

The Law In The New Testament

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STATEMENTS

1. The Abrahamic Covenant is the foundational Covenant for Israel and onwards to bless the whole world through the Messiah.
2. The Mosaic Covenant was given to Israel only.
3. Progressive Covenants: With coming of the New Covenant, the Old Covenant is part included in the New and part superseded. Some laws and prophecies are fulfilled at Yeshua's death and are no longer in place.
4. New Covenant characteristic
5. Law of The Messiah is by the Mediator of the New Covenant, Yeshua. There is a new Priesthood and the temple system is gone. The Curses of the Old Covenant Law are annulled. Righteousness is by faith in what God has done for us in Yeshua. The OT Law is a guide under the Holy Spirit's guidance for all believers.
6. The New Covenant is characterizes by, love, grace and Holy Spirit.
7. Israel. God's intention is to ensure Israel endures. Therefore the Sabbath, feasts, Jewish customs in the OT Law are still necessary for maintaining Jewish identity as a people.
8. The Gentiles are not required to follow laws specifically related to Israel. But they are free to celebrate with Israel their Sabbath, feasts and customs. They must avoid legalism but instead use the OT and NT as a general guide to righteousness.

1. MOSAIC COVENANT

The Mosaic Covenant was given to Israel only. The mediator of the Old Covenant was Moses. God's grace and law were both present. The nation's law included external laws that kept Israel as a distinct people from the heathen nations.

2. PROGRESSIVE COVENANTS

Each new covenant includes aspects of the earlier covenants and yet adds or modifies from what has gone before. The covenants are seen to continue but in a changed form.

The Mosaic Covenant continues promises made to Abraham. The New Covenant continues promises that were made to Israel, Abraham's descendants.

God does not abolish 100% what He has previously revealed when He established a new covenant. Yet there are clear distinctions between each period. It is a new dispensation.

So we see a "Covenant viewpoint" and a "Dispensational viewpoint" in God's dealings. Some scriptures in the NT emphasize from one viewpoint or the other and it can be a little confusing.

3. NEW COVENANT

God states through His prophet Jeremiah that a new covenant was required because the old wasn't working. Israel was not able to meet the righteous demands of the Law. They sinned.

He promised a time when “He would put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. Jer31:33. This time would be characterized by personal fellowship with God and forgiveness of sin.

The statement here is a generalization. “His Law” is the eternal values of righteousness in the Torah.

1 Corinthians 9:20-21 (HCSB)

²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win those under the law.

²¹ To those who are without [that] law, like one without the law—not being without God’s law but within Christ’s law—to win those without the law.

Paul does not mean the OT writings are gone. He means here that he is not under the OT law as a means of righteousness, not that a believer should ignore God’s moral standards.

Paul says that the Old Covenant Law had served as a school master to lead the Jews to Messiah. But now they have to under His control. But he also says we would not have known what sin was except for the law. (primarily the moral law as the context of that verse shows).

4. LAW OF THE MESSIAH

Paul calls the NT teaching “the Law of Christ / Messiah”. This applies to Jewish and Gentile believers.

Galatians 6:2 (NKJV)

2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

The Mediator of the New Covenant is Yeshua, God’s Messiah. Where there is a new Priesthood and the temple system is gone then there will be New covenant laws, “The New Order”. This will remove forever many of the OT Laws.

Generally Yeshua upholds the moral law but he also negates the temple related laws. Other laws he fulfilled once and for all. Yeshua in His death and resurrection as God’s atonement did fulfil many of the laws and cause them to be superseded. The ritual purity laws and Temple laws are gone.

But other laws are current forever. Yeshua upheld love for God, He upheld tithing, He upheld honouring of parents and not stealing.

Paul the Apostle makes some statements that show his high regard for the Law as a guide.

Romans 3:20 (NKJV)

20 .., for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:12 (NKJV)

12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good...

16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good.

Here Paul is obviously talking of moral laws about righteousness. Which are still relevant.

