

The Law and the Christian

I. Introduction

A. One of the most significant and complicated issues in Christian theology is the relationship between the Mosaic Law and the believer. Even within the evangelical community there are several differing views on what relationship, if any, the Christian has to the Law of Moses. This topic could rightly be discussed under the category of sanctification, but we will discuss it here as its own topic.

[The law, the kingdom of God, and the people of God are three of the most unclear or disputed areas in evangelicalism. Vlach says the biggest is probably the law].

B. Questions

1. Is the Law of Moses binding on the New Testament Christian?
2. If the Law of Moses is binding on the Christian which part(s) is binding?
 - a) Moral?
 - b) Civil?
 - c) Ceremonial?
 - d) All of the above or some of the above?
3. Is the Law a unit or can it be divided into parts?
4. Can a person be saved by keeping the Law?
5. What is the relationship between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ?

C. *The debate* The debate over the relationship of law and grace to the believer has been a continual one throughout church history.

"This was true in the days of the apostles, and it has likewise been true down through the centuries of church history. This was the subject of discussion in the first church council recorded in Acts 15:5, 11. It was also the occasion of the writing of Paul's sharpest epistle, the letter to the Galatian churches. This is an endless battle, but every generation in the church of God must *meet* the issue

for itself" (Alva J. McClain; *Law and Grace*, pp. 5-6).

Purpose of Law of Moses in OT

1. The Law of Moses was **not given as a means or way of salvation**, but "as the grateful response of those who had already been saved" [Vlach says the law is more about sanctification than justification] (Daniel Block, "Law, Ten Commandments, Torah," in *Holman Dictionary*).

a. Israel was chosen by grace.

b. The Decalogue begins with a preamble: "I am the LORD your God. . . "

c. "Obedience to the Decalogue or any other law has never been intended as the way of salvation but as the appropriate response to salvation already received [i.e., it's about sanctification]" (Block)

2. "Obedience to the law was an expression of covenant relationship" (Block).

a. Israel's primary relationship was not to a code of laws but to God who graciously called Israel.

b. God did not reveal the Decalogue until after the people declared their complete and unconditional service to God (Exod 19:8).

3. "Obedience to the law was the precondition to Israel's fulfillment of the mission to which she had been called and the precondition to her own blessing" (Block). The conditional Mosaic Law was the means through which a specific generation of Israel could experience the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant.

4. "God's revelation of the law to Israel was a supreme act of grace and a unique sign of privilege" (Block).

5. "True obedience to the law was to be the external expression of an inward disposition of fear and faith in God and covenant love toward him" (Block).

6. "The laws viewed all of life holistically under the authority of the divine suzerain [leader of the covenant]" (Block).

7. The people were expected to keep the Law (see Deut 30:11-20).

Perversions of the Law of Moses

1. Some Jews tried to make keep the Mosaic Law **a means of salvation** (works righteousness) (see Rom 9:30-32)

2. Some Jews **emphasized the external rituals at the expense of the heart** (Mic 6:6-8).

3. Some Jews viewed the Mosaic Law as a means of **exclusive ethnocentrism** against Gentiles (see Jonah) when in reality keeping the Mosaic Law was supposed to be a witness to the Gentiles of the greatness of Israel's God.

II. The essence of the Mosaic Law

A. **Defined** "The law of Moses was a divinely **instituted rule of life mediated through Moses to govern God's covenant people, Israel in Canaan**. It regulated their common, everyday conduct.... The Mosaic code of laws **included the commandments (Ex. 20:1-17), the ordinances stipulating the Israelites' social life (21:1--23:33), and those directing Israel's worship (25:1--31:18)"** (Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 760).

