

**THOUGHTS ON WHY WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE OLD
TESTAMENT LAW**

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Introduction

This document is a collection of my thoughts regarding the right use and abiding validity of the Old Testament law. Sometimes this document is merely statements with supporting verses. Other times it provides more explanation. In many ways, it's just a list of relevant Bible verses with thoughts and/or questions about them.

I recognize that books have been written on this topic, but sadly I have not had much time to study them. I don't think many people do, so this is a relatively short document outlining what I find the Bible to teach about the Old and New Covenants.

While I am happy to defend this document, please understand that it is not a formal theological paper that includes in-depth rationale and answers to opposing arguments for each verse. In fact, this has been developed primarily in short spurts here and there as thoughts occur to me during my personal devotions. Thus, in the rush "to publication" there may be grammatical errors, incomplete thoughts and obvious typos. Please extend grace.

My hope is that this document causes us to reflect on entire Law of God (both Old and New Covenants) and their value for us today. May this produce in us a greater love for God's holiness, a greater desire to call upon Christ for obedience, and a greater sense of unity and forbearance with those who disagree.

So, let's dive into what the Bible says about the Old and New Covenants. For one thing, let us be clear that the Law is still valuable for New Covenant believers. Here are some examples that confirm this point:

The law is valuable for Believers

It teaches us about God and His wise ways:

Psalm 1:1–3 says, "1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers."

N.B. all the exhortations of passages such as Psalm 119 to know and understand the law.

It was a tutor to show us our sin

Galatians 3:24 says, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith."

Much can be said, and more will be said about this at the end of this document. But it is clear that the law still has value for the Christian today. However, even though the law is valuable for the believer, not all laws are for all people at all times. This is clearly the case in the following examples:

Laws are identified for who they are for

Some were just for Adam:

Genesis 2:16–17 says, "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Some were just for Jews

Deuteronomy 4:14 "The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it."

Exodus 19:3 "Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel..."

Some were just for Levites:

Numbers 18:6–7 "Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD, to perform the service for the tent of meeting. 7 But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

Some were just for kings:

Deuteronomy 17:18–20 "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. 19 "It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel."

Some were for all people:

Leviticus 18:24–28 "'Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. 25 'For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. 26 'But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you 27 (for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled); 28 so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you."

The law was for a set period of time, not all times

Jeremiah 31:31–34 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new

covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. 33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.””

This does not mean that there are not moral standards for God’s people, it means that the specific laws for the specific people have been fulfilled by Christ’s coming (Matthew 5:17).

The New Testament authors understood that the Old Covenant was fulfilled and replaced by the New Covenant

In the Great Commission, Jesus told the apostles to go into all the world teaching them all that He has commanded. Note that He does not say “Moses” or “the Ancients” or other terms for the Old Covenant law:

Matthew 28:19–20 (NASB) “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.””

In Acts 6:13 Stephen was accused of speaking against the Law and Moses and the customs of Moses, that would hardly be the case if he was preaching the message that we are still bound to the Law, Moses and customs of Moses.

Likewise, in Acts 13:43, when Paul and Barnabas were in Pisidion Antioch, teaching in the synagogue, they told the people in verse 39 that they could be freed from that which the law of Moses could not free them. Then, as they were leaving in verse 43, they “were urging them to continue in the grace of God.” They urged them to continue in the “grace of God” as opposed to the “law of Moses” (from verse 39). This is a stunning point, when we consider that Paul was a former Pharisee and Barnabas was a Levite who was, by birth mandate, called to be a teacher of the Mosaic Law. Instead, these two taught the people of the surpassing value of the grace of God over and opposed to the law of Moses.

Furthermore, in Acts 15, the early church debated what responsibility Gentile believers has to the law. Acts 15:6–11 says, “The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. 7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 “And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 “Now therefore 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? 11 “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”” And so, Peter calls upon the church to recognize that neither they as Jewish Christians, nor Gentiles, are to be placed under the yoke of the law.

In Galatians 2:18, Paul even said that the Gospel he preaches “destroyed” the law. The word “destroy” there is “kataluo” which means to “destroy completely, to ruin or to overthrow.”

Galatians 2:18 (NASB) “For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.”

The point that Paul is making in Galatians 2:18 flows from everything he has said previously in Galatians 2. Much of Galatians 2 is the record of Paul’s admonition to Peter to stop trying to walk by grace and the law simultaneously. The reason is because “a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 2:16).” And yet, if we still try to examine our lives by the law, we will be found sinners (verse 17) but the tool of the law has been replaced by the Gospel of Grace (which was Paul’s point in chapter 1). And so, we have died to the law (verse 19) so that we might live to God by faith (verse 20).

In Galatians 3:2-5, Paul explains that the works of the law does not produce “perfection”. The word perfection (in verse 3) is the word “epiteleo” which is an intensive form of the word “telos” which is often used to speak of maturity (e.g. Colossians 1:28).

Galatians 3:2–5 (NASB) "2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"

Likewise, in Galatians 3:19, Paul says that the Law was for the people until (key word) the “seed” arrived (whom verse 16 says is Jesus).

Galatians 3:19 (NASB) "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made."

Paul’s point in this passage is that now that the “Seed” has arrived, the purpose of the law has been fulfilled.

In Galatians 4:21-31, Paul used Sarah and Hagar as an illustration of how we are children of the free woman; thus indicating we are no longer under the law.

