

THE
MOSAIC
COVENANT

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Crossroads Full Gospel
International Ministries

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

Published by:

*Crossroads Publications
10681 Princes Highway
Warrnambool
Victoria 3280
Australia*

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THE MOSAIC COVENANT

THE COVENANT OF GOD

Background Reading: Genesis 17:1-8

Between the Fall of man and the time of Moses, various blood Covenants were established by God with different groups and individuals. These were instituted as a means of holding eternal death at bay for those who lived according to these Covenants. The blood of the sacrifices atoned for (or covered) the sins of the people. This was only a stopgap measure, however, for it could not release people from the power and the bondage of sin, namely the sin nature which gives the power to sin.

During this period, God called a man named Abram to be the founder of a people who would be His holy nation, His chosen possession of all the nations on the earth. God gave to Abram special promises which related to an everlasting Covenant and the promise of a Messiah Who would deal decisively with the terrible sin problem that afflicted all mankind. God promised Abram or Abraham, as he came to be called, that through him, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. This promise obviously pointed to the Messiah Who would come forth as one of Abraham's descendants. The Word of God reveals that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. In other words, Abraham believed God's promises, and because of his faith was considered "righteous," meaning he had rightstanding with God.

Later, when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, God gave His people the following promise: *"Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My Covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people . . and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation . . ."* (Exodus 19:5-6).

***“...This covenantal promise, however,
was conditional upon the people obeying
God’s laws which He delivered to Moses
on Mount Sinai. . .”***

This covenantal promise, however, was conditional upon the people obeying God’s laws which He delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. This very detailed body of regulations covered every aspect of life and was known as the Mosaic Law. The Old Testament Saints were those of God’s people who sought to obey the regulations of the Mosaic Law and whose sins were covered by the blood sacrifices. Note that other Old Testament Saints existed prior to the Mosaic Law, being those who believed in the Covenant.

Now the Mosaic Law was never intended to replace the Covenant of Grace made with Abraham. It was never intended to become a means of “salvation by works” - it was the means by which God revealed to Israel His righteous standards, which, through experience, they found they were unable to keep.

The continuity and preservation of the Covenant of Grace is clearly laid out in scripture.

GALATIANS 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, “And to seeds”, as of many; but as of one, “And to your seed,” which is Christ.

GALATIANS 3:17 And this I say, that the Covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

GALATIANS 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Wuest, speaking of Galatians 3:16-18, addresses the issue of the Covenant as follows:

“Verse sixteen. The promises were made to Abraham and to his seed, Christ. But when Christ is seen as seed of Abraham here, all those saved by Him are included. The word seed when used in the singular number in the Old Testament means progeny. Thus to Abraham personally and to all those who by faith in Christ are brought into salvation, were the promises made. The fact that the promises were made to Abraham and to all believers all down the ages who follow Abraham in his act of faith, indicates that the faith way of salvation existed before the law was given, continued through the time the law was in force, and still is in effect after the abrogation of the law at the Cross. Thus the entrance of the law did not affect the covenant at all.

Translation. Now to Abraham were made the promises, and to his seed. He does not say, And to the seeds, as in respect to many (seeds), but in respect to one (seed), and to your seed who is Christ.

***“. . .the faith way of salvation existed
before the law was given, continued
through the time the law was in force,
and still is in effect after the abrogation
of the law at the Cross. . .”***

Verse seventeen. The words “And this I say,” take up for the purpose of further argument or explanation a thought which has already been expressed. In verse 16, Paul has by inference hinted at what he states plainly in this verse. The figure of 430 years, Paul probably took from Exodus 12:40. The statement of the length of time that elapsed between the giving of the covenant to Abraham and the giving of the law to Moses, implies that the law was something new and different which could not therefore be an element forming part of the promise. The longer the covenant was in force as the alone method upon which God operated in the

saving of sinners, the more impressive is Paul's statement. God was saving men on the basis of faith without works since the time of Adam, or 2,500 years before the law was given. The law was in force from Moses to Christ, or for a period of 1500 years. At the Cross it was abrogated. The Judaizers not only attempted to retain the Mosaic institutions for the Jews, but tried to impose them upon the Gentiles, to whom that law was never given. This was what Paul was fighting.

