

No foreigner is to enter within the forecourt and the balustrade (δρύφακτου, *drufaktou*) around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his subsequent death.<sup>1</sup>

If Paul had intended his readers to understand the retaining wall of the Temple which separated Gentile from Jew to be what Messiah destroyed, he would have used the common Greek term, something he doubtlessly had seen time and time again as he entered the Temple. Josephus calls the separating wall in the Temple court δρύφακτος λιθινός (*druphaktos lithinos*), “fence of stone,” employing the same term used in the inscription, and describes the wall as three cubits high (1.5 meters; 4.5 feet) with gates. Philo also calls the wall δρύφακτος (*drufaktos*) not μεσότοιχος (*mesotoichos*) or φραγμός (*fragmos*), the words of our text. The Mishnah and Bavli refer to the balustrade by the term יריס , (*soreg*), “lattice-work fence.”

Moreover, the aorist participle λύσας (*lusas* from *luō*), as well as the context, would most clearly require that the breaking down of the wall had already taken place. But until the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, this partition wall remained. It seems unlikely that Paul would teach the present reality of peace between Jew and Gentile on the basis of Messiah’s having abolished the separating wall in the Temple if, in fact, it was still standing!

Yet, in spite of these facts, many English Bibles have translated our text in such a way that it appears Paul is teaching the “law” (i.e., the Torah) has been abolished. Note how these English Bibles translate vv. 14–15.

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1 Quoted from E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63BCE—66CE* (Trinity Press International, 1992), p. 61. The inscription along with the history of its recovery has been published in Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (Baker, 1978 reprint), p. 80, where Deissmann has τρύφακτου (*trufaktou*) rather than δρύφακτου, *drufakto*. Liddel and Scott list only δρύφακτου, *drufakto*, noting that τρύφακτου (*trufaktou*) is an erroneous form. See also Peretz Segal, “The Penalty of the Warning Inscription from the Temple of Jerusalem,” *IEJ* 39, 1989, pp. 79-84.

Ant. xv.417; cf. War 5.193f; 6.124-6. The Bavli notes that these gates were closed up, cf. b.Yoma 16a.

For He himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, [NIV]

For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, [NRSV]

For he is himself our peace. Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the barrier of enmity which separated them; for he annulled the law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace. [REB]

For he himself is our shalom—he has made us both one and has broken down the *m'chitzah* which divided us by destroying in his own body the enmity occasioned by the *Torah*, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances. He did this in order to create in union with himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make shalom, [CJB]

Not only is it clear from other Scriptures that Yeshua did not come to abolish the Torah (Matt 5:17–20) but it is also clear that His Apostles, including Paul, never taught that the Torah was abolished by the death of Messiah. In his epistle to the Romans, in 3:21–30, Paul has established that righteousness before God is gained on the basis of faith in Yeshua alone and not by works of the Law. He then concludes:

Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be!  
On the contrary, we establish the Law. (Rom 3:31, NASB)

So one wonders how the modern translations have so easily made it appear as though here, in Ephesians 2, Paul is teaching that the “Law” (Torah) is what divided Jew and Gentile, especially when we remember that the covenant made with Abraham promised blessing upon all the nations/families of the earth (cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). God would not have given His promise to bless all the families of the earth and then give the gift of the Torah that would separate the people of

Israel from the rest of the nations.

Important for our study is the use of the verb *περιφράσσειν* (*perifrassein*) in an early document, the Epistle of Aristeas.<sup>1</sup> This verb means “to fence about” and is cognate to the word “wall” (*φραγμός*, *fragmos*) used in Eph 2:14. In the Epistle of Aristeas, this word refers to the man-made laws (often referred to as the “oral Torah”) as the fence around the Law which enforced separation between Jew and non-Jew.