Galatians 4:21–31 (NASB) “Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. 23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. 24 This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. 27 For it is written, “REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND.” 28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of

promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN." 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman."

Paul viewed himself as a servant of a new covenant, specifically not of the letter but of the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:6 (NASB) "who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

In Romans 7:4, Paul said that we have died to the Law through Christ so that we might be joined to Christ in order that we might bear fruit to God.

Romans 7:4 (NASB) "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."

In 1st Timothy 1:6-11, Paul specifically warns against people who want to be teachers of the law; explaining that they do not understand the very thing they are seeking to teach.

1 Timothy 1:6–11 says, "For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 7 wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. 8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted."

Debates about the law can quickly degrade into wrangling over words. Thus, Paul strongly warns against such debates and even comes to the point of saying that such debates are grounds for removing the person from the assembly of God's people.

Titus 3:9–11 says, "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, 11 knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned."

Paul frequently taught, as in Romans 3:21, that the law does not produce righteousness in the eyes of God.

Romans 3:21–25 "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed..."

Likewise, Paul reminds the Romans that they are not under the law. It would seem from Romans 7:1 that this is the Jewish law.

Romans 6:14 (NASB) "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

Paul goes on to say in Romans 7:4 that we have died to the law, and in Romans 7:6 that we have been released from the law, and finally in Romans 10:4 that Christ is the end of the law.

Romans 7:4 (NASB) "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."

Romans 7:6 (NASB) "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter."

Romans 10:4 (NASB) "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

And yet this does not mean that there are no standards of holiness; or that the believer can walk anyway they want. But as Hebrews 7:12 explains, there has been a change in the law.

Hebrews 7:11–12 (NASB) "Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? 12 For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also."

Thus, the author of Hebrews says later in 8:13, the law has become obsolete.

Hebrews 8:13 says, "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 IMPOSSIBILITY OF FOLLOWING THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW

As we consider the question for the abiding validity of the law, we need to address two common (and I believe incorrect) assumptions:

- 1) that some laws can be disregarded
- 2) that some laws can be contextualized

These are both common concessions that modern teachers of the law hold to in order to maintain that we should still keep the OT Law. They often admit that while we must keep the Old Covenant laws, there are some we no longer have to keep; or if we do keep them we can keep them in an updated form. The Old Testament law does not give allowance for either position.

The Entire Law was to be Obeyed

For instance, Deuteronomy 32:46–47 says, “Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. 47 “For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”” Reading this has to cause us to marvel at the beauty and surrender in the heart of a person who truly obeyed “all the words” and recognized there were no “idle” words, and who made the law their “life”. One can only imagine what these words would have meant to the obedient Jew—that they were to be so absorbed in the law of God that it is their very life. They are not to be trifled with. They are not to be viewed as mere idle thoughts; but they are to be absorbed into every area of our life.

Another passage is Deuteronomy 28:1 “Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.” Again, this passage calls the Jews to obey all of God’s commands. If there was any question about which commands that Moses was referring to; he specifies which ones with the word “today” which indicates the entirety (at least) of the book of Deuteronomy; and more fully the Pentateuch. The fact is, the Old Testament believers were expected to completely follow the entire law.

Other similar passages include:

Deuteronomy 11:8 “You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it;”

Deuteronomy 11:27–28 “the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; 28 and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.”

Deuteronomy 13:18 “18 if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.”

Deuteronomy 15:5 “5 if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today.”

Deuteronomy 19:9 “9 if you carefully observe all this commandment which I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in His ways always...”

Deuteronomy 27:1 “1 Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, “Keep all the commandments which I command you today.”

The Law was not to be contextualized

Likewise, contextualization does not seem to be permitted either. For instance, one of the Lord’s most repeated indictments against the Jews in the book of Judges was that they were “doing what was

right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25, et.al.). God specifically prohibited that kind of free-use of the law in Deuteronomy 12:8 “You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes.”

Likewise, the Jews were to be careful to obey them completely and accurately. The Bible uses the term “turning to the right or left” to visibly picture any slight deviation from the intended law. For instance, Deuteronomy 17:11 says, “According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left.”

In fact, practically speaking, when certain people “contextualized” their obedience, it resulted in judgment. For example, Nadab and Abihu died for offering strange fire in Leviticus 10. Uzzah died while steadying the ark in 2 Samuel 6 when they were improperly transporting it. In both instances, there was no wiggle room for modifying God’s instructions for their situation. This is further reinforced by Paul in Galatians 3:15 which says, “15 Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man’s covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.” Thus, the law—as long as it was to be in force—was not to be revised or updated.

Moreover, when the Old Testament believer sought to submit to God, he would enter into a covenant with the Lord. Passages such as Deuteronomy 29:10-13 record the people entering the covenant with the Lord as they entered the Promised Land. Likewise, it’s often said that circumcision is the sign of the covenant. In the New Testament, we enter into the New Covenant by faith; if the Old Covenant is still in force, we would still need to enter that covenant via a *brit milah* (a circumcision ceremony). Furthermore, each New Covenant believer would then need to enter into two covenants, first the Old Covenant through circumcision and then the New Covenant by faith. Yet we know from various passages (Galatians 5:2 & 3, et.al.) that we do not become followers of Jesus by first becoming followers of the Old Covenant by circumcision, if we did, “Christ will be of no benefit” to us. If a person does not enter the law via the original means established by the Lord, then they are circumventing the very law they are claiming to follow.

