

ARE WE STILL UNDER THE LAW?

By Mark Moore

I. ARGUMENTS FOR (With Response Below):

1. ***Jesus was a Jew and kept Jewish law and traditions and feasts***, (excluding, of course, added teachings of the Pharisees.) True, Jesus lived under the Old Testament. The New Testament did not take place until His death, burial and Resurrection (c.f. Galatians 4:4,5).
2. ***If you take away law, you have "law-less-ness" which is strictly forbidden in both Old and New Testaments***. We are not governed by law. However, that is not to say that we are not governed. We are led by the Spirit of Christ, and prompted by love. And this is magnificently more powerful to change one's life than law ever was.
3. ***Order--Under the law we know what is expected of us***. Under the New Covenant, without law, we also know exactly what is expected--Love God and love your neighbor (Romans 13:9, 10; Galatians 5:14). And the advantage of this system is that there are no loop-holes in love like there are in law.
4. ***The imperatives of the N.T. are simply new laws to be kept***. Indeed, we are told, imperatively, to do certain things and to act certain ways. But the appeal to obedience in the N.T. is not law, but relationship. We do not keep N.T. commands in order to earn merit or to escape punishment. (Which are the only two reasons one keeps law.) But we keep them because of the relationship we have with Jesus as slave and master. One more note: Our obedience to these commands does not "make or break" our salvation. It does, however, reflect the depth of our love for our master and/or the level of our Christian maturity.
5. ***"Faith without works is dead."*** Indeed, but a clear distinction must be drawn between works of faith and works of law. A work of faith is what I do in response to my relationship with Jesus as Lord. A work of law is what I do either to escape punishment or to earn merit.
6. ***In Acts 15:20, 23-29, which is said to be the Apostolic decision against the law, we find four laws given to the Gentiles***. These are not laws given to the Gentiles, because there is no punishment involved in breaking them. (And law always involves punishment, or penalty.) In other words, their salvation is not dependent upon keeping these laws. So what are these? They are commands which, when kept, would keep the Jews who might become Christians, from being offended by their potential brothers.
7. ***In Acts 16:3, just after the Jerusalem Council, Paul circumcised Timothy***. Thus Paul still kept the law of circumcision. It is clearly stated that he did this, not to keep the law, but to keep potential Jewish converts from being offended.
8. ***In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, "I have not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it."*** Jesus fulfilled it in two ways, (1) by obeying it completely, and (2) by retiring it. In the same way as the apple blossom is fulfilled by the apple, and then falls off, so also the law was fulfilled by the sacrifice of Christ and passed quietly into inactivity.

II. ARGUMENTS AGAINST:

1. One must keep all the law to be justified by it, which has never been done, except by Jesus, (Galatians 3:10-12; 5:3).
2. The law can only condemn. It never makes one righteous (Romans 3:19,20; 7:10,11; Galatians 2:16-21; 3:10,11,21).
3. The law arouses sinful passion (Romans 7:5).
4. Law produces sin by informing us of our sin and educating us further as to what sin is and how to do it (Romans 3:20; 7:7,8).
5. The law is slavery, grace is freedom (Galatians 4:9-11, 21-26; 5:1).
6. Those under law are severed from Christ (Galatians 4:11; 5:4).
7. We have been released from the law (Romans 3:21; 8:1-3).
8. We died, thus are free from the law (Romans 6:4-7; 7:1,4; Galatians 2:18-20).
9. Faith preceded and superseded the law (Galatians 3:15-25).
10. Only faith can produce righteousness (Galatians 3:5-9).
11. Christ abolished [KATARGEO = Render powerless], the law (Ephesians 2:15).
12. The law was fulfilled by grace, and thus retired (Romans 3:31; Matthew 5:17).
13. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-10; Acts 15:11).