on this, “*primarily denotes* ‘that which is traced or drawn, a picture;’ then, ‘that which is written,’ (a) ‘a character, *letter of the alphabet*,’ 2 Cor. 3:7; ‘written,’ lit., ‘(in) letters;’ Gal. 6:11; here the reference is not to the length of the Epistle (*Paul never uses gramma, either in the singular or the plural of his Epistles; of these he uses epistole*, No. 2), but to the size of the characters written by his own hand (probably from this verse to the end, as the use of the past tense, ‘I have written,’ is, according to Greek idiom, the equivalent of our ‘I am writing’). Moreover, the word for ‘letters’ is here in the dative case, grammas in, ‘with (how large) letters;’ (b) ‘a writing, a written document, a bond’ (AV, ‘bill’) Luke 16:6,7; (c) ‘a letter, by way of correspondence,’ Acts 28:21; (d) the Scriptures of the OT, 2 Tim. 3:15; (e) ‘learning,’ John 7:15, ‘letters;’ Acts 26:24, ‘(much) learning’ (lit., ‘many letters’); in the papyri an illiterate person is often spoken of as one who does not know ‘letters,’ ‘which never means anything else than inability to write’ (Moulton and Milligan); (f) ‘the letter,’ the written commandments of the Word of God, in contrast to the inward operation of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant, Rom. 2:27,29; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6; (g) ‘the books of Moses,’ John 5:47.” (Vine’s Expository Words, under “Letter”). So basically means, a writing, that is, a letter, note, epistle, book, etc.; plural learning: - bill, learning, letter, scripture, writing, written. *But primarily it means the letters in the alphabet*. In one case it means the “Holy Scriptures” or writings (2 Timothy 3:15)-meaning the Bible. *But in the context of Romans* the second chapter, these are people “who by the letter

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and circumcision dost transgress the law?” (v.27). as noted it cannot mean keeping the law and transgression the law.

So what does this mean, the “letter?” Many have heard of the “tetragrammaton” (from Greek ε ά, meaning “four letters.” It originates from tetra “four” + gramma (gen. grammatos) “letter”) (Online Etymology Dictionary). This is the Hebrew theonym יהוה, commonly transliterated into Latin letters as YHWH. It is one of the names of the national god of Israel used in the Bible. The four letters make up the NAME of God! There are no vowels in the Hebrew language pronunciation aids are often added, so the *letters make up the name*. This is what Paul was speaking of. They were Jews in “NAME” only. Paul said, “For he is not *a Jew*.” JFB Commentary says, “In other words, the name of ‘Jew’” (emphasis added). Gill’s Commentary says this same. Their outward appearance they were called by the *name* “Jews.” (Letters make up the name “Jew”). But inwardly as Jesus said they were not true Israelites like Nathanael in whom there was “no guile.” He kept the law of God.

But, “...who by the letter [a Jew in name only] and circumcision dost transgress the law? “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly [in name only]; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

“But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly [a true Israelite keeps the law]; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter [in name only]; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:27-29). This is the meaning of the “Letter”- People who are “Jews” only in name, not by how they live their lives. True Israelites or children of Abraham, are those who keep the law of God, as did Abraham (Gen 26:5).

So 2 Corinthians 3:6 means, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, [unconverted fleshly people who in name only were called Israel in Moses’ day] but of the spirit [true Israelites who obey the law written in their hearts]: for the letter killeth, [Jews in name only breaking the law its wages is death] but the spirit giveth life. [Keeping the law of God leads to life]”

After this in verse 7, the Apostle Paul demonstrates through the example of Moses’ ministry how God executes judgment on those who sin “willfully.”

The Ministration

Now Paul begins to describe Moses’ ministry. He says, “But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away:” (2 Corinth 3:7). The word “ministration” should read as it does in 1 Corinthians 12:5 as “administration” (see Strong’s #1248 “diakonia”).

