

STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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“Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.” Thus begins Psalm 119. But is this a blessing promised to the people of God *today*? If so, what *particular manifestation* of “the law of the Lord” pertains to them—that which Moses taught, or that which Jesus taught, or a combination of the two? And how do Christian “ways” of obedience compare to those prescribed for ancient Israelites? Moreover, how can a believer—whether under Moses or under Jesus—aspire to “blameless” law-keeping without violating the prerogatives of divine grace or ascribe to proper respect to grace without becoming antinomian? Such are the questions before us.

—Knox Chamblin¹

OLD TESTAMENT FLYOVER:

—EXCURSIS—

Understanding the Old Testament Law

I. Introduction

- A. Before moving on to the next major section of the OT canon (Former Prophets), it is important to more carefully consider the nature and status of the OT law.
- B. This issue has been hotly debated for decades among biblical scholars, both liberal and conservative.
- C. We cannot explore all of the literature and the arguments swirling around this “legal” milieu, but at the risk of oversimplification, the heart of the issue revolves around three overlapping points:
 1. **The nature of the law**—is the law a unified whole, or can it be divided into categories with differing durations and applications?
 2. **The purpose of the law**—why did God give the law and what purpose did it serve in the life of his people in the past?
 3. **The status of the law**—how does the law relate to Christians?

¹ Knox Chamblin, “The Law of Moses and The Law of Christ,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 181.

- D. These are not simple issues to address! But, if we are to be careful students of Scripture, we must explore them with care and humility, knowing that good and godly people will fall on both sides of what has and will be a continually-debated issue in the church.
- E. The following discussion will proceed based on these three points.

II. The Nature of the Old Testament Law

- A. It has become almost sacrosanct in the Protestant church to view the OT law as divided into categories of moral, civil/social, and ceremonial/religious. This is summarized well by VanGemeran, who writes, “The ceremonial laws, civil laws, and the penal code have been abrogated, and the moral law has received further clarification in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ.”²
- B. On one level, these divisions are helpful for informally categorizing the various laws in the Mosaic Covenant.
- C. On another level, it has led to a serious misunderstanding of the Mosaic Law.
- D. Overwhelming scriptural and historical evidence leads us to the view that *the Mosaic Law was one united law that was inextricably imbedded in a covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel.*
 - 1. OT Evidence
 - a. The OT writers consistently refer to the law in its entirety rather than to parts of the law.
 - b. Moses’ exposition of the Decalogue (Deut 4:44-26:19) “demonstrates that the so-called civil and ceremonial stipulations are inextricably interwoven with what are considered to be the moral laws. Violation of any of the stipulations is a breach of the Decalogue.”³
 - 1) Ceremonial restrictions on eating meat with its blood are tied to the 1st and 2nd commands and the worship of Yahweh (Deut 12:16).
 - 2) Civil law requiring the construction of railings on rooftops is linked with the 6th command regarding the taking of human life (Deut 22:8).
 - 3) Civil restrictions on sowing multiple kinds of seed, plowing with different animals, and mixing materials to create clothing are all linked to the 7th commandment regarding adultery (Deut 22:9-11).
 - c. Thus, the OT stipulations are *all* moral, *all* civil, and *all* ceremonial.
 - 1) The Sabbath is found in the so-called **moral law**, yet no one before Sinai was required to keep it (Neh 9:13-14), and it served as the sign of the covenant established between God and a specific people who had been rescued out of

² Willem A. VanGemeran, “The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ,” in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 37.

³ William D. Barrick, “The Mosaic Covenant,” *MSJ* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 228.

