

Vanquishing the Mosaic Marriage Law By the Death of Israel's Husband/God

Paul's Old Testament Reference in Romans 7:1-6

I. Introduction

Did the apostle Paul have a specific Old Testament conceptual reference in mind when he wrote Romans 7:1-6? This writer thinks that he did.

The purpose of the paper is to examine the details of Romans 7:1-6 in light of a comprehensive search of the relative data in the Old Testament, and to demonstrate Paul's Old Testament comprehension in relation to his statement in Romans 7:1-6.

The modern church does not seem to have any difficulty accepting her postulated role as "the bride of Christ," but for some reason she seems to be totally unable to deal with the idea that in the Old Testament **Israel is presented and identified as the wife of Yahweh** (Isa. 54:1, 6; Jer. 3:1,8; 31:32; Ez. 23:5; et al.). This failure to come to grips with this concept has created much confusion and misunderstanding about the Bible, especially in relationship to Romans 7:1-6. This Old Testament marriage between Yahweh and Israel is the relationship that Paul is using in Romans 7:1-6 to explain how the Jews (the married wife) were released from the "Mosaic Law" that they might then be free to be married another, the risen Christ.

II. The Argument

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman which has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he lives; but if the husband be dead, she is released from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband lives, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:1-6)

Chapter seven in Romans is “one of the best known chapters in the word of God.”¹ “Few chapters in the Bible have been the subject of more decidedly different interpretations than this.”² It is certainly a pivotal chapter in Paul’s letter to the church at Rome. While many consider it as “both formidable and frightening,”³ others have seen it as simple “support for what has already been said in the previous chapter(s).”⁴

“The first section of this chapter (vs. 1-6) presents a problem”⁵ of understanding. That this particular passage is disputed and poorly understood is readily apparent from even a cursory examination of the available literature. A survey of various commentaries available on this passage of Scripture demonstrates that while there is some agreement there is also much disagreement as to its purpose, meaning, and application. Thus Morris has written, “There are problems with this opening section,

¹Boice, James M., Romans: The Reign of Grace (Romans 5-8 Volume 2), p. 715.

²Barnes, Commentary on Romans, p. 158

³Ibid.

⁴Cranfield, C. E. B., Romans: A Shorter Commentary, p. 148.

⁵Boice, p. 155

such that Barclay could say, ‘Seldom did Paul write so difficult and so complicated a passage as this.’ Dodd is scathing, holding that Paul’s illustration ‘is confused from the outset’ and that in the end we should ignore what he is actually saying ‘and ask what it is that Paul is really talking about...’ On the other hand Lenski can say, ‘Paul’s illustration is perfectly chosen.’”⁶ While according to Cranfield “it was generally assumed from early times that Paul’s intention in verses two and three was allegorical.”⁷

For the purpose of this paper we are going to apply Dodd’s advice, “and ask what...is Paul really writing about...”⁸ In this passage Paul “returns (Romans 6:14) to the question of release from the law (“Ye are not under the law but under grace”) and **shows how this discharge has come to be.**” Paul opens this passage by explaining exactly what he is talking about and to whom he is writing:

Know you not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,)...
“... He specifically refers to his ‘brethren,’ a word which he then explains as ‘those who know the Torah.’ He immediately makes it clear, (sic) therefore, that he is addressing the Jewish believers in the Roman congregation. Paul directly appeals to his ‘kinsmen’ in order to bring out the biblical basis of his argument...”⁹ which at this point has specific relevance to the Jews in the congregation at Rome.

