

“RIGHTLY DIVIDING”

PART THREE; THE SCHOOLMASTER

Previously, we have shown that the Law of Moses was given to a select group of people at a specific point in history. God did not intend the Law to last forever but, instead, gave the Law as part of his plan of salvation. One might reasonably ask the purpose of the Law. Why was it necessary to create an intermediate system of spiritual laws instead of moving immediately to the moment of redemption in Christ Jesus? This is an excellent question and is certainly worthy of a complete answer.

Paul struggled with the Galatian Christians over their retreat back into the Law of Moses from the Gospel of Christ. He explains the purpose of the old law succinctly in Galatians 3:24 when he writes, *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”* “Schoolmaster” translates a Greek word that literally means a “boy leader” or a guide. The idea is of one who guides or directs another until the boy reaches a destination on goal. After we reach that goal, which in this case is faith in Christ, we no longer have need of the guide or “schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:25). In the context of Galatians 3, it is the old law that guided us toward Christ Jesus. Now that we have knowledge of Christ and faith in him, the Law of Moses is no longer useful for obedience. We may even say that without the Law of Moses we could never find our way to Christ. The student may ask how that is true, and, what use, if any, the Law of Moses is today.

The Law of Moses served at least four purposes. We will demonstrate each in turn. In the end, the reader will see how the old law perfectly served God’s plan of salvation.

God gave the law to make obvious **the sinfulness of sin**. As an example, Paul cites the sin of lust, sometimes called covetousness, in Romans 7. He said, *“Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet”* (Romans 7:7). He continues his explanation, *“For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died”* (Romans 7:8b-9). Finally, *“But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful”* (Romans 7:13). In our language today, the law was necessary so that man might come to understand just how terrible sin really is. The great burden of sacrifices, the awful bloody animal slayings, the seemingly severe punishments for infractions and disobedience, all point to the horrible nature of sin. The Law of Moses, even today, helps us understand and fully appreciate God’s hatred of sin.

Similarly, the Law of Moses helps us understand **the holiness of God**. Beginning at Sinai, men were strictly forbidden to approach unto God (Exodus 19:12-13). God’s presence among men was in the most holy place inside the tabernacle. God allowed only the High Priest to approach unto him and then only after cleansing himself and dressing in specially prescribed clothing (Leviticus 16). Man came to understand that he could not approach unto the glory of God because of sins which God could not tolerate (Isaiah 59:2).

The old law was also a tool to prove **the promises of God**. Jehovah promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that through their offspring a blessing to the entire world would come. The only way to provide a clear and unquestioned lineage for Jesus Christ was through a nation of people,

separated from the world, for God's own purposes. Matthew 1 and Luke 3 both record the historical genealogy of Jesus Christ. The promise made to the Patriarchs was confirmed because the Law of Moses preserved an unchanged bloodline through which the Savior came. The Law of Moses kept the people pure and separate from the world.

The Law of Moses provided a "*shadow of good things to come*" (Hebrews 10:1). Many aspects of the Old Testament Law of Moses served as dim vision of something better to come in Christ (Hebrews 8:5). For example, the entire nation of Old Testament Israel must be viewed as the church today. Both Israel and the church are chosen especially for God's own purpose (1 Peter 2:9). The animal sacrifices, although woefully inadequate (Hebrews 10:4), vaguely pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Even the mediation of Moses pointed to Christ's mediation for us today (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 12:24).

Therefore, we see that the law served a useful purpose. But how can we show that the law is no longer in place? Next week we will answer that question.

Bryant Evans

NEXT WEEK: "RIGHTLY DIVIDING" - PART FOUR; NAILED TO THE CROSS