

The Law of Moses vs. The Law of Christ

The Law of Moses can be defined as, “the laws (beginning with the Ten Commandments) that God gave to the Israelites through Moses; it includes many rules of religious observance given in the first five books of the Old Testament (in Judaism these books are called the Torah)”¹ The Law of Moses is then made up of the 10 commandments and the stipulated civil and ceremonial laws (613 total). This Law is also called the Old Covenant which was made with Moses and the people he would mediate for (i.e. Israel). This Law was in effect until the coming of the Lord and the establishment of the new Law, the Law of Christ.

The Law of Christ can be defined as, “...those prescriptive principles drawn from the example and teaching of Jesus and his apostles (the central demand being love), which are meant to be worked out in specific situations by the guiding influence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.”² The Law of Christ is built around the central aspect of love: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” The second is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.”³ From this flows the Law of Christ, the greatness of love, and the work of the Spirit in the lives of the believer.

Old (Mosaic) Covenant → Law of Moses

New Covenant → Law of Christ

When looking at the Law of Moses and comparing this Law with the Law of Christ it is clear that there is a unique paradigm attributed to both. The Law of Moses was to function in a specific way and the Law of Christ was to function in a different way. Though there may be overlaps, they should not be conflated as the same entity. The Law of Moses functioned as a tutor (school master) to point its people to Christ. It was only meant to function as a covenant and law until Christ’s coming. Galatians 3 makes this abundantly clear:

24 Therefore the Law has become our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

¹ <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/Law%20of%20Moses>

² A. Blake White, A Short Primer on New Covenant Theology Essentials, In Series: New Covenant Theology.

https://www.gracegems.org/31/white_short_primer_on_new_coven.htm

³ Mark 12:28-31

If, what Paul says is true, that the Law would find its end with Christ, then it is also true that we are no longer ‘under’ a tutor. We have moved from being ‘under’ the tutor, to being under something different, a new entity. What is this new entity? Paul makes it clear that this new entity, is a new Law. In 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 Paul clearly states that he appeared to be one without the Law (because he is no longer under the Mosaic Law) to one under the Law of Christ:

21 to those who are without the Law, I became as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law.

Because of this, we should see things as Paul does. We also, like Paul, are not under this old Mosaic Law, but have been moved from that Law to the Law of Christ. There is a new governing principle for those that have faith in Christ.

Paul will also repeatedly play on the *antithesis* theme between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ, demonstrating that they are not the same entity. Here is a snippet:

Steward	Law of Moses	Law of Christ
Mediator	Moses (<i>Acts 13:39; Gal 3:19-20</i>)	→ Christ (<i>Rom. 3:31</i>)
Governing Principle	Law (<i>Works</i>)	→ Grace (<i>Faith</i>)
People Group	Ethnic Israel	→ The Church (<i>True Israel + Gentiles</i>)
Covenant	Old	→ New
Bondage or Freedom?	Bondage (<i>Rom. 7:4-6; Gal 4:24-25; 5:1</i>)	→ Freedom (<i>Gal. 5:1, 13; 2 Cor. 3:17</i>)
Ministry	Flesh (<i>Gal. 5:16-17</i>) Curse (<i>Gal. 3:10-13</i>) Death (<i>Rom. 8:2; Gal. 3:21; 2 Cor. 3:6</i>) Condemnation (<i>Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:9</i>)	→ Spirit (<i>Rom. 7:6; Gal. 5:18; 2 Cor 3:6</i>) Blessing (<i>Gal. 3:13-14</i>) Life (<i>Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor 3:6</i>) Reconciliation (<i>Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 3:9</i>)
Church Under?	No (<i>1 Cor. 9:19-23</i>)	→ Yes (<i>1 Cor. 9:19-23</i>)
Fulfilled?	By Christ (<i>Mt. 5:17; Rom. 10:4</i>)	→ By Church (<i>Gal. 6:2</i>)
Tutor	For Israel (<i>Gal. 3:24</i>)	→ For the Church (<i>Gal. 3:25</i>)
Contrast	Oldness of Letter (<i>Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:2-17</i>)	→ Perfect Law of Liberty (<i>Rom. 7:4-6; James 1:25</i>)
Sacrifice	Blood of Animals	→ Blood of Christ
Written	On Stone (<i>2 Cor. 3:3, 7</i>)	→ On Hearts (<i>2 Cor. 3:3</i>)
Eternal	No (<i>2 Cor. 3:11; Heb. 8:13</i>)	→ Yes (<i>Heb. 8:13</i>)
Obsolete	Yes (<i>Heb. 8:13</i>)	→ No (<i>Heb. 8:13</i>)
Commandments	Old	→ New (<i>John 13:34-35</i>)
Creation	Old	→ New (<i>Rom. 6:4</i>)
Glorious	No (<i>2 Cor. 3:10</i>)	→ Yes (<i>2 Cor. 3:10</i>)

What we can see from the numerous points above is that the Law of Christ is not the same as the Law of Moses. The Law of Christ in fact replaces the Law of Moses as the governing Law during this present age. The Law of Christ (built on the premise of love) becomes the command for the church to abide by. It is more glorious than the Mosaic Law, it is more wholesome drawing from more angles, and deeper realities. It is more sacred, more pronounced, free, and beautiful. The Mosaic Law (though beautiful in itself) is not more beautiful than the Law of Christ.

