




Considering Law from Biblical Old and New Testament Perspectives

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Abstract

The focus of this article is on the interplay between legal concepts and biblical teachings, drawing inspiration from both the Old and New Testaments. The review commences by delving into the legal precepts of the Old Testament, understanding the shaped notions of justice, morality, and governance in ancient societies. As the narrative unfolds, attention shifts towards the transformative and affirmative ideals introduced by the teachings of Christ in the New Testament with reference to Mosaic Law. The article addresses biblical passages referring to legal issues, highlighting the evolution from a strict adherence to legal codes to a more compassionate and merciful ethos. It probes how the New Testament redefines key aspects such as justice, forgiveness, and the role of law in fostering a community grounded in love and grace. Moreover, the article navigates the nuanced relationship between the Old and New Testaments in shaping legal perspectives. It examines the relationship between rigid, legalistic interpretations and the broader principles of love, justice, and mercy advocated in the New Testament. By blending biblical with legal analysis, this article contributes to a more profound understanding of the biblical foundations that inform contemporary legal thought, prompting contemplation on the enduring relevance of biblical principles in influencing ethical and legal frameworks today.

Keywords: Law, *Tôrāh*, Mosaic Law, Decalogue, Covenant.

Introduction

The law itself is a marvel that is itself utterly inseparable from contemporary society. Cicero famously stated "*Ubisocietas, ibijus*" which is Latin for "wherever there is society, there is law" (Akhverdiev et al., 2018). In all societies laws are a necessary requirement because in current nations, the law serves as a crucial form of maintaining order. Firstly, it is through the law, alongside its various legal organizations and frameworks, that nations pursue to maintain the behaviour of individuals and organizations. In doing so they are required to protect the economic, social and political rights of all individuals in a society and safeguard the equality between individuals. Secondly, the law is essential in that it defines the structure of governments in various political systems by organising power, the law assists in the establishment and distribution of authority and control between various governmental actors as well as including the state and her citizens. Thirdly, law serves to direct adequate contestation by providing the necessary, substantial and procedural means required to promote accountability, resolve legal disagreements peacefully, and ultimately change the rules where needed for the betterment of wider society (World Bank, 2017).

The law's importance requires us as humans that we completely eradicate the personal will of public officials from the administration of justice in society. No legislator, executive, citizen, or judge should be allowed to entertain arbitrary power to act against societal welfare. Additionally, the rule of law stems from human nature as all seek justice through the workings



of the law. As such governments claim that only the laws, they formulate serve justice correctly. From this it is only the law that can securely stabilise justice throughout society thus, making the rule of law necessary (Sellers, 2016). However, it should be recognised that congruent to the law, religion has a vastly significant role in various societal processes. If the law regulates civilisation, then religion permeates almost every single area of human life, occupying the entire sphere of morality and ethics (Akhverdiev et al., 2018).

This article will look specifically at the uses of the Mosaic Law and how it was formulated and how it is seen from an Old Testament perspective as well as a New Testament perspective specifically with reference to the fulfilment of the law by God and through Jesus Christ. The main idea behind the Mosaic Law was to provide desired standards of righteousness to be followed by people when dealing with Yahweh. Laws were provided to demonstrate that individuals and also societies could not in any way operate as required by Yahweh unless they had an idea of what was expected.

The Law in the Old Testament Perspective

Mosaic Law also known as the Law of Moses is a form of an ancient legal system described in The *Tōrāh* (meaning Law or Instruction) or Pentateuch which constitutes the first five books of the *Tanakh*, referred to as The Old Testament by Christians. The *Tōrāh* presents many laws as being given directly from Yahweh (God) to Moses (The Law Book, 2020).

