

“What Then Is the Law?”

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In the context of convincing the Galatian Christians that the Law of Moses was inferior to the Law/ Gospel of Christ, Paul anticipated the foregoing question (Gal. 3:19). Much confusion still reigns on the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, causing many errors in doctrine and practice.

Some see the New Testament as a mere continuation of the Old, with men responsible to both. However, they are two separate bodies of law containing various contradictory statutes (e.g., days and acts of worship, circumcision, offerings, priesthood, et al.).

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 In several direct statements, the Bible declares that the authority of the Old Testament has been replaced by that of the New (e.g., Gal. 3:23–25; 5:1–6; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 1:1–2; 10:9; et al.). Various illustrations 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 Testament age and opened that of the New.

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.

“Does the Old Testament have any practical value today?” Yes. Paul said that its contents are for our “learning” and our “admonition” (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

Consider:

- Its prophecies and types foretell the Christ, the new covenant, and the church, allowing us to see God’s careful, patient, persistent work in history.

- It is an important historical source book, relating man's creation, his fall into sin, God's love, mercy, and justice.
- It is the necessary frame of reference for understanding the New Testament. Much of the New is a profound mystery without knowledge of 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).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, June 15, 2012]

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