

10. How should New Testament Believers relate to the OT Law?

Below is a brief overview on the subject of the Law which I believe will help answer your questions about the believer and the Law today.

A. The Use of the Term “The Law” (Instruction, Torah)

- This term is used of the entire Old Testament (John 10:34; Psalm 82; Isa. 1:18).
- It is used with such terms as the prophets, and writings, again as a title for the entire Old Testament Scripture, but in this way it looks at them in their division (Luke 24:27, 44).
- It is used of the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).
- The term is used of the entire specific code given to the nation Israel to govern and guide their moral, religious and secular life, and covers parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (Deut. 4:8, 44-45).
- The term is used of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:12)

B. The Origin and Source of the Law

God is the origin and source though, in part, it was mediated by angels (Exodus 31:1b; Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:1-2).

C. The Content and Make-Up of the Law

Though the Law is an indivisible unit—there are three parts or elements:

1. **The Commandments:** The moral law governing the moral life guiding man (Israel) in principles of right and wrong in relation to God and with man (Exodus 20:1-17).
2. **The Judgments:** The social law governing Israel in her secular, social, political and economic life (Exodus 21:1–23:13).
3. **The Ordinances:** The religious law which guided and provided for Israel in her spiritual relationship and fellowship with God. It included the priesthood, tabernacle and sacrifices (Exodus 25:31; Leviticus).

D. The Recipients of the Law

The Law was for Israel in the land. From the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.12) Israel was a chosen nation, an instrument of God to become a channel of blessing to all nations. Jehovah was her King—to rule over her and guide her in her destiny so that she might not become polluted or contaminated by the nations and could thus fulfill her purpose. For this the Mosaic Law was instituted to guide her as a nation in all spheres of her life, morally, socially, politically, economically and religiously.

As a code the Law was not to be and could not be specifically obeyed to the letter by any other people in any other place as a rule of life. However, it did set forth, in the spirit of the Law, principles which are applicable and bring blessing to all people, anywhere, and at any time when applied and used.

There were certain economic provisions in the Law to govern and protect the economic life of Israel. For example there was the right of property ownership, free enterprise, protection of the poor which guarded against the evils of great concentrations of wealth in the hands of a few with the consequent impoverishment of others. But the poor were provided for in such a way as to avoid the loss of free enterprise and the individuals initiative by high taxation as well as to avoid making leeches out of men who refused to work.

However, the strict application of these laws to our world is impossible since the original conditions in which God directly intervened cannot be reproduced, at least not until the millennium. Yet, Economists could study and learn much from these laws and principles.

E. The Nature of the Law

- ▶ It is holy and good (Rom. 7:12, 14).
- ▶ It is spiritual (Romans 7:14). It is designed to establish a relationship between God and His people.
- ▶ It is weak because it was dependent on man's ability. especially when taken as a system of merit (Rom. 8:3).
- ▶ It is a unit or a unity (Gal. 3:10, 12; 5:3; James 2:10-11). All three parts were designed to function as one, you cannot separate any part such as the Ten Commandments. They were designed to function together and guide Israel in all of its life. The recognition of any of its features, i.e., as a meritorious system of righteousness with God, obligates the person to fulfill the entire Law.
- ▶ It is the opposite of grace and faith by virtue of motivation and power (Rom. 6:14; 7:6; 8:3; Gal. 3:12).
- ▶ It was temporary. It was never designed to be a permanent rule of life. It was merely a tutor or guardian to guard Israel in all areas of her life until Christ (2 Cor. 3:7, 11; Gal. 3:23-24; Rom. 10:4).

F. The Limitations of the Law

When approached as a meritorious system, the Law cannot:

- ▶ Justify (Gal. 2:16).
- ▶ Give life (Gal. 3:21).
- ▶ Give the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 14).
- ▶ Give spirituality (Gal. 3:21; 5:5; Rom. 8:3).
- ▶ Make perfect or permanently deal with sin (Heb. 7:19).

G. The Effects of the Law (when man approaches it as a merit system.)

- ▶ It brings a curse (Gal. 3:10-12).
- ▶ It brings death, it is a killer (2 Cor. 3:6-7; Rom. 7:9-10).
- ▶ It brings condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9).
- ▶ It makes offenses abound (Rom. 5:10; 7:7-13).
- ▶ It declares all men guilty (Rom. 3:19).
- ▶ It holds men in bondage to sin and death (Gal. 4:3-5, 9, 24; Rom. 7:10-14). This is because man in his sinful state can never fulfill the righteousness of the Law, especially in the spirit of the Law. He always falls short as Romans 3:23 tells us, and thus becomes condemned.

H. The Relation of NT Believers to the Law

- ▶ He is not saved by keeping the Law (Gal. 2:21).
- ▶ He is not under the Law as a rule of life, i.e., sacrifice, Sabbath keeping, tithing (Rom. 6:14; Acts 15:5, 24).
- ▶ So he does not walk by the Law but by the Spirit which is our new law (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:5). A law of liberty via faith in the operation of God.
- ▶ He is dead to the Law (Rom. 7:1-6; Gal. 2:19). Again by virtue of his union with Jesus Christ who fulfilled the Law.
- ▶ He is to fulfill the righteousness of the Law, the spirit of the law, as seen in Christ's words in Matthew 10:37-40. One hundred percent love for God and for neighbor (James 2:9). But this can only be fulfilled through a knowledge of Bible doctrine and the filling of the Holy Spirit which furnishes the power. So we are under God's new law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2-4).

I. The Purpose and Function of the Law

- ▶ To provide a standard of righteousness (Deut. 4:8; Psalm 19:7-9).
- ▶ To reveal God's holiness and goodness (Deut. 4:8; Rom. 7:12-14).
- ▶ To identify sin and reveal man's sin and bankrupt condition (Rom 7:7-8; 5:20; Gal. 3:19).
- ▶ To shut man up to faith, i.e., to exclude the works of the Law as a system of merit (Gal. 3:19-20, 20-23; 1 Tim. 1:8-9; Rom. 3:19-20).

J. The End of the Law as a Rule of Life

The Law ended as a way of life at the coming of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:4). This instituted the new law of the Spirit, the one of liberty (Rom. 8:2, 13).

K. The Lawful Use of the Law

The Law is still good from the standpoint of its main function and purpose as seen above in The Purpose and Function of the Law (I Tim. 1:8-10; James 2:1-10; Gal. 5:1-3; 6:1). This is how James uses the Law, to reveal their sin (James 2:9), and to get them out of self-righteous legalism and move them out in faith.

L. Keeping the Law in the True Sense

In the true sense as God intended it, not as Israel and man always tend to take it. Codex I showed the Jew his sin and that he was shut up under it. This made him go to Codex III for forgiveness through faith in the sacrifices which pointed to Christ. Then Codex II, the social law, regulated Israel's life by showing him how to live socially, but not for merit or spirituality.

M. Christ, the Fulfillment of the Law

- ▶ Christ fulfilled the first part of the Law (the Commandments) by living a perfect and sinless life. Thus, when man trusts in Christ, Christ's righteousness is imputed to that individual so we have justification. We have Christ's righteousness so the Law can't condemn us (Rom. 8:1; 7:1-6; Rom. 5:1; 4:4-8).
- ▶ Christ fulfilled the third part of the Law (The Ordinances), by dying on the cross for us and in our place. This showed that God was also perfect justice and sin must be judged, but God provided a Lamb. The penalty which the Law exercised was paid. Again there is no condemnation because the believer is in Christ (Col. 2:14; Rom. 3:24-25).
- ▶ Christ also fulfills the second part of the Law (the social law) and replaces it with a new way of life fitting to our new salvation. He gives provision for the inner man—the Holy Spirit who makes one spiritual and enables him to produce the righteousness of the Law (Rom. 8:2-4). a. Believers are not under Law but under grace (Rom. 6:14). b. Believers are under a new law, the grace provision of a new law, the principle of the Spirit Controlled Walk which provides the power and energy to produce the righteousness of the Law. c. Now our obligation is to walk by the Holy Spirit. To think, do, and say by His power so we can produce the righteousness of the Law. This gives victory, or better appropriates Christ's victory and resurrection life over the power of the sin nature and the law of sin and death with the Holy Spirit inside, controlling.

Summary

- ▶ Christ is the end of the Law and believers are not under the Law.
- ▶ Christ fulfills the Law by His person and work. So believers are under a new law; the obligation to walk by the Spirit of Life (Rom. 8:2-4). If we are under the Spirit then we are not under the Law (Gal. 5:18).
- ▶ Against such there is no law, because we are operating under the highest law, the standards are met as we walk by the Holy Spirit and grow in the Word (Gal. 5:22).

N. Warning Against Entanglement with the Law as Believers

After salvation by grace there is the danger of reverting to Law or legalism by taboos and force (Gal. 3:1-3). To go back to the Law as a way of life puts one under the control of the flesh, it nullifies true spirituality by faith in the Holy Spirit, and defeats the believer. It results in human good and domination by the old sin nature (Gal. 5:1-5; Col. 2:14f).