Yeshua, makes the intention of the law clearer and makes more emphasis on living a love relationship with God with genuine obedience from the heart. He fulfils prophesy.

The emphasis shifts from external to internal. Religion becomes not from the outside in but from the inside to the outer. This is clearly seen in the sermon on the mount teachings. Some of the moral and righteous principles in the Torah continue, which Yeshua upholds. This is all called the "Law of Christ or Messiah". At the preface to the sermon on the mount Yeshua says these words:

Matthew 5:17-18 (NKJV) (At the start of the Sermon on the Mount teaching)

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. (The prophets spoke of genuine mercy and justice and of messianic prophesy)

18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

1st He is declaring He is not abrogating the Law and Prophets writings. However, He came to fulfil the Old Testament writings in the sense of bringing to completion its partial revelation, in bringing to pass its messianic predictions, and in giving the true interpretation to its moral precepts.

Yeshua then says that the law is to be preserved. But this must be as He interprets it. This He then continues to do in the Sermon on the Mount teaching. Temple related ritual purity laws are gone. The emphasis moves from an external righteousness to a heart righteousness in the power of the Spirit, and to a God centred life.

Mark 7:17-23 (NKJV)

He explained the parable. 18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"

20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

5. LOVE, GRACE AND THE SPIRIT

But now we are to meet the righteous requirements part of the law in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are no longer "under" the OT law as a legalistic means of obtaining righteousness. Now by faith.

Romans 7:6 (HCSB)

⁶ But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

This verse gives a key to understanding the issue of NT vs the OT law. Released from the letter – every little detail formerly required. (plus Oral Law too), instead in a new way of the Spirit.

Romans 8:3-4 (NKJV)

³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through (our) flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh (natural nature) but according to the Spirit.

The law is still a guide under the Holy Spirit. We do not earn righteousness. If love is real not mere sentiment, then the law makes its reappearance as a guide and a teacher under the power of the

Holy Spirit. Without law, love has no structure and slips into humanistic sentiment. Love must be guided by law. Without the power of the Spirit and the power of the atonement of Yeshua as our focus of dependence, our old nature will reassert itself. We will go to a NT form of works-righteousness.

Later Paul teaches that the righteous requirements of the law are not about ceremonial things like food and drink and rituals but righteousness and spirituality.

Romans 14:17 (NKJV)

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

6. LAWS FOR ISRAEL

God makes it clear in His promises to Abraham and to Moses and to the prophets that His commitment to Israel is forever. God wants Israel and the Jews to continue and return to their land. The following are still to be done: the celebration of the Sabbath - the central sign of the covenant and the holy feasts of Passover, Shavuot, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. Without the Torah, the Sabbath and yearly holy feasts the Jewish people would have long ago have vanished and assimilated. The feasts will continue forever. In Zechariah it talks of Sukkot being celebrated in the Millennial age.

The rites of passage of circumcision, Bar Mitzva and Jewish marriage also should continue as important Jewish life events. Jews should keep away from pagan life and maintain their Jewishness.

Yeshua showed the feasts speak of Himself. IE Passover spoke of himself as the Lamb of God.

Messianic Jews have to continue to relate to their own people in a valid way. Their influence is very important within Jewish people and in Israel. In a way they must follow the New covenant laws and OT laws and customs still relevant to Israel now.

7. GENTILES

The New Covenant law is what Yeshua Himself teaches. He primarily emphasises love for God and man like Hillel. A Holy life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. Legalism is to be avoided.

The decisions made in Acts 15 showed that the Gentiles should not fully follow the Mosaic Law. It was too heavy a yoke. Instead a basic righteous life was needed: abstain from idolatry, sexual immorality, eating of blood etc; basic morality. God would then guide them on further.

Col 2:16 makes it clear that food laws, feast days and sabbaths are not essential for the Gentiles. But there is freedom to partake in a non legalistic way.

Colossians 2:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.