

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

"Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Rev. 22:12

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"COMMENTS ON GALATIANS 3 - No. 7." (Page 502)

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"AND it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." There is probably no man living who can fully comprehend this passage. We know that when God came down upon Mount Sinai, he was accompanied by ten thousands of his saints (holy ones), Deut. 33:2, and that they must have had some part to act in that great event; but what part they acted, no man can tell. The details of all that was done within that dense cloud which veiled Sinai's top from human gaze, have never been revealed to man. A parallel to this passage in Galatians is found, however, in Stephen's address to the Jewish Sanhedrin :—

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have *received the law by the disposition of angels*, and have not kept it." Acts 7: 51-53.

Those wicked men were uncircumcised in heart because they had not kept the law of God. See Rom. 2:25-29. They had violated the law which forbids murder, although they had received it "by the disposition of angels." To the same effect the apostle writes to the Hebrews:—

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. 2:1-3.

As we said before, it is useless to conjecture on these passages. Just what part the angels acted in connection with the proclaiming of the law, we cannot tell; we only know that in each of the above texts the statement that is made concerning the angels is made to emphasize the guilt of those who should violate the law, or should reject the gospel, which has reference to the law. With this we must leave this expression,—"*it was ordained by angels*,"—the only really difficult passage in the chapter.

"In the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." Verse 20. The expression, "but God is one," indicates that God is one of two parties between whom there is a mediator in whose hand the law was ordained. Now when we read that "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5), the conclusion seems irresistible that the "mediator" in whose hand the law was ordained, or disposed, was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

If to any one this conclusion seems unnatural, let him remember that the Son is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and that by him the worlds were made. Heb. 1:1-3. "For by him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Col. 1:16, 17. He is one with the Father (John 10:30), and therefore is worthy to be called God, and to be worshiped as God. John 1:1. "Without him was not anything made that was made." It

would be expected therefore that the active work of proclaiming the law to men should also be performed by the Son. Whatever is done by the Son is the same as if done by the Father.

It will be profitable right here to note how inseparably the law and the gospel are united, and how impossible it is to separate, in any transaction, the Father and the Son. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1); but it was the Son "by whom he made the worlds." Heb. 1:2. God formed the earth to be inhabited (Isa. 45:18), and therefore man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27); but before man was made, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Gen. 1:26. This has unmistakable reference to Him who is "before all things," and by whom all things were created. Col. 1:16,17. Man fell, and thereby lost all hope of immortality, for which he was created. Then Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15); but "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." 2 Cor. 5:19. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34); but he is not alone in his love, neither does he have to move a heart hardened against man; "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. And when God spoke the law from Sinai, he said, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:2); but we know that an angel, in whom was the name of the Lord was with the people, whom they were to obey (Ex. 23:20, 21), and who spoke to Moses in the Mount Sinai, when he received the lively oracles to give unto us. Acts 7:38. Moreover we are plainly told that it was Christ who was with them in the wilderness, supplying both literal and spiritual food and water. 1 Cor. 10:1-4.

Thus in everything that concerns man, we see oneness of thought and action between the Father and the Son. It is not true that "the Jewish age," so-called, was the administration of stern justice by the Father, and that "the Christian age" is the administration of tender mercy by the Son. If the life of one man had spanned the entire interval between creation and the present time, he could say, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." There is no change of government between the fall of man and the restoration of all things. As it was the great love of God to the fallen world which moved him to give his only begotten Son for their redemption, we are not surprised to learn that when Christ's ambassadors pray to men, "Be ye reconciled to God," it is God himself beseeching sinners to accept his pardon. Even so when we learn that Christ was with the church in the wilderness, that he was upon Mount Sinai, and that it was in his hand that the law was ordained, we are not surprised to hear him say, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

"Is the law then against the promises of God?" Gal. 3:21. That it is not was shown by the 18th verse. It is directly in harmony with the promise, because by it men are enabled to see and forsake their sins, so that they may receive the promise. So the apostle says: "God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." Righteousness would have been by the law if such a thing had been possible. If by any means men could have received life without the death of Christ, we may be sure that that means would have been adopted. God is infinite; his love is infinite; therefore it was at an infinite sacrifice that God gave up his Son to die that the world through him might have life. But there was no other way, for the law once violated could not by any possibility give life. It was ordained to life, but sin caused it to be unto death. "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Gal. 3:22.

Blessed conclusion! "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1:15. Therefore, since all are concluded under sin, he came to save all. The provision is ample enough for all, but only those who believe can be made partakers. Unfortunately, too many will not acknowledge the authority of God's law, and will not confess themselves to be sinners, and therefore the "promise

by faith of Jesus Christ" cannot be given to them; for we are taught by verse 22, that it is necessary for men to be "concluded under sin," in order that they may be sharers in the promise by faith. This again shows how the law works in harmony with the promise.

W.