

## UNDERSTANDING THE LAW OF MOSES

A mention of the words “Mosaic Law” creates both good and bad impressions. As a result sometimes we are not quite sure in our minds how we should view the Law. Sometimes we have a degree of ambivalence.

Let us clarify our understanding of the role of the Law of Moses – noting:-

- Why it was given and what it accomplished.
- Its limitations.
- How it was to be removed as a garment worn out, rolled up and vanishing away.

**Our hesitation about the Law is derived from scriptural descriptions such as the following**

Rom 4v15 The law worketh wrath  
Rom 8v3 The law was weak through the flesh  
2Cor 3v6 The letter (of the law) killeth  
2Cor 3v7 The ministration of death  
Gal 3v13 The curse of the law  
Gal 4v3 Bondage under the rudiments of the world  
Gal 4v9 Weak and beggarly elements.  
Gal 5v1 A yoke of bondage.  
Eph 2v15 The enmity- the law of commandments  
Col 2v14 The handwriting of ordinances that was against us  
Heb 7v18 The “weakness and unprofitableness thereof”  
Heb 8v7 The first covenant was not faultless.  
Heb 8v13 Decayeth and waxeth old  
Heb 9v10 Carnal ordinances

When considering such a list – it is easy to understand why we can have an ambivalent attitude towards the Law.

### But the Law is good, holy and just

We have to be very careful that we don't get a wrong impression of the Law. All the above descriptions of the Law were given by Paul in his debate against Judaism. The Judaistic Jews used the Law to do things which it was specifically designed not to do. (i.e. establish Jewish righteousness).

By Contrast..Note the positive tone found in these words :

Psa 119v7 “The law of Yahweh is perfect converting the soul.”

Psa 119v97 “O how love I thy law it is my meditation all the day.”

Psa 119v18 “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

Paul (who penned that entire list above) was also concerned lest we get the wrong idea.

**Romans 7v12 The law is holy, and the commandment holy just and good.**

Why then could such a good thing as the Law have been described so often in such a negative way by the apostles?

Purely it was because it had outlived its intended purpose and was now being retained by the Jews well past its time.

The Law was ideally suited to achieve Gods initial objectives - but the Jews tried to make it much more than that, and therefore it became their undoing.

Using the Law as a code of works to earn eternal life was a totally wrong application of God`s holy and just Law.

### What the Law was primarily given for

Firstly-It was an appropriate mechanism to regulate an unspiritual nation.

*But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;*

*Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,*

*For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;*

1 TIM 1v8-10

God had taken a nation of largely uneducated slaves from Egypt and brought them into the wilderness , intending to make them an holy nation.

The new nation needed a civil code of law, moral laws, a justice system, health and safety provisions and case law that could be applied by extension.

God also gave them a pattern of worship, including feasts, sacrifices , priesthood and places to worship (the tabernacle, the place of God`s name etc.)

Built into the Law were many aspects that the discerning faithful could use to better understand and imitate God.

The Law also strongly pointed forward to mans need of redemption by focussing on human uncleanness and sin. There were also many pointers to the coming “prophet like unto Moses” the promised “lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world”.

*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*

*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

*But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. GAL 3v22-25*

### God`s Law restored in the Kingdom

Many elements of the Mosaic Law will be reinstated in the future. Aspects of the Law that will be reinstated include - sacrifices, feasts and Sabbaths and civil codes .

Bro Roberts comments as follows:-

“In the last 9 chapters of Ezekiel we have a detailed description of the new settlement of the land, and the new city of service about 40 miles in circumference, and the new temple, of gigantic capacity, in, “from one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh will come to worship before God.” (Is 66:23) In this description, we recognise many features of the law of Moses restored:- The burnt offering, the sin

offering, the drink offering, and the trespass offering, the altar, the most holy place, the cherubim, the meal offering, the priests and holy garments, sprinkling of blood, burning of the bullock, offering of the fat and the blood, defiling by the dead, offering of the first fruits, observance of the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, keeping of the feast, the new moons, and the Sabbaths and so on.” **Law of Moses p312**

This renewed Law of God will initially train a godless and spiritually ignorant world now living in the Kingdom, in the same way He initially did for Israel.

