

Whose Mail Are You Reading?

by Bob Nyberg

Have you ever received someone else's mail by accident? How embarrassed we are after we realize that we are reading someone else's mail. To do so accidentally is a pardonable offense. But to do so willingly is not. According to the U.S. Postal Service, willfully and knowingly reading someone else's mail is a Federal offense. If you're looking for a new home all you have to do is open and read mail that does not belong to you. The penalty can include time in a Federal prison.

Paul rightly says: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15)."

When we "rightly divide the word of truth" we recognize that certain portions of scripture belong exclusively to Israel and certain portions belong exclusively to Christ's body, the church. We need to make sure that we keep Israel's mail separate from mail which is written for the Church.

In our country it's wrong to open and read someone else's mail. But merely reading Israel's mail is not wrong. In fact, we are encouraged to do so.

Paul also told us: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17)."

We can certainly profit by examining the types in the Old Testament and take warning from the mistakes that Old Testament saints learned throughout their life's journey.

Where we get into trouble is by making application to our own lives, instructions that were exclusively for Israel. Just as there is a penalty for reading other people's mail, so too there is also a penalty for applying to our lives those directives that were meant exclusively for Israel.

The noted Bible scholar William R. Newell aptly wrote: "It is a harmful perversion of the truth of God to teach (as did the Puritan theologians) that while we are not to keep the law as a means of salvation, we are under it as a 'rule of life.' Let a Christian only confess, 'I am under the law,' and straightway Moses fastens his yoke upon him, despite all his protests that the law has lost its power. Men have to be delivered from the whole legal principle, from the entire sphere where law reigns, ere true liberty can be found. This was accomplished on the Cross. There we 'died unto the law' (Gal. 2:19); we were there 'discharged from the law' (Rom. 6:14). And those who believe this enter the blessed sphere where grace reigns. The Holy Spirit, indwelling the believer, performs in him the will of God, whose will, at last, is a delight (Rom. 8:3,4; 12:2)."

Beware: Replacement theology tries to put the Church under Israel's law. The penalty is loss of true liberty.