B. References in the New Testament

1. The injunctions of the Mosaic Covenant "This is Paul's most frequent meaning of the law-**the 'legal' sections of the Torah**. Examples abound of this usage by Paul (e.g., Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:20; Gal. 5:3; 6:13)." (Wayne G. Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel," in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, ed. Strickland, p. 246).
2. **The Pentateuch** The first five books of the Old Testament are often referred to as "law" (ex. Matt. 5:17). Also, each of the five books of the Pentateuch is quoted and identified as being "law." (e.g., Luke 10:26-27 with Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 12:5 with Numbers 28:9-10; and 1 Cor. 9:9 with Deuteronomy 25:4).
3. The **Old Testament Scriptures as a whole** Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6 as "law" in John 10:34. Paul quoted Isaiah 28:11-12 as "law" in 1 Corinthians 14:21.

C. Number of laws within the Mosaic Law "According to orthodox Jewish tradition, there are 613 commandments in the law of Moses. These are divided into 248 affirmative laws and 365 negative laws" (Roy L. Aldrich, "Has the Mosaic Law Been Abolished?" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 116 #464, Oct. 1959, p. 323).

The Ten Commandments, then make up a small fraction of the total number of commandments given by God.

D. **The unity of the Mosaic Law** It is common to divide the Mosaic Law into three parts--moral (Ten Commandments), ceremonial, and civil. **These divisions, though, helpful for study, have no scriptural authority. The Mosaic Law is one Law and is an indivisible unity.**

“While it is unquestionably *true that* at least three elements-moral, ceremonial and civil appear within this law, **it is wrong to divide it into three laws**, or, *as* is popularly done, divide it into *two* laws, moral and ceremonial” (McClain, p. 8).

1. James 2:10: “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.” The “all” of this text is equivalent “to all the precepts of the *Torah*.” (Quote of William O.E. Oesterley, taken from McClain, p. 9) Thus to break one command is to make one guilty of breaking all 613 commands in the eyes of God.

2. Galatians 5:3 “And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.”

3. Matthew 5:19: “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and so teaches others shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” The “least commandments” include every “letter or stroke” of the whole Mosaic Law (see Matt. 5:17-18).

4. Singular use of Law in N.T. Except for Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16, the word Law is always singular in the New Testament. This points to the unity of the divine laws (James Denny, “Law,” in *New Testament Dictionary of the Bible*, v.3, p. 73).

5. What others have to say:

a) H.A. W. Meyer Commenting on Matthew 5:17-19 Meyer says, “In *nomos* [Law], however, to think merely of the moral law is erroneous; and **the distinction between the ritualistic, civil and moral law is modern**” (H.A.W. Meyer, “Matthew,” *Commentary on the New Testament*, v.1, p. 120).

b) Frederic L. Godet “In general, **the distinction between the ritual and moral elements of the law is foreign to the Jewish conscience, which takes the law as a divine unity**” (Frederic L. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, p. 144).

c) George B. Stevens “It is common to make a distinction between the ceremonial and the moral parts of the law, and to suppose that, while the, former are done away, the latter are still binding upon Christians. But **this distinction is recognized neither in the Old Testament nor in the New; it is a modern division of the law which is quite convenient and natural for us to make, but one of which a quite unwarrantable use is commonly made**” (George B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New*

Testament, fn, p. 24).

d) A.S. Peake "This distinction between the moral and ceremonial law has no meaning in Paul" (A.S. Peake, "Colossians," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, v.3, p. 527).

6. Erich Sauer "The law is a unity (Jas. 2:10), and as such is wholly abolished" (Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 194).

7. **D.A. Carson** "Although this **tripartite distinction is old**, its use as a basis for explaining the relationship between the testaments is **not demonstrably derived from the NT and probably does not antedate Aquinas**" (D.A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, v. 8, p. 143).

8. "Thus orthodox Jewish tradition, able commentators, and the Scriptures themselves recognize that the law of Moses is an indivisible unit." (Aldrich, p. 325)

9. **"Jews in Jesus' and Paul's day certainly did not divide up the law into categories; on the contrary, there was a strong insistence that the law was a unity and could not be obeyed in parts"** (Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses," *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, p. 337).