Paul's argument therefore is as follows. If a covenant once in force cannot be changed or rendered void by any subsequent action, God's covenant with Abraham cannot be changed or rendered void by the subsequent law. If this principle holds good in a human covenant, much more is it true when God makes the covenant, since God is more certainly true to His promise than man.

Translation. This now is what I mean. A covenant previously established by God,¹⁸ the law, which came after four hundred and thirty years, does not render void, with the result that the promise becomes inoperative.

Verse eighteen. Paul's argument in this verse is, that if the law affects the promise at all, it renders it null and void. It cannot be added to it without destroying it. Salvation must rest either upon the promise or upon the law. The Judaizers claimed that it rested upon the promise and the law. But Paul has shown that the law did not abrogate the promise, and thus it had no effect upon it. Thus, if as the Judaizers say, the inheritance is on the basis of law obedience, then it is not on the basis of promise. But, Paul adds, God gave it to Abraham on the basis of promise. That settled the matter. The words, law and promise are without the definite article, indicating that Paul is speaking of them here in their character of two opposing principles.

***“ . . . Salvation must rest either upon the
promise or upon the law. . . ”***

The word “gave” is from charizomai (χαρίζομαι). This is a specialized word. It denotes not merely a gift, but a gift which is given out of the spontaneous generosity of the giver’s heart, with no strings tied to it. The Greek word grace (charis (χαρις)) has the same root and the same meaning. Thus the word refers, not to an undertaking based upon terms of mutual agreement, but upon the free act of one who gives something, expecting no pay for it. This at once shows the difference between law and grace. If salvation were by obedience to the law, that would mean that it would be based upon a mutual agreement between God and the sinner whereby God would obligate Himself to give salvation to any sinner who would earn it by obedience to the law. But the very genius of the word charizomai (χαρίζομαι) militates against the teaching of the Judaizers, namely, that salvation is by works. There is a Greek word huposchesis (ὑποσχέσις) which is used of an offer based upon the terms of a mutual agreement. But it is not used here.

Furthermore, the verb gave is in the perfect tense here, which tense speaks of a past completed act having present results. The past act of God giving the inheritance on the basis of a promise, has present results, present to the writer. God gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise 2000 B.C. The results of this act were still in existence in the century when Paul wrote. The law was given 1500 B.C., and the promise still held good after the law came and had been set aside.

Translation. For if the inheritance is from law (as a method of divine dealing), no longer is it from promise (as a method of divine dealing). But to Abraham through the intermediate instrumentality of promise God has in grace freely bestowed it.”¹
 (underlines added)

WHY WAS THE MOSAIC LAW INTRODUCED ?

Background Reading: Galatians 3:19-24

The Law of God was given or exposed through the Mosaic Covenant which had three aspects:

1. The Ceremonial - which pointed to Christ in all its type-patterns.

2. The Moral - which continues today for it reveals God's standards regarding how we are to relate to both Him and our neighbour.

3. The Civil - which was unique to Israel as a society existing for God's purposes.

The precise discipline of the Mosaic Law was introduced to the Israelite nation for several reasons.

1. It revealed the holy nature of God. Thus Paul describes the Law as *"holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good"* (Romans 7:12).

2. It was *"added because of transgressions"* (Galatians 3:19), meaning that it revealed sin for what it was - not just a deviation from the right course of action but a violation of God's laws. Before the Law was given, there was no actual transgression (violation) of the Law - *"For where no law is, there is no transgression"* (Romans 4:15.) And *"... until the (Mosaic) Law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed (as a transgression) when there is no law"* : Romans 5:13. So sin was rampant before the Law was given, but after this event, sin took on a whole new meaning. Sin then became a transgression, or an open violation, in full knowledge, of God's laws. Thus the Mosaic Law was given to educate man in the utter seriousness of sin - to show man that sin was really open rebellion against God and thereby to bring man to the position where he would fear the wrath of God.

***"...the Mosaic Law was given to educate
man in the utter seriousness of sin - to
show man that sin was really open
rebellion against God. . ."***

3. It was intended to help make the nation of Israel, through whom would come the promised Redeemer, “*an holy nation*” (Exodus 19:5-6; Leviticus 19:2) - to keep His chosen people separate unto God, so that He could bring the Saviour into the world through them.

