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FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55: 1 0 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE LAW

Numerous misconceptions dominate the minds of many people when they give consideration to the law which God gave to Israel. They have been taught from childhood that by keeping the laws set forth in the ten commandments they can gain acceptance by God and enter into eternal life. They give no consideration to the declaration made by Paul in Galatians 2:15,16 in which he says: **"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."**

Paul's statement alone is enough to tell us that the law was never a way of justification for the sinner.

The Law No Perfect Transcript

In order to magnify the law as being the very zenith of divine revelation, many descriptive phrases have been worked out and then applied to it, one of which is, "the law is a perfect transcript of the mind of God." This sounds good, but since every "transcript" from the mind of God is "perfect," this says nothing special about "the law." However, if by the word "perfect" is meant "complete," then this concept of the law is wrong and totally in error. The pinnacle of revealed truth is not found in the law, as can be seen in the statement found in John 1:11: **"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."**

The words "grace and truth" are all inclusive, and it is on this basis we can say: Moses gave something, but Jesus Christ brings everything. His own person and work constitute the very substance of grace and truth. The height of truth is not found in the law. It is found in the record God gave of His Son.

No Moral and Ceremonial Law

The truth revealed in God's Word demands that we make a distinction between the ten commandments (Exo. 20) and the "judgments" that follow them (Exo. 20-24). The decalogue was the terms of a covenant which if its stipulations were met would make them God's peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. The judgments were God's directives which if observed would bring daily blessings to them as they journeyed through the wilderness and after they entered the promised land. But it is utterly false to hold that the ten commandments are "the moral law" and "the judgments" which follow are "the ceremonial law," then reason from this that "the moral law" was laid upon all mankind at Sinai while "the ceremonial law" was given only to Israel.

The law of Moses was always a unit, and no man should put asunder what God has joined together. In Romans 7:7 the command, "Thou shalt not covet" is called "the law." In 1 Cor. 9:9, "thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn," is called "the law." The first of these is found in the so-called moral law (Exo. 20: 17), and the second is found in the so-called ceremonial law (Deu. 25:4). In fact the highest moral instruction that God gave to Israel is not found in the ten commandments. It is found in "the judgments" that followed. (See Lev. 18, 19, 20).

No Sacrifice for Broken Law

The law in its entirety contained no covering for sin. It is commonly believed that when an Israelite broke the ten commandments the ceremonial law instructed him to bring a specific sacrifice to the temple and this would atone for his trespass against God.

If those who hold this view will put it to the test of God's revealed truth they will find it has no basis. In Numbers 15:32-36 we have the record of a man who gathered firewood on the sabbath day. This was an extraordinary event, since everyone in Israel observed the sabbath, and he was held in custody for a time, since there was no declaration as to what the punishment for such a violation should be. It is quite clear that if there had been some sacrifice to cover it, the man would be allowed to bring it. But there was none, so it was decreed by God that this man should be put to death. Furthermore, if the Word is further examined it will be found that the death penalty was mandatory in the breaking of eight of the ten commandments.

First commandment - see Exodus 22:20

Second commandment - see Deuteronomy 17: 1- 7

Third commandment - see Leviticus 24: 16

Fourth commandment - see Exodus 31:15

Fifth commandment - see Exodus 21:7

Sixth commandment - Exodus 21:12

Seventh commandment - Exodus 20: 10

Ninth commandment - see Deuteronomy 19:15-21

The fact that the death penalty was ordered by God if these commandments were broken is sufficient to show that there was no sacrifice for the breaking of these laws.

The Law Could be Kept

It is constantly affirmed that no one could keep the law, and that no one has ever kept the law. Those who say this should be ready to point out which one of the commandments could not be kept. In Luke 1:6 we are told that Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Very few commentators offer any thoughts as to the meaning of this verse. They are slow to recognize the truth declared here. It is the testimony of the Holy Spirit that two people did keep the law.

Furthermore, we have the testimony of Paul who declared of his own life: "**Touching the righteousness which is in the law, BLAMELESS**" (Phil. 1 :6). In view of divine declarations such as these, one is forced to correct his thinking if he holds the idea that the law could not be kept. It was given to be kept, and it was not given, as one has said: "to prove that no one could keep it. Beneath the revelation of God's will in it was His intention that it should not be kept, but should accomplish its object through its infraction."

The Law Did Not Cover All Sins

It is the opinion of many that the ten commandments in some manner covers all sins and sets forth all works of righteousness, thus providing a complete guide concerning all things moral and immoral. It is also held that if a man keeps these ten commands he will live a "pretty good" life. These ideas are completely erroneous since it can be demonstrated from God's Word that the law touched only a few sins. Furthermore, if one considers it, he might come to the conclusion that the reasons some people live such ungodly lives is because they are keeping the ten commandments and not going beyond them.

In Galatians 5: 19-21 we have a list of seventeen sins, only three of which were prohibited by the law: adultery, idolatry, and murder. The fourteen sins listed that are not mentioned in the decalogue are: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, drunkenness, and revelings. A man could do all these things and still insist that he had kept the law given at Mount Sinai. Nevertheless, Paul declares that they which do such things shall enjoy no place or portion in the kingdom of God.

Following this list of sins is a naming of nine things that are declared to be the fruit of God's Spirit working in the lives of men, not one of which is commended or commanded in the ten commandments. These are joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, and self control. Concerning these there is no law. See Gal. 5:22, 23.

Thus it should be evident to all, that if one desires rules concerning things that should or should not be done he will live on a much higher plane of righteousness and a better moral life if he concentrates on the things listed in Galatians 5 rather than those set forth in Exodus 20. The law touched very few sins. It was not given by God as a moral code. It was the terms of an agreement He entered into with Israel.

Christ Did Not End the Law

Two statements are constantly made concerning the law, both of which are based upon wrong interpretations of two passages of Scripture. The first is that Christ brought an end to the law, and Romans 10:4 is quoted in support of this; and the second is that Christ blotted out the law and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross, and Colossians 2: 14 is offered in support of this erroneous concept.

The statement made in Rom. 10:4 wherein Paul declares: "**Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth,**" has been badly misunderstood and misapplied. The word here for "end" is *telos*. This is the word that Paul used when he said to Timothy: "**Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned**" (1 Tim. 1:5). It is plain here that "the end" is the outcome. Nevertheless, whatever this statement may mean, its truth must be limited "to everyone that believeth." The law's end, its goal, was to bring the Israelite to Christ for righteousness. The law became their schoolmaster (child conductor) to bring them to Christ and its goal was reached when they believed in Him (Gal. 3:24, 25).

Paul's declaration in Colossians 2: 14 about "the handwriting of ordinances" has no reference to the law of Moses but speaks of the indictment set forth against all mankind which culminates in the words, "both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin" (Rom. 8:9), and "all the world guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19).

This "true bill" is what Jesus Christ "blotted out" (erased) and "took out of the way, nailing it to His cross."

While it is true that the death of Jesus Christ made certain changes in the law (Heb. 9: 12), and one of these changes is declared in Rom. 10:4, it did not abolish, annul, or repeal the law God gave to Israel. For the Israelite living in the land, every ' jot and tittle ' of it remained as a law to be kept.

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