‘our lawgiver . . . fenced us about [*περιφράσσειν*] with impenetrable palisades and with walls of iron to the end that we should mingle in no way with any of the other nations, remaining pure in body and in spirit’ (139) and ‘so that we should be polluted by none nor be infected with perversions by associating with worthless persons, he has fenced us about [*περιφράσσειν*] on all sides with prescribed purifications in matters of food and drink and touch and hearing and sight’ (142).<sup>2</sup>

The Rabbinic injunction regarding a fence around the Torah is common, as in *Avot*, the “Sayings of our Fathers”

They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence [*גִּיּוֹץ*, *siyag*] round the Torah.<sup>3</sup>

This gives insight to the meaning of our text, that the “dividing wall” which was abolished by Messiah was none other than those man-made laws which had enforced a separation between Jew and Gentile in opposition to the written Torah. In fact, the Tanach gives very clear instructions against erecting barriers to separate Israel from the nations. The foreigner who desired to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was to be welcomed into the community and treated with the same respect as was given the native born (Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Le-

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- 1 The Epistle of Aristeas is generally dated between 250 BC and 100 CE. See James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Doubleday, 1985), 2:8.
  - 2 English translation from Lincoln, *Ephesians in Word Bible Commentary* (Word, 1990) p. 124. The Greek text is available in H. B. Swete, *The Old Testament in Greek* (KTAV, 1968), pp. 551–606. The lines translated above are found on p. 575.
  - 3 *m.Avot* 1.1; Cf. also *b.Chullin* 110a; *b.Yebamot* 20a.

viticus 19:33, 34; 25:35; Deuteronomy 26:12). They were to be given full participation in matters of Torah and Torah-life (Sabbath: Exodus 23:12, Isaiah 56:3ff.; gleanings: Leviticus 19:10; justice: Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 24:22; festivals: Deuteronomy 16:11, 14; worship, prayer, sacrifices in the Temple: I Kings 8:41–43; II Chronicles 6:32,33).

*by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances...* –

Here Paul goes on to describe both what the “dividing wall” was, i.e., man-made laws which separated Jew and Gentile, and how it was broken down by the saving work of Yeshua in His death and resurrection.

Yeshua broke down the barrier of the dividing wall “by abolishing in His flesh the enmity...” The phrase “in His flesh” (ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ) is parallel with “by the blood of Messiah” in v. 13. It was by the death of the Incarnate One, our Messiah, that the promise made to Abraham would be realized, i.e., that all the nations/families of the earth would be blessed. Thus it was “in His flesh” that the enmity between Jew and non-Jew would be overcome, and this reminds us that the death of our Messiah as the sacrifice for sin secured the inevitable success of God’s promise to bless all the nations/families of the earth.

The dividing wall is clearly defined as that which brought “enmity” or “hostility” (ἐχθρος, *exthros*) between Jew and non-Jew. Paul uses the same word in Rom 8:7 to describe unbelievers, whose mind is set upon the flesh, as “hostile (*exthros*) toward God.”

*which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances* – Now Paul gives us clear explanation of that which constituted the “enmity” and thus created a dividing wall between Jew and non-Jew. This “wall” that separated consisted of “the law of commandments contained in ordinances” (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν). What is most important for us to recognize is how Paul describes the realm or place in which “the law of commandments” existed. It is “in ordinances.” But what is important to recognize is the Greek word Paul uses here. It is the Greek word δόγμα (*dogma*) and here, in the plural.

What is significant about this word is that it is never used in the Septuagint to describe any of God’s commandments, judgments, statutes, or laws as revealed in the written Torah. Rather, in the Lxx, *dogma* is always used to describe man-made laws, such as the edicts of a king or court.<sup>1</sup>

Some have suggested that the use of the word *dogma* in 3Maccabees

1 E.g., Esther 4:8; 9:1; Daniel 6:12.

1:3 refers to the “Law of Moses,” but an investigation of the text in no way substantiates this claim. The line in question is:

But Dositheus, known as the son of Drimylus, a Jew by birth who later changed his religion and apostatized from the ancestral traditions... (ὕστερον δὲ μεταβαλὼν τὰ νόμιμα καὶ τῶν πατρῶν δογμάτων ἀπηλλοτριωμένος)

The phrase τῶν πατρῶν δογμάτων (*ton patrion dogmaton*, literally “the *dogma* of the fathers”) does not refer to the Mosaic Torah but to the “traditions of the fathers,” the *halakah* of the community. Had the written Torah been intended, the phrase τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου (*ha patrōou nomou*), “the ancestral Law,” found only a few verses later (1:23) would have been used.<sup>1</sup>

The noun *dogma* is found five times in the Apostolic Writings. In Luke 2:1 and Acts 17:7 it is used of Caesar’s decrees, while in Acts 16:4 it refers to the apostolic decree formulated at the Jerusalem council. In Colossians 2:14 the decrees (*dogmasin*) are viewed as hostile (*kath’ hemon*, “against us”) and are removed through Messiah’s death. Here, on the basis of the removal of this debt consisting of “decrees,” Paul admonishes his readers not to let others judge them in regard to “food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.”

