

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 63 – PURPOSE OF THE MOSAIC LAW]

Last time we looked at the purpose of the law in its broader sense.

- ◆ Because man's sin was an affront to the holiness of God, it necessitated a change in the way God and mankind were to relate to one another.
- ◆ Sin made it impossible for a holy God to relate personally to sinful mankind, as they would simply be consumed by His divine holiness.
- ◆ If God was to continue to relate to mankind without consuming them, the relationship had to be established on a totally different basis.
- ◆ The divine solution to resolve this problem was the introduction of "the law."
- ◆ The law not only revealed the vast gulf between a holy God and sinful mankind, but it also provided the means by which the parties would eventually be reconciled.
- ◆ But until then, the relationship between the parties would have to be conducted purely on a legal basis.
- ◆ So when we speak of the "law" we need to regard it as this legal system or structure God introduced to govern the relationship between a holy God and His rebellious children.

Today we are going to look at the purpose of the Mosaic Law.

- ◆ God began His plan of salvation and reconciliation with the father of the faithful, Abraham.
- ◆ We will come back to Abraham and this subject of faith later.
- ◆ But for now we are going to jump past Abraham and look at God's dealing with the Israelite nation who had descended from Abraham but were now in slavery to the powerful nation of Egypt.
- ◆ It was to Abraham that God had made the promise, "***All peoples on earth will be blessed through you***" (***Gen 12:3***) speaking of the redeeming work the future Messiah would perform on behalf of all people.
- ◆ However, much was to transpire before that blessing would be fulfilled.
- ◆ After a series of mighty miracles including the passing over of the death angel where all the Egyptian firstborn were killed, while the Israelites were spared if they sacrificed a lamb and spread its shed blood over their doorways, God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian captivity.
- ◆ Moses, God's appointed leader led them off into the wilderness on their 40-year trek to the Promised Land.
- ◆ Moses was instructed by God to ensure many of the events surrounding the Israelite's deliverance from Egypt would be adopted into their culture.
- ◆ Words like exodus, Egypt, unleavened bread, Passover lamb, etc.
- ◆ It was a pattern that was further reinforced when God delivered the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.
- ◆ This law not only contained the Ten Commandments but a host of other worship, sacrificial, civil and ceremonial laws that were to govern the nation of Israel under God.
- ◆ It was a covenant relationship solely between God and the nation of Israel, no one else.

God delivered the law or Torah to Israel with the hope the people would respond positively and comply with His mission of creating a holy people for His name (Leviticus 26:12).

- ◆ Much of the emphasis placed on the Mosaic Law tends to focus on the Ten Commandments, but this over emphasis would miss other vital aspects of the Mosaic Law.
- ◆ While the Ten Commandments were to govern the ethical behaviour of the Israelites, it, of and by itself, would not create God's holy people.
- ◆ We have over 1000 years of recorded Israelite history that testify to this fact ending with the confrontation Jesus had with the religious leaders.
- ◆ This was not the fault of the law; the problem was there simply was not a heart in the people to obey (Deuteronomy 5:29; Hebrews 8:7-8).

This is why the Mosaic Law also contained aspects that pointed forward to future events from whence true deliverance would come and from this deliverance would arise a holy people who did have a heart to obey.

- ◆ The sacrificial laws in the Torah pointed not only to a merciful God who was willing to forgive their sins but also to the sacrifice the future Lamb of God would pay for the sins of the whole world fulfilling the promise made to Abraham.
- ◆ The annual worship calendar contained names that incredibly would be applied to Jesus over 1000 years later, when He came and "tabernacled" with us as our Passover lamb, our unleavened bread, our atonement and our Sabbath rest.

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 63 – PURPOSE OF THE MOSAIC LAW]

- ◆ We should not underestimate the powerful dynamics needed to bring about the fulfilment of this prophecy. It would be like William the Conqueror predicting who would be sitting on the throne of England in our time.
- ◆ The laws governing the foods the Israelites were allowed to eat and the fabrics of the clothes they were allowed to wear, were designed to remind them as they pulled on their clothes each morning and sat down to their daily meals they were God's holy people separate from the pagan nations around them.
- ◆ Even today, Jews are recognised by these customs.
- ◆ However, this too pointed to the future when there would be no need for a daily reminder as God would come and actually live "in" us.