10. **"The unity of the Mosaic law leaves only two alternatives-either complete deliverance from or complete subjection to the entire system."** (Aldrich, p. 325)

11. "We will not be misled by any. . . erroneous views if we hold fast to a complete definition of the divine law, namely, that the law of God in the Bible is one law, including moral, ceremonial, and civil elements" (McClain, p. 43).

III. The Mosaic Law does not save anyone

A. Galatians 2:16 "By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."

B. Galatians 2:21 "If righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

C. Galatians 3:11 "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident."

D. Romans 3:20 "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight."

E. Abraham was saved by faith and not by works of the Law (compare Romans 4:3 with Genesis 15:6).

IV. The Mosaic Law in relation to Israel

A. **The Mosaic Law was given to Israel alone.** Prior to the giving of the Law the Lord said, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel" (Exodus 19:3). Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write down these words, for **in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel**" (Ex. 34:27).

"It was to Israel that the Decalogue was primarily addressed, and not to all mankind." (John R. Sampey, "The Ten Commandments," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, v.5, p. 2944 B).

B. **The Mosaic Law revealed God's character to Israel.** "I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy" (Lev. 11:45). **God's character is the basis for the entire law.**

C. The Mosaic Law signified Israel's special relationship to God. "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

"The giving of the law itself demonstrated God's graciousness to Israel. The fact that God had given Israel a set of guidelines for the affairs of life, such as government and worship, constantly reminded them of God's concern for them as his special nation" (Strickland, p. 236).

D. The Mosaic Law provided instruction for living acceptably before God

"The law defined the responsibility of the covenant nation to God, marking out the requirement for fellowship and communion with him. It gave specific instructions to them concerning appropriate behavior within the covenant relationship" (Strickland, p. 237). This instruction **included how to worship God and how the theocracy was to be organized and managed.**

E. **Mosaic Law a rule of life not a means of salvation.** Being under the law in the Old Testament era did not mean that salvation was by means of keeping the law (Rom. 3:20). "Under law" for Old Testament saints meant they were under it as a rule of life. **They followed the Mosaic Law not for salvation but for sanctification.**

F. The Mosaic Law included penalties for breaking the Law

"It should be remembered that the Ten Commandments were part of the legal system of Israel as a theocracy. In the Mosaic economy 'every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward' (Heb. 2:2b). A law without penalty is only good advice. The Mosaic penalty for violation of each of the first four commandments was death. . . . Only a theocracy could enforce such laws" (Aldrich, p. 332).

G. The Mosaic Law did not replace the Abrahamic Covenant "The Law which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant [Abrahamic] previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise" (Galatians 3:17).

V. The purposes of the Mosaic Law

A. The Mosaic Law revealed and exposed sin (this is very explicit and clear)

1. Romans 3:20 "For through the Law comes knowledge of sin." "Its purpose was to inform humankind of their sinfulness" (Strickland, p. 241).

2. Romans 5:20 "And the Law came in that the transgression might increase." As Moo says, "The Mosaic Law specified in detail God's will for his people Israel, thereby increasing their responsibility and the seriousness of the matter when they failed to meet that responsibility" (Moo, p. 340).

3. Romans 3:19 "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be, closed, and all the world may become accountable to God." The Law of God establishes that everyone in the world is not only guilty of sin but deserving of God's wrath because of their sin.

4. Romans 7:7-13 "In this remarkable passage the Holy Spirit shows us that although the law was something wholly good, nevertheless the sin of man is of such a terrible character that it actually works through the law, so that the good and holy commandment of the law not only fails to eliminate sin but actually stimulates sin!" (McClain, p. 26)

"The law functioned in Paul's own life to force him to come to grips with the ugliness and pervasiveness of sin. It produced not merely a recognition that he was sinning, but accompanying that knowledge was an inner

conviction of sin" (Strickland, p. 242).

5. Galatians 3:19 "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions." The giving of the Law is related to man's sin.

