

Of Jesus the Christ it is written, *“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second”* (Hebrews 8:6,7). In this passage the *“first covenant”* is the Old Testament law, and *“the second”* refers to the covenant that God gave us through His Son.

The Bible, God’s word, is the truth that can make us free from sin and condemnation (John 8:32; 17:17). It alone is the message that can save our souls (James 1:21). Is the Old Testament part of God’s word, and is it true? Without a doubt! What about the New Testament? It, too, is God’s truth. If that be the case, then by which covenant or testament should you and I strive to live? Are we obligated to keep the old law, the teaching of the Christ (the new covenant), or both?

HOW IS THE OLD LAW DESCRIBED?

The law that God gave the Israelites at Mt. Sinai is often referred to as *“the law of Moses”* (Acts 13:39). This does not mean that Moses himself was the source of that law. Rather, he was the mediator through whom God gave it to Israel.

In a number of New Testament verses the Holy Spirit refers to the old law simply as *“the law”* (Hebrews 10:1). That law is also called *“the law of God”* (Nehemiah 8:8,18) or *“the law of the Lord”* (Luke 2:23,24). It is plainly described as being *“holy, and just, and good”* (Romans 7:12).

Without question, the ten commandments were a significant part of the instructions that the Lord gave to the Israelite nation. It is important to note, however, that the law of Moses included much more than just those ten commands. In fact, there were more than 600 commands in the old law.

TO WHOM WAS THE OLD LAW GIVEN?

In the 15th century before the birth of Jesus, God sent Moses to deliver the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. In the third month after they crossed the Red Sea and escaped Egypt, they

came to Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:1). There, the Lord God gave them a new law, the law of Moses.

In Exodus 20:2,3 it is written, *“I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* These are the beginning statements of the law that God spoke at Sinai. Notice that it was spoken to those whom He had brought out of the land of Egypt. Who was that? The Israelites.

Further, in Deuteronomy 5:1-3 we read, *“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.”* Of which covenant was Moses speaking on this occasion? Of the covenant that God made with someone at Sinai (also called “Horeb”). And with whom was this covenant made? With the ones to whom Moses was speaking, as noted in the text quoted above. Note carefully that on that day Moses was speaking *only to the Israelites*, reminding them of the covenant that God had made with them!

Friends, there was only one nation present at Mt. Sinai to receive the law of Moses, and that was the nation of Israel. The law of Moses was not addressed to Spain, China, the U.S.A., or even to Christians of every nation. It was given only to the Jewish nation.

WHY WAS THE OLD LAW GIVEN?

Everything that God has ever done, He has done for a purpose. So He must have had a reason for giving the law of Moses to Israel. For one thing, He gave them this law to help them understand what sin was. *“...for by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (Romans 3:20). In addition, God gave the Israelites the law of Moses in order to help bring them to the Christ. *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith”*

(Galatians 3:24). The law of Moses “pointed” the Jews to Jesus, and those Jews who properly understood the law would be ready in their hearts to receive Jesus as the Messiah or Christ.

Please note that the law of Moses was only a *temporary* law. God never intended for that law to be in effect until the end of time. How long was it to be in force? *“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ...”* (Galatians 3:19, NKJV). “The law” (law of Moses) was to last *“till the Seed”* would come. Who or what was *“the Seed?”* Verse sixteen of the same chapter identifies this Seed as the Christ. Thus, the law of Moses was to be in force only until the time of Jesus (His first coming). And remember, that law was only for the Jews.

WHAT DID JESUS DO WITH THE OLD LAW?

As a Jew, Jesus lived under the law of Moses and was thus obligated to keep it (Galatians 4:4). Second, He never transgressed the law, but kept it perfectly. He *“did no sin”* (1 Peter 2:22). Third, He is described as *“the end of the law”* (Romans 10:4). Further, He fulfilled the old law: He said, *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil”* (Matthew 5:17).

Finally, through His death Jesus abolished the old law. He *“abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances”* (Ephesians 2:15). What was this *“law of commandments contained in ordinances”* that our Lord abolished? The law of Moses! To say that Christ abolished the old law does not mean that it ceased to exist or that it should be removed from the Bible. It simply means that after Jesus’ death the law of Moses was no longer in effect.

IS THE LAW OF MOSES STILL BINDING?

Are you and I obligated to obey the old law today? As we just noted, Jesus already *abolished*

that law, so it is no longer binding on anyone. Many are surprised when they first learn this truth, but it is clearly taught in a number of New Testament verses. For example:

(1) Colossians 2:14 – *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”*

(2) Galatians 3:24,25 – *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”*

Question: According to these verses, what is the “schoolmaster” that men are “no longer under?” It is “the law” (the law of Moses). Therefore, this passage shows that men are “no longer under” the law of Moses!

(3) Hebrews 10:9 – *“Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.”* What are “the first” and “the second?” They are two covenants: “the first” is the old law, and “the second” is the new covenant of Jesus which He established through His blood (Matthew 26:28).

(4) Romans 7:4 – *“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead ...”*

SOME SERIOUS MATTERS TO CONSIDER

If one still insists that we should keep the old law today, then let him consider these facts:

(1) One cannot be justified or saved by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).

(2) A Christian who seeks to be justified by the old law has “fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

(3) One who desires to keep the law of Moses is obligated to keep not just part of it, but *all of it!* Such a person is “a debtor to do the whole law” (Galatians 5:3). Under the old covenant the Jews were commanded to offer animal sacrifices to God, travel to the place that God appointed (Jerusalem) to keep annual feasts (Passover, etc.), stone to death those who blaspheme the name of the Lord, every seventh year (the “Sabbath” year)

refrain from planting crops, and do many other things. Again, if we say that we ought to follow the old law, then it ought to be 100% or not at all! (4) It is impossible to keep both the law of Moses and the teaching of Christ at the same time. There are just too many differences. So, which one will we follow, the old law, Jesus’ teachings, or both?

THE NEW TESTAMENT OF THE CHRIST

Dear reader, today God speaks to us through His Son Jesus (Hebrews 1:1,2). We must live by what Jesus says, not the law of Moses, for God said, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him”* (Matthew 17:5). After Jesus’ resurrection He told His apostles: *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ...”* (Matthew 28:18,20). It is the will of the Christ, Who has all authority, that all men obey His commands, not the law of Moses.

God today calls men through the gospel, not by the law of Moses (2 Thessalonians 2:14). The power of God unto salvation is not the old law, but “the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16). We further read, *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the father and the Son”* (2 John 9).

Yes, the Old Testament came from God. And, yes, it is very beneficial to Christians to study it. But, we must always keep in mind that it is no longer in force. Today it is God’s will that all men everywhere follow Jesus’ teaching, also known as His gospel or new testament.

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