“(For I speak to them that know the law,)” of this phrase Lenski writes, “Paul intends to use an ordinary example taken from the general field of law...”¹⁰ This is a most ridiculous statement. Paul definitely is not taking an example “from the general

⁶Morris, Leon, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 270

⁷Cranfield, p. 149

⁸Morris, p. 270

⁹Shulam, Joseph, A Commentary on Romans, Seattle Pacific University Library, p. 235

¹⁰Lenski, R. C. H., Interpretation of Romans Wartburg Press, Columbus 15, Ohio p. 442.

field of law,” he is clearly referring to the Marriage Law given at Sinai. “The law assumed to be known is surely the written law of the Old Testament, particularly the Mosaic law.”¹¹

Having declared his purpose and his specific audience (the ones who would have known the Mosaic Law who would be able to assist the non-Jews in the congregation to understand what he was writing about), Paul continues:

...the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives.

Here Paul is asserting a truth that every educated first century Jew was cognizant of, that is that -- all parties to the Mosaic Marriage Covenant were bound to the Mosaic Law as long as they lived. Having thus asserted this self-evident truth, Paul continues:

For the woman which has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he lives; but if the husband be dead, she is released from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband lives, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man.

A married woman who was bound by the law of her husband as long as the husband lived, what on earth is Paul writing about? According to Morris, “The main difficulty [of this passage] is that Paul’s illustration refers to a wife who is bound to her husband as long as **he lives**, but who is free to marry again when he dies as she could not before his death.”¹² From this point on the commentaries and research papers are of little use as ostensibly most commentators have completely missed Paul’s purpose here. Commentators from Augustine to the present have demonstrated much confusion over this passage. Augustine and many others believed it to be allegorical, while Murray and others have stated that it is an analogy. “The analogy of the marital relation is applied to

¹¹Murray, John, The Epistle to the Romans, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 240.

¹²Morris, p. 270.

the subject the apostle has in view. It is the severely restricted feature of the illustration, as we have just noted, that has occasioned much difficulty for expositors.”¹³ Many others, including Cranfield and Morris thought that it was an illustration. Thus Morris wrote, “The main difficulty is that Paul’s illustration refers to a wife who is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but who is free to marry again when he dies as she could not before the death. This is used to illustrate the truth that the believer has died to the law and is now given over to Christ. But in the illustration it is not the wife but the husband who dies, not the husband but the wife who remarries. We would not use an illustration in this way...” and neither did Paul.¹⁴ ***Thus the commentators are caught on “the horns of a dilemma” that they have not resolved.***

The Jewish commentator Joseph Shulam got much closer to Paul’s true purpose when he stated, “In chapters 5-6 he (Paul) primarily deals with the issue of God’s justification of the Gentiles through faithfulness. He now (chapter 7) takes up the claim (verse 1) that Jewish believers are, by the same token, either no longer responsible to the Torah or able to overcome their evil inclination through Torah-observance alone. Based on the **biblical depiction** of Israel’s idolatry as adultery, he describes the ‘master’ which **Israel serves as her ‘husband’** to whom she may be faithful or with whom she may play the harlot.”¹⁵ Unfortunately Shulam failed to follow through on this insight and missed and/or misinterpreted Paul’s purpose.

However, Shulam correctly identified **the source of Paul’s illustration which was the Old Testament depiction of Yahweh as the Husband -- God of Israel.** Thus,

¹³Murray, p. 241.

¹⁴Morris, p. 270.

¹⁵Shulam, p.235, emphasis added.

we see that herein Paul is making a direct reference to **Yahweh's Covenantal Marriage to Israel** mediated by Moses, otherwise known as the Mosaic Law. **The Husband**, to whom Paul is referring, **is Yahweh**, the Husband God of Israel, and **the wife** is Israel. Therefore, when the Husband (Jesus, God incarnate) died Israel was released from the Mosaic law of her Husband (Yahweh).

We have now learned from this study that Yahweh was married to Israel. As we continue our study we shall learn that Israel became two daughter kingdoms – the house of Israel and the house of Judah the ‘two wives’ of Yahweh. We must now refer to the Old Testament to clearly establish and sustain this fact and its implications in this passage and much of the rest of the New Testament.

Yahweh's betrothal of Israel to Himself is recorded by Moses in Exodus 6:

Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I *am* Yahweh, and I **will bring you** out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I **will rid you** out of their bondage, and I **will redeem you** with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: 7 And I **will take you** to me for a people, and I **will be to you a (husband) God** (Jer.31:32): and ye shall know that I *am* Yahweh your (husband) God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 And I **will bring you in unto the land (Yahweh's home for his wife)**, concerning which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I **will give it you for a heritage: I am Yahweh.** (Exodus 6:6-8, comments and emphasis added)

And the marriage ceremony is recorded in Exodus 19 as declared by Yahweh, delivered by Moses and accepted by the people of Israel:

And Moses went up unto God, and Yahweh called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shall thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and **brought you unto myself.** 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my (marriage) covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people (what a wife is to her husband): for all the earth *is* mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shall speak unto the children of Israel. 7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which Yahweh commanded him. 8 And **all the people answered together, and said**, All that Yahweh hath spoken **we will do.** And Moses returned the words of the people unto Yahweh. (Exodus 19:3-8, emphasis added)

However, to properly understand all that is embodied in Paul's statement in Romans 7:1-6 there is much more of this story that we must learn and understand.

Ezekiel records Yahweh's account of this betrothal and marriage as follows:

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause **Jerusalem** to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem;...I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: *thy* breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas you *were* naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and **I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a (marriage) covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and you became mine.** (Ezekiel 16:1-3a, 7-8, emphasis added)

However, Ezekiel also clearly explains that Jerusalem was not faithful to her husband and the marriage covenant:

And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and **played the harlot** because of thy renown, and **poured out thy fornications on every one that passed by;**... and played **the harlot** thereupon: ... and madest to thyself images of men, and **didst commit whoredom with them;**...*Is this of thy whoredoms* a small matter,...And in all thine abominations and **thy whoredoms** thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth,...thou hast...multiplied **thy whoredoms**. Thou hast also **committed fornication** with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast **increased thy whoredoms**, to provoke me to anger. Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary *food*, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of **thy lewd way**. **Thou hast played the whore** also with the Assyrians, because you were unsatiable; yea, **thou hast played the harlot** with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied. Thou hast moreover **multiplied thy fornication** in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet you were not satisfied herewith. How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these *things*, the work of **an imperious whorish woman; ...as a wife that commites adultery, which** takes strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores: but you give your gifts to all your lovers, and hire them, that they may come unto you on every side for your **whoredom**. And the contrary is in thee from *other* women in **thy whoredoms**, ... Wherefore, **O harlot**, hear the word of the LORD: (Ezekiel 16:14-35a AV, emphasis and comment added)

As this story unfolds within the pages of the Old Testament we learn that Yahweh

actually had ‘two wives’ and each of these wives was destined to have a major part in Yahweh’s great plan of redemption and salvation.

‘TWO WIVES’

Behold, the days come, saith Yahweh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 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*** (Aholah-Israel and Aholibah-Judah), ***saith Yahweh.*** (Jeremiah 31:31-32, emphasis and comment added here and in all other Scripture quotes)

In the above passage of Scripture, Yahweh states that He was “a husband unto them” and identifies “them” (His ‘wives’) as **the house of Israel** (the northern kingdom) and **the house of Judah** (the southern kingdom). It is evident from this, that in some sense, Yahweh considered Himself to be **married to ‘two wives.’** We can learn much more about these two wives from Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 23 we read that these two wives are named and described in more detail.

...The word of Yahweh came again unto me (Ezekiel), **saying,** Son of man, **there were two women, the daughters of one mother.** ...And the names of them were **Aholah** the elder, and **Aholibah** her sister: and **they were mine** (Yahweh’s); ...Samaria *is* Aholah, and **Jerusalem Aholibah,**... (Ezekiel 1:1-4)

In the above passage of Scripture Yahweh has recorded the fact that He had two women the daughters of one mother and He “was a husband to them” (Jer.31:32c). These ‘two wives’ were “the daughters of one mother,” i.e. Israel whom **Yahweh betrothed to Himself** while she was in Egypt. And **who became Yahweh’s wife** at Mt. Sinai, with Moses as the mediator of that marriage covenant.