However, besides these aspects of the Mosaic Law, there was another sobering aspect: it was a legal contract between God and the nation of Israel.

- ◆ Under the agreement each party had responsibilities in order for the covenant to be binding.
- ◆ God spelled out the contract to Moses who then took it to the people for their approval.
- ◆ ***Exodus 24:7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."***
- ◆ As recorded here, the contract the Israelites agreed to was conditional on their obedience.
- ◆ They had to perform to the standard God had set out for them in order for them to be His holy people (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).
- ◆ This was a tall order for fallible human beings even with this carrot and stick (blessing and cursing) approach.
- ◆ Theoretically, obedience was possible, but as subsequent events would demonstrate it was an unobtainable goal for humans in their fallen state.
- ◆ Even at this relatively low standard of obedience (Jesus brought an even higher standard, Matthew 5:20-29) the subsequent history of Israel is one of one sad failure after another.

But this is precisely what the introduction of the Mosaic Law was supposed to do. It was to demonstrate for all time and for all humanity our inability to measure up to God's standard of perfection under our own strength.

- ◆ The apostle Paul with the benefit of hindsight reveals the purpose of the Mosaic Law.
- ◆ ***Romans 5:20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.***
- ◆ Did you get that...***the trespass might increase!***
- ◆ This is the irony brought about with the introduction of the law.
- ◆ Instead of helping matters, all it did was open up whole new avenues of sinning.
- ◆ This is the dilemma and frustration Paul expresses about living under the law in Romans 7.
- ◆ We won't take the time to read all of it now, but just a couple of verses to illustrate the point.
- ◆ ***Romans 7:7-8 What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting.***
- ◆ It's like telling a child not to touch the hot stove, or in the case of Adam and Eve, not to touch the fruit of the tree of knowledge.
- ◆ All of a sudden there is a fascination with what is prohibited.
- ◆ The Mosaic Law was added to increase transgressions to prove once and for all humanity's inability to measure up to God's standard of perfection.
- ◆ ***Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***

As mentioned in an earlier session, there are two ways to obtain eternal life, through perfect obedience to the Law as Jesus answered the expert in the law (Luke 10:25-28), or through faith in Jesus Christ as Paul told the Galatians (Galatians 2:16).

- ◆ It comes down to whose "works" we are going to rely on in order to gain eternal life.
- ◆ We can rely on our own "works," i.e. our ability to keep the commandments perfectly, or Jesus' ability to keep the commandments perfectly on our behalf.
- ◆ This was the message Jesus reinforced with His ego shattering teachings to the religious leaders such as His sermon on the mount, and the parables of the Good Samaritan and the prodigal son.

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 63 – PURPOSE OF THE MOSAIC LAW]

- ◆ It was to contrast their hypocritical and pathetic efforts of obedience to the Mosaic Law with the perfection demanded by a holy God.
- ◆ None of us can be the good Samaritan, the prodigal father, forgive our brother 70 times seven, or live up to the demands of the sermon on the mount perfectly every time.
- ◆ It was to burst the self-righteous bubble of the scribes and Pharisees who thought, through their system of “do’s” and “don’ts” they were fulfilling the law.
- ◆ Jesus raised the bar and confronted them with the true requirements of God’s law.
- ◆ Only Jesus can fulfil these perfect requirements every time because they are a reflection of the nature and character of a holy God.
- ◆ But in the same way as Jesus’ teachings exposed the sham of the religious life of the scribes and Pharisees back then so they would throw themselves on God’s mercy, that same message is just as applicable today.
- ◆ God never intended salvation to be achieved through the law.
- ◆ Sinful human beings by their very nature could never solve the problem of sin. That would be like asking criminals to solve society’s crime problems.
- ◆ A solution could only come from a holy God Himself.
- ◆ ***Romans 8:3-4 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.***

We saw the law was introduced to expose the vast gulf between a holy God and fallen sinful humanity. But it also contained the means by which justification and reconciliation were to be achieved.