4. It was intended to be an external and temporary discipline to provide them with boundaries up until the time when justification would be available by faith (Galatians 3:23-24). Indeed the Mosaic Law could only expose the terrible ugliness of sin. It could not deal with sin - the domination of the sin nature. Because man was powerless to obey the Law, it could not, as an external code, free the people from the deadly grip of this insidious enemy, i.e. the sin nature.

5. It was also intended, in the truest sense, to point out the hopelessness of man’s efforts, in his own flesh, to meet all the requirements of the Mosaic Law and indeed all the laws of God. Thus the Law was intended to make people aware of their need for a Saviour, and to lead them to Christ. He therefore does not nullify the Law - for Christ is its proper goal and fulfillment. Thus: “*It (the Law) was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to Whom the promise was made . . .*” (Galatians 3:19). The “*seed*” referred to here is of course Jesus.

***GALATIANS 3:19 Wherefore then serves the Law?
(What good is the Law?) It was added because of
transgressions (was given to define sin), till the seed
should come to whom the Promise was made (Christ
is the Promise); and it was ordained by Angels in the
hand of a mediator. (Moses was the mediator of the
Law.) (E.S.B.)***

Scofield answers the question posed by Galatians 3:19 as follows:

“(3:19) *The answer to this question is six-fold:*

(1) *The law was added because of transgressions, i.e. to give to sin the character of transgression.*

(a) *Men had been sinning before Moses but, in the absence of law, their sins were not put to their account (Romans 5:13); the law gave to sin the character of transgression, i.e. of personal guilt.*

(b) *Also, since men not only continued to transgress after the law was given, but were provoked to transgress by the very law which forbade it (Romans 7:8), the law conclusively proved the inveterate sinfulness of man's nature (Romans 7:11-13).*

(2) *The law, therefore, "concluded all under sin" (cp. Romans 3:19-20, 23).*

(3) *The law was an ad interim dealing, "till the Seed should come" (v.19)*

(4) *The law shut sinful man up to faith as the only avenue of escape (v.23).*

(5) *The law was to the Jews what the child-discipliner (Gk. Paidagogos) was in a Greek household, a custodian of children in their minority, and it had this character "unto" (i.e. until) Christ (vv. 23-25, note; 4:1-2). And*

(6) *Christ having come, the believer is no longer under the child-discipliner (i.e. the law, v.25), but has become a disciple (i.e. learner) of Christ Himself (Matthew 11:29; Luke 10:39; John 17:6-8; Titus 2:11-13)."*²

"...the moral principles of God, or the spirit of the Mosaic Law, had always been written on man's heart (his conscience) and the Fall of man had not obliterated this instinctive knowledge of sin..."

Before the Mosaic Law was handed down to the Israelites, mankind was still accountable to God for his actions. This is because the moral principles of God, or the spirit of the Mosaic Law, had always been written on man's heart (his conscience) and

the Fall of man had not obliterated this instinctive knowledge of sin (this is, or course, unless the conscience had been seared by active sin or cultural dictates).

Paul outlines this principle of the accountability of unsaved man in Romans 2:14-15.

ROMANS 2:14 For when the Gentiles, who have not the Law (of Moses), do by nature the things contained in (required by) the Law (as directed by their conscience), these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves (having been given a standard of right and wrong through their conscience):

ROMANS 2:15 Which show the work of the Law written in their hearts (means that no one, whomever they might be and wherever they might be, is absent of all Light), their conscience also bearing witness (but which can be seared), and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another (conscience does not prove a reliable guide, as is proclaimed here); (E.S.B.)

Here we see that even the Gentiles, who did not have access to the Mosaic Law, were still responsible to God for obeying the principles which were written on their hearts (consciences).

Note: Although this is true, as Christians, our spirit still needs to be educated through the renewing of the mind so that it can discern between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). In this way, the conscience (the voice of our spirit enmeshed with God's nature) can check us in all that we do. The more we obey our trained conscience, the stronger its voice will become. The more mankind sins, however, the more his conscience will become seared, warped or oblivious to sin. For this reason the conscience is not a totally reliable guide, the only answer being to follow the Spirit in all things (Romans 8:1). Renald Showers writes of "The Human Conscience" as follows:

"Paul referred to the human conscience in Romans 2:14-15. Every human is born with a conscience; therefore, God can use

the conscience to reveal truths to all mankind. Through the conscience, God reveals that right and wrong actually exist and that humans are responsible for what they do and don't do. The conscience gives people a sense of guilt when they do something wrong, and peace when they act in accordance with what they believe is right.