Egypt and were destined for the land. “The sabbath was ordained for those who were delivered out of Egypt and who would inhabit the land of promise.”⁴

- 2) **Civil/social laws** are often directly tied to supposed moral commands. For instance, the nation was commanded to execute a disobedient child (civil law) for breaking the 5th commandment (moral law). Thus, the civil law ended the child’s opportunity for long life which was part of the promise in the moral law.
- 3) **Ceremonial laws**, such as blood sacrifice and religious festivals, were “means of regular reinforcement and instruction” of the “moral laws” and served as “the vehicle of worship,” which was central to the 1st command.⁵ To disobey a ceremonial law had direct implications on one’s obedience to the moral laws.
- d. In summary: “As long as the covenant with Moses was in effect Israel was obligated to keep the entire law. (Division of the Mosaic law into distinct categories—such as civil, ceremonial and moral—was unknown to the OT Israelites. Within the theocracy the law of Moses was a unified entity.)⁶

2. NT Evidence

- a. The NT writers speak of the law as a unified whole. Whenever the term “law” (*nomos*) occurs, it always (except for Heb 8:10 and 10:16) occurs in the singular, suggesting that Jesus and the NT writers viewed it as a unit.
- b. The NT writers emphasize that disobedience in one area of the law constituted disobedience to the entire law.
 - 1) **Galatians 5:3** – “And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that *he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.*”
 - 2) **James 2:10** – For whoever keeps the *whole law* and yet stumbles in *one point*, he has become *guilty of all*.

3. Historical Evidence

- a. The Jewish tradition does not evidence a three-fold view of the Mosaic law.⁷
- b. The division seems to be a rather modern invention: “Although this tripartite distinction is old, its use as a basis for explaining the relationship between the testa-

⁴ Ibid., 229.

⁵ Ibid., 229-30.

⁶ Mark W. Karlberg, “The Significance of Israel in Biblical Typology,” *JETS* 31, no. 3 (September 1988): 263.

⁷ Roy L. Aldrich, “Has the Mosaic Law Been Abolished?” *BSac* 116, no. 464 (October 1959): 325.

ments is not demonstrably derived from the NT and probably does not antedate Aquinas.”⁸

III. The Purpose of the Old Testament Law

A. Historically, theologians have identified three uses of the law:⁹

1. *A usus politicus/civilis*: The law serves the purpose of restraining sin and promoting righteousness.
2. *A usus elencticus/pedagogicus*: The law brings man under conviction of sin, making him conscious of his inability to meet the law’s demands and thus leads him to Christ.
3. *A usus didacticus/normativus*: The law is a rule of life for believers, reminding them of their duties and leading them in the way of life and salvation.

B. However, as one looks over the whole of Scripture, it seems clear that these three uses do not exhaust Scripture’s revealed purposes for the OT law. Instead, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum suggests a nine-fold purpose to the law which makes better use of both the OT and NT data concerning why the law was given to Israel:¹⁰

1. The law revealed the holiness of God and the standard of righteousness that God demanded for a proper relationship with Him (Lev 11:44; 19:1-2, 37; 1 Pet 1:15-16). The Law itself was *holy, righteous, and good* (Rom 7:12).
2. The law provided the rule of conduct for OT saints (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7-8, 26). It was the center of the OT believer’s spiritual life and his delight (cf. Ps 119:77, 97, 103-104, 159).
3. The law provided occasions for individual and corporate worship for Israel (e.g., the seven holy seasons of Israel in Lev 23).
4. The law kept the Jews a distinct people (Lev 11:44-45; Deut 7:6; 14:1-2). This was the specific reason for many of the laws, such as the dietary laws and the clothing laws. The Jews were to be distinct from all other people in a variety of ways, such as their worship habits (Lev 1, 7, 16, 23), their eating habits (Lev 11:1-47), their sexual habits (Lev 12), their clothing habits (Lev 19:19), and even their grooming habits (Lev 19:27). See also Exod 19:5-8; 31:13.
5. The law served as “the middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:11-16) that kept Gentiles in the OT from direct participation in the unconditional covenants (i.e., Abrahamic, Deuteronomic, Davidic, and New) and enjoyment of their spiritual blessings. Thus,

⁸ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *EBC*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 143.

⁹ Taken from L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 614-15.

