
BIBLE TALK

Welcome to "Bible Talk." This week the question is: **"What purpose, then, does the law serve?"**

This question was asked by the apostle Paul when he was writing the book of Galatians.

Galatians 3:19

¹⁹ What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ...

When the apostle asked what purpose the law served, he was speaking of the Old Testament law – the Law of Moses. Why did God give this law to men?

There are at least four major reasons why God gave the Old Testament law and that's what our "Bible Talk" message is all about this week.

ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS

First, God gave the Old Testament law "because of transgressions" according to Galatians 3:19.

When man first sinned in the Garden of Eden God immediately announced His plans to send His very own Son into the world to save mankind (Gen. 3:15). However, it was not in His plans to send Jesus right away. The world was not ready for Him. Preparation had to be made. The Old Testament law of Moses was added "because of transgressions." Men had sinned and they needed some law to control them until Jesus could come and perform His work of saving men. The law was given to keep transgressions under control.

Notice carefully, the time limit attached to the law. God did not give this law as a permanent fixture. From the very beginning He intended that the Old Testament law would last only until Jesus should come and at that time it would end.

Galatians 3:19

¹⁹ What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ...

The "seed" spoken of here refers to Jesus according to Galatians 3:16. So the law of Moses, including the ten commandments, would only last until Jesus came and died on the cross (Col. 2:14). The law with its ten commandments were replaced by the New Testament of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:9-10). This New Testament is better than the Old Testament because it has better promises (Heb. 8:6-7). Under the New Testament we today are justified from sins which people under the Old Testament could not be justified (Acts 13:39).

TO KEEP ABRAHAM'S SEED SEPARATE

Second, the law of Moses was also given to keep Abraham's descendants separated from other nations.

The patriarch Abraham was a very good man. He is called the "father of those who believe" (Rom. 4:11-16). He is called the "friend of God" (Ja. 2:23). God was so pleased with Abraham that He promises to send Jesus thru the descendants of Abraham (Gen. 22:18).

In order to carry out this wonderful promise to Abraham, it was necessary that Abraham's descendants be kept separated from other nationalities. If his descendants began to intermix and intermarry with other nations, it would soon become impossible to distinguish Abraham's descendants from other nations. One purpose of the Old Testament law was to keep Abraham's descendants separated from other nations until Jesus could be brought forth into the world.

However, after Jesus came, there was no longer a need to keep the Hebrew people separated from other nations by this law. Jesus removed the law that was acting like a barricade, or wall separating Jews from Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:14-15

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

A SHADOW OF GOOD THINGS TO COME

Third, God gave the Old Testament law was to serve as a shadow of "good things to come."

Hebrews 10:1

¹ ... the law, [had] a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things ...

This simply means that religious ordinances, rites, and ceremonies of the Old Testament were given to symbolize and foretell of things that were to come under the New Testament system. For example, when the children of Israel went thru the Red Sea and were saved from Egyptian bondage, this was to symbolize Christian baptism that frees the sinner from bondage to sin (1 Cor. 10:1-2). The wanderings of the Israelites thru the wilderness was symbolic of the struggles Christian would have living in a world of sin. When some rebelled and were destroyed, it symbolized that Christians can sin after being saved and lose their salvation (1 Cor. 10:5-12). The tabernacle was a shadow of the Lord's church (Heb. 8:1-3). The Passover lamb was a shadow of the Lord Jesus Himself dying for our sins (1 Cor. 5:7). On and on we could go. By having the Old Testament serve as a shadow, God was getting men ready for Jesus who would bring the New Testament church and plan of salvation.

TO BRING MEN TO CHRIST

A fourth major reason why God gave the Old Testament law was to bring men to Christ.

Galatians 3:24-25

²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

A "tutor" in those days was much like a school bus driver today. They would take children to the school and watch over them. However, once the children were delivered safely to the school,

the "tutor" was free to leave. His job was finished because now the children were under the care of the school teacher.

In a similar way, the Old Testament law of Moses brought men to Jesus Christ. It served to prepare men and watched over them until Jesus came bringing His New Testament law. Once men were placed in the care of Jesus Himself, the Old Testament law was "free to leave." It had done its job and was no longer needed.

SUMMARY

In summary, there were four major reasons why God gave the Old Testament law of Moses:

- a) To keep sin under control until Jesus could come.
- b) To keep Abraham's descendants separated from other nations until Jesus could come.
- c) To serve as a shadow of the New Testament church.
- d) To bring men to Jesus like a "tutor" brings children to school.

After Jesus came the Old Testament came to an end and we no longer live under the teachings and laws of that testament. If we wish to be saved today and please God, we must turn to the New Testament and do what it prescribes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on *Bible Talk*.