“ . . . The conscience gives people a sense of guilt when they do something wrong, and peace when they act in accordance with what they believe is right. . . ”

God's revelation through the conscience can be limited in two ways. First, by doing the same wrong repeatedly, people can sear their consciences, making them so insensitive to the wrong that they no longer bother them (1 Tim.4:2). Second, people's culture educates their consciences concerning the specifics of right and wrong. If their culture has taught them concepts of right and wrong contrary to God's standards, then their consciences will not be an accurate guide in every instance. In light of this, when people become saved, they may have to reeducate their consciences to bring their specific concepts of right and wrong into conformity with God's standards (Romans 12:-1-2; Ephesians 4:17-6:9).”³

(underlines added)

THE NATURE OF THE LAW AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CROSS

One writer gives a clear outline of the Law, what it could and couldn't do, and how it relates to us as Christians today.

THE LAW OF GOD

“In the Law, God sets forth His Standard of Righteousness, in other words, what a man ought to be. He then pronounces a curse on him if he doesn’t measure up. But irrespective as to how much man may claim that he is what he ought to be, he finds that when he looks at himself in the light of the Law of God, he actually is the very thing which the Law condemns.

Paul tells us that “the law entered that the offence might abound,” showing us the very real object of the Law (Romans 5:20).

The Law is like a mirror which is let down from Heaven, which shows man what he is, which to say the least, is not good at all, but gives man no means to rectify the situation. It reveals the crookedness, but does not remove it. Furthermore, the mirror did not create the evil it severely points out, but simply reveals what’s already there. Thus it is with the Law; it does not create the evil in man’s heart, and neither does it remove it; but, with unerring accuracy, it reveals it.

“. . . Thus it is with the Law; it does not create the evil in man’s heart, and neither does it remove it; but, with unerring accuracy, it reveals it. . . ”

THE NATURE OF THE LAW

If it is to be noticed, the Law constantly tells us not to do certain things. It is fashioned in this manner, simply because it is in our fallen nature to, in fact, do these things. But because our nature is fallen, we cannot rectify the situation, even if we know what is wrong. And that’s man’s basic problem.

He knows there is something wrong. At times he will refuse to admit it, but his actions portray the fact that he knows there is a severe difficulty in his nature. He claims that it can be rectified with this or that method, but he always fails, as he has been failing now for nearly 6,000 years of recorded history.

One of the reasons that the Law does not address itself to the Believer and the Believer is not to address himself to the Law, which we will say more about momentarily, is simply because the Divine Nature now rests within the heart and life of the one who has accepted Christ (II Peter 1:4).

If it is to be noticed, a child does not have to be taught to lie; they just do it naturally. It has to be taught to tell the truth. A child doesn't have to be taught to steal; it will just do it on its own initiative. It has to be taught not to steal. Now why is this so?

It is so simply because of the fallen nature of every human being, all due to the Fall. To claim that man has not suffered a Fall is to deny the obvious, and to accept the ridiculous!

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE LAW

Due to the fact that Paul dealt more with the Law than anything else, even though he was dealing primarily with Gentiles, who in fact, didn't know very much about the Law, if anything at all, tells us of the severity of this problem.

There is something about the Law of God, which is God's Standard of Righteousness, which challenges man, which perhaps it is intended to do. Of course, I'm speaking of Believers.

The Believer is so easily enticed, not by the Law, it merely being the vehicle which serves as the means. The enticement is a leftover from the Fall, despite the fact that we're speaking here of redeemed men. In other words, Believers tend to think that because they are new creations in Christ Jesus, they can do all things. Whereas they were not able to keep the Law of God, when in an unredeemed state, they seem to think that now it can be done.

All of this comes from an improper understanding of the Cross, to which we will address ourselves to a greater extent momentarily.

However, we must understand that the Christian is not to expose himself to the Law in any fashion. Jesus has already served as our Substitute as it regards the Law. On our behalf, and totally on our behalf, He kept it perfectly and in every

respect. As well, He suffered its penalty on the Cross, which relieved us of that terrible judgement, which was due us.