The Law of Moses was segmented into a total of 613 commandments. A portion of these, roughly 248, were positive in nature and 365 were negative. Amongst this collection of commandments needed for living in consensus with God were most importantly the Ten Commandments. Although the Jewish people refer to the first five books of the *Tanakh* as “the Law” the actual “Law” is more limited specifically to four of the five books namely:

Exodus – describes the Israelites escape from Egypt and includes the receipt of the Ten Commandments

Leviticus – details the laws pertaining to priesthood, sacrificial offerings, as well as ritual purity

Numbers – contains the Israelites’ 40-year wanderings in the desert and mentions the census of the different tribes.

Deuteronomy – mentions the laws concerning crime, worship and punishment all of which were delivered before Moses’ death. (Nicolaidis et al., 2011).

The main rules outlined in the Decalogue as found in the Book of Exodus 20:3-17 were given directly to Israel by Yahweh at Mount Sinai and they consisted of a set of ten laws that were not only civil in nature, but were also ceremonially and morally inclined. It is by these “Laws” that Israel was going to be permitted to live in the Promised Land of Canaan (Rugwiji, 2020).

With reference to Exodus 19:5 Yahweh is recorded as having said: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine...”.

God gave “the Law” as a necessary means of connecting Israel to Himself in the form of a covenant. Obediently following the law however, did not necessitate Israel being considered to be God’s people but rather allocated Israel the framework to build obedience to Him, and as such allowed for the preservation of current and future covenant relationships. Additionally, the full obedience required by the Law could never be satisfied by legalism, as the Law itself commanded not only complete love for God but also love for one’s fellow man. As such the respect to God’s Law was a direct expression of trust in God; only when people offered such obedience and respect could they be seen as belonging to Him. God being the formulator of the Law implied that any violations of the Law were considered direct actions and sins against God. In any event, laws in the Old Testament described that the ancient Israelite society was indeed a law-abiding society which was legalized by the preparation and application of civic,



ceremonial and moral laws with the *Tôrāh* as the main Law from Yahweh (Nicolaides et al., 2011; Rugwiji, 2020).

Moreover, every person in Israel was subject to the moral and religious requirements contained in the Pentateuch. Regional leaders and kings were key in relating and enforcing the law among their subjects, upon themselves and other legal authorities. This is evident in the Book of Exodus 24:7-8: “⁷ And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, all that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. ⁸ And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.”

The “Covenant Code” or the “Book of the Covenant” is book of legal instruction which is considered to be the oldest of all the Israelite legal traditions and biblical laws are considered to have been dynamic systems of thought enabling ancient Israel's efforts towards their self-definition (Morrow, 2017). The Book of the Covenant contains three main types of law namely, casuistic, apodictic as well as participial. With reference to the apodictic laws, they are generally characterised by their unconditional and second person tone that does not provide a direct forfeit for the defilement of a specific law (David et al., 1974). Such laws are seen to be either as prescriptive (i.e., positive commandments) usually beginning with “thou shalt” or prohibitive laws (i.e., negative commandments) beginning with “thou shalt not”. A prime example of this is seen in the Ten Commandments or the Decalogue. These laws are absolute in nature and are definitively seen to be divine in nature representing the actual words of God (Belnap, n.d.)

This notion is upheld in the biblical reference of Exodus 31:18 which states: “¹⁸ And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” (Belnap, n.d.)

A Table (author’s own) showing the **Prescriptive and Prohibitive Commandments from the Book of Deuteronomy 5:7-21**.

Prescriptive Commandments	Prohibitive Commandments
⁷ Thou shalt have none other gods before me.	⁸ Thou shalt not make thee any graven image...
¹² Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it...	¹¹ Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain...
¹⁶ Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee...	¹⁷ Thou shalt not kill.
	¹⁸ Neither shalt thou commit adultery.
	¹⁹ Neither shalt thou steal.
	²⁰ Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour...
	²¹ Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is thy neighbour's...

Concerning the casuistic and participial commandments these perform the function of defining general principles while also providing variable cases that determine whether a certain



behaviour by an individual is tolerable or not. Such cases address two of the basic aspects of the general biblical Israelite's life namely cultic and civic activity. The latter focuses mainly on the avoidance of social discord such as interactions between family members, property damage be it intentional or not and lastly legal dealings and cases (Belnap, n.d.)