6. 1 Timothy 1:8-9 "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious." Law reveals to the unrighteous that they are sinners.

B. The Mosaic Law acted as a temporary guardian for Israel until Christ came (Galatians 3:23-25) "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."

The tutor in Paul's day was the equivalent of a guardian who temporarily took care of all a child's needs. When the child reached maturity the tutor was no longer needed. As Homer Kent says, "When Paul chose this term [tutor] for his illustration, he was emphasizing the temporary character of the law and its inferiority. The law was Israel's guardian and trainer until Christ. When the Christian era arrived, justification by faith was made clear, and the inability of the law to provide justification was demonstrated (see Acts 13:39 for another Pauline statement to this effect)" (Homer A. Kent, *The Freedom of God's Sons*, p. 105).

VI. Why Christians are not under the Mosaic Law

A. **The Bible explicitly declares that the Christian believer is not "under law."**

1. Romans 6:14 "For you are not under law, but under grace." "Under law" and "under grace" are set in contrast to each other. To be under law" means to be subject to the entire Mosaic legal system including all its commands and penalties.

"With the inauguration of a new epoch, our relationship to law has changed. Whereas the law formerly dominated and controlled, it now has no authority over the life of the saint." (Strickland, p. 266)

(Note that Christ, in Gal. 4:4, is said to have been born "under law," obviously referring to the Mosaic era. This helps show that "under law" in

Rom. 6:14 refers to the dispensation of the law and not just condemnation of the law or abuse of the law.)

2. Romans 6:15: "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!"

3. Galatians 5:18 "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law." "Since Paul viewed all Christians as led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14-15), it follows that he did not believe the stipulations of the law applied to them." (David K. Lowery, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, p. 276).

4. 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 [this verse is particularly powerful because we see both the negative and positive aspects of the law] ". . . though not being myself under the Law. . . though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ." **Paul clearly states that he did not consider himself as being under the Mosaic Law. But he was under a different law – the law of Christ.**

B. The New Testament teaches that believers have died to the Mosaic Law.

1. Romans 7:4 "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another."

2. Romans 7:6 "But now we have been released from the Law." That this law Paul has been released from includes the Ten Commandments can be seen by his quote of the tenth commandment in the next verse, "for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COVET'" (v.7).

3. Galatians 2:19 "For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God."

C. Romans 10:4 teaches that Christ brought an end to the Mosaic Law when He completely fulfilled it "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

What does it mean that Christ was the "end of the law"?

"Christ being the *telos* [end] of the law means that he is the point of culmination for the Mosaic Law. He is its 'goal' in the sense that the law has always anticipated and looked forward to Christ. But he is also its 'end' in that his fulfillment of the law brings to an end that period of time when it was a key

element in the plan of God" (Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ," in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, ed. John Feinberg, p. 207).

D. 2 Corinthians 3:6-11 teaches that the Mosaic Covenant, including the Ten Commandments has faded away, giving way to the superior New Covenant. Paul, in this section describes himself as servant of "a new covenant." This New Covenant is contrasted with the Mosaic Law which is called "the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones," obviously a reference to the Ten Commandments. He describes this Mosaic Covenant as that "which fades away" (v.11). His point-the coming of the New Covenant has made the old Mosaic Covenant, including the Ten Commandments, obsolete as a way of life for the believer. (The verb for *fading away* in verses 7, 11, and 13 is from the verb *katargeo*, which means *to abrogate, to cancel, to bring to an end*. No stronger term could be used to describe the abolition of the law (see Aldrich, p. 326).

E. The Book of Hebrews teaches that the Mosaic Law has been made obsolete.

1. Hebrews 7:12 "For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also." The Levitical priesthood was essentially linked to the Mosaic Law. Thus any basic change in the priesthood requires a corresponding change *in* the Law. Christ's priesthood was according to the order of Melchizedek, not Aaron. Thus, a change in law occurred.
2. Hebrews 7:18-19 "For on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment [Mosaic Law] because of its weaknesses and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God."
3. Hebrews 8:13 When discussing the nature of the New Covenant the writer of Hebrews said, "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." The obsolete covenant is a reference to the Mosaic Law.
4. Hebrews 10:1 "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come..."

