

The Role of the Law of Moses in the Church

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Preliminary Observations

- ▶ The priesthood revealed by the Law of Moses has changed permanently (Hebrews 7:12, 14; 1 Peter 2:5, 9).
- ▶ The sacrificial system of the Law of Moses is outmoded (Hebrews 8:13) and set aside (7:18).
- ▶ The Law of Moses did not redeem the Israelites—they were already redeemed.
- ▶ Violation of the Law of Moses in any one point is violation of all of it (James 2:10-11).
- ▶ There are not three laws or three sections of the Law of Moses (moral, civil, and ceremonial)—only one Law.
 - ✓ Sabbath keeping (in the so-called moral Law—Exodus 20:1-17) is no longer binding.
 - ✓ Capital punishment of persistently disobedient children (in the so-called civil law—Exodus 20:22–23:32) is no longer binding.
 - ✓ Levitical sacrifices (in the so-called ceremonial law—Exodus 25:1–31:18) are no longer binding. The food restrictions in the Law are not longer binding (Acts 10:15; 1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Purposes of the Law of Moses	
Purpose	Reference
To reveal sinfulness.	Romans 3:19-20
To reveal the hideous nature of sin.	Romans 7:7-13
To reveal the holiness of God.	1 Peter 1:16
To inhibit sin.	1 Timothy 1:9
To guide Israel to Christ, the Messiah.	Galatians 3:23-24; cp. John 1:45

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Concerning the Change from the Law of Moses

- ❑ The Law of Moses cannot perfect anyone in his or her relationship to God (Hebrews 7:11, 19; 9:9; 10:1).
- ❑ The New Covenant is better than the Mosaic Covenant (Hebrews 7:22; cp. Acts 13:39).
- ❑ The Christian is under a different law (James 1:25; 2:8)—a law that is far more severe than that of Moses and the commandments given on Mt. Sinai (Matthew 5:19-48). We are not lawless. We are just free from the Law of Moses (Romans 7:3; 8:2; Galatians 5:1).

If I am not under the Law of Moses, what then do I do with the Law of Moses in my Bible?

- ◆ Begin with 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is **inspired** by God and **profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Purposes of the Law of Moses	
Purpose	2 Timothy 3:16-17
To reveal sinfulness.	<i>reproof</i>
To reveal the hideous nature of sin.	<i>reproof</i>
To reveal the holiness of God.	<i>teaching... training in righteousness</i>
To inhibit sin.	<i>correction</i>
To guide Israel to Christ, the Messiah.	<i>teaching</i>

- ❑ Deuteronomy 22:8 *teaches* us to love our “neighbors” by protecting them when they are in our homes. Our homes should not be unsafe. This legislation does not apply to pitched roofs in temperate climates (although a flat roof in tropical climates would be safer with a parapet).
- ❑ Leviticus 19:9-10 *teaches* us to love our “neighbors” by providing for the poor in our midst. This legislation does not apply to all field crops and the produce of orchards and vineyards today—there is no continuing legislation about gleaning per se. Not being a farmer is no excuse to neglect the poor.
- ❑ Doctrine is *taught* by the Law of Moses:
 - ✓ God is holy and righteous (Leviticus 11:45; Deuteronomy 32:4).
 - ✓ God is eternal and living (Deuteronomy 33:27; 5:26).
 - ✓ God is a person (Leviticus 26:12).

- ✓ God is all-powerful and all-wise (Deuteronomy 10:17; Exodus 31:3).
- ✓ God is sovereign (Exodus 34:9).
- ✓ God is gracious and merciful (Exodus 34:6-7; cp. Matthew 23:23).
- ✓ Atonement and forgiveness come through substitutionary sacrifice (Leviticus 4:20; Hebrews 9:22; cp. Luke 24:44; Acts 28:23).

❑ *Instruction in righteousness* is provided in the Law of Moses:

- ✓ Do not covet (see Romans 7:7-8).
- ✓ Love your “neighbor” (see Romans 13:8-10).
- ✓ Care for preachers of the Word (see 1 Corinthians 9:6-11).

Because Jesus fulfilled the law, the Apostle Paul can then point to a new law for the church—the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). To be “under the law,” used nine times in Paul’s writings, seems to be antithetical to the nature of Christianity. Christians are not living under the law of Moses as the binding constitution of the church. That law was provided for a time of preparation for the fulfillment. Now that Christ has fulfilled the law, followers of Jesus are not to go back under the regulations of the law as if Jesus accomplished nothing. They are now under the law of Christ. This language certainly means they have laws to keep (1 Cor. 7:19); and these laws cover what the law of Moses intended. Some of the Mosaic laws have been integrated fully into the New Testament (1 Cor. 9:20-21; Gal. 6:2), but as always the spirit of the law has been heightened as these laws are interpreted through Christ. To be free from the law of Moses does not mean being free from all commandments and restraints. It means that for those who are “in Christ” the law has no power to condemn, because Christ has fulfilled it; but it also means that those who are “in Christ” died to sin and now must live in the righteousness of Christ. Because Christ fulfilled the law, Christians are now to follow his law.

— Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 64