Legal cases as rulings were given specifically concerning false charges and reports as well as bribery as is evident in the Book of Exodus 23:1,6-8 where it mentions:

“¹Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness... ⁶Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause. ⁷Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.”
⁸And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.”

Here in this context can we place the famous *lex talionis* (*law of retaliation*) (Mitchell, 2020), or the formulation from Exodus 21:24 - 26 which states, “²⁴Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. ²⁶And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.” The principle highlights the importance that just remuneration should be afforded if a person causes harm or injury to another and/or their property. Additionally, the Covenant Code addressed poverty and introduced the idea of the Sabbatical year in Exodus 23:11, “But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy olive yard”. This allocated the produce for the poorer members of society and preserved the marginalised groups.

Widows, orphans and the elderly were also cared for and had legal rights. Certain laws dealt explicitly with crimes such as theft (Exodus 22:1-8) and trespassing (Exodus 22:9). Other laws institutionalised on how to handle with hazardous wild and domestic animals (Exodus 23:10-11). The law went so far as to encompass scenarios including if an animal took a human life that was gifted with the image of God, the animal was deemed guilty of committing criminality and was objectively seen as guilty and thus, had to be executed (Nicolaidēs., et al. 2011).

The above-mentioned examples demonstrate the teachings of the law consisted of more than mere restrictions but placed major emphasis on people's responsibility to care for the welfare of not only oneself but of others. They sought to teach the people of Israel the divine obligations out of which they could fulfil their covenant with God (Belnap, n.d.).

God's response to sin and the breaking of the Law is constantly a fusion of mercy and judgement. From the provision He gives to Adam and Eve after their disobedience in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), the confusion of the tongues at Babel (Genesis 11), and the Great Flood (Genesis 7) to name a few. In this way God wishes us to follow His very actions and in as many ways as possible strive to be like Him, as such He wants humans to first follow the commandments and use them as a basis for being in accordance with Him (David et al., 1974). The law was a gift given by God to a haughty people, additionally it was given to all people and not one specific group. The law was observed not because it was easily understood but because it was commanded (Black et al., 1962).

The Law and Jesus Christ

The Term "Law" is derived from the Greek word *nomos*, which is in turn derived from *nemo* meaning "to divide," "distribute," "apportion," and generally referred to anything established, anything received by practice, a tradition and commonly in the New Testament a command (Orr, 1915). The word *nomos* appears in the New Testament approximately 165 times in 162 different verses throughout the Scripture. With the most use seen in regard either to the Law of Moses or to the entire Old Testament (Schmidtbleicher, 2003).



According to the late John Austin the law is described as being, “*a rule laid down for the guidance of an intelligent being, by an intelligent being having power over him.*”. In accordance with this comprehensive declaration, he distinguishes between the kinds of law as “*laws set by God to His human creatures, and laws set by men to men*”. Austin summarises the law into three distinct concepts: “*The ideas or notions comprehended by the term command are the following:*

- (1) *a wish or desire conceived by a rational being that another rational being shall do or forbear;*
- (2) *an evil to proceed from the former and to be incurred by the latter in case the latter comply not with the wish;*
- (3) *an expression or intimation of the wish by words or other signs.”* (Orr, 1915).

Evidently by usage of this definition it makes it obvious that the term “laws of nature” can only be utilised in a figurative context. This figurative context suggested by Austin indicates that homogeneity of conduct is one regularity of law proper, thus, “*Wherever we observe a uniform order of events, or a uniform order of coexisting phenomena, we are prone to impute that order to a law set by its author, though the case presents us with nothing that can be likened to a sanction or a duty.*”. Throughout the New Testament it can be seen that the term “law” bears generally the ideas indicative of Austin’s definition of law (Orr, 1915).