The Law Had Specific Time & Place for the Jewish People

Having said this, some passages seem to indicate that the law has limitations in its universal use. For instance, Deuteronomy 31:12–13 says, “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. 13 “Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.” When verse 13 says “as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess” it seems to indicate that if they were to be dispossessed by some other nation; there would necessarily be some laws that could no longer be followed. Indeed, once the Jews were deported to Assyria in 722 BC and Babylon in 586 BC; they were no longer able to fully obey the law. Daniel still sought to follow some laws (e.g. dietary) but he could no longer follow all of them.

In Leviticus 25:2 speaks of the Jews coming into the land that God gave them. He then gave them a bunch of laws to follow. This very verse is founded upon the idea that there is a specific time, place and people to which these laws apply.

Accordingly, now that we live in the New Covenant, the purpose of the Old Covenant, as something that society must follow exactly without change, has now been set aside. It can still show us holiness and it can still show us God's zeal for His people, and many other things; but it no longer gives us an absolute law that we must follow without adjustment or contextualizing.

A further word about applying the principles of the Old Covenant law... while there are many moral principles that are still valid for today, the law was never a vague "principle". It was always a specific and exact command. It is a holy representation of the will of God. If it were to be the law of the land, it would have to be untouched and thus need to go onto a judge's bookshelf and be consulted by juries and require a due punishment. People were not stoned or cut off because they violated the "principle" of the law. They were executed for violating specific laws.

Moreover, under the Old Covenant, the sentencing guidelines were often given with the law. Thus, if the law were still in force today; so would the sentencing guidelines. Yet we know from specific examples in the New Testament that it is not. For instance, in the matter of adultery—under the law, the sentence was death, and yet under the New Covenant, the sentence is divorce. That updated contextualization would be invalid if we are still under the law.

CONUNDRUMS

As I read through the Old Testament, there are countless laws that would be virtually impossible to live out now. Normally, I would *not* say that just because something is hard, God does not expect it of us. But given that I do not believe that we are bound to the Old Covenant, these examples are very compelling (to myself at least) that the law has been set aside for the New Covenant believer.

In the examples that follow, I in no way desire to disparage the Old Testament regulations or imply that these would be in any way invalid or unrighteous if carried out under the Old Covenant by national Israel. I believe that in the days of the Old Covenant, these would have been righteous.

The Old Testament law is and was holy. It is still holy (currently) as a holy record of God in the same way that the book of Isaiah is holy, or any other passage of scripture. It was holy for the Jewish people as their direct instructions from God, intended to fully bear upon every matter it addresses.

And yet, if we are to still keep the law, even today, then this creates various challenges. The following are just some that I've come across in my studies of God's Word. I would imagine that anyone reading these examples of conundrums will quickly become annoyed by them. If as you read these, you get fed up with my preponderance of examples, I suggest that you then skip to the end of this section (probably around Page 15) where I provide some concluding thoughts.

Laws before the Law

There are many places where the people of God are to keep specific laws that were prescribed *before* the actual Mosaic Law was given. For instance:

Circumcision was prescribed all the way back in Genesis 17, et.al. Is this a command that is still to be obeyed as a means by demonstrating that a person is in covenant with God? If we do not do this today, on what grounds? Obviously, Galatians 5:2 says that if we receive circumcision than Christ will be of no benefit for us, however, Paul is applying the point he makes back in Galatians 3:24, that the Law was to lead us to Christ and once its purpose has been achieved, it is set aside. But if that's not the case (that the law has been set aside), why not prescribe circumcision for everyone with the hope that they will come to Christ?

Another law that was before the Mosaic law was that of the Passover feast. This was prescribed in Exodus 12 and 13, before the Mosaic Covenant was ratified in Exodus 24. It is for the children of Israel, and if the laws of the children of Israel still apply to the church, then it would seem that the laws for the Passover Feast would still apply as well? Indeed, in Exodus 13:8, we are to tell the children that this is what the Lord did for "me". This is pre-Mosaic Law and is not tied to the temple worship, nor to government. Therefore, it seems like it should be followed, if the law still applies today.

Similarly, Exodus 13:2 & 15 tell us to pay a redemption price for every first born. The purpose was to remind the children of Israel of their physical redemption from Egypt which then points to the true, spiritual redemption they still needed. For those of us who are in Christ, Jesus is our firstborn redeemer, and yet if the law is still operative, why would we not do this? For that matter, Deuteronomy 15:19 even forbade using the firstborn animals on the farm and sheering the firstborn sheep. Would we *not* do this either? These laws were not ceremonial or civil in their purpose...but *moral*: they were to demonstrate that the individual understood that God is our redeemer. If the moral law is still in effect, especially since these preceded the Mosaic Law, why don't people still do them today?

Ceremonial Law Conundrums

It doesn't take much study to realize that the Old Covenant creates immediate problems if still to be applied today. Much of the law speaks of performing sacrifices, and temple worship, and priests and Levites, etc. Since they are not in existence today, they cannot be followed.

Many people suggest that we should divide the law into three components: Ceremonial, Civil and Moral. They would say that we are not bound by the ceremonial law, but still the civil and moral. However, scripture does not give us such freedom to divide the Old Covenant into the parts we'll keep and parts we'll discard. In fact, even the New Testament authors taught that if a person were to continue to live by the Old Covenant, they had to live by all of the laws:

Galatians 3:10 (NASB) "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.""