¹⁰ Taken from Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “The Eight Covenants of the Bible: Part 2: The Mosaic Covenant,” <http://www.messianicassociation.org/ezone18-af.covenants.htm> [accessed April 11, 2014].

Gentiles were both “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel” and “strangers from the covenants of the promise” (Eph 2:12). The only way Gentiles could enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants during the OT was to take upon themselves the obligations of the law, undergo the rite of circumcision, and thus live like a Jew. Unless they became proselytes to Mosaic Judaism, Gentiles could not enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants.

6. The law revealed sin by providing the knowledge of sin and clarifying exactly what sin is (Rom 3:19-20; 5:20; 7:7).
 7. The law increased sin by giving the sin nature a base of operation (Rom 4:15). Of course, men were sinners before the law was given, but they were not transgressors of the law. Once the law came, the sin nature had a base of operation, causing the individual to violate these commandments and sin all the more (Rom 7:7-13; cf. 1 Cor 15:56). However, increasing sin was met by increasing grace from God to cover sin (Rom 5:20).
 8. The law demonstrated the sinner’s inability to please God on his own. He was incapable of perfectly obeying the law or attaining righteousness through it (Rom 7:14-25).
 9. The law drove the sinner to faith in Christ, the only one who could atone for sin (Rom 8:1-4; Gal 3:24-25; cf. John 1:45).
- C. It should be clearly noted that *none* of these stated purposes involves the salvation of the person living under the law.
1. The purpose of the law was never to provide a means of salvation (Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16; 3:11, 21).
 2. Israel had *already* been redeemed from Egypt when the law was given to them. Therefore, there is no way that it could serve as a *means* of redemption.
 3. “Israel’s redemption was occasioned by God’s love, mercy, and grace (Deut 4:37; 7:7-9; 10:15). He redeemed them before He entered the covenant with them at Sinai. Any claim that the covenant needed to be kept in order for someone to be saved from sin denies the theological and redemptive contexts of the Mosaic Covenant historically.”¹¹

IV. The Status of the Old Testament Law

- A. The point of contention between students of the Scripture involves whether the law is still operative today and thus applicable to the NT believer. In other words, the issue is over the “third use” of the law—the law as a rule of life for the believer.

¹¹ Barrick, “The Mosaic Covenant,” 220.

- B. Arthur Pink articulates one side when he writes, “The Christian needs the law. First, to subdue the spirit of self-righteousness. . . . Second, to restrain the flesh and hold us back from lawlessness. Third, as a rule of life, setting before us continually that holiness of heart and conduct which, through the power of the Spirit, we should be ever striving to attain.”¹²
- C. However, there is a plentitude of biblical data indicating that the OT law has been done away with and is no longer operative and thus is not the governing rule of life for the NT believer:

1. **Romans 7:1-6**

- a. Paul makes an analogy between the Mosaic Covenant and the marriage covenant. A marriage covenant is binding only as long as both members are alive, but if one member dies, the other is free from the covenant.
- b. In the same way, the NT believer has died to the law through union with Christ in his death. This makes the NT believer free from the law to which they were once bound and the law powerless over the believer.

2. **Romans 10:4**

- a. Paul argues that Christ is the termination (i.e., “end”) of the law. The result of this termination is that there might be righteousness to everyone who believes. Thus, as long as the law remained in effect, righteousness on the basis of faith was unavailable.
- b. However, the end of the Mosaic Covenant and the establishment of the New Covenant result in righteousness for everyone who believes.

3. **2 Corinthians 3:7-11**

- a. Paul contrasts the fading glory of the Mosaic Covenant with the glory of the New Covenant. While the Mosaic Law had glory, it was fading like the light on the face of Moses (cf. Exod 34:29-35).
- b. This makes the Mosaic law *temporary*, and was “being made useless” by the appearance of the New Covenant which had a lasting glory.

