

PURPOSE OF THE LAW

Almost every week there is some question or discussion about the law of Moses. A lot of people have questions about it. A lot of people are concerned. Then there are those who don't seem to know what law they are under, they use one law at one time and another law at another time. On one occasion they quote the Mosaic law to justify their practices and on another occasion they quote from the law of Christ to justify what they do.

I presently live in a community of Seventh Day Adventists. They observe the Sabbath, or what they call the Sabbath. They go to church on Saturday, not on Sunday. They use the law of Moses to justify their keeping of the Sabbath. They call themselves Christians, yet there were no Christians under the law of Moses. So you can see that we continually need to study to find out and show under which law we are to operate.

Some people seem to think that the law of Moses was to last forever, but that was not the case. To the nation of Israel, the law of Moses was given, with its ten commandments, was an everlasting covenant. But it did not extend past the duration of that nation. Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18 *"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished."*

Many try to read into this that the law would be in force till heaven and earth passes away. But that is not what Jesus said, nor meant. The law would last till it was fulfilled entirely! Before the cross Jesus said to His Father, *"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,"* (John 17:4). By His death on the cross, Jesus had fulfilled all the law and prophets had declared concerning Him. But on the cross when He said, *"It is finished"*, he was not just talking about His life, it was the work which the Father had given him to do. By His death on the cross Jesus had fulfilled all the law and the prophets had said concerning Him, and He could then offer a more perfect way. The Bible says in Acts 13:29 *"And when they had fulfilled all things that were written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb."* Thus now saints are *"looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of {our} faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:2).

Christ fulfilled all the requirements of the Law of Moses in His death by *"having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, nailing it to the cross"* (Colossians 2:14). It was not in part, but in full, and it was done for our benefit: *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"* (Galatians 3:13). Paul goes in to more detail of Jesus taking the law out of the way in

writing the saints at Ephesus, *"For he is our peace, who made both one, [JEW AND GENTILE] and brake down the middle wall of partition, [THE LAW] (15) having abolished in the flesh the enmity, {even} the law of commandments {contained} in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, {so} making peace; (16) and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby"* (Ephesians 2:14-16) .

This changed our state and relationship to God. Notice what he wrote to the Romans, ROM 7:4 *"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, {even} to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God."* Study this from the picture drawn in Ephesians 5:23-33 where he said, (Ephesians 5:23-33) *"For the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ also is the head of the church, {being} himself the saviour of the body. (24) But as the church is subject to Christ, so {let} the wives also {be} to their husbands in everything. (25) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; (26) that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, (27) that he might present the church to himself a glorious {church}, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (28) Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: (29) for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church; (30) because we are members of his body. (31) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. (32) This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. (33) Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and {let} the wife {see} that she fear her husband."* We have turned from the law to be espoused to Christ.

When Paul wrote to the Galatians he explained the purpose of the law. (Galatians 3:16-17) *"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made"* (verse 19). Further we are told, *"Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. (17) Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect."* The law could not supersede the promise nor countermand it. One purpose of the law is emphatically stated for us in Galatians 3:24-25 *"So that the law is become our tutor {to bring us} unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But now faith that is come, we are no longer under a tutor."* We still respect the law, for it was to bring to Christ, but now we are no longer under the schoolmaster (the law). In fact Gentiles were never under the law. It was for the nation of

Israel only. The law was to last *"till the seed should come"* (v. 19), and we are now under the *"seed, which is Christ"* (verse 16), and there salvation is offered through faith in Jesus Christ.

It seems some folk are offended by the removal of the law. To them we cite from God's word in the book of Hebrews, in Hebrews 7:18-19 *"For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (19) (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God."* So it was disannulled, abrogated, repealed, if you please, because of its weakness and lack of profit, for it made nothing perfect. Therefore it was said, *"For if that first {covenant} had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. (8) For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . . In that he saith, A new {covenant} he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away"* (Hebrews 8:7-8, 13).

The glaring weakness of the law is affirmed by the Hebrew writers statement in Hebrews 10:1-4 *"For the law having a shadow of the good {things} to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. (2) Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. (3) But in those {sacrifices} there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. (4) For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins."* The law could not do the **one** thing that was most needed; i.e., obtain forgiveness and redemption. Do you now visualize the decaying, worn-out law ready to pass away? For this reason it was removed. *"then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. (10) By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Hebrews 10:9-10). These readings from Hebrews reveal why, where and when the law was removed. The first (law_ gave place to the second (new will and Testament of Jesus Christ) through whom we have obtained eternal redemption.

How did the apostle Paul regard the law? He was raised under the law of Moses and arduously observed. In defence at Jerusalem he said, *"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day"* (ACTS 22:3). He also testified in Galatians 1:14 he *"advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."* Of this period Paul said, *"I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many*

things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them" (Acts 26:9-10). But later he confess that what he was doing then "was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." He further said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"(1 Timothy 1:13-15). Paul lived to see the error of his way, and turned from the law in his obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When Saul of Tarsus met the Lord on the road to Damascus, to persecute Christians, or those of the way, his who life was altered. Here he was, a Jew, a Pharisee of Pharisees, he later said, dedicated to wiping out Christianity by pursuing Christians, arresting them and bringing them to Jerusalem for trial and death. But when he met the Lord, he asked, *"Who art thou, Lord? And Jesus {said}, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: (6) but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. Paul told his own story later in Jerusalem, how that Ananias came to him with the Lords's message, saying" "And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me I came into Damascus. (12) And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, (13) came unto me, and standing by me said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And in that very hour I looked up on him. (14) And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. (15) For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. (16) And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." (Acts 9:5-6;Acts 22:8-16)* His new knowledge is reflected in what he wrote to the churches in that area Galatians 2:21 *"I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought."* It had been forcefully impressed on Paul, and he wrote it to Rome, Romans 3:20 *"because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law {cometh} the knowledge of sin."*

The distinction of the law and the gospel was shown to him, and his conclusion was, *"We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. He used this very argument when he withstood Peter to the face in Antioch"(Romans 3:28)* Then in Galatians 2:16 he said, *"yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."*

All this brings up a very interesting and intriguing question, and a revealing answer as well,

"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law." (Galatians 3:21). But righteousness and the giving of life were presented by Jesus Christ through His gospel. "And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (16) For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. (17) For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth" (Hebrews 9:15-17). Christ's will and testimony could not have been probated before his death. He had to die to purchase the church with His blood, for it was not "bought on terms." (Acts 20:28) But Jesus now reigns as Prophet, Priest and king. (Hebrews 1:1-3)

(1) God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, (2) hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in {his} Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; (3) who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; and to turn from the Son of God back to the outdated and obsolete law of Moses is to sacrifice every blessing Christ has brought to man. "Ye are severed from Christ, ye would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4). There is no quicker or surer way of departing from Christ than scampering back under the archaic law to embrace again the types and shadows which were only figures of things to come in Jesus Christ.