James 2:10 (NASB) "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."

Matthew 5:17–18 (NASB) "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

If the Old Covenant was in effect, then it is still in effect in its entirety. The law never gives anyone (New Covenant or Old Covenant believer alike) the permission to cut it up and only obey certain parts. As Galatians 3:10 says, when it's in force, it's to be obeyed entirely.

Likewise, even though people who say that we are still under the Old Covenant stipulate that we are not under the ceremonial laws, using their reasoning, this should not be the case. The New Testament calls us all "priests" and therefore it would seem that we should keep the laws for the priests. 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..." It would seem, then, that we should at least uphold the laws for priests. This would include things like not marrying a widow (Leviticus 21:14), not letting our hair grow long (Leviticus 10:6). Nor are priests allowed to go near a dead body (Leviticus 21:11) or own land (Deuteronomy 18:1). While it makes sense that these would not be enforced in the New Covenant, it does not make sense why we would not enforce them if New Covenant believers are now priests.

Moral Law Conundrums

Now, often those who say we need to still follow the Old Testament Law, usually mean that we should follow the Moral Law. As mentioned above, there is no warrant for this division. But, having said that, if we were to still say that the Moral Law is still in force, then even this position creates serious conundrums.

For instance, in Leviticus 4:3, when a priest in authority sinned, even secretly, his sin would bring guilt upon all the people. So, this is an immoral act by one person, that brings guilt to everyone. Hence, this is clearly in the realm of morality. If this leader were to sin (say with adultery), do they still bring guilt onto the rest of the people? Likewise, how far does this guilt extend? Just for their church? What if they're a denominational leader, is the whole denomination guilty as well?

Just about everyone recognizes (or at least everyone should recognize) that the Old Covenant Law can legitimately be a guide for the believer today. We can go to these passages and derive principles of holiness (although, as stated above, God never tells His people in the Old Covenant to obey principles, but rather the exact laws as given). But even still... there are countless examples where the Law clearly helps us clarify principles related to murder, adultery, fathers teaching their children, etc.

However, in terms of what is binding are the specific commands given in the New Testament. A Christian farmer doesn't have to lose sleep trying to figure out how to obey God's laws regarding leaving sections of ground fallow (Lev 25:3). But every Christian farmer should (for the sake of argument) lose sleep about obeying the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount, and the rest of the New Testament, is specifically valid and we can never dismiss any instruction given. If a person patently ignores New Testament commands, they might (and perhaps should) face church discipline. But consider the following examples of Old Covenant law, would we church discipline a person if they failed in the following areas of "Moral Law":

For instance, the Jews were to stone adulterers in Leviticus 20:10. Jesus said in Matthew 5:28 that to look at a woman with lust is adultery. Should we execute married people who struggle with lust for others? How would we know and how would we enforce this? Furthermore, should we church discipline those who refused to stone people who look at pornography?

Conversely, when two unmarried people have intercourse, the man who seduced the woman is supposed to marry her. If her father does not consent, the man is to give the father the “bride price for virgins (Deut 22:16-17).” What would that be in today’s valuation? But it gets more complex in Deuteronomy 22:28-29 that speaks of a man who was intercourse with a woman by force. He is supposed to pay the father 50 shekels and then marry her for the rest of her life. He does not have the option for divorce. Would we do this of people who “seize” women today? Would we church discipline a father who would not give his daughter in marriage to the man who “seized” her?

Likewise, Deuteronomy 7:3 forbids a Jewish person from marrying a non-Jewish person. Would we make this a national law just for Jews? Or would we extend this Christians and forbid interracial marriage? Deuteronomy 7:3 says, “Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.”

Proverbs 28:17 forbids “supporting” someone who is guilty of shedding human blood. While it’s probably speaking of murder, it could be broadly interpreted to speak of all kinds of shedding of human blood, whether justified, lethal or accidental. While our society probably has gone too far in making criminals feel comfortable, what constitutes “supporting” someone? If we had a society that kept the Old Testament Law, would we not allow people to have defense attorneys? Would convicted criminals not be allowed food or water while in prison? Would we church discipline a doctor who took care of inmates in prison?

Civil Law Conundrums

I’ve heard that when people speak of obeying the “Law” they are not referring to the ceremonial law; though perhaps obeying civil laws and moral laws. Yet often the laws are intermingled. For instance, in Deuteronomy 21, the Lord gave the instruction that when a person was found to be murdered, if the perpetrator is not known, then the town elders were to bring a heifer to the scene and break its neck and seek the Lord’s forgiveness (Deuteronomy 21:1-4). If we are to still follow the Old Testament laws, I see no reason why we should not continue this practice.

Likewise, civil laws were often intermingled with moral laws. For instance, in 2 Chronicles 26:16-21, King Uzziah was banished because he sought to worship the Lord on his own. Would we still apply this law today? Would presidents be removed for worshipping the Lord on their own? Would their personal devotions become criminal worship? If they were to uphold this law, and not worship on their own, what church would they go to? Which denomination of Christianity? If we say that we can worship the Lord privately because of the priesthood of believers, then wouldn’t the rest of the priesthood laws still apply to us today?