## What is the Law?

When we talk about the Law, what are we talking about?

- The Law -is a general phrase used to define the commandments and precepts from God , given to Israel by angels, through the hand of Moses.
- Particularly the words of God given to Moses upon Mt Sinai, but also those elaborated further by Moses at subsequent stages (eg in the Book of Deuteronomy)
- It involved the nation entering into a covenant at Sinai, so is described as the Mosaic Covenant to distinguish it from the Abrahamic Covenant and from the New Covenant in Christ.
- The Law contained a worship ritual, civil laws, case law, and inspirational provisions.

## What could the law achieve for a Jew if it was obeyed?

One of the first clues we have to the limitations of the law is to look at what it could achieve for a Jew.

Assuming perfect observance of the Law -what could it deliver to the Jews?

1. **It could bring a provisional forgiveness from sins.** (Lev 4v20,26, 31, 35) Forgiveness was possible under the Mosaic law for some sins .  
But this was not full forgiveness. It was actually a conditional forgiveness, based on future events (the Day of Atonement) , and a promise of future fulfilment to bring forgiveness.(Rom 5v13 )
2. **The law offered blessings in this life, in return for obedience**
  - Deut4v40 “That it may go well with thee and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which Yahweh thy God giveth thee .”
  - Deut 6v3 “ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey”.
  - Psalm 128v1-2 “Eat the labour of thy hands and it shall be well with thee.”

Note the main emphasis relates to this life.

Contrast this with the promises made to Abraham - Gen 13v15 “ for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever.”

## What the Law could not achieve for a Jew?

First let us consider the subject of forgiveness.

We note that with certain offerings their sins could be provisionally forgiven.

But note the limitations:-

- Sin offerings were only nominated for sins of ignorance, and minor trespasses.
- There were many sins for which there were no offerings and which could not be forgiven under the Law. (see Psa 51v16)

Those sins that were able to be offered for under the Law, were forgiven only in a limited conditional (provisional) sense.

- Heb 10v1-4 Sacrifices under the Law could not make the comers thereunto perfect, did not purge their conscience of sins. Sins were remembered again every year. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin.
- Heb 9v15 Christ, mediator of new covenant that by means of death for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called (in the past) might receive the promise.

## Could 'works' of obedience save a person?

The major problem was that no human could keep the Law perfectly.

- Rom 8v3 -“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:”
- Gal 3v11 -That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident.
- Heb 7v19 -The law made nothing perfect.
- Heb9v9 - The Law was “a figure for the time then present, but could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience.”
- Gal 3v18-The Law could not bring the inheritance , if the inheritance is by the law it is no more of promise.
- The law never promised eternal life.

## Why couldn't the law give eternal life?

The basic principle of the Mosaic Law was that the man that doeth all the law shall live by it. Romans 10v5

The nature of the law was that if you were under the law, you had to perform **all the law** - you could not pick and choose the laws that you found easy to fulfil.

- Gal 3v10 “As many as are under the works of law are under the curse for it is written. Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

- James 2v10 -“For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

As we know - it is absolutely impossible to observe the Law 100%, especially difficult were laws like “Thou shalt not covet...”(Rom 7v7)

**The weakness of the Law**, was that nobody could actually live by it, and keep all its provisions and commandments .

- Acts 15v10 - The Law was “..a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear”.
- Romans 8v3 -The Law was weak through the flesh.

<h3>What then was the purpose of the Law - why was it given to Israel?</h3>
---

Look at Gods overall plan unfolding

- Abraham- one man, one family
- National- a chosen nation
- Christ- the real son , the saviour of the world
- Gentiles- to be brought in to the promises
- Kingdom- the whole world brought in

The ultimate goal of all God’s revelation is the conversion of the whole planet.