F. Galatians 3:17-19 teaches that the Law was a temporary institution that began 430 years after the Abrahamic Covenant was given and ended with the coming of Christ. "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions. . . until the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise had been made."

G. Christ abolished the Mosaic Law with His death

[Yet there seemed to be a transition period until about 70 AD when the law was fading away - Hebrews says this.]

1. Ephesians 2:15 "by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances." Christ "abolished" or "rendered powerless" the power of the Mosaic Law in the life of the believer when He died on the cross.

2. Colossians 2:14 "Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

"This written code, the Law, was like a handwritten 'certificate of debt.' Since people cannot keep the Law, it is like a bill of indebtedness.... But Jesus took away this criminal charge, this certificate of indebtedness by His death" (Norman L. Geisler, "Colossians," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, v.2, p. 678).

H. The believer is not under the Mosaic Law today because nowhere does the New Testament call for the inflicting of penalties for those who break the law.

With law comes penalties. It has been said, "A law without a penalty is only good advice." If the Ten Commandments are in operation today, then the penalties, including death for breaking the first four commandments, should be in effect for today. But they are not. For example, the penalty for incest according to the Mosaic Law was stoning (Lev. 20:11), but in the New Testament, the penalty for unrepentant incest is not stoning but excommunication (1. Cor. 5:1-5). (see Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 93)

I. The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 declared that Gentile believers did not have to keep the Mosaic Law The immediate issue before this council was whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved and whether they need to keep the Mosaic Law. Peter said to those who believed Gentiles had to keep the Law, "Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" The judgment of the council was that the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised to be saved (v.19). They only were to stay away from certain practices that would have been offensive to the Jews. Nothing was said about them needing to keep the Law.

As Ryrie says, "If there was ever a good opportunity to say that the Gentiles were under the law, this was it; for that would have settled the matter simply

and quickly. But the apostles, who were Jews themselves, recognized that the law had no force any longer, and they did not try to impose it" (Charles C. Ryrie, "The End of the Law," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 124 #495--July 1967, p. 243).

[We are under the law today but it is the law of Christ and the New Covenant. Since there are so many similarities between the OT law and the law of Christ they greatly overlap. Vlach says we're not under the Mosaic law. Since God is the same there will be continuity throughout time such as murder is always wrong. But there are discontinuities also. The Mosaic law is profitable and has a new role in the New Covenant and it functions like wisdom literature and teaches us a lot about God {such as His character which doesn't change} The commands of the Mosaic law have ended but the New Testament and the law of Christ picks up. "The Law of Christ" is the commands and principles in the New Testament]

[In summary Vlach believes:

- (1) the law is a unit it stands or falls together (the Bible doesn't divide it into parts).
- (2) Mosaic law was a way for Israel to express worship of God and stay connected to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.
- (3) Israel broke Mosaic covenant.
- (4) NT tells us we are not under the law
- (5) Christians are not under the Mosaic law
- (6) Jesus fulfills the Mosaic law with His life and death and transition believers to the New Covenant]

[Mosaic law and Paul (based on Risner's book *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, 2013)¹

We are not under the Mosaic Law but we are under God's standards. So there is a similarity between the OT and NT moral law. It was wrong to steal and lie before the law of Moses came and after. In the New Testament 3 things are going on with the law:

1. **Repudiation** - not under Mosaic Law passages (Rom 7:4, 6).
2. **Replacement** - we are under the new covenant and law of Christ.
3. **Re-appropriation** - (this explains the continuation of the **Mosaic Law** verses) we are not under it as a binding rule of life (in the New Covenant) but the OT operates as wisdom literature and it points to Christ and shows us

¹ Vlach did a review of Risner's book *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, in the TMS journal and Vlach thinks Risner is really good and says so in his review.

what is yet to come - prophecy. Paul uses the law for ethics (Eph 6:1-4). So all three of these are true, especially 1 and 2 (repudiation, replacement) are clear in the Scripture and the third (re-appropriation) explains why Paul is sometimes positive to the law and sometimes not.]