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 22:13–19 speaks to how to handle an accusation of sexual impurity. The matter is to be brought before the elders. Would we have to set up town elders? Or would today’s judicial system be sufficient. If so, on what biblical grounds? Verse 13 says, “If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then turns against her, 14 and charges her with shameful deeds and publicly defames her, and says, ‘I took this woman, but when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin,’ 15 then the girl’s father and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of the girl’s virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. 16 “The girl’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man for a wife, but he turned against her; 17 and behold, he has charged her with shameful deeds, saying, “I did not find your daughter a virgin.” But this is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity.’ And they shall spread the

garment before the elders of the city. 18 So the elders of that city shall take the man and chastise him, 19 and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give it to the girl's father, because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days." In this instance, the elders are to adjudicate the matter of possible immorality. In Deuteronomy 22, the parents are to keep the sheets from their daughter's wedding night to prove her virginity. Would we still do this today? Who would adjudicate this? While it is not impossible to enforce this law, it would certainly be difficult to truly live by.

In Leviticus 25:3 God gave them specific laws about when the plant crops. Verse 3 says, "Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, 4 but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard." To obey this law today, all farmers would need to submit to the government a farming schedule that demonstrated they were only farming a piece of land for six years, then leaving it fallow for the seventh. Not only would this be an administrative nightmare, what would be the penalty for disobedience?

In Leviticus 25, verse 10 it says, "You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family." Verse 23 reasserts this principle: "The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me." Similarly, in Nehemiah 10:31, when the Israelites were recommitting themselves to the Mosaic Covenant, they signed their name to the commitment of forgiving all debts every 7 years. If we brought these laws into our society, we could not have debt longer than 7 years and we could not own land for more than 50 years. Not only would this wreak havoc on homeownership, it would cause far greater upheaval with serious commercial properties like sports stadiums and skyscrapers and military bases; most of which last far longer than 50 years.

Leviticus 25:9 says, "You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land." Full obedience to this law would require the use of a ram's horn to signify that it was time to signify the commencement of the commands to follow. More importantly, this notification was to be given on the Day of Atonement—a ceremonial law; both were intermingled.

Likewise, under the Old Covenant, the Year of Jubilee was to be the calculus that set the economic clock. We would have to bring it back. This is explained in Leviticus 25, verses 11-16: "You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. 12 'For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. 13 'On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property. 14 'If you make a sale, moreover, to your friend or buy from your friend's hand, you shall not wrong one another. 15 'Corresponding to the number of years after the jubilee, you shall buy from your friend; he is to sell to you according to the number of years of crops. 16 'In proportion to the extent of the years you shall increase its price, and in proportion to the fewness of the years you shall diminish its price, for it is a number of crops he is selling to you." If we were to bring this back, how would the calendar be established? Even more, assuming that other nations were to also follow these laws, how would their calendar be established? We would probably need to have specialists who would monitor the various calendars around the world just so that multinational organizations could operate within these "Years of Jubilees."

Likewise, in national Israel, a person could always reclaim any piece of property they had sold. We would have to add these laws back into contracts with easement upon easements so that the land could always be returned to the originally seller. Likewise, who would be determined to be the original landowner? Leviticus 25, verse 24 says, "Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land. 25 'If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. 26 'Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, 27 then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. Verse 28 'But if he has not found sufficient means to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of its purchaser until the year of jubilee; but at the jubilee it shall revert, that he may return to his property." Furthermore, these laws were based upon the tribal boundaries established by Joshua. On what basis would we establish these tribal boundaries in our society? Again, the laws make sense for National Israel but not for our society today.

There were different stipulations for walled cities, how would these stipulations be applied today since we have no walled cities in America? Leviticus 25, verse 29, "Likewise, if a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, then his redemption right remains valid until a full year from its sale; his right of redemption lasts a full year. 30 'But if it is not bought back for him within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city passes permanently to its purchaser throughout his generations; it does not revert in the jubilee. 31 'The houses of the villages, however, which have no surrounding wall shall be considered as open fields; they have redemption rights and revert in the jubilee."

As mentioned, often the laws overlap in being moral versus ceremonial. For instance, in Leviticus 25:35, the Law forbids charging interest from a poor brethren. While this might be a socially wonderful thing to enforce, how would this be determined? How would it be enforced? Verse 35, "Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. 36 'Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you. 37 'You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain."

Likewise, if we say that we are still under the Old Covenant, the law gave specific stipulation for the Levites. There are many Jewish people in America who believe they are direct descendants of Levites. On what basis would we determine this? Likewise, would we give these special provisions for them? Verse 32 says, "As for cities of the Levites, the Levites have a permanent right of redemption for the houses of the cities which are their possession. 33 'What, therefore, belongs to the Levites may be redeemed and a house sale in the city of this possession reverts in the jubilee, for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the sons of Israel. 34 'But pasture fields of their cities shall not be sold, for that is their perpetual possession."

Conclusion on these Conundrums

In many ways, the preponderance of examples is probably frustrating to anyone reading this document. But that only serves the point. In the Old Covenant, these laws made perfect sense for national Israel that was under the Mosaic Covenant with the Lord. In the New Testament, the New Covenant is not for national Israel, but for anyone who would come to God through the sacrifice of His Son. Those people enter into a New Covenant with a new set of laws. At times, those laws are identical

to the Old Covenant Laws, at times they completely replace and reset them. The Old Covenant cannot be divided up. It was never intended to be. It is simply replaced by the New Covenant with a new set of laws as given in the New Covenant Documents which we call the New Testament.

