

COVENANT ESCHATOLOGY

Lesson 2: The Ministry of Death

An Examination of Life Under the Old Covenant

THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT

- During this lesson, I do not wish to cast the impression that the Law of Moses was not a good thing as if it somehow was defected.
- “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).
- “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12).
- The problem with the Law of Moses was not the Law, but the problem was with man.
- “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me” (Rom 7:11)

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

- To cause the offense to abound (Romans 5:20).
- To give hope and comfort (Romans 15:4).
- To bring mankind to Christ (Galatians 3:24).
- To be a shadow of good things to come (Colossians 2:16-17).

THAT THE OFFENSE MIGHT ABOUND

- The offense of Adam was his sin and death, but it is not limited to that. The nature of Adam's sin was that he was trying to operate without depending upon God. God had offered everything that he needed, and he still chose to try to become like God. The Law was a personification of both the separation that was brought in through Adam as well as the nature of Adam's offense.
- In other words, one could look at the practices of the law and see two things: 1) Separation from God was made manifest and 2) The Law could never perfect those who followed it.
- It was in these two ways that the Law caused the offense to abound. We will explore them further on the next slide.

SEPARATION FROM GOD WAS MADE MANIFEST

- When we examine the elements of the Old Law, we can see how it was a personification of the separation from God that was introduced by Adam.
- The temple, for instance is where the Most Holy Place was.
- All of the people would come year by year to see the temple and to worship God.
- Even though they knew the presence of God was there, only the High Priest could enter on one day out of the year.
- The temple was a constant reminder that they could not enter into the full presence of God in their condition. This is seen further in our next point.

THE LAW COULD NEVER PERFECT THOSE WHO FOLLOWED IT

- “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect” (Hebrews 10:1).
- “For the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God” (Hebrews 7:19).
- You could raise the best livestock, bring the best of your harvest, and keep every jot and tittle of the law to the best of your abilities, and you would never be able to attain perfection.
- “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them”” (Gal 3:10).

PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF LIFE UNDER THE LAW

- Romans 7:7-25 [Just Read]
- 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 [Notice the words used to describe the law]
- Galatians 4:21-5:1 [Bondage versus liberty]

A CLOSER LOOK AT ROMANS 5

- Through Adam, sin entered into the world, and the death came about because of that sin. This death came upon **all** men. In the context of Romans, all means all inclusive – that is, both Jew and Gentile.
- Children have not sinned, so that death has not passed upon them (v.18).
- There was a law in effect, but it was not the law of Moses – otherwise, sin could not be imputed.
- Death reigned from Adam to Moses, but death was not abolished through Moses. It was caused to abound.
- Just as all (Jew and Greek) die because of Adam, all (Jew and Greek) can live because of the free gift.

A QUICK LOOK AT I CORINTHIANS 15

I do not want to get into great detail at this juncture, but I would simply like to introduce some ideas that will be beneficial to us later.

- ✓ I Corinthians 15 begins and ends with a reference to Hosea. This form of argumentation is called *inclusio*, and it was commonly employed in both Old and New Testaments.
- ✓ When dealing with Jewish opposition, Paul usually brings out his accomplishments under the Law, but here he humbles himself. I believe this has to do with the nature of the Corinthian denial.
- ✓ The Corinthians are denying the resurrection of the dead ones – not resurrection in general.

CONTINUED

If the Corinthians' denial was concerning everyone (including themselves), then Paul's argumentation would have made no sense. Let's notice Paul's arguments and try to determine who the dead ones were from there.

- ✓ Argument 1: Denial of the resurrection of the dead ones is a denial of Christ's resurrection.
- ✓ Argument 2: Denial of the resurrection of the dead ones means that our preaching is in vain.
- ✓ Argument 3: Denial of the resurrection of the dead ones means that your faith is in vain.
- ✓ Argument 4: Denial of the resurrection of the dead ones means that Paul was a false witness.

CONTINUED

- ✓ Argument 5: Denial of the resurrection of the dead ones means that you are in sin.
- ✓ Argument 6: Denial of the resurrection of the dead ones means that those Christians that have died are lost.
- ✓ Argument 7: Denial of the resurrection of the dead ones means that they only had hope in this life.

So, who are the dead ones? It couldn't have been Jesus, themselves, or fellow Christians. We also know it must be a group that died before Christ because He rose out from among that group. Therefore, we believe they were denying those that died under the Old Covenant prior to the death of Christ

CONTINUED

- ✓ The same idea of death in Adam and life in Christ that was used in Romans 5 is used in I Corinthians 15:21-28.
- ✓ A further comparison of Adam and Christ is made in I Corinthians 15:42-49.
- ✓ Paul references Isaiah 25:8 as his text for showing that death would be swallowed up in victory.
- ✓ He then references Hosea 13:14 in connection with the resurrection as well.
- ✓ Finally, in I Corinthians 15:56, Paul says that the sting of death is sin, but the strength of sin is the Law. Knowing what we know about the Law, doesn't this make perfect sense?