“ . . . Jesus has already served as our Substitute as it regards the Law. On our behalf, and totally on our behalf, He kept it perfectly and in every respect. . . ”

The Believer must understand that if regeneration does not take us off the ground of Law, it cannot take us beyond the range of the curse of the Law. If the Christian is under the former; that is, under Law, he is, of necessity, exposed to the latter as well!

The Believer has perfection in Christ. But he must ever understand that it is not by Law, but rather by Grace. We cannot, and in fact we must not even try to confound the two economies. Scripture largely and distinctly declares that we are not justified by the Law; nor is the Law our rule of life. That which can only curse can never justify, and that which can only kill can never be a rule of life (Romans 6:14; Galatians 2:21).

LEGALISM

Mackintosh says: “there is no evil or error more abominable in the sight of the Lord than legalism.”

We should hearken to the strong language, the accents of righteous indignation, which fell from the Holy Spirit, in reference to those Teachers of the Law - “I would they were even cut off which trouble you” (Galatians 5:12).

Thus, it is obvious that the Law is neither the ground of life to the sinner nor the rule of life to the Christian: Christ is both the one and the other - He is our life and He is our rule of life.

Let me ask a question!

Will the Commandment, “You shall not steal” stop the thief from stealing? The same can be asked of all the other Commandments.

While the Law might make the thief realize that there are consequences, it can do nothing to check his evil nature that desires to take that which belongs to someone else. There has to be a new heart to address that problem, which can only be given by Christ.

We might ask the question “Is not the Law perfect? And if perfect, what more would you have?”

To be sure, the Law is Divinely perfect. But, it is the very perfection of the Law which causes it to curse and slay those who are not perfect, if they attempt to stand before it. The Scripture comes screaming at us, “The Law is spiritual, but I am carnal” (Romans ,Chpt.7).

When this perfect Law comes in contact with fallen humanity, even redeemed humanity, and we try to meet it head on, in effect trying to do what Jesus Alone could do, we find that it only “works wrath,” in our lives (Romans 4:15; 8:7).

THE CROSS AND THE LAW

The Believer is to ignore the Law. As stated, it has been satisfied in Christ. If he places his Faith totally in Christ, and the Finished Work of Christ, the Holy Spirit will work grandly within his life, and do so on a perpetual, continuous basis, and the demands of the Law will then be met because it was all met in Christ.

However, these demands will be met without the Believer having to address himself to the subject whatsoever. The Believer’s life is to be a life of Faith, and I speak of Faith in Christ, and Faith in Christ exclusively, which refers to what Christ did at the Cross. That alone is our victory! That alone is our power! (I Corinthians 1:18).

Then the Law is kept, and kept perfectly, without us even having to think about it. But unfortunately, much, if not most, of the Church world opts for law, rather than the Cross. Such a path is a path of destruction! There is nothing in the Law but wrath, whereas there is nothing in the Cross but victory!”⁴

(underlines added.)

“...There is nothing in the Law but wrath, whereas there is nothing in the Cross but victory. . .”

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW OF MOSES

Continuing with our examination of the Law and its limitations, we know that “*death* (the penalty for sin) *reigned from Adam to Moses*” (Romans 5:14), being the evidence that sin was still very much in existence before the Law was given. When the Law was revealed, however, it defined sin clearly as a transgression of God’s laws, a breaking of the rules, a rebellion against authority. It narrowed the focus of the Israelite people and brought them under discipline till the One should come Who would fulfill its purpose.

The Mosaic Law is sometimes seen in a very negative light, as legalistic, cold and condemnatory. However Paul shows us that the Mosaic Law was totally holy and good.

ROMANS 7:12 Wherefore the Law is Holy (points to the fact that it is God’s Revelation of Himself; the problem is not in the Law of God, the problem is in us), and the Commandment Holy, and just, and good (the Law is like a mirror which shows man what he is, but contains no power to change him). (E.S.B.)

The problem was, as we have learned, that while it identified and condemned sin, it made no provision, gave no empowerment, for meeting its just requirements. In fact the more awareness the Law brought of sin, and the more it condemned and forbade sin, the more it actually created the conditions for sin to increase. Thus it gave no ability to control sin and in the process of making sin more recognizable, actually stirred up sinful passions which

had lain dormant. This is because being prohibited from doing something usually awakens a desire for this very thing - thus the saying, “forbidden fruit tastes sweeter.” Paul speaks of this process in Romans 7:7-10. He concludes that the Law is holy and spiritual but that its application brought not freedom but increased bondage to unregenerated humanity, dominated by the sin nature.