WHAT THE LAW CANNOT DO

One of the key points of the New Testament is that the law could not produce righteousness before God. But not only that, it did not produce spiritual health. For instance:

The law does not impart life:

Galatians 3:21 (NASB) "Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law."

Make a person righteous:

Romans 2 & 3 are clear that the law was for the Jews and that even Gentiles without the Law may be more pure and righteous than those with the law. The law itself does not make a person righteous in the same way the faith does (Romans 3:30).

In establishing that we are not enslaved to sin any longer, Paul does not tell us to present ourselves to the law for sanctification, but to righteousness in Romans 6:19.

Galatians 3:2–5 (NASB) "This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"

Free a person from sin:

Acts 13:39 "and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses."

Colossians 2:20–23 "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence."

Lead us to know Christ:

Philippians 3:8 says, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,"

In this context "all things" was referring to all that Paul previously strove after, from his circumcision, to his heritage, to the law, even to his own zeal. He counts them all as "loss" –which is a polite translation of a rough word speaking of garbage. In Paul's mind, striving after all that stuff was not only something he counted (past tense) as loss, but also "count(s)" (present tense—verse 8) as not helping him know Christ more profoundly. Indeed, it is the giving up of these things that produces true spiritual knowledge.

The Result of the Law

Not only is it dangerous to enforce the law if we are no longer under the Old Covenant, the Bible gives warnings about still trying to follow the law.

Paul says that it increases transgression. Of course, we recognize that this is the result of the flesh rebelling against the law, but it would be that much more difficult to enforce in a secular, unregenerate society.

Romans 5:20 (NASB) "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,"

Romans 7:8 (NASB) "But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead."

The Law gives a curse:

Deuteronomy 27:26 (NASB) "'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

Galatians 3:10–12 (NASB) "10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.""

The law "Kills" us

Romans 7:9–11 (NASB) "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me."

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN TO THE OLD COVENANT

Now is there abiding validity of the law? Absolutely yes! But not as a binding set of rules to follow with the implication if we do not do them, we are sinning. That can't be said for the New Testament instructions. We are to obey every command in the New Testament, if we do not, we are sinning. However, the same principle does not apply for the Old Testament. We are not sinning when we do not wade into the "conundrum" passages listed above. That being said, there are still many passages that are helpful in our walk, and the wise Christian spends a lot of their devotional life meditating upon the Old Testament, including the Old Testament laws. Often, we can see principles for holiness and godly living, but in light of the "conundrums" listed above, we are not bound to every single command & instruction in the Old Testament in the same way that we are bound to every single command & instruction in the New Testament.

Some Purposes of the Old Covenant Law are still in effect

Some Laws are binding for all people and all nations at all times.

One of the common desires of people who believe we should hold to the Old Testament "moral law" is related to matters of purity. One of the key chapters regarding purity in the Old Testament is Leviticus 18 which lists off many sexual sins including incest (Lev 18:6-16), adultery (Lev 18:20), homosexuality (Lev 18:22) and bestiality (Lev 18:23). It has been reasoned that this chapter is necessary to understand these matters, and therefore, to preserve the obedience to this chapter, we need to fabricate a category of "Moral Laws" that ought to be followed. Theoretically, the concept of Moral Law is understandable and justifiable. However, we don't have to fabricate a subcategory of morals laws, in order to still obey this chapter.

Leviticus 18 is specifically an indictment of the nations that dwelled in the Promised Land before the Jews entered it. The final verses of Leviticus 18 (Lev 18:24-30) speak of how the nations committed these sins and defiled the land and therefore, were cast from it. Thus, the specific laws of Leviticus 18 are, indeed, laws for all people and all nations. The nation that embraces the kinds of things this chapter prohibits will eventually face the same fate as the Canaanites. Therefore, we can recognize the abiding validity of Leviticus 18 as a unique passage within the Torah, while not saying that the rest of the Torah is still applicable to the Christian today.

It reveals God's holiness and their need for forgiveness.

Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16 "Be holy; for I am holy".

Exodus 32:33 (NASB) "The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book."

Exodus 34:6-7 (NASB) "Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.""

It unifies and distinguishes Israel as a nation.

Exodus 31:13 “But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.”

It provides a basis for Israel’s walk with and worship of God.

Leviticus 22:21 “When a man offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.”

It exposes the sinfulness of man.

Galatians 3:19 “Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.”

Romans 3:19–20 (NASB) “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”

It points to Christ

In my experience, modern Jews are deeply struggling in their attempt to follow the Old Covenant. I’ve had significant conversations about the law with reformed Jews, Orthodox Jews and Hassidic Jews. While these anecdotal conversations do not speak for Judaism as a whole, none of these people truly sought to obey the Law as they were supposed to according to passages like Deuteronomy 27:1. Likewise, they all gave expansive, cursory statements about why we do not keep every law today. Scripture does not give them this convenient out. If they are going to place themselves under the Old Covenant, they must obey the entire law. This was Paul’s very point in Galatians 3:10 and later Galatians 3:24.

And yet, if the Lord were to allow us to cross paths with a Jewish person, we can show them from their own laws the need for atonement, redemption, forgiveness, etc. All of this is wonderful material for a rich exhortation to follow Christ. Many Jews have been won to Christ using this method as they see their guilt before God, their need for a Savior, and that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law.

