

Lesson 34

8.3 The Law

- We studied how God used a strong hand and Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. We also saw how the Egyptians were destroyed. Then it happened:

⇒ Exodus 15:22~26;	Israel enters the desert; God begins to provide for their needs and begins to give statutes and ordinances.
⇒ Exodus 16:1~8;	The people begin to murmur, and God promises them bread from heaven and meat to eat and tells them how to take care of themselves.
⇒ Exodus 16:11~15;	God sends quails and manna.
⇒ Exodus 16:19~20;	The people disobey God.
⇒ Exodus 17:1~7;	God provides water again.
⇒ Exodus 19:1~6;	God calls Moses to Mount Sinai (<i>or Horeb</i>) and begins to give the Law.
⇒ Exodus 20:1~17;	The Ten Commandments, the heart of the Law.
⇒ Exodus 20:18;	The entire Law begins to be given; the feasts for worshiping God, the instructions for building the tabernacle.
⇒ Exodus 32:1~14;	The golden calf.
⇒ Exodus 32:15~24;	Moses destroyed the tablets of the Ten Commandments and the gold calf.
⇒ Exodus 32:30~35;	Moses intercedes for the people.
⇒ Exodus 34:1~9;	The new tablets of the Ten Commandments.
⇒ Exodus 34:10~28;	God's Mosaic Covenant.
⇒ Exodus 34:29~35;	Moses comes down from the mountain with the new tablets of the Ten Commandments and his face shines.
⇒ Exodus 35;	Building of the Tabernacle.

- The time of the law lasted about 1500 years. Virtually all of the Old Testament was written during this time, beginning with the call of Moses on Mount Horeb. It is during this time that God reveals Himself to the people of Israel, and this period is perhaps the most misunderstood in the Church. The most common mistake is to think that the Law was given to save these people; this is a total mistake. The Law was given to a redeemed people, a nation already saved by God.
- When God gave Abraham the promise of descendants, land, and blessing, He sealed it with a covenant and did not specify when it would be fulfilled. Then, between the promise and the fulfillment of the covenant, God interjected another program that would not be as eternal as the promise and the covenant. This program, God's law given to Moses (*which is why it is also called the law of Moses or the Mosaic Covenant*), had a purpose.

⇒ **Galatians 3:15~19**

- **V.15~16;** Notice that Paul speaks first of the Abrahamic Covenant, and then of the Law.

- **V.17:** *'the law which came after...'*, after what? After the promise. **'does not nullify the promise so as to make it ineffective.'** God says: *'The law that came 430 years after the promise to Abraham, which is eternal, cannot nullify the promise'*. The promise was made to Christ (**V.16**). Why does Paul say that the promise was made to the descendant, and that the descendant is Christ? Because we have seen that Abraham has different kinds of descendants, but only those who are concentrated in Christ are the ones who receive this promise, both those of Israel and those of the Gentiles.
- **V.18:** The Galatians were making a big mess of things, because they wanted to follow the law of Moses in order to be accepted by God. But Paul says no, that after Jesus Christ the law was abolished, as we'll see below. Paul is saying that the promise is eternal, and the law is not. He's saying that the promise was given freely, but the law is not free, either you keep the law, or you die. Paul is saying that the promise, the inheritance that we receive, does not come from the law, but from the promise. Paul is putting the law in its proper place.
- **V.19:** Then a very pertinent question arises: why the law? If the law didn't help the promise, why was the law given? He himself answers: **'The law was added because of transgressions, until the descendant should come to whom the promise had been made...'**
 Added, inserted; ... until. This is the limit; this shows that the law is not an eternal covenant like the promise.
 If it is only by promise, then why was the Law included in God's program?
 Because of transgressions, until Jesus Christ came.
- So, what do we do with the law today? Do we make a *'package'* and throw it away, or do we follow the law? Everybody has to think about it! So, we have two extremes: either we follow the law, or we ignore it. We have to think: What is the law for me?
 ⇒ **Romans 7:12;** The law is holy, just, and good. We cannot throw away what is holy.
- The Law, as we have said, was given to a redeemed people. When these people were called by God in Egypt, blood had already been shed. When the last plague came, the death of the firstborn, the firstborn of the Hebrews and those who believed were spared. But someone in their household had died! A substitute had died in place of their firstborn. The blood of the slain lamb was smeared on the lintel and doorposts so that when the destroying angel passed by and looked at the house, he would say: *'Oops, there's been death here, I'm going to pass over it.'* This is the true meaning of the word *'Passover'*, to pass over. A lamb without blemish was set apart and killed. A perfect lamb, without blemish, without defect, already points to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, our true Passover. ⇒ **I Corinthians 5:7.**
- When the firstborn died, Pharaoh said to the Hebrews, *'Go away, get out of here'*; but blood had been given. It was a redeemed nation.
 ⇒ **Isaiah 43:1;** If Israel was not redeemed, God could not speak like this.