Thus the Mosaic Law was intended, in the truest sense, to reveal to man his utter sinfulness and the hopelessness of his condition - and consequently to lead him to look not inwardly for redemption but outwardly. As a result, he would then be lead to throw himself on the mercy and grace of God, realising his helplessness and hopelessness. Some did this, from time to time, but unfortunately most did not, and so continued along the same pathway, steeped in sin. Only the promised Saviour, to Whom the sin of the world was imputed, could free man from the power of sin and enable him to live not under the law of sin and death but the Law of Life (which entails not only spiritual union with God, but empowerment through the Divine Nature to live according to His righteous standards).

Paul actually calls the Law the “*ministration of death*” (2 Corinthians 3:7) because the Law pronounced a curse upon those who did not obey all its demands (Galatians 3:10; Deuteronomy 27:26), and no man could keep all its requirements. Thus under the Mosaic Law, it was revealed that the curse came upon all. The Divine curse, however, had been in existence long before the Law, for Adam came under its jurisdiction when he sinned and died spiritually. But the Mosaic Law and even the spirit of the Law written upon the hearts of men declared “*all the world . . . guilty before God*” (Romans 3:19).

Nevertheless, within the limitations of the Law there was provision for victory in the sense that, if people lived in obedience to the conditions of the Covenant, they were able to enter Abraham’s Bosom after physical death. Provision was made for their sin, which was inevitable, through the atoning sacrifices. In this way, the people’s sins were covered over until the time when the Lamb of God (Who became the perfect sacrifice) would pay the price for their full redemption. Christ’s finished work at the Cross would not only break sin’s grip, but also give born-again

Believers the power to live a righteous life via the energies and graces of His Divine Nature. Thus the Law functioned as a pathway to lead the Old Testament Saints to the holding place known as Abraham's Bosom. This was, however, a pathway with a dead end. If Christ had not died and fulfilled all the requirements of the law of sacrifice, the Old Testament Saints would never have been able to enter heaven.

“ . . . The Mosaic Law, in itself, was never intended to be a means by which righteousness could be attained before God. . . ”

The Mosaic Law, in itself, was never intended to be a means by which righteousness could be attained before God. Thus it was never intended to be a means of earning salvation. It was never intended as a replacement for the Covenant of Grace made with Abraham. Just as Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness, this was to be the pattern for our own justification, that being by faith. Keeping the Mosaic Law was never intended to be a competing means of righteousness. It was a temporary provision brought alongside grace to reveal God's righteous standards and to show sinners their need of a Saviour.

GALATIANS 3:23 But before Faith came (actually says in the Greek, “before the Faith”; in short, it refers to “Jesus Christ and Him Crucified”), ***we were kept under the Law*** (actually means, “to keep inward under lock and key”), ***shut up unto the Faith which should afterwards be revealed.*** (This proclaims the fact that the Law pointed to Christ, always to Christ.) (E.S.B.)

GALATIANS 3:24 Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster (should have been translated, “guardian”) ***to bring us unto Christ*** (proclaims what the end result of the Law was intended to be), ***that we***

might be justified by Faith. (This proclaims to us that the Law had no permanent function, but served only until Christ would come. It is only by Faith in Christ that one can be justified.) (E.S.B.)

“The idea is, that if the Law was not intended to take the place of the Covenant, which it didn’t; consequently, the Law must have been given for some purpose entirely different from that of the Promise. No one can doubt the soundness of this argument.

The promise to Abraham was of the nature of a contract, and no Law given by one of the parties to a treaty or contract can disannul it.

Two nations make a treaty of peace, involving solemn promises, pledges, and obligations. No law made afterwards by one of the nations can disannul or change that treaty. Two men make a contract with solemn pledges and promises. No act of one of the parties can change that, or alter the conditions. So it was with the Covenant between God and Abraham; which in fact, is still in force presently.

God made to him solemn Promises, which could not be affected by a future giving of the Law, or anything else for that matter. God would feel Himself to be under the most solemn obligation to fulfill all the Promises which He had made to him, and which were fulfilled in Christ. Consequently, as long as Christ is alive, the Abrahamic Covenant will remain in force.”⁵

(underlines added)

“...Keeping the Mosaic Law was never intended to be a competing means of righteousness. . .”