Some Purposes of the Old Covenant Law are NOT still in effect

The Old Covenant is no longer the standard that we are judged by, and it is no longer the reason that we might be exiled.

Deuteronomy 27 to 29 laid out the agreement between God and His people. If the people obeyed, they would be blessed. If they disobeyed the covenant, they would be judged and ultimately exiled. Now, Deuteronomy 27 to 29 is too long to place in this document, Jeremiah 11:3-4 summarizes the agreement by saying “... this covenant which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I

brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God,'" In many places in the Old Testament, the Lord lays the reason for the exile was because He was wiping the land of them and their sin.

So, one of the key purposes of the Old Covenant was to establish the Jews as the people of God and to secure them a place on this Earth where holiness would abide. When Old Covenant believers obeyed God's law, they received His blessings. When they broke His covenantal law they were under His judgment. They could only be restored back to a place of forgiveness and fellowship with Him by offering sacrifices.

In fact the whole passage in Jeremiah 11:2-11 (plus in many other places in the other prophets), the Lord lays out the basis of His judgment upon them: They broke His covenant and therefore will suffer the consequences of their disobedience that was laid out in Deuteronomy 27 & 28. He even says in verse 8, "Therefore I brought on them all the words of this covenant." Thus, since they broke God's covenant they would suffer His judgment.

However, the Old Covenant is no longer the standard that we must obey so that we do not experience judgment and exile. Likewise, we have no longer go through the Old Covenant rituals to enter into that covenant.

Why? Later in the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah 31 says that a "New Covenant" is coming which will be a law written on our hearts (made clearer in Ezekiel 36:26-27). These "New Covenant" believers will no longer have to worry about going into an "exile" for breaking Old Covenant laws, indeed that covenant (the old one) has been replaced with the New Covenant. There are no true "Old Covenant" believers anymore. Even modern day Jews who seek to obey the Law are actually violating it because its purpose was fulfilled in Christ.

So, one of the key purposes of the Old Covenant has been set aside. God does not require us to keep the Old Covenant laws under threat of punishment and exile. It would be strange for us to warn other Christians that they are going to be exiled from the land. What land would we be exiled from?

The Old Covenant is no longer the highest standard of God's holiness that we are to follow.

Another key purpose of the Old Covenant Law was to show us God's standard of holiness. While it does still give us a sense of God's holiness, it is an incomplete picture. God's holiness (and God's standard of holiness for His people) is even higher than the Old Testament models (Matt 5:17-20).

If you examine the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, I believe you will find every pure, moral principle repeated in the New Testament. It's been pointed out that there are 613 distinct commands in the Old Testament, but 1050 distinct commands in the New Testament.

Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17-20 are true: His standards of righteousness are not lowered by the Gospel. We are still called to be holy, righteous and pure. We are still called to be honest, generous, faithful, hospitable, forgiving, self-sacrificing. We are further called to refrain from gossiping, slander, back biting, and arguments about the law. We are to...Pray for our enemies. Pray for backsliders. Pray for Christ's kingdom to come.

When you look at the purified law that we are given by God in the New Testament, we see that His standards for holiness and purity are even higher than that of the Old Covenant believer. Thus, under the Old Covenant, you couldn't touch another man's wife. In the New Covenant, you can't even think the wrong kind of thoughts about another woman. Under the Old Covenant, you couldn't covet. Under the New Covenant, you can't even worry about what you don't have. Under the Old Covenant, you could (kind of) fight with others. In the New Covenant you have to love even your enemies. Under the Old Covenant, you could get divorced for all kinds of reasons, under the New Covenant, unless there's immorality or abandonment, you have to work it out.

And so, the New Covenant law of Christ gives a far clearer picture of the holiness He calls us to.

The Value of the Old Covenant Law for believers

First, it needs to be said that the message of the New Testament is not preaching the law. For instance, in Acts 21:21, this was not the message of Paul because he was being persecuted for not properly upholding the law. And yet, we do have a "law" that is written on our hearts. This is a "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25) and the royal law (James 2:8). But even with this New Covenant law, the Old Covenant is still righteous and good and when we understand it rightly, we will delight in it (Romans 7:22).

We can delight in it because the Old Covenant teaches us the History of God's dealing with the Jews. The Pentateuch teaches actual events that actually occurred. 1st Corinthians 10:6 explains that the Old Testament accounts are "examples for us" — and in context, it's referring to various events and passages specifically from the Pentateuch. Thus, we can learn from these passages and learn from their example (verse 11) and not be smug in our current standing.

The Law can be a praise hymnal for all that Christ has done to free us from the law. It teaches us the significance of our sin and the atonement and redemption provided by Christ. When we read the law, we can see within its pages God's love for holiness and purity and our absolute sin. We can celebrate the tremendous forgiveness we have in Christ.

Likewise, the law is a constant reminder of the utter holiness of God. Even though we are saved by grace, and even though God's grace covers our sins; we can still see the call to holiness. 1st Peter 1:16 calls us to be holy as God is holy; but tragically many modern churches have this backwards. Not being under the law does not open us up to more actions that we are permitted to do; BUT LESS. This is Christ's point in the Sermon on the Mount. The New Covenant believer has the law written on our hearts and so we now have an even HIGHER standard we must follow.