Many other Scriptures confirm that the “mother” referenced in Ezekiel 23:2 was “mother” Israel before she became the two “daughters,” Aholah and Aholibah, ***when the kingdom of Israel was rent from Solomon’s heritage and became two kingdoms, Israel (Aholah), the northern kingdom and Judah (Aholibah), the southern kingdom.***

And **Yahweh was angry with Solomon**, because his heart was turned from Yahweh God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Yahweh commanded. Wherefore Yahweh said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, **I will surely forcibly take the kingdom (Israel) from thee, and will give it to thy servant.** Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: ***but I will forcibly take it out of the hand of thy son.*** Howbeit I will not forcibly take away the entire kingdom; ***but will give one tribe (Benjamin) to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.*** (1 Kings 11:9-13 AV)

The identification that Yahweh gives to these two women in Ezekiel also confirms these facts. Samaria (Aholah) was the capital city of the northern kingdom of the house of Israel, and Jerusalem (Aholibah) was the capital city of the southern kingdom of the house of Judah (Jews).

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel confirm the fact that both of the daughters, who were His ‘wives,’ were harlots.

And **they** committed whoredoms in Egypt; **they** committed whoredoms in **their** youth: there were **their** breasts pressed, and there **they** bruised the teats of their virginity. (Ezekiel 1:3, see also Jer. 3 below)

After supplying a brief review of the information presented above, Ezekiel briefly turns his attention to Aholah.

And **Aholah played the harlot when she was mine;... Wherefore I have delivered her (Aholah) into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians,** (Ezekiel 1:5, see also vss.6-10)

Yahweh here instructs that He had delivered Aholah (Samaria, c. 721 BC) into the hand of her lovers the Assyrians. The prophet Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel, describes that “deliverance” of Aholah in these words.

Yahweh said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, hast thou seen *that* which **backsliding Israel** hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there **hath played the harlot**. And I said after she had done all these *things*, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. ...And I saw, when for all the causes whereby **backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce;**^(Jer.3:6-8a)

From this passage, we learn that because of the uncleanness (harlotry) that her Husband Yahweh had found in His wife Aholah, Yahweh had given her **a bill or certificate of divorce** and had **put her away; out of the marriage covenant relationship and out of His land**. However, ***He kept His marriage relationship with Aholibah in spite of her harlotry.***

And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*...yet her treacherous sister **Judah** feared not, but went and **played the harlot also**. And it came to pass through the lightness of **her whoredom**, that she defiled the land, and **committed adultery** with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than **treacherous Judah**. (Jeremiah 3:6-11 AV, emphasis added)

This continued marriage relationship with Aholibah becomes a very important factor in properly understanding the New Testament (the new marriage covenant, the record of the fulfillment of the eschatology of Israel).

Ezekiel expands upon Aholibah’s adulterous affairs:

And when her (Aholah’s) sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she (Aholah) and in her (Aholibah’s) whoredoms more than her sister (Aholah) in her whoredoms. She (Aholibah) doted upon the Assyrians *her* neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. Then I saw that she was defiled, *that they took both one way*, And *that* she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion, Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea. **And the Babylonians came to her (Aholibah) into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them**, and her mind was alienated from them. So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her,

like as my mind was alienated from her sister (Aholah). Yet she (Aholibah) multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she (Aholibah) had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. For she (Aholibah) doted upon their paramours, whose flesh *is* as the flesh of asses, and whose issue *is like* the issue of horses. Thus, thou (Aholibah) called to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth. (Ezekiel 23:11-21)

Because of all this harlotry, Yahweh stated that He would “set my jealousy against”