We see from Galatians 3:24 that the ultimate purpose of the Mosaic Law was to lead people to Christ, so they could depend on God’s provision of grace through Him. Its ultimate purpose was certainly not to produce justification through works -

and this is what the Pharisees later came to be guilty of. They obeyed the letter of the Law in an appearance of righteousness, but denied the spirit of it (Matthew 23:23-24). And no one can be counted righteous before God by works of the flesh, for man cannot fully obey the righteous laws of God by his own self-effort. Nor can he do anything which would merit salvation. He is indeed guilty, for “*there is none righteous, no, not one*” (Romans 3:10), “*and all our righteousnesses (righteous acts) are as filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6) before the Lord and His standard of righteousness.

Concerning the Mosaic Law, if you failed in only one part of it, you were considered guilty of it all. This is like a small amount of poison contaminating the whole body.

Note: As in Jesus’ day, when the Mosaic Law became a stumbling block to the religious people who obeyed the letter of the Law and thought they were righteous, today the same problem exists in regard to the Bible’s moral standards. Many unsaved people live in bondage today because they try to live according to the Bible’s basic moral standards or principles in order to obtain God’s favour and even secure a place in heaven. Now it is not possible to gain God’s favour without Jesus. This approach simply represents man trying to please God on his own terms, which is in fact self-rule, and living in bondage as a result. Bondage in this case relates to ignorance, for on the basis of their own good works, such people often believe they are right with God when in fact this is not so (“If my good outweighs my bad I will enter heaven,” etc.). In their ignorance they also feel that they have no need for a Saviour. But we can understand that if an external code could have dealt with the problem of sin and bridged the gap between God and man, Jesus would not have had to die!!

“ . . .the ultimate purpose of the Mosaic Law was to lead people to Christ, so they could depend on God’s provision of grace through Him. . . ”

“The Covenant of Grace with Abraham was unconditional. And then 430 years later God added the Law. Abraham was under Grace, Isaac was under Grace, Jacob was under Grace, the Children of Israel were under Grace while they were slaves in Egypt. They were delivered from Egypt by Grace, they crossed the Red Sea by Grace, and then when they reaching Mount Sinai, God added the Law.

The Law did not supplant Grace. It did not take the place of Grace. It did not annul the Promises of Grace. It was added and Israel was still under Grace when God added the Law.

Read again Galatians 3:17 - the giving of the Law did not make void the Covenant of Grace made to Israel. It was added to Grace, so that Israel was under a Law which condemned them, but thank God also under Grace which made provision for a broken Law, through the sacrifices, which always pointed to Christ. If Grace had been removed when Israel was given the Law, they would all have perished.”⁶

(underlines added)

WHAT LAWS ARE OBSOLETE, WHAT LAWS REMAIN ?

Background Reading: Colossians 2:14-17

We can see with the benefit of hindsight that the Old Testament was the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. This is because everything given in the Old Testament, the laws, the feasts, the blood sacrifices and Covenants, the promises, the Holy of Holies, etc., point to the Cross and are fulfilled by Christ's finished work. God's Plan of Redemption was established, detail by detail, and by His marvellous foreknowledge, all the fine points of the Old and New Covenants dovetail together. Thus both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant constitute “the Covenant of God,” also known as the written Word of God.

As we have seen, the Mosaic Law had three aspects - the moral, civil and ceremonial. Yet the scriptures teach that it was indivisible by nature, for the breaking of only one part of the Law meant that the person concerned, as a “lawbreaker,” was guilty of breaking the entire Law (James 2:10). This could only be true if the Mosaic Law was an indivisible unit.

Also note that it is not always easy to distinguish between the three aspects of the Law, for in any particular context, all three may be included. For instance, the civil law was founded on moral principles, or the spirit of the Law. Nevertheless, the parts of the Old Covenant which became obsolete when Jesus rose from the dead were concerned with the ceremonial and civil aspects:

1. Ceremonial Law.

(a) The atoning sacrifices and the ordinances which accompanied them - for Jesus’ death in which His Blood was shed was the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. Jesus through the Atonement did not do away with this part of the Law - rather He fulfilled it (Hebrews 10:1-2, 8-19).

