

The 613 Laws of the Old Testament

by Robert Wurtz II

Robert Wurtz II explores the significance of the 613 laws of the Old Testament and their role in leading believers to Christ.

Topics: "Old Testament Law", "Christian Salvation"

Description

Robert Wurtz II delves into the significance of the law in leading us to Christ and revealing our need for Him. The law of God exposes sin, converting the soul and showing our dependence on Christ for righteousness. Despite the Jews codifying the Law of Moses into 613 laws, Jesus summarized it into loving God and loving others. The law serves as a schoolmaster guiding us to Christ, shedding light on our need for His salvation.

Transcript

Paul said that if righteousness could have come by the law it would have; but it cannot. As it is written... Galatians 3:21 "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." All the law can do is lead us to Christ and teach us about God's ways. Paul said that he pressed towards the "mark" for the prize. Here we read... "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." (Philippians 3:5,6). We know that this mark was not perfection of the law because he counted all his works of righteousness as dung that he might win Christ (Philippians 3:8). "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Galatians 2:21)

As we begin to take a closer look at the issues its good to realize that the Jews codified the Law of Moses into 613 laws. It is a law that contains the unchanging personality of God in what it means to be holy and love, etc. Jesus said that all of the law and prophets could be summarized into just 2. Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

There are plenty of resources to at least take a look at what the laws are. I am hesitant to suggest anyone look on the net for these things because of the extreme views of some of the sites out there. Therefore I would say go to the public library and look them up in the Encyclopedia Judaica.

What studying these laws did for me at the Institute was to make me realize that I don't understand what God means when I conceptualize the meaning of "Love the Lord your God" or "Love your neighbor as

yourself, etc." My preconceived ideas of what those concepts were- were often lacking in the meaning of God's terms. Paul said that the law is good if it is used lawfully.

The law of God exposes sin- plain and simple. It converts the soul by showing us our need for Christ. It was not written for the righteous but for sinners. And it was added because of transgressions. It exposed the law of sin that is in our members. As Paul said it- when the commandment came sin revived and I died. So we see then that it is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. Bro. Ron Bailey did an excellent job dealing with this issue in section 4 of his series called "Adoption." The law was in fact a light that would light the path to Christ; but the people would not that the glory of that law should shine upon them; hence by analogy, the veil that was placed over the face of Moses is still upon their hearts. They would not, that the "light" (glory) of the law be shone upon them.

When the people that sat in darkness saw a great light, they were seeing the Glory of the Law of God embodied in the living Word of God (John 1). When you are in sin as an impenitent, you do not desire to see this light as it is contrary to those who love darkness because their deeds are evil. As it is written... men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

The first laws given to man (In Jewish tradition) were the "Noachide Laws". This was a series of 7 laws that dealt with the basic categories of sin. Then came the 10 Commandments. then the Jews codified the law in 613 laws. This is not the whole law- but covers most of the issues. Some of them deal with the nation or the priesthood, etc. Others are relevant for understanding how God defines certain behaviors.

In Acts 15 we see a short list of commands being put on the Gentiles Christians. The Jewish Christians were zealous of the law and many continued to keep it as an identification of who they were as God's people and not for salvation (Acts 21:17-25; Acts 24:13-20). There is proof of this else where especially in Galatians when certain came from James and Peter to a "law approach" and left the Gentiles fellowship. Again, not for salvation, but as their culture and identity. We are gentiles and we are commanded to abide in the calling that we are called in (I Corinthians 7:18).

Since that time the Oral Law has been codified (in the 2nd century) and now there is a "shield" over the law. This Oral Law in significant ways keeps the Jewish People from having the light they need to lead them to Christ. Dealing with this issue alone is one of the greatest challenges facing the Jews in my opinion.

Others such as horrendous behavior from Christians towards them over 2000 years are the beginnings of understanding where they are coming from so that we can try to let God lead us as to how we deal with them. It is part of the study to show ourselves approved.

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