This word means,

- “1) service, ministering, especially of those who execute the commands of others
- “2) of those who by the command of God proclaim and promote religion among men
 - 2a) *of the office of Moses*

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2b) of the office of the apostles and its administration

2c) of the office of prophets, evangelists, elders etc.

“3) the ministration of those who render to others the offices of Christian affection especially those who help meet need by either collecting or distributing of charities

“4) the office of the deacon in the church

“5) the service of those who prepare and present food” (Thayer’s Definitions).

What was the “office of Moses”?

Moses was a judge, a ruler in Israel. “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.” (Ex 18:13).

The word “judge” in this passage means “A primitive root; to *judge*, that is, pronounce *sentence* (for or against); by implication to *vindicate* or *punish*; **by extension to govern**; passively to *litigate* (literally or figuratively): - + *avenge*, X that condemn, contend, defend, execute (judgment), (be a) judge (-ment), X needs, plead, reason, **rule**.” (Strong’s #8199, emphasis added). Judges were appointed to rule Israel.

James Strong & McClintock Cyclopedia under “Judge” says “(שׁוֹפֵט, ‘shophet’, usu. in the plur., שׁוֹפְטִים, ‘shophetim’, **rulers rather than magistrates**, from שָׁפַט different from, שָׁרַף to try a cause, see Gesenius, s.v.; compare Bertholdt’s Theolog. Journ. 7, 1; Werner, in Rudelbach’s Zeitschr. 1844, 3, 17; Sept., N. Test. Acts 13:20, and Josephus, Ant. 6, 5, 4, κρίται; in Dan 3:2-3, a diff. Chald. term is employed,” The Judges were basically **the government in Israel**.

“*Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.*” (Deut 16:18).

“*A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.*” (Prov 16:10).

Why was it called the “administration of death?” God gave the government the power to carry out the death penalty, or avenge someone concerning a crime, or breaking the law of God, “The Old Covenant, the law is so called, because it places under the sentence of death.” (People’s New Testament).

“...and he shall pay as the judges [government in Israel] *determine*.

“And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give *life for life*,

“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

“Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” (Ex 21:22-25).

“If there be a controversy between men, *and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.*

“And it shall be, if the wicked man *be* worthy to be beaten, **that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault**, by a certain number.

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“Forty stripes he may give him, *and* not exceed: lest, *if* he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee” (Deut 25:1-3).

This was ordained by God that only governments were allowed to put people to death, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: *the powers that be are ordained of God.*” (Romans 13:1). This is the “administration” of Moses. It is not speaking of the law itself, but how the law was administered over the people of Israel.

It however does **not** say that Moses’ administration was *not* a ministration of righteousness. God’s law is righteousness (Psalm 119:172), and Moses told the people to keep the law of God (Deut 30:19). Paul said, “For Moses *describeth* the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall *live by them.*” (Rom 10:5). The Levites “taught all Israel” the “the good knowledge of the LORD:” (2 Chron 35:3; 30:22 see also Jer 33:21-22; Malachi 2:6-7).

But it was also an “administration of condemnation” (v.9), as well, because it had rule over the people, and the government was put in place. This death penalty was given to those people who sinned “willfully.” Not to people who sinned in ignorance. Sacrifices were there for those who repented of sin done in ignorance. But to those who sinned, who *knew it* was a sin, “But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously, *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, *the same reproacheth* the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

“Because he hath *despised the word of the LORD*, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity *shall be* upon him.” (Num 15:30-31). Moses was given the permission by God that the government can carry out the death penalty; this is the “Administration of Death.”

Then it says, “written *and* engraven in stones” not in their hearts. They were not obedient to God, not “mixed” with faith, as God wanted for them, so God wrote them on stones, because Israel at Sinai told Moses, “And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off.

“And they said unto Moses, *Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, *that ye sin not* [write the law on their hearts]

“And the people stood afar off [rejected God], and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God *was.*” (Ex 20:18-21). They did not want God to rule them directly by the Spirit of God guiding them, “For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God* they are the sons of God.” (Rom 8:14), they resisted the spirit of God “*ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye*”(Acts 7:51) they wanted to be ruled by Moses, a physical man, and not the God.