For instance, in the New Covenant, we are to love God with all our heart, mind, & soul (Matthew 22:37). Anything—even something good—that detracts from our total love for God must be avoided. This can easily be applied to many forms of entertainment, hobbies, etc. Anything that diminishes our total devotion to God must be avoided. Likewise, we are to love our neighbor as ourself (Matthew 22:38). Anything that is not done for love of other people should be avoided.

Not only that, but Romans 14:29 says that whatever is not of faith is sin. This likewise greatly limits what we can do—all of our actions need to be driven as an act of faith. When we truly seek to live

this way, we will quickly discover how much of our life is lived not out of faith in God. All of those actions are to be shed from the life of the maturing Christ.

Thus, when the implications of these principles truly rest upon our life, and we start getting rid of everything that is not done out of love for God, love for others, and driven by faith; we'll quickly find that there are far less activities that we are permitted to engage in.

This also explains a troubling reality that most honest students of the Old Testament quietly find out. When we read the Old Testament with New Testament eyes, we find troubling examples of moral misconduct that is not condemned at the level we would expect (e.g. Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, the Levite and the concubine in Judges 19, etc, Samson and the harlot of Gaza in Judges 16:1). In the Old Covenant, those actions did not violate the law—indeed, the Old Covenant seems to go light on things like prostitution, polygamy and slavery. Yet, as New Covenant believers—with a command to love God and love others—these matters are prohibited—not because we have a chapter and verse prohibiting them, but because they violate the principles of love, faith, and holiness. That's why Paul says in 1st Corinthians 8 that even eating meat can be immoral. What was permitted in the Old Covenant may now be prohibited if it violates the law of love.

And so, rather than throwing off morality, the New Covenant raises the standard much higher and even more expansive. No longer do we demand a “verse” to regulate every action—now we are called to simply abide in God's holiness *all the time* and avoid everything that does not love and glorify Him. Rather than creating an open field of permissiveness; it limits it even further. Rather than allowing us to eat or drink anything, every piece of food we eat and every drop we drink and every word we say needs to be offered to God to glorify Him.

Thus; while the specifics of the Old Covenant law may not be in place any longer, many of those laws—plus many, many, more actions not addressed in the Old Testament—now become matters of holiness/unholiness that must be driven by a love for God, a love for others and done in faith. Even “good” things not done this way become sinful in the New Covenant.

Thus, for us the question of permissiveness must be regulated by seeking holiness in all things, love in all things, glory to God in all things, and wisdom in all things. Thus, actions permitted under the Old Covenant are no longer permitted in the New Covenant. For instance, under the Old Covenant, David could be warmed by a “young virgin” in 1st Kings 1:2 because there was no law against it. Yet, in the New Covenant 1st Thessalonians 5:22 says, “abstain from all appearance of evil” and so such conduct is not permissible. Sacrificing Saul's sons to God in 2nd Samuel 21:9 is permissible because there was no law against it. Yet, in the New Covenant, such actions are prohibited. Polygamy was permissible in the Old Covenant, and yet even without such a law in the New Testament, if we aspire to reflect Christ in everything we do; we see that He has just one bride and so will we; not because we're looking for a “verse” to condemn or condone, but because we're seeking to be absolutely holy in everything we do.

Thus, the standard is not lowered, but raised. This was Christ's principle in the Sermon on the Mount where He took the law and raised it. In all His examples of adultery, anger, generosity, love—He showed that New Covenant believers exceed the righteousness of the keepers of the Old Covenant (Matthew 5:20). There are even Old Covenant laws that are incompatible with the New Covenant. For

instance, In Leviticus 5:16, the Lord gave people principles of restitution (add a fifth) and retribution in Lev 24:17 (an eye for eye). Yet in the New Covenant, we are called to forgive unconditionally (Matt 18).

Thus, His law is written on our hearts—just not as a letter, but rather the “law” of abiding in fellowship with God. The question for the Christian is not: “Is there a verse permitting or condemning this action” but rather, is this something God is doing? Is this how I know God more? Is this how I walk in His love for me and others more? Does this action draw me further into His holiness? Is this an action or word that glorifies and celebrates God’s holiness? Are these thoughts holy and pleasing to Him? Am I—right now—in service to His holiness? Are these motives for His holiness? Or is this for my flesh? Am I looking for some “legal loophole” to permit something that Jesus is not doing right now? Am I looking for an excuse to let my flesh, my world view, my opinions, rule me and not the Spirit of God? And thus, the standard is raised higher.

Conclusion

This last comment—should ultimately be the first. Our Lord has fully satisfied the requirements of the Law in Himself. Because of His perfect life and sacrificial death, we are viewed by God as spotless children, fully washed in Christ. And yet our justification is not the end, but the beginning of righteous living. Now, we are to abide in Christ and live in fellowship with Him so that by His grace we might fully be able to live out the law that He has written on our hearts. We could never obey the law in our flesh, and now, in His love and wisdom, He gives us His Spirit who now enables us to obey the law He has always intended for us to follow.

My hope is that God’s people know and understand both the Old Covenant Law and the New Covenant Law as designed by Him, and as we grow in our knowledge of these things, we will grow increasingly committed to the law of holiness, love, wisdom and glory to God in all things. In so doing, we will avoid falling into the snare of the law (Romans 11:9) and the snare of lawlessness that the Lord condemns (Matthew 7:23, 1 John 3:4). Thanks for reading to the end.