(b) The ceremonial law which dealt with circumcision and various feasts, washings and rituals, clean and unclean foods, etc. The ceremonial law pointed to Christ and was fulfilled when He came (Colossians 2:14-17).

2. Civil Law.

The civil aspect of the Mosaic Law consisted of the laws which were unique to Israel and pertained to Israel as a society, existing and perpetuated for God’s purposes. Some of the issues addressed were property rights, slavery, the oppression of widows, murder, manslaughter, avengers of blood, care of the poor and relationships between family members, masters and servants, etc. As we can see, some of these laws were based on moral principles and laws which were meant to be permanent, not temporary, e.g. tithing as a means of providing for the structure by which God’s Word can be ministered.

“...The civil aspect of the Mosaic Law consisted of the laws which were unique to Israel and pertained to Israel as a society, existing and perpetuated for God’s purposes. . .”

Some of the civil laws were given so that Israel would survive as a nation separate from the surrounding heathen nations - so that God could bring the Saviour into the world through them e.g. Deuteronomy 7:2-6. Other civil laws were designed to keep this nation as a peculiar people, separated unto God (e.g. Deuteronomy 21:18-21), and able, as a distinct group, to survive through the generations (e.g. Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Other laws which pertained only to Israel included the allowance of divorce because of their unregenerate state, i.e. hard hearts (as in Matthew 19:7-8; Mark 10:2-5). These are some of the laws God gave to Israel in their unique position, civil laws that are no longer applicable in this New Testament age, even though the moral principles on which they are founded are meant to be permanent (and constitute part of the spirit of the Law). Indeed it is the moral aspect of the Mosaic Law which remains today.

Note: Israel had three major purposes. It was intended to be the womb of the Messiah, to bring the Word of God to the world and to evangelize the whole earth. Israel fulfilled the first two purposes but failed totally with the third because it rejected the Messiah. Israel was to be a light and example to the world before the Cross and after the Cross, but on both counts they failed miserably.

So after Christ died and rose from the dead, the ceremonial laws adhered to by the Jews became obsolete, for Jesus had fulfilled them. The civil laws which pertained only to Israel also became obsolete, for the New Covenant made them so (John 14:6). After the Cross, for both Jew and Gentile, only one “way” existed. Adhering to the former civil and ceremonial laws would

give the Jew no benefit, for Jesus had fulfilled all the Law, and the New Covenant had replaced the Old Covenant. When Israel rejected the Messiah (the New Covenant and the only way to eternal life), they were broken off the True Vine and believing Gentiles were grafted in. The Church has thus become God's vehicle to bring the Gospel to the earth in this Age of Grace - until the appointed time when Israel will be restored to God (Romans 11:17-19).

The spirit of the Law, however, or the moral aspect of the Law, was in existence in the Garden of Eden and is still in operation today. If we do not walk in obedience to the spirit of the Law, in any area, we come under the law of sin and death in that area. If we disobey one of God's commandments, even as Christians, we will come under the law of sin and death in that area of sin. If we walk according to the Spirit and obey, by God's grace, all His commandments, we come under the influence of the Law of Life in Christ Jesus in every area.

As Christians, we have "newness of life" afforded to us positionally through the Divine Nature. To experience this at a conditional level, we need to be yielding to the Lord in every area of our lives. In this way, as we believe for it, we can absorb the energies and graces of the Divine Nature, and so live in a way we are unable to do without God's help. This is to live in abundant life. This is to live in the Law of Life in Christ Jesus!

***“ . . . The spirit of the Law, however, or
the moral aspect of the Law, was in
existence in the Garden of Eden and is
still in operation today. . . ”***

In Old Covenant times, the Lord sought to rule Israel externally through the commandments of the Mosaic Law. Under the New Covenant, He seeks to rule those in Christ internally, through the Divine Nature. God wants man to choose life and not death, and in Him, by the wonderful grace of the Divine Nature, to order our lives. In this way, we will live in His Light. Amen.

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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- 1 Wuest, Kenneth S., Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, Galatians 3:16-21.
- 2 Scofield, C.I., The New Scofield Reference Bible, Galatians 3:19 – 25.
- 3 Israel My Glory, Vol.53 Issue 6, 1999.
- 4 S.B.C. Exodus, pgs. 357-359.
- 5 S.B.C. Vol.15, Galatians, pgs.233-234.
- 6 S.B.C. Vol.15, Galatians, pg.239.

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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