

The Judeo-Christian Ethic: Fallacy or Foundation?

This article is in response to a radio program I inadvertently heard that caught my attention. The quote below is from a very anointed pastor whom I respect and admire, although I cannot agree with his conclusion negating the Judeo-Christian Ethic as the basis for Christian morality.

"I have a little problem with talking about the Judeo-Christian ethic. If you say Judeo, meaning Jews who do not believe in Jesus Christ, but hold to the Ten Commandments, you're introducing a flaw into worship, which is utterly profound. I mean the New Testament is written to say those who do not honor the Son do not honor the Father, so the concept of a Judeo-Christian ethic as the goal to which we are aiming is profoundly mistaken.

Because ethics has to grow out of a true view of G-d and to reject Jesus Christ is to have an absolutely flawed view of G-d and therefore the ethic that flows from it as morality is going to be flawed. Even if some of the behavior is the same, the point of ethics is not merely the kernel or the shell of the behavior, but the inner convictions of the mind, and the disposition of the heart, and the goal of what we are displaying, and if Jesus Christ is omitted from that, I don't think we have Christian ethics or morality."

I would suggest that this pastor's conclusion is flawed and the reason it is flawed, is because he is using the rejection of Jesus Christ by the majority of the Jewish people as his reason for not accepting the Judeo-Christian Ethic as the basis for Christian morality. If I understand the concept of the Judeo-Christian Ethic, it is the revelation of G-d's standard for human morality that is found in the Holy Scriptures, including both the Older and Newer Covenants. For the purposes of simplicity and functionality I might suggest the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount (both initially written to the Jewish people) as the biblical basis for a Judeo-Christian Ethic.

There is nothing flawed about either of these passages of Scripture, except our inability as humans to live in complete harmony with the requirements contained therein. That is why Scripture also informs us of the saving grace of G-d that is found in both the Passion and the Resurrection of our L-RD Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah. Even though many Jewish people may reject Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, that does not corrupt the perfect law of G-d, which is an integral part of revealing His character and nature to all the world.

I believe that the Ten Commandments are the basis for a correct view of G-d and are an appropriate expression of worship to G-d, regardless of the spiritual enlightenment of the Jewish community. Psalm 19 gives a resounding declaration for the purity and perfection of G-d's law as a standard for human morality.

"The law of the L-RD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the L-RD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the L-RD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the L-RD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the L-RD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the L-RD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." Psalm 19:7-11

Jeremiah prophesied of how the New Covenant would be the inscription of G-d's law in our minds and upon our hearts through the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.

*"Behold the days come, says the L-RD, that **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant 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 broke, although I was an husband unto them, says the L-RD. But **this shall be the covenant I will make** with the house of Israel; After those days, says the L-RD, **I will put My law in their inward parts, and write in their hearts;** and they I will be their G-d, and they shall be My people." Jeremiah 31:31-33*

Jesus himself spoke of G-d's ancient commandments with the highest accolade and with an unusually stern warning.

*"It is written, **Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of G-d.**" Matthew 4:4*

***"Think not that I come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, Till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments and shall teach men to do so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."** Matthew 5:17-20*

Y'shua sees enough value in G-d's commandments that He encourages that they be taught and observed (He exemplified teaching and observance in light of the New Covenant in Matthew 12:1-12). The righteousness that He is requiring (which exceeds the outward, superficial righteousness of religious observance devoid of a humble and contrite heart), is that which comes through thoughtful heartfelt repentance and child-like faith.

*"Now we know that what things the law says, it says to them who are under the law: **that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before G-d.** Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: **for by the law is the knowledge of sin.** But now the righteousness of G-d without the law is manifested, **being witnessed by the law and the prophets.**" Romans 3:19-21*

Here the Apostle Paul makes it clear that the purpose of the law was to silence all human arguments of self-righteousness, pointing us to and affirming the righteousness, which comes to us by faith. Without the law, we cannot fully comprehend the holiness of G-d and our utter hopelessness without a savior.

*"What shall we say then? **Is the law sin?** G-d forbid. No, **I had not known sin, except by the law:** for I had not known lust, except the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" Romans 7:7*

*"Wherefore **the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.**" Romans 7:12*

*"For **we know that the law is spiritual:** but I am carnal, sold under sin." Romans 7:14*

*"If then I do that which I would not, **I consent unto the law that it is good.**" Romans 7:16*

In Romans 7, the Apostle Paul explains how the law reveals to us the sinfulness of our humanity as it unveils to us the holiness of G-d. Jesus and Paul are declaring that the Ten Commandments are the basis for our morality and our understanding of G-d. Without them, all the blessings of the New Covenant would be without purpose and we would not be able to comprehend why they are so precious and priceless. I would suggest that the Judeo-Christian Ethic is alive and well, as I believe G-d would have it.

I humbly submit these thoughts in hopes of encouraging this dear pastor to reconsider his statement. I share this with the greatest respect and admiration for this precious pastor who continues to bless our city with his faithful declaration of the Gospel of our L-RD and Savior, Jesus the Messiah. Shalom and may G-d graciously bless you, Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman