

## “WHAT THEN IS THE LAW?”

Judaizing zealots had come among the Galatian churches preaching that the Gentile saints must submit to certain requirements of Moses' law to be saved. Some of the brethren had been “quickly removed” by this error (Gal. 1:6–9), and Paul wrote his letter to them in an effort to call them back to the Truth.

In the context of convincing the Galatian Christians of the inferiority of Moses' law when compared with the Gospel, he anticipated their asking, “What then is the law?” (Gal. 3:19). He basically answered that it was God's preparatory measure for bringing Christ into the world (v. 20). Much confusion still reigns on the relationship between not only the law of Moses and the Gospel, but between all of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The resulting confusion remains the cause of a multitude of errors in doctrine and practice.

Some see the New Testament as a mere continuation of the Old, with men responsible to both. However, while they are closely related and contain some of the same principles and prohibitions, they also contain various contradictory statutes (e.g., days and acts of worship, circumcision, offerings, tithing, priesthood, et al.). They are two separate and distinct bodies of law.

The Old Testament foretells the coming of a new covenant (Testament) (Jer. 31:31–34), which the Bible identifies as the “better covenant,” mediated by Christ (Heb. 8:6–13). In several direct statements the Bible declares that the **authority** of the Old Testament has been replaced by that of the New (e.g., Gal. 3:23–25; 5:1–6; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 1:1–2; 10:9; et al.). Inspired writers also used various illustrations to make the same point (Rom. 7:1–4; Gal. 4:22–31; Heb. 7:12; 9:15–17). The cross is the epochal event that closed the Old and opened the New Testament age.

Some questions immediately arise:

- “Are we no longer under the Ten Commandments?” **No**, we are not. However, all of them except the sabbath law are continued in the New Testament. We are obliged to obey them, not because they are in the Old Testament, but in the New.
- “Is the Old Testament not inspired?” **Yes**. The passing of its **authority** does not imply anything concerning its inspiration or accuracy. It is God's inspired Word, revealed by God to its various writers, just as the New Testament is.
- “Does the Old Testament have any practical value today?” **Yes**. Paul said that its contents are for our “learning,” “admonition,” and example (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6–11).

Consider the following:

- Its prophecies and types foretell the Christ, His new covenant, and the establishment of His church, allowing us to see God's careful, patient, persistent work in history to redeem His estranged creation.
- It is an important historical source book, revealing the origin of all things, the creation of man and his fall into sin, and the nature of God (love, mercy, long-suffering, and justice).
- It is the necessary frame of reference for understanding the New Testament. Much of the New Testament would be a profound mystery did we not have the Old Testament.

The Old Testament's basic purpose was to reveal man's sinfulness and need of a Redeemer and to point to that Redeemer in advance of His coming (Rom. 7:7; Gal. 3:19, 24). All of these facts emphasize the importance of our earnest study of the Old Testament.

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