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Stephenson's "A Biblicist view of law and gospel" (book review)

Rachel Perry Hanses
Chamberlain College of Nursing

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Book Reviews



Stephenson, L.L. (2017). *A Biblicist view of law and gospel*. Greenville, SC: Ambassador International. 224 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 9781620201565

A Biblicist View of Law and Gospel examines the Law and Gospel through an extensive analysis of Matthew 5:17-20, the Old Testament and the connection of law within Christianity. In eleven chapters Lester Stephenson examines different conflicting verses by looking at the full text of the passage, adding historical and cultural analysis, and reexamining the statements.

The first section lays out groundwork for understanding the context to that statements within both the Law and the Gospel as complimentary rather than conflicting. The author implores an innate understanding of the principle involved in the meaning of the text and encourages believers to seek a deeper understanding of each verse.

The strength of this book is in its ability to distinguish the Old Testament as relevant and important in modern society. Many Christians look at the New Testament as the modern Scripture, though the New Testament routinely references the Old Testament in its pages. Stephenson makes the argument that the Old Testament must be fully considered as it is the word of God, without modern man deciding which passages suit him. “If Christians were to disregard the law, Old Testament passages such as, ‘Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law’ (Ps. 119:18) would be irrelevant. That places men in the dangerous position of picking and choosing which portions of Scripture are valid” (p. 64). Differentiating man’s obligation to the Law versus the Gospel is oftentimes hard to understand. Chapter 5: Purpose of the Law states “The law itself is not sin, It is the means of revealing sin” (p. 92). Stephenson analyzes the law as a tool for men to understand the human propensity to sin and to guide humankind towards a life of good.

This book would be a welcomed addition to libraries at Christian institutions as it is well-researched and delivers an analysis that may lead to additional analysis on the topic. The first 178 pages of this work are text, the remaining pages are appendixes that lend more background, scripture references and additional laws pertaining to many of the large topics covered in the book.

Reviewer

Rachel Perry Hanses, Chamberlain College of Nursing