

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. 3.” (Page 438)

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"WHEREFORE then serveth the law?" This is a very pertinent question, and several points need to be borne in mind in reading it. First, the word "serveth" seems to convey to many minds the idea that the law was subservient, or secondary, to something else. There was really no necessity for the insertion of the word by the translators, for it is not expressed in the original. The text reads, *Tioun ho nomos?* "Why then the law?" This conveys the exact meaning. It may also be more freely rendered, "Of what use, then, is the law?" Second, it must be remembered that questions of this sort are very common in Paul's writings. After having stated a proposition, he puts himself in the place of a supposed objector, in order that, by answering the question, he may bring out an additional thought. By so doing he anticipates every objection that might be brought against his argument.

Now recall the argument of verses 16-18, and you will readily see the force of this question. He has shown that the works of the law will not suffice to gain the promised inheritance for anybody. Faith in Christ is the only condition of salvation. Then the objector speaks up, and says, "Then what is the use of the law? If the inheritance is only by promise, what do men gain by having the law? Is it not rather a detriment to them?" There was need of asking and answering this question; for, notwithstanding Paul's answer, thousands are to-day asking the same question, and in so doing they imagine that they are making an unanswerable objection against the law. They say, "If we are saved by grace, what need have we of the law?" And what is the answer?—"It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." Verse 19.

This is a very short answer, but it is full of meaning. Let us examine it candidly and carefully, giving due weight to every word. "It was *added*." Here the casual reader is liable to be misled into supposing that some mathematical process is referred to. It is true that the word (*prostithami*) is most commonly used in the sense of "add," but every word must be rendered in accordance with its connection. When used in connection with the law, it does not have the sense of "add." The only other instance in the New Testament where this word is used with reference to the law is Heb.12:19, where it is rendered "spoken." Paul says that when the people heard the voice of God proclaiming the law from Sinai, "they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken unto them any more." This makes the meaning more clear than if it had been rendered, "They that heard entreated that the word might not be added to them any more." In fact, that rendering would not bring out any idea at all. The "Emphatic Diaglott" uses "added" in this place, thus: "The hearers of which entreated that not another word should be added to them;" but by the change of construction the expression is equivalent to that in the regular version. So if in Gal. 3:19 it were rendered "spoken," the meaning would be brought out more clearly. "It was spoken because of transgressions." Now when the antinomian asks: "What was the use of the law, if the inheritance was only by promise?" Paul answers, "It was spoken because of transgressions."

"Because of transgressions." Again the casual reader will say: "You have told us that there can be no transgression when there is no law; yet here you have the law spoken because of transgressions already existing; how is this?" It is all right. There can indeed be no transgression when there is no law; but it must be remembered that the law

existed in full force long before it was spoken from Sinai, yes, long before the creation of man. In the temple of God in Heaven the law of God was beneath the throne of God, the basis of his Government. This we have clearly demonstrated. And when it was spoken from Sinai, and a copy of it was given to Moses to place within the ark, there was no more law in existence than there was before. The people of the world were under just as much obligation to keep the law before that time as they were afterward. And that was just why it was then given. The people being under obligation to keep the law perfectly, it was necessary that they should have it in such a form that they could study it carefully. Before the giving of the law upon Sinai, God had conveyed a knowledge of his will to the people by his prophets, as Enoch and Noah. The people also had in their hearts more or less trace of the law originally written in the heart of man. But the only people who cared to remember God had been in long and cruel bondage to the heathen, and their knowledge of right and wrong had become blunted. Consequently the law was given that wrong might be known to be wrong. If this point be kept in mind, the reader will not become confused by the text, even though he retains the rendering "added" instead of "spoken." Thus the law was already in existence, and known to man, although only by tradition; but now the Lord added it in written form. But however it is rendered, there is no more reason for supposing that it teaches that the law was here first introduced than there is of supposing that by the "entering" of the law, in Rom. 5:20, or the "speaking" of it, in Heb. 12:19, the first introduction of the law is indicated.

A parallel to the expression, "It was added [or spoken] because of transgressions," is found in Rom.5:20: "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound." The "entering" of the law was at Sinai. Why did it enter?—That the offense (sin) which previously existed might abound. The previous existence of sin implies the previous existence of the law; but it was then formally given that the enormity of sin might be seen. And why was it necessary that the enormity of sin might be seen? Says Paul, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." That is, it was necessary for men to see the real nature of sin, in order that they might seek the grace that is in Christ, which alone can take away sin. And the more enormous sin appeared, the more comprehensive views could they have of grace; for no matter how greatly sin abounded, grace superabounded. This will be made more clear further on.

W.