VII. Passages used to support the **continuance of the Mosaic Law** as a rule of life for the Christian today.

A. Matthew 5:17-19 "Do not think I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." The following are various interpretations of this passage:

1. The word "fulfill" means to "establish" or "confirm." Thus Jesus established the whole Mosaic Law including "the smallest letter or stroke." HOWEVER, the meaning of "establish" or "confirm" is highly unlikely. Plus, if this interpretation is correct, it would seem to demand that the sacrifices and offerings of the Law are still operative for today-this clearly goes against the teachings of the Book of Hebrews and the letters of Paul.

2. Jesus is establishing the validity of the moral law while the civil and ceremonial aspects have passed away. HOWEVER, there is no biblical basis for dividing the Law up this way. Besides, what Jesus says encompasses every "letter and stroke" not just the moral elements.

3. PROBABLE VIEW: Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets in the sense that the Law and the Prophets point to Him and He is their fulfillment (see Carson, p. 143).

"Christ fulfilled the OT by obeying the Law perfectly, by fulfilling its types and prophecies, and by paying the full penalty of the Law as the Substitute for sinners" (Homer A. Kent, "Matthew," in *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 937). Thus when we say that the Mosaic Law has been done away with in this age, it has been done away with not by destruction, but by fulfillment. **This interpretation is in line with Romans 10:4, "For Christ is the end [goal or cessation] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Thus this passage does not teach the continuance of the whole Mosaic Law as a code of conduct, rather it teaches that the OT finds complete fulfillment in Christ.**

B. **Romans 3:31 "Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law." In what sense is the Law established?"** There are various ways to interpret this passage:

1. *The whole Mosaic Law is established as rule of life for the believer.* HOWEVER, this view directly contradicts Romans 6:14-15; 7:4, 6; and the Book of Hebrews.

2. *Paul is establishing the moral element of the Mosaic Law as operative for the believer today.* HOWEVER, the idea of dividing the moral elements of the Law from the other elements is foreign to Paul and the other writers of the Bible.

3. POSSIBLE VIEW: *Revealer of sin* The Law is established in line with the purpose Paul has already given for the Law in Romans 3—the Law is established as a revealer of sin. The Law shows all men to be accountable to God (3:19) and reveals that every person is a sinner (3:20). (S. Lewis Johnson, sermon on Romans, 'Boasting Excluded, Distinctions Rejected, the Law Established,' in *Believer's Bible Bulletin*, October 5, 1980).

4. POSSIBLE VIEW: *Christ the perfect Fulfiller of the Law* The Law is established in that Christ has provided full satisfaction of the demands of the Law on behalf of all those who believe in Him. (See Romans 8:4 and 10:4). Thus the Law is established in that Christ has fulfilled its requirements. (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, in the NICNT, pp. 254-55)

C. Romans 7:22 and 25 Paul in these verses says, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man. So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."

Some see this passage as support for the present applicability of the Mosaic Law to the conduct of the believer today. This is probably not the case, however. That the Mosaic Law is referred to is correct but that serving the Law is to be the practice of Christians is not. Paul's point in this section (7:14-25) may be to show what happens when a person (probably a believer) tries to be holy by keeping the Mosaic Law. As McClain says, "He [Paul] wrote this chapter to teach all men that there is no holiness by works of the law. Paul was writing from the standpoint of a converted man, who has tried sincerely and earnestly to attain holiness in life and break the power of sin by keeping the law" (Alva J. McClain, *Romans*, p. 150). Thus, Romans 7:22 and 25 do not sanction keeping the Mosaic Law today, but warns the Christian what will happen if he tries to keep the Law—he will run into terrible frustration and defeat (v. 24). (For more on this view of Romans 7:14-25 see Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Contrast Between the Spiritual Conflict in Romans 7 and Galatians 5," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 123-#492-Oct. 1966.).