Afterwards, God said, “And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and *I will give thee tables of stone*, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.” (Ex 24:12). They wanted a physical man to rule over them, and not his spirit, so God wrote the Law on stone, a physical material substance and not on their minds and hearts, the spiritual.

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Ministry of the Church

Whereas the administration of the “spirit” (v.8), Paul says, “*There is therefore now no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit... That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1, 4). The administration of the law of God over the church-people who have the Holy Spirit and the Law written on their hearts, as oppose to Israel whom their hearts were not mixed with faith, there was no condemnation among the church of God. All were under the blood of Jesus, and the death penalty was lifted, and received forgiveness of sins, and was “glorious.” Those in the church were “overcoming” and not sinning “willfully” but Loved God with all their hearts, so they were not condemned to death.

Moses ministry called “ministration of condemnation” (v.9). Only the government can execute the death penalty on its people according to the Bible. The church will not have this kind of power until the second coming of Jesus when they rule and reign with him (see below). So the administration of Moses was one of Life and death. The ministry of the New Testament is one of righteousness *only* in this world, but the world to come it will be both.

How the Law was Administered

Let us carefully note that Paul is *not* discussing the law, but “the ministration” of the law. Back in the days of Moses the “administration” pronounced immediate death for presumptuous violations of the commandments. In Paul’s day and under his ministry such was not the case. Please note that the difference lay not with the law but with the “ministrations.” Paul contrasts “the ministration of death” and “the ministration of the Spirit.” The “ministration of condemnation” was followed by “the ministration of righteousness.” There is all the difference in the world between the law itself and the *administration* of the law. When the administration of the Constitution changes from the Democratic Party to the Republican, the Constitution is not changed. It is left intact, so with the law of Ten Commandments.

The following texts clearly show what Paul meant by the term “ministration of death”; they also show that the law he referred to was the Decalogue:

“And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely *be put to death.*” (Leviticus 24:16).

“Whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely *be put to death.*” (Exodus 31:15).

“For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely *put to death.*” (Leviticus 20:9).

“And he that killeth any man shall surely *be put to death.*” (Leviticus 24:17).

“The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely *be put to death.*” (Leviticus 20:10).

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In Moses' day Israel was called a “nation” and also “the church in the wilderness” (Numbers 14:12; Acts 7:38). The church and the nation were united under the immediate direction of God *through* Moses; it was a union of church and state. Such a regime is a theocracy.

But the time came when the Israelites demanded a king to judge them “like all the nations.” In granting this request, the Lord said, “They have rejected me [Israel's King see 1 Sam 12:12], that I should not reign over them.” (1 Samuel 8:7). It was then that “the ministration of death” for civil offenses passed into the hands of kings and civil courts. So the “administration” of death was God, the King of Israel, ruling over them *through* Moses administering the judgments of God for the transgression of sins over an unconverted people. This continued in the times of the Judges, and then the kings. “A *divine sentence is in the lips of the king*: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.” (Prov 16:10). This was the rule of the state!

The “ministration of righteousness” were ministers that were made, “overseers, to feed the church of God,” (Acts 20:28). They were to “edify” the church of God as Paul says, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; “For the *perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13). This is the “ministration of Righteousness.” The administration of the Law of God over the church, to teach and preach the law of God to perfect the saints, “The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul:” (Psalm 19:7). Jesus said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48).

The Glory of Moses

Now it says, “ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the *glory of his countenance*; [Grk. “prosōpon” Strong's #4348 means appearance, person, presence] which *glory* was to be done away:” (2 Corinth 3:7).

Vincent Word Studies says, “A very inadequate translation. Εγενήθη means came to pass or took place, not simply was. *A glory passed from God to Moses*, so that his face became shining. It is much more graphic and truthful to render ἐν δόξῃ literally, in or with glory, than to convert the two words into a single adjective, glorious. Rev., *much better, came with glory*.” (Emphasis added). So the first half of this verse should read, “ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, *came with glory*.” Moses' ministry *originated* with God! To let Israel see that he had communion with God, that he was in God's presence, and that the law and the administering of that law came directly from God himself! (see Num 16:28).

