

Lex Macqueen; All Saints Waitara Sermon

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Deuteronomy 29; Galatians 3:10-20

I want you to come with me in your imagination.

Come with me to your favourite football stadium. Or if, like me, football doesn't turn you on, maybe an Olympic stadium, or something else.

It is a dark night and you walk out, right into the middle of the stadium.

As you are standing there, one bank of bright lights comes on, and one side of you is bathed in bright light. You cast a shadow.

Then another bank of lights comes on and there is another shadow. We now have two shadows; one from each of two angles. Are they the same?

A little observation will show that they are different, even though they are cast by the same person, you.

A little thought, and we realize a couple of other things. Each of the shadows is two-dimensional, even though you are three-dimensional! And while each of the shadows is an accurate representation of you, it falls far short of the reality that is you.

And now, another bank of lights comes on, and there is another shadow, different again from the others, yet again an accurate, but very limited representation of you. Every time more lights come on, there are more different shadows.

Even when all the lights are on, however, and there are many shadows, we can only gather a limited amount of information about you from the shadows.

But let us go back a bit and turn the lights out again.

This time we will put Jesus at the centre of the stadium.

A bank of lights comes on. There is a shadow and it has a name; 'Tabernacle'.

As the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews in Hebrews 8:5 wrote:

They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and **shadow** of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

Another bank of lights comes on. The shadow this time is called 'Temple'.

In John chapter 2;

¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." ²⁰The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" ²¹But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

Another bank of lights, and this shadow is called 'Kings'. We think of David and Solomon and remember that it is Jesus who is THE KING.

Another bank of lights and we have the 'Prophets'. This time we think of Elijah, Isaiah, and all the other prophets, but Jesus was THE PROPHET.

There are other lights we could turn on for Jesus, but for now, one more will do. It is called Law.

We are talking here about what is called the Law of Moses, or the Torah. It is that Law that was given at Mt Sinai.

Again the writer of Hebrews in chapter 10 verse 1 wrote:

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.

We now have five shadows. There could be more, but I think I might have made my point. We have here five two dimensional representations of the multi-dimensional Jesus. All the shadows look different, yet they represent the same Jesus.

But suppose that you and I had lived before Jesus was born.

We would have had the shadows, but no Jesus! Each of the shadows is there BEFORE the arrival of the reality.

This morning we are looking at one of these shadows. The Law.

So, why do we have the Law as a shadow of Jesus, and what was its function?

Before we deal with that question, we need to recognize just who it was that the Law was given to. Our Old Testament reading this morning – from Deuteronomy 29 – is one of many passages in the Old Testament that make it very clear that the Law was given to a particular people – the people of Israel whom God brought out of Egypt, looking after them for forty

years in the desert, and finally leading them into the promised land. For them – the people of Israel – the Law was a kind of cultural manual. Because they were God's people, they were to live in distinctive ways. Their lives were to be different from those of all other peoples as a demonstration that they belonged to the one true and holy God.

Firstly, in Galatians 3:19, we read:

What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

Those of you who are parents will recognize the scene. When did you last tell your child that he or she must NOT do something? In all probability it was when they had just done that very thing! There were plenty of incidents in Israel's past that warranted a "Thou shalt not" or two.

But there are other things here. The Law was added – to what? It was added to the covenant that God made with Abraham 430 years earlier.

Then there is also another matter. Another time factor. There is an indication here that the Law was only for a time. Reading that verse again;

What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions **until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.**

To us mortals who live in a world with a strong focus on the need for law and order, it might seem difficult that Paul is saying that the Law was for the time until the Seed should

come. Paul's language here tells us that he is saying that the Law was given for the time until Jesus came.

Paul continued with this theme. Verse 24 has been translated in a number of ways over the years. The New International Version translates it;

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

The English Standard Version translates it:

So then, the law was our **guardian** until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

Now, the 'guardian' of which Paul wrote was called a 'paidagogos'. It was his job to deliver young boys safely to school. Young boys are prone to getting into mischief on their way to school, and the paidagogos, who had a reputation for being rather severe, was charged with the job of making sure that a young boy was delivered to school, instead of getting sidetracked on the way.

