

GOD'S PROVISION – HIS LAWS IN OUR HEARTS

What is the Law and what is its purpose in today's world

by Derek Rous

I believe we would all agree with Ray's analysis of the problem in the world and also in the Church. There is a real concern amongst Messianic congregations in Israel as well as elsewhere about the issue of the Law of God. First, do Jewish believers have to keep the Law and what precisely do they mean? Second, what is required of gentiles? What about wearing Kippah, Tzitzith, Shabbat regulations, Kosher laws, obeying rabbis. By doing these things as a witness to the community, is it effective? Is anyone impressed – or is it a slippery slope back into orthodoxy?

For many who come into the Kingdom of God as gentile believers, they might well be told, "We are no longer under the Law but under Grace." Rom 6:14. The implication being that the Law of God is finished, the Law revealed through Moses is done away with and no longer applies. Gal 3:1 might well be referred to, "Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you . . ." meaning, why are you being entangled with a yoke of bondage. Didn't Acts 15 deal with all this?

The result however of throwing out the Law is – lawlessness! And this is quite the opposite of what Jesus came to do. He came to fulfil the Law Matt 5:17. And He came to enable His disciples to fulfil the Law. Mat 7:12 The two commandments on which hung all the Law and the prophets were ". . . love God and love your neighbour as yourself. Mat 22:39-40

Loving God was expressed by obeying His commandments. Joshua 22:5 It was the Law of God that David delighted in day and night. Read Ps 119:97 "O how I love your Law! It is my meditation all the day" "I hate vain thoughts; but thy Law I do love." 119:113 Time and again through this Psalm, David expresses his appreciation to God for revealing the Law. But Ps 119 is long and hence for many a psalm to be avoided. So instead, let's look at the potted version – Psalm 19: esp vs 7-11. These two psalms in many ways present us with a paradox. David seems to be laying the foundation for legalism because of his great love for God's Law. The singer of Israel perhaps knows more than most the results of breaking the Law of God. But obeying God's Law is not

necessarily legalism. Loving God and obeying His Law is so that we might live righteous lives. David exalts the glories of God's Law and in this 'antinomian' church age in which we live, it is a recipe for sanity. The purpose of the New Covenant made with Israel and Judah in Jer 31:31 was that the Law could be written on their hearts. This was not a covenant of lawlessness for Jewish or gentile believers who be subsequently grafted in.

The book of Romans gloriously describes the purpose of God's Law. We need to be 'do-ers' of the Law 2:13 not just hearers (cf James). God's Law points to His character and Faith establishes the Law 3:21. The Law is established through Christ 3:31 Grace does not conflict with the Law 6:14-15. The Law exposes sin and is good 7:7. The Law brings great delight 7:22. Living in the Spirit is in accordance with His Law 7:25 (enables us to test the spirit) Israel was blessed by the Law and so can gentiles. 9:4

Space prevents a complete study of scripture but maybe a look into Galatians is good for contrast sake. In the redemptive process, the Law brought death 2:19. Clearly righteousness does not come by the Law. The inheritance is by faith and not obedience to Law. It was never to save rather to indicate a person needs salvation. 2:21; 3:11, 18, 21

However, the end of the Law is Gal 5:14 "Thou shalt love your neighbour as yourself." Rom 13:10, James 2:8 points up

the Royal Law that demonstrates the Love of God to those around us who live in a kingdom governed by Satan's deadly rule.

Christians are criticised by Rabbis for being Lawless and not revering Torah. They say that Christians are Lawless and irreverent in life and worship. And in some respects they are quite right. Our challenge is that we will never provoke them to jealousy unless we are less antinomian. Of course, Judaism does not have Torah alone. There is the Oral Law given as they say to Moses - of which there is no Biblical support. In many ways, Rabbis become a replacement for the Holy Spirit as the study of Talmud becomes centre stage. But there is a real and urgent need to demonstrate to the world as well as the Jewish community that God has established His Laws for all the world to obey and enjoy. The challenge today is to have the courage and boldness to say so especially in the Christian Church let alone in the secular humanistic world.

Creating separation by outward show in how we dress, what we eat, who we speak to, where we go is not God's intention and its not the main issue. It's whether we can break through barriers and touch needy hearts that counts. This is the purpose of the Law - bringing God's order into a world of increasing chaos and confusion. May the Lord give us an appetite for His ways and help us to share them amongst those who need to hear and experience His truth and love.

If you would like 2 leaflets on these subjects (prepared some time ago) – "Jewish Roots and Jesus", & "Rabbis and Synagogues or the "Ecclesia?" (Letter from an Israeli Jewish Pastor) – send an SAE to the Bromley office.