On the night of Passover, Israel was redeemed. God treats Israel as a redeemed nation and treats the individuals of Israel separately. They are two different things, as a nation and as individuals. Each individual must accept Jesus as Savior in order to be saved.

- The Hebrews left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, symbolizing water baptism, and in three months they were at Mount Horeb. What happened there? God called Moses and gave him the laws, commandments, and judgments. There were 613 commandments, with the Ten Commandments being the heart of the law.
- These redeemed people came to Mount Sinai, and there God revealed Himself to them. There were about three million people, a very large number of people. These enslaved people, accustomed to the idolatry of Egypt, didn't even know how to relate to their God. So, the Law was also given to guide the people on how to relate to God. Through the Law, God revealed Himself to Israel, revealing His nature and holiness. There are two ways to come to God, one is Jesus, but there is another way, and it is not heresy.

If a person keeps the 613 commandments all his life, from the day he is born until the day he dies, without ever deviating from them for one second, not even in his thoughts, he can go to heaven. We're serious, very serious! This is also what God wanted to show by giving the Law of Moses.

- The Law of Moses is, in short, a portrait of God. Israel didn't know their God, so God said: *'I'll give you the picture!'* So, He put the Law of Moses on the program. All these judgments, statutes, if the people kept them, they would really know God. Imagine an Israelite in his daily life: *'Have I transgressed?'* It was very serious! There were laws that said you couldn't touch dead things. If you touched a dead body or a dead animal, you became ceremonially unclean and could not participate in any ceremony; you had to go outside the camp and purify yourself with water and the ashes of a heifer, not an easy task.
- The laws affected all areas of a person's life: social, housing, religious, family. There were laws that even interfered with marital relations. So, if a person fulfilled the 613 laws in his whole life, without deviating for a second, not even in thought, he was like God, he was on the same level of holiness as God, so he could go and live with God.
- That's what God wanted to show with the Law, the impossibility for man to keep the Law. You might think, if God knew that man couldn't keep the Law, why did He give the Law? That is why God said: *'If you want to live with me, you must be holy as I am holy, because sin will not enter heaven'*. Sin separated God from man, and God said: *'If you are to come back here, or if I am to come back there with you, you must be like me, and I am like this law'*. Do you know what the Law is? It is the portrait of God.
- God knew very well that they would not keep the law, and when we come to the New Testament, we find the apostles saying: *'A yoke that neither we nor our fathers could bear'*.
 ⇒ **Acts 15:10.**
 ⇒ **Galatians 5:1;** It is a yoke of bondage.
 But the law is holy, good, and perfect, for it is the image of God.
- But the law is a picture of something else. Anyone looking at the law would see his total inability to live up to that standard. When I look at God, I immediately see myself and realize my total inability, my sinfulness, my weakness. *'How can I fulfill this law to be equal to God, to be with God? Do I need all this for God to be with me?'*

⇒ **IMPOSSIBLE.**

This is exactly what God wanted to show us when He gave us the Law.