4. **Galatians 3:19-4:7**

- a. Part of the law’s use as a revealer of sin was to act as a guardian (παιδογωγός [*paidagogos*]; not a “tutor” as it is popularly translated) over Israel. This picture is drawn from common Roman life where a slave was placed over a child to supervise the conduct and morals of a boy until he reached maturity. The guardian was,

¹² Arthur W. Pink, *The Divine Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 187.

by nature, a temporary provision. The law was Israel's guardian, supervising and guiding Israel morally until Christ arrived. After that, Israel no longer needed a guardian.

- b. "The παιδαγωγός emerges...not as a 'tutor' leading a child on to something (a function often attributed to the law in the life of an individual in accordance with this understanding of Gal 3:24-25), nor as an excessively harsh character, but as a servant who closely supervises, monitors and watches over a young child.... It imposed rules, guarded behavior, and served to reveal, confine under, and stimulate sin. All this was intended by God as preparation for the era of fulfillment which has now dawned in Christ, the era in which slaves have become sons through the redemption brought by Christ and the gift of the Spirit."¹³
- c. "The word *pedagogue* is used for temporal reasons in Galatians 3:23-25. One who was still 'under a pedagogue' had not yet grown up. Paul's intention here is to make a salvation-historical point. Now that Christ has come the pedagogue is no longer needed.... Pedagogues, guardians, and managers, therefore, are appropriate illustrations since they contrast childhood with adulthood.... He uses these words to stress that the law was not intended to be in force forever. It has a temporal limit in salvation history."¹⁴
- d. "While a boy was under a slave's authority, he, though the heir, was no better than a slave (4:1-3). However, with the coming of Christ at the 'fullness of time' believers are no longer 'children' (νήπιοι, v. 3) but have received the 'adoption as sons' (υιοθεσίαν, v. 5)."¹⁵

5. Ephesians 2:14-16

- a. Paul called his Gentile readers to remember their former condition before Christ: uncircumcised, "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (vv. 11-12).
- b. But their union with Christ has given them a new relationship by making them part of "one new body" (i.e., the church) composed of both Jew and Gentile. This was accomplished by destroying the barrier that divided Jews from Gentiles.
- c. In the Herodian temple, the "dividing wall" was the wall separating the court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Jews, where no Gentile could enter. Paul uses

¹³ Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 214.

¹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 79-80.

¹⁵ Hal Harless, "The Cessation of the Mosaic Covenant," *BSac* 160, no. 639 (July-Sept 2003): 359.

this dividing wall as an analogy for the Mosaic Covenant which served as a partition separating the Jews from Gentiles.

- d. “God made four unconditional eternal covenants with Israel. All of God’s blessings, both material and spiritual, are mediated by means of these four Jewish covenants. God also had a fifth covenant which was temporary and conditional. It was the Mosaic Covenant that contained the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law served as a *wall of partition* to keep the Gentiles as Gentiles away from enjoying Jewish spiritual blessings. If the Mosaic Law was still in effect, it would still be a wall of partition to keep the Gentiles away; but the wall of partition was broken down with the death of Christ. Since the wall of partition was the Mosaic Law, that meant the Law of Moses was done away with. Gentiles as Gentiles on the basis of faith can and do enjoy Jewish spiritual blessings by becoming fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.”¹⁶

6. Colossians 2:14-17

- a. The believer, who was once spiritually dead, is now alive through his union with Christ. Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection has become the believer’s death, burial, and resurrection.
- b. The result is forgiveness for “transgressions” (v. 13) through the cancellation of “the certificate of death consisting of decrees against us.” This “certificate of death” is a euphemism for the Mosaic Law, and the cross is seen as the termination of the law and its power over the believer because God “has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (v. 14).
- c. Since the “certificate of death” is done away with, Paul commands the Colossian church not to allow anyone to “act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day” (v. 16). Since the law had been taken away, the ordinances of the law were no longer in effect and the Christian was free from obeying them as a rule of life that demonstrated true spirituality.

