

UNTIL THE SEED SHOULD COME

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Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made. - Gal.3:19

Christians sometimes quote this verse in an attempt to justify their casting away of the Torah as a moral guide for believers.

"The law was intended to last only until a certain time," they say, "until the Messiah, the Seed, had come. Now that Jesus has come, the Old Testament law no longer applies. It was only meant to last until Jesus came."

The anti-nomian view (the idea that the Torah can be ignored by Christians) presents some major problems. First, if the Torah was meant to end when the Seed came, then why did the Seed warn His disciples to not even think that He had come to abolish the Torah? (Mt. 5:17ff) And if the Torah is no longer valid, how are Christians supposed to know how God wants them to live and worship? The New Testament gives some instruction, of course. It is worth noting, though, that many of the New Testament instructions are direct quotes from the Torah. Even anti-nomians like Scofield admit this: The [OT] commandments are used in the distinctively Christian Scriptures [the NT] as an instruction in righteousness," Scofield wrote. (*Scofield Reference Bible*, Gal.3:24 footnote.)

Scofield's observation is true, and it raises an important question: If the Old Testament Law was meant to last only until the Seed came, then what business did Peter, Paul, James, and John have telling Christians to obey Old Testament commandments? They sometimes even used the phrase "for it is written" to give added weight to their authority when they quoted Old Testament commands. If it is now no longer necessary to obey Old Testament commands because the Seed has come, then what difference does it make that "it is written"?

Obviously some commandments of

the Torah are still binding on Christians. Most Bible-believing Christians agree that the Ten Commandments should be obeyed. (Well, nine of them, anyway. For some reason the Sabbath commandment is viewed as abolished.) Bible-believing Christians generally agree on other various Torah commands (prohibitions against sodomy, witchcraft, talebearing, etc.). So obviously some of the Torah's commands are still binding for Christians. And, according to Galatians 3:19, part of the Torah was meant to last only "until the Seed should come." The Big Question is: Which part of the Torah was meant to last only until the coming of the Seed? Who gets to decide which Torah commands Christians can ignore and which ones they should still obey? And what is the basis for determining whether a commandment is abolished or still binding? The anti-nomian view cannot answer these questions.

The anti-nomians focus on the phrase "until the Seed should come," with special emphasis on the word *until*. If we first look at the introductory phrase "it was added because of transgressions" (with a special emphasis on the words *added* and *transgressions*), we can come up with a view that explains which part of the Torah was meant to last only until the Seed should come. First let's consider the word *added*.

If something is "added," then there has to be something else to which it is added. The use of the verb *add* necessitates the existence of a prior addend to which the second addend is attached. If the law was "added," then to *what prior addend was it added?* More importantly, did Paul mean that the *entire Law* was added (to something)? Or, did he mean that *part of the Law* was added to a *prior, already-existing Torah*? If this is the case (and I believe it is), then this would help to clarify which part of the Torah was meant to be temporary, "until the Seed should come," and which part of the

Torah was meant to be observed even after the Seed came. Obviously the part of the Law that was added as an addendum to the prior, already-existing Torah would be that part which was meant to last only until the Seed should come, and the prior, already-existing Torah would be that part which was to continue even after the Seed came.

Now let's consider the phrase "because of transgressions." This will help clarify what law was added. We need only ask ourselves this question: Which part of the Torah makes a provision to cover transgressions? The answer: That part of the Law which gives instructions concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices. See, for example, Leviticus 16:3,16, & 21, where the sin-offering and burnt-offering are offered "because of their transgressions" - the exact phrase Paul uses in Galatians 3:19.

The next question: Were the laws concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices for transgressions added to a prior, already-existing Torah? Yes, they were. The Torah was first given to God's people when they heard the voice of Yahweh utter the Ten Commandments. (See Deuteronomy 4:13, 36; 5:4, 22.) Then Moses went up into the mountain. When the people got tired of waiting for Moses to return, they transgressed the Torah by making a golden calf to worship. This transgression of the Torah made it necessary for God to add something more to the Torah, namely, laws concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

"The law was added because of transgressions." This statement alone strongly implies (if not proves) that there was, indeed, an already-existing Torah, because "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). In order for transgression to exist, there must be a law to transgress. It was the transgression of the already-existing Torah that made it necessary to add the law of burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Therefore we could understand Galatians 3:19 to mean "the law [of

burnt-offerings and sacrifices] was added [to the Torah] because of transgressions [against the Torah]."

These laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices were added to cover transgressions, but burnt-offering and sacrifice was not the thing God was originally after: "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imaginations of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward" (Jer. 7:22-24). Obedience was what God wanted, but transgression created a need for burnt-offerings and sacrifices to be added to the Torah.

It is remarkable that even Scofield, in spite of his anti-Torah bias, makes this comment about these verses from Jeremiah: "The command concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices was not given to the people till they had broken the decalogue, the law of obedience" (Jer. 7:22, fn.1, emphasis mine.) It is even more remarkable that in this same footnote, Scofield refers the reader back to his notes at Exodus 20, where he separates the giving of the Law into stages. Scofield sees the first stage as consisting of the following: the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. ch. 20), the "judgments" (Ex. 21:1-23:13), the feasts (Ex. 23:14-19), and the instructions for the conquest of Canaan (Ex. 23:20-33). Scofield calls this first stage "pure law, with no provision of priesthood and sacrifice for failure." (Emphasis mine). He views the giving of the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices as a separate stage, distinct from this first stage. According to Scofield, the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices were given as something *separate from* and *subsequent to* the people's transgression of the Torah, and *because* of the people's transgression of the Torah. In these notes, the anti-nomian Scofield has unwittingly shown that "the law [of burnt-offerings

and sacrifices] was added [to the Torah] because of transgressions [against the Torah]!"

All of this can be summed up in the words of Samuel: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22). What God wants is obedience. It is transgression that creates the need for burnt-offerings and sacrifices; therefore the Lord has no pleasure in burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Hebrews 10:6-9 elaborates on this: "In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do Thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second."

In the above verse, God did not "take away" the Old Testament Law that He might "establish" New Testament Grace. In the context of this passage, the "law" that is being discussed is the system of burnt-offerings and sacrifices that were offered at the Temple by the Levitical priesthood for the transgressions of the people. Because the Messiah had been sacrificed and the Temple was soon to be destroyed, God was in the process of "taking away the first [system of animal sacrifices for transgressions]" in order to "establish the second [system of sacrifice, viz., the sacrifice of Messiah, who was 'wounded for our transgressions' and was stricken 'for the transgression of my people' (Isa. 53:5, 8)]."

A close study of Hebrews, especially chapters 9 & 10, will show that the writer's goal was to show his Messianic Jewish readers that the sacrifice of the Messiah was the fulfillment of all the previous sacrifices and burnt-offerings that were offered in the Temple. As long as the Temple was still standing and as long as the Levitical priesthood was still operating, Messianic Jews were free to participate

in Temple worship during this period of transition. (This is obvious in the Book of Acts.) However, they needed to understand that Yeshua was the fulfillment of the sacrifices. The only value of burnt-offerings and sacrifices was in the fact that they pointed back to the sacrifice of the Messiah, the "more excellent sacrifice." These sacrifices could not, however, be a substitute for the sacrifice of the Messiah.

This idea harmonizes quite well with the idea that "the law [of burnt-offerings and sacrifices] was added [to the Torah] because of transgressions [against the Torah]." The writer of Hebrews was telling his Jewish readers that the laws of burnt offerings and sacrifices were only necessary until the Messiah should come, and Paul was telling his Gentile readers in Galatia the same thing.

If this understanding of Galatians 3:19 is correct (which I believe it is), then it will make a great difference in how we understand some of the other references to "the law" in Galatians. This view takes into account the fact that "the law" which the so-called Judaizers were trying to push onto the Gentiles in Galatia *included the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices* that were offered at the Temple. And before Gentiles were allowed to participate in these offerings at the Temple, they had to undergo circumcision, which meant a full-fledged, formal conversion to Judaism. And this, of course, was what Paul was opposing - the idea that justification comes by a formal conversion to Judaism.

The next time you read Galatians, keep these four things in mind when you see the words "the law": 1. Paul could not have been preaching against the Law *per se*, because Christians were still expected to obey some parts of the Torah. 2. Christians were not required to obey the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices. 3. The law that the Judaizers were trying to push on the Gentile believers included the laws of burnt-offerings and sacrifices. 4. For Gentiles, Temple worship involving sacrifices required a full-fledged, formal conversion to Judaism in order to be justified. Q