1. Abraham’s Seed - The promises involved the promised single seed - the purpose of the law was to ensure the national environment was right for the seed to come and fulfil his work.
2. The Nation of Israel  
The law was given by God to establish a national base for His purpose . This required the making of a new nation (God’s witnesses) and the establishment of a system of Law to guide it - this was the Mosaic Law.  
(Excellent section in “Law of Moses” by R.Roberts - opening chapter.)
3. The Jews that fled from Egypt were disorganised, idolaters and complainers. God remonstrates that most of them didn’t fully forsake the Gods of Egypt. (See Ezek 20v7-8)

- We note again the inspired comments of Paul in 1 Tim1:8-9

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.

- Gal 3v19-22 Wherefore serveth the law? It was added because of transgression until the seed should come.

So the Mosaic law and covenant was firstly a system which would establish a satisfactory national entity.

But the Law was not provided just for this pragmatic reason. There was a whole extra series of reasons as well.

**The Law was sent to prepare Israel for Christ.**

**The Law taught them that they were sinful and would die.**

- Rom 3v19 The law saith .. to those under it that every mouth should be stopped and all found guilty before God.

**The law highlighted our sinful nature**

- Romans 7v7 I would not have known sin but for the law.
- Romans 3v20 The law brings the knowledge of sin
- Romans 4v15 Where no law is , there is no transgression.
- Romans 5v13 Until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law.

Romans 7v13 The intended effect was “ that sin became exceedingly sinful”.

The Law provided a framework through which sin could be exposed for what it is. This was driven home again and again by the Law with its laws against mixing fabrics, crops and intermarriage. There was so many ways to contract uncleanness and so many sin offerings and washings required.

**The end result?** Gal 3v22 “The scripture hath concluded all under sin.”

**The Law prepared Israel to appreciate their need for  
Christ/the Messiah/the Seed to come**

- Romans 10v4 Christ in the end, (ultimate outcome), of the law to everyone that believeth.
- Gal 3v24 The Law was our schoolmaster (pedagogue) to bring us unto Christ (it made us look forward)
- Gal 4v2 Under the Law Jews were “ As a child under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father.”
- Note! The logic in Paul`s conclusion to his speech in Acts 13v38-39

Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.

## **The Law symbolised Christ's sacrifice in every aspect, preparing their hearts.**

- Heb8v5 -The example and shadow of heavenly things - make it after the pattern.
- Heb9v23 -The pattern of things in the heavens.
- Heb10v1 -A shadow of good things to come.

### **Therefore when Christ came -he fulfilled what the Law had been pointing forward to**

- Mat 5v17 I come not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil.
- Gal 3v19 The law was added because of transgression until the seed should come.
- Heb9v10 Meats, drinks, washings, carnal ordinances imposed on them until the reformation.

### **But Christ needed to fulfil and to remove the law.**

Why was this necessary ?

- To open up the hope of eternal life 2 Tim 1v9-10.
- To give us the adoption as sons -so we are no longer servants Gal 4v5-7
- To remove the curse that comes from the law Gal 3v13
- To allow salvation to be of faith Gal 3v22-25 not by works.
- To allow the promises to have their intended scope Gal 3v19-21
- To unite Jews and Gentiles by removing the wall of exclusion Eph 2v14-15.
- That Gentiles might come in to share Abraham's promises Gal 3v13
- To make our salvation a matter of individual character and faith.

### **This is precisely what Christ achieved**

Having fulfilled the Law, he turned it upon itself in his crucifixion.

As the Law now cursed a righteous man, it showed its limitations Gal 3v13

- Heb7v18 He disannulled the law.
- Col 2v14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us he took it out of the way nailing it to the cross.
- Hebrews 8v13 That which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away
- Our salvation in Christ is far superior to the Law .Hebrews 12v18-29

## HOW GOD WANTS US TO SEE BEYOND THE LAW

For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:  
But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. JER 7v22-23

I will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he goats out of thy folds.  
For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills.  
I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.  
If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.  
Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. PSA 50v9-15

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

MICAH 6v6-8