7. Hebrews 7:11-18

- a. In the OT law, the high priesthood was restricted to the line of Aaron.
- b. However, the author of Hebrews argues that Christ is the believer’s great High Priest not in the order of Aaron but rather in the order of Melchizedek (cf. Ps 110:4), meaning that the Messiah would function both as priest and king.

¹⁶ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1994), 645.

- c. However, the point of Hebrews 7:11-18 is that if the Mosaic Covenant were still operative, then Jesus would not be qualified to serve as a priest, since he was from the tribe of Judah rather than Levi.
- d. However, the fact that there is a change of priesthood (away from the levitical priesthood) also means there has been a change in law (v. 12). When Christ died, the law was terminated, allowing Christ to exercise his priesthood without legal hindrance. That Jesus serves as high priest evidences the end of the OT law.

8. **Hebrews 8:7-13**

- a. The author of Hebrews argues that there was a fundamental deficiency in the OT law: people were unable to keep it.
- b. Thus, the deficiency of the Old Covenant necessitated the establishment of a New Covenant. Since the New Covenant has come, the Old Covenant is obsolete and unnecessary (v. 13).
- c. Thus, the author's argument follows this syllogism:¹⁷
 - 1) All that is obsolete disappears.
 - 2) The Mosaic Covenant has become obsolete.
 - 3) Therefore the Mosaic Covenant has disappeared.

9. **Matthew 5:17-19**

- a. Jesus asserts that his intention is not to do away with even the smallest part of the law. Rather he came to "fulfill" the law, meaning that he realized everything the OT said about him. In fact, in his sinless life, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness by living in complete obedience to the law.
 - b. While he lived, he remained under the law, and his purpose was not to abolish the law "until all is accomplished." Of course, in the death and resurrection, all was accomplished, and the need for the law disappeared.
- D. All of this data points to the fact that the Mosaic Law as a legal code had a specific purpose in the OT but has been terminated in the death of Christ when the Mosaic Covenant was terminated and the New Covenant was established.
- E. So then, what is the role of the OT law in the life of NT believers? Two principles should govern how we look at the OT law:

1. **The Principle of Liberty**

- a. NT believers have been *liberated* from the OT law and are no longer required to keep the commandments belonging to that system.

¹⁷ Harless, "The Cessation of the Mosaic Covenant," 363-4.

- 1) Paul consistently argued in passages such as Romans 7, Galatians 3-4, and Colossians 2 that the believer was free from the law. He also consistently argued that Gentiles were not required to keep the law (see Acts 15).
 - 2) The Epistle to the Hebrews is an argument of the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant over and against Moses and the Old Covenant, and it is made to a group of Jews who were considering reverting to Judaism. When we adopt a view of the law as necessary for the Christian life to subdue self-righteousness, restrain sin, and act as a rule of life,¹⁸ we are “basically...making the same mistake as the recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews” and “rejecting ‘the perfect law of liberty’ and its better hope and covenant.”¹⁹
- b. NT believers have the *liberty* to keep parts of the OT law if they so choose.
- 1) Paul’s vow in Acts 18:18 is based on the Nazirite vow of Numbers 6:2, 5, 9.
 - 2) Paul had Timothy circumcised so as not to offend the Jews during their missionary endeavors (Acts 16:1-3).
 - 3) Paul’s desire to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16) is based on the command in Deuteronomy 16:16.
 - 4) Paul willingly submitted to the law in order to gain better acceptance and ministry opportunity among the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-26).
 - 5) The council in Jerusalem decided that the Gentiles coming to faith in Christ were not to be burdened with the law of circumcision, but they were told to “abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood” (Acts 15:20). The reasoning behind these abstentions was that such acts would create an unnecessary stumbling block for Jewish evangelism (v. 21).
 - 6) This liberty is outlined carefully in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. Freedom from the law means that the NT believer is not *required* to keep OT commands. But this liberty must not become a stumbling block for someone who does not yet understand the richness of this liberty.
 - 7) When Paul was ministering to Jews, he freely submitted himself to OT laws so as to gain a hearing without unnecessary stumbling blocks. Similarly, when he ministered to Gentiles, he lived in freedom of the law so as not to unnecessarily alienate those who would find the OT law foreign and strange. Thus “to the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not myself being under the Law, so that I

¹⁸ Pink, *The Divine Covenants*, 187.