Aholibah and **punish her very severely.**

Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and **I will bring them against thee on every side; The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans**, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses. And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, *which* shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments. And I will set my jealousy against thee (Aholibah), and they shall deal furiously with thee (Aholibah): they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue (remnant) shall be devoured by the fire. They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. **Thus will I make thy lewdness** and thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt **to cease from thee**: so that thou shall not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of *them* whom thou hatest, into the hand of *them* from whom thy mind is alienated: And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and **the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered**, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. I will do these *things* unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shall drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shall be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much. Thou shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. Thou shall even drink it and suck *it* out, and thou shall break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; That they have committed adultery, and blood *is* in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through *the fire*, to devour *them*. Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house. And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst

thyself with ornaments, And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort *were* brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. Then said I unto *her that was* old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she *with them*? Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: **so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women.** (Ezekiel 23:22-45)

The immediate context of this prophecy was fulfilled when the Babylonians seiged, sacked, and burned Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and carried Jerusalem into the Babylonian captivity. **However, in the greatest and fullest context it would be fulfilled in 70 AD as is presented in the dual prophecy in Jeremiah 50¹⁶.** For after pronouncing this incredible punishment upon Aholibah, Ezekiel looks far into the future and declares the final judgment to befall Aholibah.

Wherefore, **O harlot**, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all *them* that thou hast loved, with all *them* that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. **And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock** (cf. Isa. 1:1&21; Rev 17:1ff) **and shed blood** (cf. Matt.23:35) **are judged** (cf. Rev. 19:2) ; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.

For thus saith the Lord GOD; I **will bring up a company** (the Roman army) upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. **And the company** (the Roman army, especially the tenth legion) **shall stone them with stones**, (Rev.16:17-21) and dispatch them with their swords; (Rom.13:4) they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses **with fire** (Rev.17:16, 18:8). **Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness.** And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 16:35-38, & 23:46-49 AV)

The prophet Isaiah confirms that this is the correct understanding of this prophecy. Isaiah declares:

¹⁶ This great prophecy in Jeremiah 50 “against Babylon” and “against the Chaldeans” is the source and background for the “Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and abominations of the Land” that is presented in Revelation 17:5 The “against Babylon” portion of this prophecy is actually the prophecy of Mystery Babylon that is fulfilled in the first century judgment and destruction of Jerusalem while the “against the Chaldeans” portion is the prophecy of the imminent destruction of the Chaldean Empire which was fulfilled when the Medo-Persians’ invaded and conqueror the Chaldeans.

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw **concerning Judah and Jerusalem** in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. (Isaiah 1:1 AV)

How is the faithful city (Jerusalem-Aholibah) **become a harlot!** It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless; neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore saith the Lord, Yahweh of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: **...And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake Yahweh shall be consumed. ...and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.** (Isaiah 1:21-31, emphasis and comment added)

A careful and understanding student of Scripture will understand that Isaiah has looked far ahead into the future and is here making a prophecy about the final, 70 AD destruction and desolation of Jerusalem and the temple because **in verses 26-27 Yahweh declares through Isaiah a great prophecy of redemption that could only occur in the Messiah:**

And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: **afterward thou shall be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.** (Isa.1:26-27, emphasis added)

In the light of the New Testament, this is surely a great Old Testament prophecy of the city of righteousness sought by Abraham and described in Hebrews:

By faith Abraham...looked for **a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.** ...that is, a heavenly (city): wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: **for he hath prepared for them a city.** (Hebrews 11:9-10 & 16, emphasis added)

The city whose builder and maker is God is the city of righteousness of Isaiah's prophecy for righteousness can come only through Jesus Christ, the author and provider of Righteousness. It is the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem which the author of Hebrews tells those first century Hebrew Christians that they had come to:

But **you are come unto mount Sion,** and unto **the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,** and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And **to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant,**... (Hebrews 12:22-24 AV)

In the passage above from Hebrews, “mount Sion” is the author’s appellation for the kingdom of God (heaven), exactly the same as Isaiah’s “Zion” is his appellation for the kingdom of God (heaven). Hebrews “the city of God...the heavenly Jerusalem” is exactly the same as Isaiah’s “city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