A question that arises is, is the Law of Christ different than the Law of Moses in ***ALL*** areas. The answer is no! There is certainly some continuity between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ. Walter Elwell states, "Jesus' teaching, although standing in continuity with the law given at Sinai, nevertheless sovereignly fashions a new law. In some instances Jesus sharpens commandments (Matt 5:17-48) and in others considers them obsolete (Mark 7:17-19). On one occasion, having been asked to identify the greatest commandment, Jesus concurs with the Jewish wisdom of his time (Mark 12:32-33) that the greatest commandments are to love God supremely and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:28-31). He breaks with tradition, however, by defining the term "neighbor" to mean even the despised Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)."⁴ So, are there areas of connection to the Mosaic Law? Of course, but the Mosaic Law as a package (Civil, Ceremonial, and Moral as seen by the Covenantalist) have all found their terminus in Christ. The Law cannot be broken down to the say that Jesus as the mediator only fulfilled 'some' areas of the Mosaic Law. The tripartite nature of the Law causes serious damage to the work of Christ and to the Law when not properly applied. Blake says, "NCT denies this "tripartite" division of the law because the writers of Scripture do not make such distinctions (e.g., skim through Lev. 19 and try to classify the commandments). The law is presented as a unit throughout Scripture. Hebrews 7:11-12 says, "If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also." Notice that the law and the priesthood are bound up together. It is a package deal. If the priesthood changes, then the law changes as well. This threefold division has no biblical basis. CT likes to emphasize that the Ten Commandments are the eternal moral law of God, but the Ten Commandments cannot be extrapolated from the covenant in which they were given. A careful reading of Exodus 19-24 bears this out. Chapter 19 is the historical introduction, and chapter 24 is the covenant ceremony. Chapter 20 consists of the ten words (20:1). Chapters 21-23 consist of the laws (21:1). In chapter 24, Moses calls both the words and the laws the "book of the covenant" (24:3, 7). One cannot have the ten words without the laws that go with them. Chapter 20 belongs with chapters 21-23."⁵

⁴ Elwell, Walter A. "Entry for 'Law of Christ'". "Evangelical Dictionary of Theology". 1997.

⁵ A. Blake White, A Short Primer on New Covenant Theology Essentials, In Series: New Covenant Theology.

https://www.gracegems.org/31/white_short_primer_on_new_coven.htm

If we see that this division does not work, we are left with the following paradigm:

Old Mosaic Covenant → Law of Moses

FULFILLED IN CHRIST (ROM 10:4) + REPLACED BY (HEB 8:13)

New Covenant → Law of Christ

This means that there is no aspect of the Law of Moses or the Mosaic Covenant that is still binding today. It has been replaced by the Law of Christ.

Just to give some examples of what the Law of Christ looks like, we look to Jesus for our example:

1. Following Christ (Mt. 4:19; 8:22; 10:38; 16:24)
2. Shine our Light (Mt. 5:14-16)
3. Honoring God's Law (Mt. 5:17-19)
4. Don't Lust (Mt. 5:27-30)
5. Keep Your Word (Mt. 5:37)
6. Love Your Enemies (Mt. 5:44-46)
7. Be Perfect (Mt. 5:46-48)
8. Lay Up Treasures (Mt. 6:19-21)
9. Seek God's Kingdom (Mt. 6:33)
10. Judge Not (Mt. 7:1-3)
11. Ask, Seek, Knock (Mt. 7:7-8)
12. Do Unto Others (Mt. 7:12)
13. Beware of False Prophets (Mt. 7:15-16)

14. Be Wise (Mt. 10:16)
15. Do Not Fear (Mt. 10:28)
16. Come to Jesus (Mt. 11:28-30)
17. Honor Parents (Mt. 15:4)
18. Deny Yourself (Lk. 9:23-25)
19. Church Discipline (Mt. 18:15-17)
20. Beware of Covetousness (Lk. 12:15)
21. Forgive (Mt. 18:21-22)
22. Honoring Marriage (Mt. 19:4-6)
23. Being a Servant (Mt. 20:26-28)
24. Ask in Faith (Mt. 21-22)
25. Rendering to Caesar (Mt. 22:19-21)
26. Love the Lord (Mt. 22:37-38)
27. Love Your Neighbor (Mt. 22:39-40)
28. Await The Lord's Return (Mt. 24:42-44)
29. Keep the Lord's Commandments (Jn. 14:15)
30. Make Disciples (Mt. 28:19-20)

Etc.

This is what the Law of Christ looks like. One great proof of a change in Law is the example of the Sabbath. In the Old Testament we are told to “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.” Yet, Paul in Romans 14:5 says that each person should be convinced in their

own mind. How can we have it both ways? They both cannot equally be true at this present time. Clearly, Paul was advocating for a change in Law. The Old is obsolete and a new better way is made. The new and better way is guided by the Spirit. Paul says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.”⁶

⁶ Galatians 5:18