¹⁹ Barrick, “The Mosaic Covenant,” 232.

might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.... I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:20-23).

- 8) “There are two dangers that must be avoided by any believer who volunteers to keep commands of the Law of Moses. One danger is the idea that by doing so he is contributing to his own justification and sanctification. This is false. The second danger is in one’s expecting others to keep the same commandments he has decided to keep. This is equally wrong and borders on legalism. The one who exercises his freedom to keep the Law must recognize and respect another’s freedom not to keep it.”²⁰ And the one who exercises his freedom to not keep the Law must recognize and respect another’s freedom to keep it. That is the principle of liberty.

2. The Principle of Profitability

- a. Just because the OT law does not govern the NT believer as a rule of life does not insinuate that the OT law has no spiritual profit.
- b. Quite the opposite, Paul asserts that “*all* Scripture is breathed out by God and *profitable* for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).
- c. The OT law is *profitable!* But why?
 - 1) The OT law is part of Scripture and therefore it is “breathed out by God.”
 - 2) Since God is the source of Scripture, then the character of God informs the character of Scripture. Since God is true, trustworthy, inerrant, and authoritative, then so is Scripture.
- d. The OT law is *profitable!* But how?
 - 1) The OT law *teaches* us truth and doctrine about God, man, sin, and salvation.
 - 2) The OT law *reproves* us by identifying sin and condemning sin
 - 3) The OT law *corrects* us by straightening a sinner’s crooked path
 - 4) The OT law *trains* us in what it means to live in *righteousness*
 - 5) The OT law makes the believer “adequate, equipped for every good work.”

²⁰ Fruchtenbaum, “The Mosaic Covenant.”

- e. Thus, we must never look at the OT law as something offering no profit to the NT believer. To deny its profitability is to deny its inspiration.

V. Questions Related to the Christian and the Law

A. **Question 1:** *If the NT believer is no longer under the OT law, then does this mean the NT believer has no law? What is the rule of life now for the believer if the OT does not serve that function?*

1. Those who argue for the continuation of the Mosaic Law into the Church era often argue that to assert that the Mosaic Law has been abolished makes one antinomian (i.e., anti-law/lawless).
2. Paul anticipated this assertion from his readers, because it naturally follows from the emphasis on the Christian's freedom from the OT law.
 - a. After asserting that believers are not "under law but under grace," he writes, "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!" (Rom 6:15).
 - b. When Paul ministered to Gentiles who were "without law," he conducted himself as one who had been freed from the OT law (as opposed to his willing submission to the OT law when he ministered to Jews who were "under the Law"). But, he emphasized that while he ministered to Gentiles as one who was himself "without law" (i.e., OT law), he added, "though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:21).
3. Because the Mosaic law was inextricably linked to the covenant in which it was housed (the Mosaic Covenant), when the covenant passed away, so did the law code that accompanied it.
4. Similarly, when Christ instituted the New Covenant, a new law code was instituted that became the *new* rule of life for believers who relate to God through the *New* Covenant. The NT refers to this law with several titles:
 - a. **1 Corinthians 9:20-21** "To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, thought not being without the law of God but under *the law of Christ*, so that I might win those who are without law."
 - b. **Galatians 6:2** – "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill *the law of Christ*."
 - c. **Romans 8:2** – "For *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus* has set you free from the law of sin and death."