Isaiah says, “Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, *and* his people, *saying*, Where *is* he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? *where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?*” (Isaiah 63:11). Moses had the Law of God written on his heart, for he had the spirit of God in him-and a *precious few* in Israel at that time as well had it, like Aaron and Miriam and the 70 elders in Israel (Num 11:17, 25; 12:1-2). In Fact Moses wished that *everyone*

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in Israel had the spirit of God in them, as he states in Numbers 11, “...would God that *all* the LORD'S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” (v.29); However *all* Israel did *not* have the spirit and God's law in them as God wanted (Deut 10:16).

The glory of God is his presence! (Exodus 33:14-23), which is his spirit because this is what God is composed of, “Cast me not away from *thy presence*; and take not thy *holy spirit* from me...Whither shall I go from *thy spirit*? or whither *shall I flee from thy presence*?” (Psalm 51:11; 139:7). Moses possessed the spirit of God and one could see it on him. This is why Israel could not look upon Moses because the glory of God shone from him, and sinful man cannot stand in the presence of God.

Now the end of the verse says, “which *glory* was to be done away” Does this mean the law of God? Absolutely Not! Paul speaks of “two” things which was glorious, the administration and Moses' *presence* shining from his face.

Notice the word “glory” is in italics. It is not in the original Greek. This becomes important to understand what was “done away.” By adding the word “glory” at the end of the verse, people find it hard to figure out which was done away with. However, remove that word which does not belong there, and it becomes evident that Paul was saying that it *was* “glory of his countenance” that shined on *the face of Moses is what he was speaking of*-His appearance that Israel saw shining from his face. Paul further proves this in verse 13:

“And not as Moses, *which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished*.” (v.13). It says here that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold something; and that, that something was “abolished.”

When one goes back and reads the account in Exodus 34, we see that they *did* behold the tablets of stone in Moses' hands. What then was it that they could not “steadfastly behold?” *It was the “face” of Moses*: “And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai *with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand*, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him...And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.” (Ex 34:29, 35). Because they could not behold his face, for it “shone” –verse 34, Moses had to cover his face with a veil until he went back in to speak with God. The law was in Moses' hand, and *they did not put the veil over the law but over his face!*

What was really done away? The English Standard Version says, “...that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end,”

The Literal Translation of the Bible renders it, “so as *that* the sons of Israel could not gaze into ‘the face of Moses’ because of the glory of his face, *which was to cease*,” It was the “glory of his countenance,” his presence, that was coming to an end! Why was the glory coming to an end? Because Moses died! The Holy Spirit of God is forever, Moses is a man, and men live for so long then die. Since the glory shone from his face, it would only be there till Moses was in their *presence*, there in *person*- it would come to an end at his death, “So Moses the servant of the

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LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.” (Deut 34:5). So the presence of Moses was no longer with Israel.

Paul continues:

“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.

“For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

“For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.” (vv.8-11).

Verse 8 should read, “The gospel, the ministration of life, must have *still greater glory*. It has glory now, and *will have a fuller glory* in the day of the Lord.” (Peoples New Test.). This verse Paul is saying that the administration of the church has the glory of God now with the Holy Spirit in our hearts, but it still has not come into its full fruition (*more about this below*).

As he says in the next verse, “For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, ***much more*** doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” (v.9). The ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory why? The Israelites did *not* have the law written on their hearts and were not obedient. The Holy Spirit was not in them, but only Moses and a precious few among them.

The Church of God on the other hand, all have the spirit [glory] of God dwelling in them, and live their lives obedient to God and follow his law. This is why the church “exceeds in glory.”

Paul goes on to say, “For even that which was made glorious had *no glory in this respect*, by reason of the glory that excelleth.” (v.10). The administration of Moses even though had the glory of God, did not have all Israel with the Spirit of God dwelling in their hearts like the church of the New Testament!