Isaiah calls the city of God, “the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” The author of Hebrews calls the city of God, “the heavenly Jerusalem, and the apostle John calls this “holy city” the “new Jerusalem” and declares that this city is “the bride of Christ.” (Rev.21:2 & 9-10) These three all witness to the same fact. Isaiah declares that the kingdom of God (Zion) “will be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness.” *He also declares that at the same time the kingdom comes “the destruction of the transgressors of the marriage law and ...the sinners... that forsake Yahweh shall be consumed by fire.”* This is exactly what the New Testament declares was to happen at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and when the power of the Jews was broken, i.e. bound. The apostle alludes to this prophecy in Romans 16:20. While history clearly and unequivocally declares that this did happen in 70 AD, just as prophesied.

The apostate house of Judah, (Jerusalem-Aholibah) was the great mystery Harlot of Revelation 17-19, this harlot rejected and killed her Messiah (husband) and was punished lawfully for her harlotry.

However, Isaiah declared that “Zion” would be redeemed, the apostle Paul declared, “There shall come out of Zion the deliverer and he shall turn ungodliness from Jacob,” and the apostle John tells us that this “redeemed Zion” would be the virgin bride

of Christ, but Yahweh was already married to Aholibah, and she was tightly bound by that marriage law. How were faithful Jews to become free from that marriage law so that they could take their part in the bride of Christ?

In that incredible passage of Scripture in Romans 7, the apostle gives us the answer to our question:

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For **the woman which hath a husband** is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he liveth; **but if the husband be dead**, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: **but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law**; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Wherefore, my brethren, **you also are become dead to the law by the dead body of Christ; that you should be married** to another, *even to him who is raised from the dead*, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the pathologies of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

But now we are delivered from the law, that (the law) being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:1-6 AV)

What are the implications in this passage for the house of Judah, i.e. the first century Jews?

Let's examine how it applied to the Jews of the first century to whom Paul wrote, "for I speak to them that know the law." The "brethren" in the Roman ekklesia who knew the law were undoubtedly Jewish believers in the Messiah. The "law" that He refers to in this passage is, of course, the law that was given to Israel by Yahweh through Moses; the Law by which Yahweh bound both Israel and Himself.

Paul addressed them in this manner in order to alert the "ekklesia" at Rome that the readers of this epistle would need a certain knowledge of that law in order to clearly

understand what he was about to write to them. “Joyce A. Little, who has carefully examined this passage” makes two very accurate observations about this passage: “First, Paul is concerned with demonstrating that the law played a necessary role prior to the coming of Christ (hence the validity of the law governing the first marriage). Second, Paul wishes to use vv. 2-3 as an analogy demonstrating that **death** can change one’s relationship to the law.¹⁷ The third is, Paul wishes to use this structure to develop his view that the husband’s death takes place for a specific purpose, i.e. that the marriage law by which the husband bound the wife to himself is dissolved by the death of the husband and the wife is thus released from that law that she might be free to be married to another husband. (Emphasis mine)

Paul begins this portion of his epistle to the ekklesia at Rome with the statement brethren you know “how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?” What man is Paul referring to in this statement? He is referring to the Husband of verses 2-3.

It is clear from Exodus 19 that Yahweh and Israel were the principal players in the events that took place there at Sinai and that Moses was the mediator of that law (Gal.3:19). In Exodus 6:4-8, we saw that Yahweh betrothed Israel to Himself while she was yet in Egypt. Exodus 19:3-8 is the record of the marriage ceremony whereby Yahweh and Israel became “one” in that marriage covenant mediated by Moses, for Yahweh has clearly stated to Israel that “your maker is your husband” (Isa.54:5), and “I was a husband to them” (Jer.31:32). Thus Yahweh and Israel were both bound by that marriage “law.”