Paul tells us that that was the function of the Law. Just as the paidagogos had the responsibility of delivering young boys safely to school, the Law's purpose, as a 'paidagogos', was to see that the **PEOPLE OF ISRAEL** could actually get to the point of benefitting from the arrival of Jesus. Many of them disobeyed the Law and disqualified themselves from receiving that benefit. They disobeyed the 'paidagogos'.

Now it should be apparent at this point that the duties of a 'paidagogos' are finished once his charge is delivered safely to school. His job is done. Is that what Paul is saying in Galatians about the Law? That it's job was done once Jesus came? That

once Jesus came, the Law had done its job and was no longer needed? I believe it is.

Let me read Galatians 4:1-5, where Paul explains more of what he means. As I read, I am going to insert extra words. I will do this, because it is commonly recognized that when Paul used 'we' and 'us' in this letter, he did so in order to refer to his own race, the people of Israel. He wrote:

What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we – the people of Israel – were children, we – the people of Israel – were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we – the people of Israel – might receive the full rights of sons.

Paul was here summing up what he had been saying in chapter 3. When he wrote; "we – the people of Israel – were in slavery under the basic principles of the world" he was describing the people of Israel under the Law. The reference to 'basic principles of the world' is a reference to the basic needs of sinful man to operate under law. But there was to be redemption in Jesus for those under the harsh regime of the Law.

There are many other issues here that I would dearly love to discuss with you, such as the fact that Jesus never pointed his disciples to the Law as a basis for their behavior, nor did he give the two great commandments, nor did he address the words of the two great commandments to his disciples. But time will not allow me here.

But we DO need to look at the relationship between Jesus and the Law.

Let me start by asking you, "Which is greater, Jesus or the Law." I expect that you know the answer. Of course Jesus is greater than the Law!

Then why is it that people keep telling me that Jesus 'kept the Law'? That is a concept that I do not find in Scripture, and it has the cart before the horse.

We need here to go to the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapter 5:17 where Jesus said:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

I have several points to make here. In my experience, most people think that because Jesus said "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets" that that meant that Jesus was saying that the Law would continue to have effect. But what he was actually saying was this; "If you think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, you have missed the point. It is not that I have come to abolish them, I have come to fulfil them.

Now please, don't anybody tell me that the phrase 'the Law and the Prophets' is a reference to the Old Testament as a whole, because that is not what Jesus said! He said 'the Law OR the Prophets' and by so doing was making it clear that he came to fulfil BOTH the Law AND the Prophets'.

So, Jesus came to FULFIL the Law and the Prophets. Let us continue to concentrate on the Law.

So, how did Jesus fulfil the Law? Was it by being the real sacrificial lamb, was it by doing other things that are listed in the Law?

I was talking about shadows before. The Tabernacle in the Old Testament was a shadow of Christ. Do we, as Christians, have a tabernacle – or even a Temple? Do we have a king, other than Jesus? And do we have prophets like the Old Testament prophets? Well, no, we don't! We have Jesus. He fulfilled all these things.

So, what about the Law. What DOES it mean that Jesus fulfilled the Law? It is much more than the things that he did. Jesus fulfilled the Law, simply by coming into the world. It is as though, when Jesus arrived on the scene, the Law stood up and said, "That's him. He's the one. I'm just the shadow. He's the reality. I've pointed you to righteousness and holiness, but the real righteousness and holiness has now arrived. It is Jesus."

Here, I cannot help but recall the words of John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease".

The Law had done its work. The people of Israel had come to the point where Jesus had arrived. It was time to hand over to the reality.

If we want to live for God, then we must live daily in Christ's service. At the very least, we need to be constantly aware that we are the servants of the King. Paul put this rather clearly in Romans 7:5,6.

"For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what

once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.'

We must not live our lives looking over our shoulders and worrying about whether we have kept a set of rules. Once Jesus had arrived on the scene, the Law was fulfilled. It had done its job, and our focus must be on Christ, not a set of rules, for those who belong to Christ, who live in him, no longer need the rules, we have the reality.

The Title for this morning was 'Life-giving Love'. I hope that you can see with me this morning that giving of the Law to those early Israelites was in fact an act of Life-giving Love, because it was God's provision for ensuring that his chosen people would indeed be kept safe until the coming of the Saviour. But now that he has come, we who know the Saviour, who have put our trust in him as Saviour and Lord, who know the forgiveness of sins because of HIS death on the cross, who know that we shall be there at the resurrection because HE was raised; we know Jesus - the true life-giving Love.