D. 1 Timothy 1:8-10 "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it

lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man but for those who are lawless....”

Some use this passage to teach a current applicability of the Law to the believer today but the text actually says the opposite. The Law "is not made for a righteous man." There is a lawful use of the Law though -- for the lawless (unbeliever). The proper use of the Law involves showing its purpose to those who are trying to keep it for salvation and sanctification. We can use it to show these people that **the Law cannot save or help anyone live a godly life. Only faith in Christ can accomplish these things.** Plus, it is possible that Paul is not referring to the Mosaic Law specifically but the principle of law in general.

E. Ephesians 6:2-3 “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.” Some point to the restatement of the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12) in Ephesians as evidence that the Mosaic Law is still binding. Three factors weigh against this view, though. **First, this passage may be a case where the New Testament is picking up principles of the Mosaic Law and reapplying them to the New Testament era as part of the Law of Christ. In fact, the New Testament picks up nine of the ten original Ten Commandments, except for the Sabbath command, and reapplies them as part of the Law of Christ.** Second, the penalty of death for not honoring one's parents (Ex. 21:15) is dropped in Paul's application of this command. Third, long life in the land of Palestine is changed to long life on the earth-making the reward applicable to the new age, showing a discontinuity between the Mosaic and Church eras (see **Roy L. Aldrich, "The Mosaic Ten Commandments Compared to Their Restatements in the New Testament,"** in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 118 #471--Jul 1961, p. 254).

F. 1 Corinthians 7:19: “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.” What commandments are in reference here? In a context in which Paul is downplaying the significance of an essential feature of the Mosaic Law-circumcision, it is highly unlikely that the "commandments" referred to here are the Mosaic commandments. In this section on marriage and divorce it is significant that Paul never appeals to Mosaic legislation to solve the problem. The context indicates that it is the commands of the Lord and Paul that are in view here not the Mosaic Law (see Strickland, pp. 78-79).

G. Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others." Some equate "the weightier provisions" of the law as being the moral law. Thus the weightier portions of the law (i.e. the

moral law) are applicable to today while the lesser areas, (i.e. sacrifices) are not. However, the context of this passage is hypocrisy not divisions in the Law. To make differentiations between the moral, civil, and ceremonial elements of the Law is unwarranted from this text. Plus, Jesus affirmed that the lesser things ("the others") needed to be done along with the weightier matters. In sum, the fact that there are some matters of the law that are weightier than others does not mean that the law can be divided in such a way that we keep certain portions today while not obeying others.

VIII. The inauguration of the Law of Christ

A. Does believing that the Mosaic Law has been done away with in its entirety as a rule of life for the believer make one antinomian or anti-law? If the Mosaic Law is not in effect today does that leave the New Testament Christian lawless and free to do whatever he wants?

B. Law of Christ in the Church era **"The New Testament speaks of the 'law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2). . . . In the law of Christ are the hundreds of commandments of the New Testament epistles, and together these form a new and distinct code of ethics"** (Ryrie, 246).

C. The abolishing of the Mosaic Law does not leave the Christian "lawless." The Christian may be free of the Mosaic Law but he is not free of *all* laws. Believers in this age are now under a different law, known as the "Law of Christ."

D. Passages referring to the Law of Christ

1. 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 *"And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I 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, that I might win those who are without law"* (emphasis mine). Paul makes a clear distinction between the Mosaic Law and the law of God that he is currently under-the "Law of Christ."

2. Galatians 6:2 *"Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ."*

E. The Law of Christ explained

1. **"The law of Christ is the new covenant counterpart to the Mosaic law. Just as the Mosaic law was normative for the Jew, the law of Christ is**

binding for the Christian" (Strickland, p. 277).