In the Gospels the word “law” is used entirely in reference to the Mosaic law, despite its diverse applications. It is often utilised to encompass the law in terms of three main divisions namely: Moral Law summated in the decalogue otherwise known as the Ten Commandments. Ceremoial Law covering ritual practices. Civil or Political Law relating to the relationships between people in response to national and political life. In certain instances, the Law refers entirely to the Old Testament as is apparent in John 10:34; 12:34; 15:25 and in other circumstances the Law indicates the Pentateuch, as in Luke 24:44 (Orr, 1915).

The relationship between the Law of God in the Old Testament Scriptures and the teachings of Christ in the New Testament poses important practical questions. In Jesus’ teachings he appears to affirm certain laws, such as those found in the decalogue, while repealing others for example ‘*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*’ which is a commandment from the Book of Exodus 21:23–27. The major question is how did Jesus intend to apply these “laws” to his followers and why did he choose to affirm certain laws while repealing others? (Nelson, 2006). Answers to these questions vary extensively:

1. *he wished for all Old Testament laws to apply (Christian Judaism)*
2. *he wished for only the moral and civil laws to apply (theonomy)*
3. *he wished for only the moral laws to apply (moral nomianism)*
4. *he wished for only laws he taught to apply (new covenant theology)*
5. *he did not wish Christians to live by laws at all (antinomianism)*

(Nelson, 2006).

The wide range of answers generates confusion, both amongst Christians, and the Church’s witness to the world’s fluctuating social and political landscapes. The main question is how exactly did Jesus relate his teaching to the Old Testament, and how did he bring this together in a clear and unswerving manner?

Firstly, the status of the “Law” as is seen Matthew 5:17–20, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus directly explains to his disciples:

“¹⁷ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:



but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

In this passage Jesus supports the Old Testament Scriptures by referring to ‘the Law’ and ‘the Prophets’. He states that the “Law” will not only stand ‘*until heaven and earth pass away*’ but ‘*until all has taken place*’. He settles and directly informs his disciples to not only practise but uphold and teach all the commandments, even to the very least of them. The disciples are directed to be even more righteous than the Pharisees and scribes, both in this manner as well as in the instruction that follows in verses 21–48 (Nelson, 2006).

Similarly, it is in this very passage in which Christ upholds and reaffirms the permanence and the complete faultlessness of the Law and he indicates the complete authority of the Law which he deems the most absolute code for the disciples to teach and share with not only the Jews but with the gentiles. Likewise in the Book of Luke, Christ makes a similar utterance where he says in Luke 16:17:

“¹⁷ And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.”

(United Church of God, 2011).

Jesus' own view of satisfying the law can be encapsulated in the use of the Greek word *pleroo* translated to mean ‘to make full’ or ‘to fulfil’ in Matthew 5:17 (Thayer., et al, 1996). Thus, Jesus declares that he came not only to complete the law but to make it indelible. He achieves this by presenting the full intent and proper applications of God’s law his meaning throughout the rest of the chapter is clear and emphasises the spiritual intentions of specific commandments. During the Sermon on the Mount Christ makes known the perfection and perpetuity of the Law and he indicates its authority in the Matthew 5:19. Christ displays that he now speaks of the law in the decalogue (United Church of God, 2011).

“¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

By these words, Jesus likened the perpetuation of the law to the very permanence of heaven itself. He declares that the law is unassailable, unbreakable and unalterable and can only be satisfied, never repealed (United Church of God, 2011). Christ brings about the fullness of the meaning that is imbued within the Law and suggests just how far reaching the Law really is. He indicates a greater all-embracing theme of his mission in ratifying the Law. Despite many alternating scholastic beliefs Jesus did not come to invalidate the Law of God that was revealed to Israel and Moses but rather he came to fulfil the words spoken by the law and the prophets. This is where many commentators have differing views on Christ’s fulfilment of the Law. Many believers, writers, and commentators understand “fulfil” in Matthew 5:17 as though Jesus were directly reaffirming the law. They utilise several terms including “confirm,” “emphasize,” “ratify,” and “establish” in this way these scholars do not see Jesus as an innovator, but as a physical exclamation point behind the Mosaic Law and the decalogue that had extensively obliged Israel. However, this belief is somewhat unsatisfactory (VanDrunen, 2019).

