

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#02-0833

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THE LAW IS MADE FOR THE LAWLESS

For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. (1 Timothy 1.6-11 NASB)

“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” ... And nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. ... Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (Revelation 21.8, 27; 22.15 NASB)

This issue is a follow-up to the series on *The Law Is Good* (#02-0831, #02-0832), especially dealing with the matter of the lake of fire as a tutor for the lawless and the rebellious. As stated previously, Paul reveals the character of those who need the law, and John reveals the character of those who will be cast outside of New Jerusalem. They are one and the same group.

To begin, we need to consider what John saw in his vision of the great white throne and New Jerusalem. John saw a mass of humanity standing before the great white throne which Daniel saw as a blazing flame of fire. Consider this thought: Many see the lake of fire as *hell*, an eternal place of torture or torment. If this were so, which it is not, then the throne of God is hell as well, for a blazing fire is how the throne of God is described. Is God in torment? Coming forth from the throne was a river of fire. It was not an evil river, which is often how hell is depicted. No; it was emanating forth from God’s throne. The river represents the fiery law of God, which is a good thing. **From his right hand went a fiery law for them** (Deuteronomy 33.2 KJV). **“Is not My word like fire?” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?”** (Jeremiah 23.29 NASB). **The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire** (Psalm 29.7 NASB).

John saw the result of the law of God going forth as a river flowing out from the throne to engulf the masses standing before the throne. The lake of fire represents the river that has widened out for all that are cast into it. But we must realize that the Revelation was written to signify, which means that what John saw was not to be taken literally but to be taken symbolically. Thus, it is not a literal lake of flames but a representation of the law of God that the multitudes will be cast into for a season in order to be tutored to Christ. A lake represents a body that is limited in size, which means that the time the masses will be cast into the law in this fashion will be limited as well, just as it was limited for the ancient nation of Israel.

It is of note that John was told by the angel of the Lord that outside the holy city, Jerusalem, will be the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, liars, unclean, and dogs. I have heard many explanations of this, but if we take the words at face value, it is obvious that the lawless and the rebellious will continue in existence, but they will not have a part in New Jerusalem; rather, their part will be in the lake of fire, the second death. In other words, they will be in a place of spiritual death in relation to New Jerusalem, which is the dwelling of God in spirit.

Now, if we consider Paul's word about the law and the lawless, we discover that the law is good as a tutor to lead the lawless and the rebellious to Christ. In fact, the law is made for these ones.

But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3.22-26 NASB)

Please do not take what I am stating to mean that salvation comes through the law, for it does not. Salvation is by grace through faith; justified by His blood. The law is merely a tutor to lead to faith in Christ. What I am proposing is that God will use the law in a very similar way as He did with ancient Israel, and it will be 100% successful in leading all to Christ. His plan will not fail!

I believe that Paul proves the point for us. Notice that in the following chart, both Paul and John reference the same group of people.

1 Timothy 1.8-10

Lawless, Rebellious, Ungodly, Sinners, Unholy, Profane. Murderers, Immoral, Homosexuals, Kidnappers, Liars, Perjurers

Revelation 21.8, 27; 22.15

Cowardly, Unbelieving, Abominable, Murderers, Immoral, Sorcerers, Idolaters, Liars, Unclean, Dogs

Paul has them outside the law but needing the law as a tutor, and John has them outside New Jerusalem being judged in the lake of fire, which is the fiery law of God. As long as they are under the law of God in judgment, they cannot enter New Jerusalem; they must remain outside. But does this automatically mean that they forever will be outside the holy city? I contend that they will not be because a lake is a limited body, and once the law has done its work they too will enter into the very glory of God. The lawless will have to suffer in some measure, but it is only for a season. For proof, consider Jesus' parables on the kingdom (e.g., Matthew 5.26; Luke 12.41-48).

Have you wondered how God intends to administer His judgments to the lawless and rebellious? Perhaps, it is best to ask: Through whom will He administer His law? Let me give you a hint; it will not be through the angels. Paul wrote to the Hebrews that God will not subject to angels the world to come (Hebrews 2.5). He wrote to the Corinthians that the saints will judge the world and the angels (1 Corinthians 6.2, 3). John saw the conquerors of Christ sitting on thrones (Revelation 20.4).

The answer to the question of through whom God will administer His law and judgments is quite clear based on Scripture. Those who are of the new creation and who become the holy city, Jerusalem, are the ones through whom God will lead the rest of mankind through the lake of fire, and at the name of Jesus all have bowed their knee and with their tongue confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Does this not excite your heart, not the fact that the saints will judge, but the fact that all who will be judged will be restored to God through His love? The law is made for the lawless to lead them into justification, not to destroy them. If God did this for us sinners, saved by grace, will He not do it for all mankind, not all at the same time, but all eventually, at the consummation of the eons?

Dear saints, this is the glory of God.