2. What the Law of Christ consists of - **The Law of Christ consists of the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament writers.** It also involves the elements of love (Gal. 5:13-14; Rom. 13:8-10; John 13:34; 15:12; 1 John 3:23) and the enablement of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

Longnecker states that the Law of Christ "stands in Paul's thought for those prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel (usually embodied in the example and teachings of Jesus), which are meant to be applied to specific situations by the direction and enablement of the Holy Spirit, being always motivated and conditioned by love" (Longnecker, Galatians, pp. 275-76).

3. Relationship of Mosaic Law to Law of Christ The Mosaic Law as a code of conduct has been done away with. In its place God has introduced the Law of Christ. Many of the individual commands in the New Testament Law of Christ are new but some are not. **Some of the commands of the Mosaic Law have been incorporated into the Law of Christ. These commands, though, are not kept as part of the Mosaic Law but as part of the Law of Christ.** In fact, nine of the ten commandments given in the original Ten Commandments are picked up and reapplied in the New Testament. The one commandment that is not picked up in the New Testament is the Sabbath command (see Col. 2:14-17). In essence then, **many of the moral principles of the Mosaic Law have been transferred into the Law of Christ.**

F. Other references to the Law of Christ

1. Law of liberty (James 1:25)
2. Royal Law (James 2:8)

IX. How to view the Mosaic Law today

A. Realize that the Mosaic Law is not a code of conduct for today. The Mosaic Law has been done away with as a rule of life for today. As New Testament saints, we are under the Law of Christ.

B. **Accept the Mosaic Law as part of the inspired Word of God that is profitable.** The charge has been made that in affirming the believer is not under law we are rejecting a part of Scripture. This charge is absolutely false. We accept that **"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16)."** The "all Scripture"

certainly includes the Mosaic Law. As McClain says, "We are not *under* the law; but because that law is inspired Scripture, it is full of valuable doctrine and useful lessons for us" (McClain, p. 56).

C. Examples to learn from

1. 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction." Paul wrote that certain events in the first five books of Moses were examples for us and were given to us for our instruction.

2. Romans 15:4 "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of, the Scriptures we might have hope."

a) God's criteria for determining false prophets (Deut. 18:20-22)

b) Exodus 21:22-25 and the unborn "A Christian reading the laws about personal injury in Exodus 21 might well conclude--rightly, I think--that the killing of an unborn baby falls into the category of those takings of human life that are prohibited by both the Decalogue and by the New Testament" (Moo, *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, p. 376).

3. Warning "Let us beware, therefore, of the error of supposing that there is anything in the Book of God which can be set aside, or even neglected, by the Christian believer. All of the Book--every part of it, no matter how small--will be found 'profitable' for the saved" (McClain, p. 56).

3 Expressions of God's Law in History

God is holy and has righteous standards for His image-bearers. These standards and laws are manifested in three main expressions:

1. The transcendent law of God on the conscience and heart of all people of all ages (always in operation)

- a. The Creator/creature distinction demands loyalty from the creatures to the Creator (Gen 1 and 2)
- b. Isa 24:5
- c. Rom 2:14-15

2. The Mosaic Law given to Israel (from Exod 19 through the death of Jesus Christ)

- a. Exod 19:5-6
- b. Exod 34:27: "I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

3. The Law of Christ of the New Covenant mediated through and for Israel but extending to the Church and the Nations (from the death of Christ onward)

- a. Jer 31:31-34
- b. Ezek 36:24-27
- c. Isa 52:15
- d. Rom 11:26-27
- e. Gal 6:2
- f. Heb 8:8-13
- g. Rev 21:24, 26

These three laws are distinguished from each other in Scripture (see Rom 2:14; Heb 8:13). Yet because these are all given by the Lawgiver (God) we should expect some continuity in the expectations of these laws. On the other hand, similarity at points does not mean sameness.