In actuality, *pleroo* (fulfil) is a rather loaded word in the Book of Matthew. Matthew states that Jesus had “fulfilled” the Old Testament approximately ten times, even Jesus’s proclaims in Matthew, *“¹⁵ And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”* Therefore, it is evident that we need to assume that Matthew uses this word similar to elsewhere in the holy scripture. So why use the word “fulfil” in these Matthean texts? Of the ten instances in which it is mentioned, Christ does indeed “fulfil” the



prophecies of the Old Testament and he does accomplish what they foretold. In other instances, this image shifts and places Christ as taking the role of an Old Testament prophet and carrying out this role in an ultimate manner. For example, God calls His Son, Jesus, out of the land of Egypt so too did God call Israel out of captivity in Egypt. Likewise, in the aforementioned verse of Matthew 3:15 we see that Jesus does not fulfil a particular scripture but it mentions Christ's wanting to "*fulfil all righteousness*" as such this indicates Christ's accomplishment of the moral demands of the Old Testament. Thus, Christ fulfilled what was foretold in the Old Testament not only through prophetic words but through moral actions (VanDrunen, 2019). Many Christians have made the grave error of assuming that Christ's Sermon on the Mount was a direct rejection of the Old Testament Law in favour of his new law of love. However, Jesus' criticisms are not faced directly at the laws themselves but the rabbi's interpretations of them. The commandments look at various aspects of human existence and experience thus, Christ did not destroy the law but he enlarged it (David et al., 1974).

Christ wished not to criticise the Law but rather he criticised the scribes and pharisees' understanding of the Law in accordance with traditional values. In all Gospels namely Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Christ observed the Law however, he did make exceptions to the Law when it came into direct conflict with his interpretation of the Law. For example, Christ's view on the observance of the Sabbath as is seen in Mark 2:27, "²⁷ And he said unto them, the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath..." additionally he holds the idea that it is not what goes into the person that taints them but what exudes from them (i.e. behaviour caused by sinful desires).

Therefore, Christ declared all foods clean (Elwell, 2001). Similarly, in the Book of Matthew 15:1-6 we see the account of the Pharisees that complained that Christ and the Disciples broke the traditions of the elders by eating with unwashed hands.

"¹Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,² Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. ³But he answered and said unto them, why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. ⁵But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; ⁶And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus, have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

In this example we see that Christ clearly did not condemn the Law itself but rather the understanding of the Law in accordance with traditional beliefs.

Christ condemned some of the paraphernalia and tradition that had long been in circulation among the Jewish people of His day. The gross misinterpretation of the Law by pharisees and scribes concerning the Law formulated a system of traditions that were far removed from the Mosaic Law and as such had no religious basis (Brandt, 2005). These misunderstandings of the Law were not only distorted but prevented the Jews from seeing the true power and sense of direction that the Law could provide them. Christ condemns them (scribes and pharisees) further in Matthew 23:13-14 saying, "¹³But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. ¹⁴Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore, ye shall receive the greater damnation." (Brandt, 2005; Orr, 1915).

Likewise, when Christ was questioned by the young ruler in the Book of Matthew 19:16-42. He wished to show the commandments as the key rules of one's life. Upon showing obedience to these commandments act as a path to eternal life and in doing so Christ emphasised the



humanistic aspects of the Law. In this interaction the young ruler boasts to Christ that he has kept all the Laws and thus indicates that he has not fully understood the moral or spiritual implications of the Law (Horne, 2002). This interaction enlightens the reader into seeing that the traditional view of the Law as observed by the pharisees and scribes is indeed incorrect and even the youth of the time period were not correctly informed on the consequences of the Law but followed traditional values instead (Coe, 2022). In this manner Jesus informs the young man to sell all that he possesses to the poor upon hearing this the young ruler is saddened and Christ again warned against the traditional ways of human life and the traditions of the pharisees in Matthew 19: 23-24 by saying, "...I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.²⁴ And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Horne, 2002; Orr, 1915; Coe, 2022).