¹⁷Little, Joyce A., quoted in Morris, p. 270

Paul states, “that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives.” Therefore, the “man” in Paul’s illustration is the husband of that Mosaic Marriage Covenant, i.e. Yahweh. Thus Paul has effectually stated the Yahweh and his wife (Aholibah-Jerusalem-Judah) “are both bound by the law as long as He lives.”

Dear readers, please do not reject this, but read on very carefully to see that surely it is true.

To those believers in Rome, Paul wrote, “For the woman which hath a husband.” The woman that Paul is referring to here is Israel, specifically that portion of Israel known as **the house of Judah** (the Jews) which **had remained married to Yahweh until the first century, when she had her husband killed on a Roman cross and she became a widow [Cf. Revelation 18:7].** (Remember that the main body of Israel had been divorced by Yahweh, put out of the covenant marriage relationship and out of His house (land) in the 8th century BC [Jer.3:8, Hosea, et al.]

The **husband**, of course, is **Yahweh**. With that in mind Paul continues, “the woman is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he lives; ***but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.***” With the above identities in mind, let us restate this: The house of Judah (the Jews) was bound by the law as long as Yahweh lived; but if Yahweh “be dead,” the house of Judah is **released** from the law, i.e. the former marriage covenant (the Mosaic law) of her husband, Yahweh.

Yahweh, the God (husband) of Judah... dead? How is this possible you demand? God can not die can He, you wonder? Well dear brothers and sisters ponder this. Yahshua (Jesus Christ) was God incarnate, right?

For in Him (Christ, vs.8) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Father, Son, & Holy Spirit) in a (human) body. (Colossians 2:9)

All Christians *should* understand that Yahshua was Yahweh incarnate, the long awaited eschatological phenomena of all twelve tribes of Israel. In that sense, Yahweh died when Yahshua died on the cross. Please note that Paul stated that when Yahweh-Yahshua (the husband) died on that Roman cross the house of Judah (the wife who still had a husband) WAS “released from the law.” Then Paul continued, “Wherefore, my (Jewish) **brethren**, you (Jewish Christians) also **are become dead to the law by the** (dead) **body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.**” In this portion of Scripture Paul clearly tells the Jewish brethren in the ekklesia at Rome that they were released from the Mosaic law by the dead “body of Christ,” and that this release from the Mosaic law thus enabled them “**to be married** (the new bride) **to another, even to him who is raised from the dead,**” i.e. **the risen Christ, the new husband**. Thus, it is very, very clear that the Jews are saved (“married to another”) in the same manner that anyone else (the house of Israel) is; by faith (trust) in the resurrected Christ and thus their marriage to Him as the bride of Christ (cf. 2Cor. 11:2; Rev19:7-9, & 21:2ff.). These Jews of faith are the children of Israel of the house of Judah who are put together with “the tribes of Israel his fellows” (Ez.37:19) which become one nation (Ez.37:22) under the greater son of David, the Shepherd king (Ez.37:24), the New Testament bride of Christ.

Thus Paul concludes, “But now we **are delivered from the law**...That we should serve in newness of spirit.” The “we”, in this verse, are the Christians of the New Covenant house of Israel. The New Covenant house of Israel is the one nation of prophecy (Ez.37:22; Matt. 21:34; 1Pet.2:9; et. al.) above. The “one body” “the one new man” and the “Bride” of Christ of the New Testament (Gal.3:28; Rom.12:4-5; 1Cor.10:17, 12:12-13 &20; Eph.2:15-16, 4:4; Col.3:15, et. al.) **which was**

caught up into His heavenly kingdom [2Tim 4:18] in the resurrection and harpazo [1Cor 15:23c, 51-54; 1Thess 4:13-17] in AD 70!