Then Paul says, “For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.” (v.11). What *remains* and what was done away?

The *ministration* of condemnation is *not* done away. Verse 7 plainly shows that the glory of Moses was *done away* by his death. That which *remains* is the ministration of Moses; it is still “glorious” administering judgment and justice in the earth by Abraham’s seed that would administer it even in this modern day (See Gen 18:19; Jer 51:20). This ministration is glorious and will continue to be glorious because it exacts God’s justice on evil doers who sin willfully against God, and are hostile to God, and this will continue in the Kingdom of God (see below).

Paul says afterwards something interesting in verse 12; “Seeing then that *we* [ministry of righteousness] *have such hope*, we use great plainness of speech:” The ministry of the church of God, because they have the Holy Spirit, they understood the will of God and his purpose; it was plain and simple to them and to the church that they preached it to! As opposed to Israel, as he says in verse 13, “And not as Moses, *which* put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel

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could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.” Israel could not see the light of the truth of God that shined in Moses; Moses preached it to them and they could not “look to the end” and see the purpose and plan of God. The veil covered the truth so they could not see it. What was abolished? The glory that shined from Moses was now gone due to his death. The glory also represented the truth of God that Moses knew and possessed and Israel just could not see it (see 2 Corinth 4:6).

Paul continues in vv.14-16, “But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the *same veil untaken away* in the reading of the Old Testament; *which veil is done away in Christ*.

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, *the veil is upon their heart*.

“Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, *the veil shall be taken away*.” As noted above, the presence and glory of God is his spirit. The Holy Spirit is what God is composed of- *It is Christ in you*.

The Holy Spirit is given to the Christian (Romans 8:9, 11). Christians are not blinded any longer but know the truth about God and salvation.

The Jews on the other hand, Paul says in verse 14, their minds were still blinded because the veil that covered the glory of God was still in their hearts. They were still flesh and did not have the Holy Spirit in them. As it says in the book of Acts, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, *ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye*.”(7:51).

It is the spirit of God that reveals the truth to a person and takes that veil away so one can see the truth, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

“*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*.

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”(1 Corinth 2:9-11). ***The veil is done away not the law or the ministration***.

The Jews, upon reading the Old Testament, still can’t see the glory of Jesus that shined on Moses, for they still have that veil covering the heart. This is by Satan the devil, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

“In whom the god of this world hath *blinded the minds of them which believe not*, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2 Corinth 4:3-4). Satan has “deceived” the whole world (Rev 12:9). It is his deception, this veil that has blinded people’s minds to the truth.

Isaiah says this covering is on all nations, “And he will destroy in this mountain the *face of the covering* cast over all people, and the *veil* that is spread over all nations.” (25:7).

Christians on the other hand are not blind, the veil that Satan has, is lifted, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, *hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*.” (2 Corinth 4:6). The Holy Spirit is that light that dwells in us, that we may understand God through Jesus Christ.

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Paul said when people convert, “Nevertheless when it shall *turn to the Lord*, *the veil shall be taken away*.” (2 Corinth 3:16). Once that veil is taken away by receiving the Holy Spirit you can see the glory of God which is Jesus Christ, *the same light that shine on Moses!* Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament. Moses had the glory of Christ on him, and dwelt in the presence of the Lord. Today the presence of the Lord is in us, by the Spirit he has given us (1 John 3:24).

Ministration still Valid

The evidence in the Bible reveals that the ministration of Moses was not done away but the presence of Moses was done away by his death. So the “ministration” of Moses, is it still in tack? Jesus said that the leaders of Israel, “The scribes and the Pharisees *sit in Moses’ seat*: “All therefore whatsoever *they bid you observe, that observe* and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”(Matthew 23:2-3). The government of Israel was still a valid way to run a nation. Jesus said to obey the ministration; their authority was to be obeyed *so long as it was not used to contradict the very Word of God itself*, so long as their words were NOT CONTRARY to Scripture. The seat of Moses is the “the heirs of Moses” (Robertson’s Word Pictures). Moses was a judge, a ruler in Israel.