- d. **James 1:25** – “But one who looks intently at *the perfect law, the law of liberty*, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”
 - e. **James 2:8** – “If, however, you are fulfilling *the royal law* according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well.”
 - f. **James 2:12** – “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the law of liberty*.”
5. Elements of the Law of Christ
- a. It consists of the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament
 - b. It involves the element of love (Gal 5:13-14; Rom 13:8-10; John 13:34; 15:12; 1 John 3:23)
 - c. It involves the enablement of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16).
 - d. It incorporates corollary commands from the OT law
 - e. It introduces new commands not seen in the OT law

Because Jesus fulfilled the law, the Apostle Paul can then point to a new law for the church—the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). To be “under the law,” used nine times in Paul’s writings, seems to be antithetical to the nature of Christianity. Christians are not living under the law of Moses as the binding constitution of the church. That law was provided for a time of preparation for the fulfillment. Now that Christ has fulfilled the law, followers of Jesus are not to go back under the regulations of the law as if Jesus accomplished nothing. They are now under the law of Christ. This language certainly means they have laws to keep (1 Cor. 7:19); and these laws cover what the law of Moses intended. Some of the Mosaic laws have been integrated fully into the New Testament (1 Cor. 9:20-21; Gal. 6:2), but as always the spirit of the law has been heightened as these laws are interpreted through Christ. To be free from the law of Moses does not mean being free from all commandments and restrains. It means that for those who are “in Christ” the law has no power to condemn, because Christ has fulfilled it; but it also means that those who are “in Christ” died to sin and now must live in the righteousness of Christ. Because Christ fulfilled the law, Christians are now to follow his law.

—Allen P. Ross²¹

²¹ Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 64.

- B. **Question 2:** *If there has been a change in law, and the law reflects the character of God, then doesn't this insinuate that God's character has changed? How can God consider something to be sinful in the past but not in the present and yet still remain the unchangeable God whose character establishes what is righteous and what is not?*
1. Those who argue for the continuation of the Mosaic Law in the Church era also suggest that a change in what God considers "righteous/unrighteous" constitutes a change in God's moral character, because that is, after all, the ultimate standard of righteousness.
 2. This kind of assertion, however, obscures the real issue, which is not over whether God's moral absolutes have changed, but simply over how those moral absolutes are expressed in time and history.
 - a. God's eternal moral law is eternal principles of righteousness that reflect the unchanging character of God.
 - b. These principles of righteousness did not originate with Moses, nor did they end when the Mosaic law was terminated. They are not equivalent to the Mosaic law or the Ten Commandments.
 - c. Rather, the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ are *expressions* of the eternal moral law of God, both being unique expressions of that one eternal law to a particular people during particular points in history for particular purposes.
 - d. When the Mosaic law ended, the expression of God's eternal moral law embodied in that law code ceased to act as the rule of life for believers. Now, that rule of life is expressed in a new law code embodied in a new covenant, *the New Covenant*.
 - e. "It is no more antinomian to say that the Mosaic law does not apply in this age than it is for a citizen of Michigan to say that he is not under the law of Illinois."²²

At the death of Christ the Temple curtain in front of the inner sanctuary was torn from top to bottom (Matt 27:51), indicating that the Savior had opened direct access to God (Heb 10:20). The NT believer is "free from the Law" (Rom 7:3; 8:2; Gal 5:1). Walter Kaiser warns Christians about "hiding behind the stipulatory covenant of Sinai as their reason for disregarding the whole message of the OT." His point is well made, but perhaps another warning needs to be given: NT preachers should beware of hiding behind the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law in Christ as their reason for neglecting the exposition of the OT. The NT teaches that the role of the OT in the life of the Christian is to provide admonition (νουθεσία, *nouthesia*, 1 Cor 10:11-13), doctrine (διδασκαλία, *didaskalia*), reproof (ἐλεγχμός, *elegmos*), correction (ἐπανόρθωσις, *epanorthōsis*), and instruction (παιδεία, *paideia*, 2 Tim 3:16). The challenge will be to avoid Peter's error on the rooftop in Joppa. NT believers dare not live as though nothing has changed.

—William D. Barrick²³

²² Roy L. Aldrich, "A New Look at Dispensationalism," *BSac* 120 (Jan-March 1963): 48.

²³ Barrick, "The Mosaic Covenant," 232.