

## **Responding to the New Atheists' attacks on the God of the Old Testament-30: The Mosaic Law-3 The Mosaic Law was for a Hardhearted People**

Before anyone criticizes the Mosaic Law, he should try to understand it, its purpose, and its context. The Mosaic Law was never given as the complete and permanent standard for God's people. God was dealing with a people who had been enslaved by the Egyptians for 430 years. There were at least two results of this multi-generational slavery: 1) the Israelites became increasingly hardened; and 2) since they had no capacity for self-governing freedom, they needed stringent laws.

That the Mosaic Law took into account the hardness of the Israelites was made explicit by Jesus Christ, "*He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way"*" (Matt. 19:8). God's ideal for marriage was laid out in creation, "*For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24). After all, God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). However, God met them where they were and built into the Mosaic Law provisions for divorce, until He could move them along with incremental steps toward the ideal. As previously noted, *because of the hardness of their hearts* there were other laws written regarding servitude, patriarchy, and the like.

The law of Moses was far from the ideal. God "works with" Israel as He finds her—crude, uncultured, hardhearted, with little to no capacity for freedom. Before anyone can gain capacity for freedom, there must be a period of "apprenticeship" in learning self-government necessary for freedom. Note the failure of some of our *first* American settlers, who went from living under a king to *instant* individual freedom and responsibility in Jamestown, and failed miserably as they attempted communism. We can also see many problems with the upcoming generation of Americans who have not had to fight for or even manage their own personal freedoms through self-government—many expect the government to take care of them. No one is ready for freedom until they have learned self-government. Consider our attempts to export democracy to, say, Saudi Arabia, or other Middle East countries.

The Israelites were a very hard and evil people. 1 Corinthians 10 speaks of the hardheartedness of the Israelites by describing them as "ungrateful and mutinous" children full of stubbornness and treachery. In fact they end up serving as vivid examples of what reversionism looks like.

The Israelites had drifted far from God's perfect standards contained in the creation narration of Genesis, where we see God's ultimate ideals regarding human equality and dignity as well as the creational standard of marriage. God's ideals were already in place at creation, but God accommodated Himself to human hardheartedness and fallen social structures because of how the Israelites had degraded from the standard over time. God met them where they were, and in His grace He also did an incredible thing: He placed redemptive designs within the

structures to lead them into Christ and freedom. The journey out of bondage to the ideal was a long one for them. But the God of grace was committed to moving them to that goal. God was tutoring them along the way to Christ and freedom. We church age believers are so blessed to have Christ and not stand in any need for the Mosaic Law to govern us. We have the Lord and His Spirit! Wow!

Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

In Him,

*Pastor Don*