In Exodus 18.13 we read, “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses SAT to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.” Moses sat, judging the people. Obviously, then, he was sitting down – in a “seat” of some sort, as he exercised his authority, given to him by God. He JUDGED among the people!

Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, was concerned that Moses would wear himself out, handling so many people’s problems. He asked him why he did this.

“And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to INQUIRE OF GOD: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I *judge* between one and another, and I DO MAKE THEM KNOW YHE STATUTES OF GOD, AND HIS LAWS” (Exodus 18.15-16). Moses, in his “seat,” TAUGHT THE PEOPLE THE LAWS, COMMANDMENTS, AND STATUTES OF GOD! He was a ruler in Israel executing God’s Judgments! His administration of Righteousness and condemnation!

Then the system of Judges was set up to govern Israel. Smaller and greater matters were handled by the judges and Moses, “And Moses’ father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest *is* not good.

“Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that *is* with thee: for this thing *is* too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

“Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

“*And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.*

“*Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:*

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“And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.” (Ex 18:17-22).

The church of God obeyed what Jesus said about the government in Israel to obey it as long as it did not contradict the word of God. One example, of those in power contradicting the word of God is in Acts. Those in Moses seat commanded the church, “Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?” (Act 5:28). The Apostles said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29).

Paul said, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.” (Rom 13:1). Paul called the government “the ordinance of God:” (v.2), and the rulers were a “minister of God” (v.4).

The ministration of Moses will be taken up by Jesus and the Church when Jesus comes again to rule and reign on this earth. Jesus is called a second Moses, “I will raise them up *a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee*, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

“And it shall come to pass, *that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*” (Deut 18:18-19).

“I will require it of him.” means -“I will judge him and punish his disobedience (cf. Gen 42:22; 2 Sam 4:11; Psalm 10:13, etc.” (Pulpit Commentary). Just like those who did not listen to Moses.

Jesus is that Prophet like Moses (John 5:45-47), and He will, “Judge” (Rev 19:11). Moses was a “Judge” and administered the Laws of God and so will Jesus in the Kingdom, “...and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: *for out of Zion shall go forth the law*, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

The death penalty will be executed in the same way as Moses for those who refuse to repent and sin “willfully” “He *that despised Moses’ law* died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

“For we know him that hath said, *Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense*, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.” (Heb 10:26, 28-30).

This ministration of death was “glorious” because it was the best way to exact just and right punishment for evil doers. It is also the best deterrent for people not to sin, and for them to know the consequences for sin. It is why God established it in the time of Moses, and why God will continue it in the Kingdom of God.

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Full Glory

Paul said that we have not seen the “ministration of Righteousness” in its full glory as of yet (2 Corinth 3:8). When the kingdom comes, Christians will be resurrected into the family of God, and be clothed with the glory of God.

At the end of the third chapter of 2 Corinthians Paul says, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*” (v.18). we are to be in the same image as Jesus, who comes in the glory of the Father (Matthew 16:27).

Isaiah 60:1-3 says, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and *the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.*”

“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: *but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*”

“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” When Jesus comes, and the saints are resurrected in full glory, they will be kings and priests and will rule the earth with Christ in the Kingdom (Rev 5:10; 20:4).

Because they will *rule* with Christ, the two administrations of church and state death and righteousness will be together again in God’s Theocracy, and *both glories will be joined into one*, and the glory of God will be in its full measure.

2 Corinthians 10:6 says, “And having in a readiness *to revenge all disobedience*, when your *obedience is fulfilled.*” Only rulers can do this, and Christians will rule with Christ in the Kingdom, and take vengeance on those who commit evil “willfully” despising God and his laws.

Jesus said, “*And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end*, to him will I give *power over the nations...* And he shall **rule** them with a rod of iron;” (Revelation 2:26, 27). May God hasten that day!