- ◆ Here we see our merciful God stepping in to achieve what sinful mankind, weakened by the flesh is unable to do.
- ◆ ***V.3-4 ...And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.***
- ◆ Jesus not only lived up to the “***righteous requirements of the law***” on our behalf, but He also paid the death penalty the law demanded for our sin by becoming a “***sin offering.***”
- ◆ Just as the Mosaic Covenant was instituted with the shedding of blood, so now we see the introduction of the New Covenant with the shedding of Christ’s blood.

But with the introduction of the New Covenant, the conditions for acceptance also changed. No longer was obedience on the part of the people required which was the weakness of the Mosaic Covenant.

- ◆ Acceptance is no longer based on our “works” but on the saving “works” of Jesus on our behalf.
- ◆ ***Romans 10:1-4 Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ² For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³ Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. ⁴ Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.***
- ◆ When we, in faith, accept the gift of grace Christ’s sacrifice has made possible on our behalf, the penalty for our sin is removed, we are forgiven, given God’s Holy Spirit and we are adopted as His children.
- ◆ The law has lost its power and control over us.
- ◆ ***Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***
- ◆ If Christ has already paid the price demanded of the law, there is no way we can be held accountable to it. That is why there is “***no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***”
- ◆ It would not be justice to require the penalty be paid a second time and the Father is not going to dishonour the terrible price His beloved Son has paid to set us free from sin.
- ◆ The problem of sin has been taken care of by the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ And as it has been achieved through “faith” the glory goes to the one who has made it possible, not to religious people believing it has been achieved by their own efforts (1 Corinthians 1:29-31).

But there is more good news for those who are “in Christ.” The law that condemns us is replaced with the law of the New Covenant.

- ◆ ***Romans 8:2 Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.***

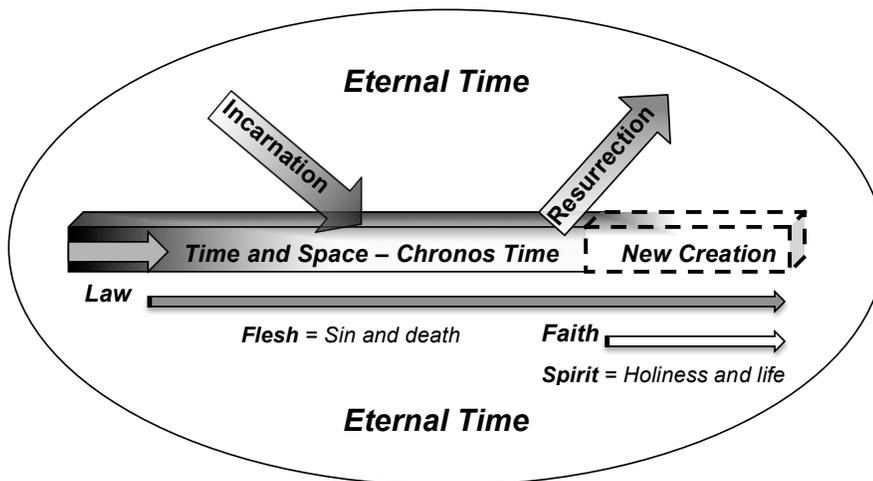
[IN GOD'S IMAGE 63 – PURPOSE OF THE MOSAIC LAW]

- ◆ If the law of sin and death has been removed, then we have access once again to the eternal, life-giving power of the Spirit.
- ◆ Through Christ's efforts, we have been forgiven, born again to a new life with a new nature, adopted as sons of God and restored to full relationship with the Father.

Our response to this gracious gift is to now live our new reality as Paul says in Romans 8:4.

- ◆ ***Romans 8:4...in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.***
- ◆ The law of sin and death apply to the age of the "flesh," but now we are to live in the age of the "Spirit" which leads to holiness and life.

Flesh - Sin and Death; Spirit - Holiness and Life (See figure below)



- ◆ ***Romans 8:12-13 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.***
- ◆ The Spirit gives us the resources to forsake the old life dictated by the flesh and to live the new life of the Spirit
- ◆ Finally, through Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and through the granting of the Holy Spirit who is able to achieve the true righteousness the law was unable to achieve, God is creating "***a holy people for His name***"
- ◆ Next time we will look at the role this new "law of the Spirit" plays in this process of preparing a holy people for God