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.... (Col 2:16)

These were the very items which occasioned the attention of the Rabbis in their “building fences,” and which had created the separation between Jew and non-Jew.

Thus we see that the word *dogma* is used throughout the Lxx as well as the Apostolic Scriptures to denote man-made decrees and is never used to describe the commandments of God in the Torah. The conclusion is clear: what Paul is teaching us in these verses is that man-made laws, specifically the man-made laws that were put into place by the Jewish authorities in order to assure the exclusion of Gentiles, is what constituted the dividing wall, and what was abolished by the saving work of Yeshua. For empowering His disciples to make disciples of all

1 Note other parallel phrases in the Lxx: τῶν πατρῶν νόμων (2 Macc 6:1), ναμοῦ ὑψίστου, (Sir. 42:2; 44:20).

the nations (Matt 28:19–20) began the worldwide harvest in which communities of believing Jews would inevitably welcome into their fellowship believing Gentiles, and the man-made “wall” which had brought about a rejection of Gentiles by the Jewish community, was abolished.

*so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man...*, – Here, once again, we see Paul’s emphasis upon “in Messiah” (ἐν Χριστῷ, *en Christō*) as being the very means by which all who are His are saved eternally, and thereby are reckoned as sons and daughters in the family of God. This parallels the central thought by which Paul opens the Epistle of Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah... He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Eph 1:1, 5-6)

The “two” consists of the one who is “far off” and the one “who is near” (v. 13) now united together in Messiah. The “one new man” does not mean that national identity (i.e., Jew and non-Jew) has been erased. No, this would undue the promise that all nations would be blessed. Rather, the “one new man” is both Jew and non-Jew adopted into the family of God, and thus having the same primary identity as being equally children of God, all having the same righteous standing before the Father, having equal access to the Father through Yeshua, and all being filled with the Ruach Who empowers and enables all to be living witnesses of God’s greatness and love.

It should be noted that in the phrase “that He might make the two into one new man,” the Greek word translated by the NASB as “make” is κτίζω (*ktizō*) which has the basic sense of “to create.” Paul emphasizes the fact that union in Messiah comes about by the believer being recreated as a new creation in Messiah Yeshua (cf. 2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). Once again, the sovereign love of God is seen in the giving of Yeshua to accomplish our salvation, which is all of grace.

*thus establishing peace...* – Here, in the body of Messiah, Jew and non-Jew are to be the true representation of the peace which God in Messiah Yeshua has established. We have peace with God and thus demonstrate peace in our unity together in the body of Messiah, the *ekklesia* which He promised to build and to protect.

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My *ekklesia*; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. (Matt 16:18)

Let us therefore glory in the work that our Savior has accomplished! How wrong it is if local congregations or communities seek to separate Jewish and non-Jewish believers. To do such a thing is to seek to undermine the very work of Yeshua in uniting the two into “one new man” as a central characteristic of the *ekklesia* He has promised to build.

**16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.**

The reconciliation which has taken place through the completed work of Yeshua, His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, brings about the sovereign plan of God by which those who are brought to faith, Jew and non-Jew alike, have been given a “new heart” through the work of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) and are thereby enabled to more and more put to death the deeds of the flesh and to live in obedience to God.

*...in one body to God through the cross* – Here Paul moves from the individual (“making the two into one new man”) to the body of Messiah and thus to the larger picture of mankind. It is through the “one body,” the *ekklesia* that Yeshua promises to build, that the accomplishment of God’s full plan of redemption will be manifest to a watching world. It is through His cross and the redemption He accomplished that “every family/nation of the earth” will be represented in that innumerable host of people that have been given the supreme gift of eternal life.

Let us consider the fact that within the “Torah movement,” we have the grand privilege of showing to a watching world the unity that God has brought to those who are truly His, those who are “in Messiah,” Jew and non-Jew sharing together in the gifts of His grace.

*by it having put to death the enmity.* – Here Paul uses warfare language, for the “enmity” i.e., the “enemy” is put to death, even as the author of Hebrews states:

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. (Heb 2:14–15)

This language makes it clear that never again should the “enmity” be

reinstated! God has forever slain the enemy which puts Jew and non-Jew at odds. All who are "in Messiah" are brothers and sisters in God's family and therefore share equally in the bounty of His grace.