The Jews of the first century **that rejected their Messiah** also refused to believe that the Mosaic Law was completely fulfilled in the Messiah. They also failed to recognize that they had killed their husband and that they were now widowed. That is why the great harlot of Revelation 17 is seen as a woman and a widow:

...**a woman** sit(ting) upon a scarlet coloured beast,... was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls , having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead a name written, **MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE LAND**...and the woman which thou sawest is that great city (Jerusalem)...and is become the habitation of malicious slanderers (devils), and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird...for her sins have reached unto heaven, and Yahweh has remembered her iniquities...How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously,...for **she says** in her heart, *I sit a queen, and I am no widow, and shall see no sorrow,*

This woman **had been** the harlot wife of Yahweh before she killed Him, then after she kills Him says “that she is no widow.” She had rebelled and killed her husband (Yahweh-Yahshua) and refused to recognize it, continued to serve the law, refused to accept her release from the law, and claimed that she was not a widow. However, this “widow” was a horrible harlot and this *“whore was about to be stoned into desolation and made naked, her flesh eaten and burned with fire”* (Rev. 17:16).

Thus, it is true, that *there was no salvation* for this whore but there was **no divorce either. The Revelation is not a divorce decree from Yahweh to the house of Judah or any other house for that matter. There is no need to divorce a widowed harlot who is truly a widow**, even though she refused to recognize it, **and is about to be put to death according to the law of Leviticus 20:10**. The mode of death was stoning (Lev.20:1) for a common adulteress and burning by fire for a priest’s daughter (Lev. 21:9) who

had become an adulteress (whore). As **the apostate portion** of the house of Judah was both, she was stoned (Rev.16:21) and burned (Rev. 17:16, 18:8) according to prophecy by the Roman army who was Yahweh's "minister..." that bore "the sword...an avenger to execute *His* wrath upon *those* that do (this great) evil. (Rom. 13:4) The faithful of Judah were united with the believing remnant of the house of Israel, from among the Nations/Gentiles where they had been scattered and preserved since the 8th century BC, into Yahshua within the new marriage covenant. Paul clearly confirms that this is the correct understanding of this matter in his letter to the Galatians:

*Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: **for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.** But the scripture hath concluded all under sin that **the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.** But before faith came, we (the Jews) were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. **Wherefore the law was our (the Jews) schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** But after that faith is come, we (the Jews) are no longer under a schoolmaster. **For you (the Gentiles) are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.** For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek;** there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: **for you are all one new man in Christ Jesus.** (Galatians 3:21-28, emphasis added; Cf. Eph. 2:15-16; Eze 37:14-23)*

III. Conclusion

In Romans 7:1-6 Paul specifically identifies the Old Testament (Mosaic Law) knowledge about harlotry, divorce and remarriage of his Jewish brethren and declares to them and their Nations/Gentile counterparts that this Mosaic Marriage Law has dominion over a man (God, the husband) as long as he lives? Thus the house of Judah (the southern kingdom); the woman (Judah) which had a husband (Yahweh) was bound by this Mosaic Marriage Law to *her* husband, Yahweh, for as long as he lives; but if the husband

(Yahweh incarnate, Jesus Christ) be dead, the Jews are released from the law of their husband.

While Jesus Christ (Yahweh incarnate) lived and ministered to the house of Judah (the Jews), He twice told them that they were a wicked and adulterous generation (Matthew 12:39 & 16:4) thus confirming that while *her* husband lived, she (the house of Judah-Jews) was in an adulterous relationship with another [cf. Rev 17:1, 3-5], and she was called an adulteress.

When Jesus Christ (Yahweh incarnate) died the house of Judah's husband was dead, and she was free (released) from that marriage law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man, the resurrected Christ. Wherefore, my brethren (the Jews), you also are become dead to the law by the [dead] body of Christ; that you should be married to another, *even* to **Him who is raised from the dead**, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the (marriage) law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit (sin) unto death. But now we are released from the (marriage) law, that (the Marriage Law) being dead wherein we were held (the marriage law within which the wife was held died with the husband Cf. Heb. 8:13); that we (first century Christians) should serve (within the new marriage covenant) in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:1-6)

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