Similarly, when Christ interacts with the lawyer in the Book of Luke 10:25-37 He is again questioned concerning the Law. The lawyer attempting to justify his own knowledge asked Jesus, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he also asked, "And who is my neighbour?". Christ simply answered the lawyer by summing up the entire moral law through the parable of the Good Samaritan and Jesus said in the report of Matthew, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.³⁹ And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Additionally in the report of Mark, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." Moreover, in Matthew, Christ says, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets". Thus, Christ inferred through this interaction and the parable of the Good Samaritan that religious and moral observance of the law far superseded the traditional values maintained by members of Jewish society such as the pharisees and scribes (Orr, 1915). Christ reminded the Jewish people that one commandment should always take superiority. Jesus' Jewish contemporaries however, would have been injurious to his interpretation as to how the priests should have behaved, but the general principle in the parable suggested that the commandment of love should certainly override all commandments in cases of conflict and thus, it is portrayed as unparalleled (Bauckham, 1998). Christ wishes us to focus on faithful and empathetic compassion, a true Christian love based entirely on self-sacrifice, this not only transcended the boundaries and limits imposed by law, but wished to establish a communal sense of livelihood. He wants us to take responsibility of the divine commandment through formal legalisation, but we should instead show compassion and mercy to all who need it without discrepancy (Deagon, 2019).

Conclusions

The Prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel, as well as the apostle Paul regarded the issue of the Law as a difficult path to follow in life especially in being righteous as people are generally transgressors. Christians are not under the Law as a legal code according to Romans 2:29, "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Moreover, we read in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life". These both show evidence that the Law of Jesus does not focus on the traditional beliefs of the Jews but rather on the spiritual essence of the Law. People are not and will never be prisoners of the Law nor are they guarded by the Law and are not subject to it however, those under the law are considered to be under sin and as a result cursed in Galatians 3:10 we read, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". While the Law states that it gives life to those who observe it people do not keep the Law (Galatians 3:10-14). This means that no person obtains life as a result of the law (Romans 7: 7-12). Christ has abolished the traditional constrictions and narrow mindedness of the Law as seen by the Jews in the Old Testament and this is clear



in Ephesians 2:15. People die to the Law and so Christ lives within them and as such live by faith in Jesus Christ and they know Christ as the Lord and fulfil the Law of Jesus Christ through Agape (Love) (See romans 8:3-4 and Galatians 5:13-14). The Mosaic Law is still important as it instructs Christians on how to live and obtain wisdom through it (Banks, 2005). The Law must be upheld as stated in Romans 3:31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.". The Law is still important for guiding people to obtain wisdom to live righteously as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works". Therefore, we can see that Christ abolished not the Law itself but rather the traditional stigma that was attached to the Law as a result of the misunderstanding of the Law in its entirety.

Jesus did not wish for us as humans to neglect the old Mosaic Law but rather he wanted us to uphold it in a new fashion (Westerholm, 2006). Judaism was mainly concerned with the Law as it was revealed through Moses at Sinai. Thus, Israel did not discover the Law or invent it but it was given as a gift to them from God which was not entirely understood by them as it ought to have been. It was intended that the Law should be practicable and liveable. The oral Law had a similar authority to the written Law. Jesus spoke of fulfilling the law and the prophets, and was speaking of bringing to fulfilment the prophecies of Scripture and Scripture in general. He of course did this through his ministry and role model life.

Jesus did not abolish the authority of the Holy Scriptures but rather fully revealed the perfect truth and divine authority of the Old Testament Law as such. Jesus never stated that no part of the law will ever pass away; he does say that no part of it shall pass away until it is fulfilled. He said he came to fulfil the Law which was then fulfilled and passed away. Consequently, humanity now dwells under the law of Christ, which is *agape* love, and not under the law of Moses. Jesus stated "17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17–19).

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