

Importance of the Old Testament

I received an E-mail the other day with this question: "I do not understand why pastors always teach about tithing. That is an Old Testament practice. We are no longer under the law, and besides, didn't the Apostle Paul write that if we tried to keep any part of the law that we would be under a curse? I don't see any reason why we should tithe or give love offerings. Can you help me on this?"

Actually, this is a very good question, and one that many Christians have problems with. There is a great deal of confusion amongst Christians as to exactly what role the Old Testament plays in our lives since we are now under the New Covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ. One

so called Christian denomination has actually thrown out the Old Testament all together and refuses to use it at all. Let us look and see what God's Word has to say about the role of the Old Testament and the Law in our lives today.

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:14-17

O.K., so here we have the Apostle Paul writing to Timothy about the importance of the scriptures and what they do. Now tell me, what scriptures did Timothy have available to him? If you said the Old Testament you are right. The only scriptures Timothy had available to him at that time was the Old Testament. The New Testament had not been written yet. So look again at the list of functions the Apostle Paul gave to the Old Testament scriptures: the Old Testament is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." That's quite a list! This scripture alone shows us that the Old Testament has a major role to play in our lives. But let's go on to see what Jesus Himself had to say about this.

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:17-19

Astonishingly, Jesus states very clearly here that anyone who teaches us to break any of the law shall be "least in the kingdom of heaven." So then we must define "the kingdom of heaven." Are we living in it now? Or is it some past or future time? Jesus Himself answers this question for us in Luke:

"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'" Luke 22:17-18

Jesus makes reference to "the kingdom of Heaven" and "the kingdom of God," as one and the same thing. The kingdom of God arrived at the resurrection because Jesus both ate and drank with the disciples after His resurrection. Therefore, we are currently living in the time described

by Jesus as “the kingdom of heaven.” AND, clearly the law and the Old Testament are still of great importance. God emphasizes the importance of the Law again in the book of Hebrews:

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.’ Then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.” Hebrews 10:14-18

These verses are clearly addressed to us Christians. I want you to take note of what God says. “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.” If God Himself is going to put His laws into our hearts and minds, then they must still be very important to Him, even though we are living under the New Covenant.

The Role of The Law In Our Lives Today

Given the clear teaching of the New Testament I have just quoted, on the importance of the Law, we need to ask the question: “Exactly what role does the Law still play in our lives today?”

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:3-4

All down through the ages, since the beginning of time, man has always thought he could save himself. He has always thought that somehow he could earn his way into heaven. Every religion on the earth today teaches this, except Christianity. Any of you who are in the habit of sharing the gospel knows that what I am saying is true. Go up to the average person on the street and ask him what he thinks will happen to him after his death. His answer will be something like this: “Well, I hope I will go to heaven.” Then ask him, “Why do you think you may go to heaven?” And he will answer you, “Well, I think that when God weighs the good things I have done against the bad things, He will find that I have done more good than bad, and will let me into heaven.” I challenge you to ask this question. This is the answer you will get every time!

Finally, God got tired of man’s vain thinking. So He said to men, “O.K., so you think you can be good enough to earn your way into heaven. I’ll show you exactly what you must do to be good enough.” And He gave the Children of Israel the Law. And He said, “Now, if you can keep this law perfectly, without one slip up, from the moment of your birth to the moment of your death, then you will be good enough to get into heaven.”

Of course, as the scripture I just quoted in Romans tells us, it is impossible for any one of us to keep the law perfectly all of our lives. Why? Because each one of us has a sin nature that pulls us to do only evil all the time. Not a single human being anywhere has ever been able to keep the law perfectly all of his life. Therefore, the law could not bring us salvation. Why? Simply because it is impossible for us to keep it. God knew all of this. So, in the fullness of time, He came down to earth and put on human flesh and became Jesus Christ. Jesus perfectly obeyed all the law His whole life. He was perfect and without sin. That is why He could pay for the sins of others – He had none of His own. That is why Jesus declared that He had come to fulfill the law. Jesus kept the law for us! So we, who accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, come under the covering of His blood and no longer have to keep the law in order to be saved. Our salvation is now through faith in Jesus Christ, NOT through keeping the law.

But that still leaves us with the question: “If we no longer have to keep the law in order to be saved, then why is the law still so important to God that He wants to write it onto our hearts and minds?”

The Apostle Paul gives us the answer in the book of Romans:

“But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’” Romans 7:6-7

There you have it plain and simple. The law defines sin! The law shows us what God likes and what He hates. We would do well to study the law and pay heed to what King David wrote:

“How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.” Psalm 119:9-11

I can just hear some of you saying right now, “Oh but the law doesn’t matter any more because we are under grace.” Take a look at what Paul has to say about that:

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” Romans 6:15-16

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will reap everlasting life.”

Galatians 6:7-8

We have no excuse to sin just because we are no longer under the law. Sin still has consequences, even for the Christian! Even though you are saved, if you continue to walk in active sin, you will completely block God’s blessings in your life, and even come under God’s chastisement which can be very severe. You would do well to find out exactly what God considers to be sin, and avoid it at all costs!

Parts of the Law That No Longer Apply

There are, however, parts of the law that we are exempt from. We no longer keep the blood sacrifices. (Hebrews 10:18) Jesus made the final blood sacrifice for sins. No more blood can be shed for sins.

We are specifically released from the dietary and ceremonial parts of the law. There was an argument about this in the early church. Some of the Christian Jews were trying to say that the gentile Christians had to follow certain parts of the law such as the dietary restriction and circumcision in order to be saved. So the early church leaders came together in a meeting to discuss the problem and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 15 tells us about this fascinating part of the history of the early church. They finally came to a conclusion, and wrote a letter to the gentile believers:

“To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words unsettling to your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law” – to whom we gave no such commandment – it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our

beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . For it seemed good to the Holy spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.” Acts 15:23-29

The only dietary law that still applies to us is the eating of blood. We are not to eat blood, nor to eat any animal who has been strangled and the blood not drained out of it. This is a challenge in such places as England where “blood pudding” is considered a delicacy. Also, in Asia the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols comes up as it is the custom in every household to sacrifice the first food of any meal to the house idol. Christians come under great persecution for refusing to participate in these sorts of rituals.

The rest of the law, other than the dietary, ceremonial and sacrificial parts, still define sin. Laws such as, stealing, lying, etc. There are still two parts of the law that cause much confusion amongst Christians today. That is circumcision and the Sabbath.

God gives His people things they can do to remind them that they are in a special covenant relationship with Himself. There were two signs of the Old Covenant, and two signs of the New Covenant. One sign is performed only once in a person’s life, the other is performed repeatedly.

The two signs of the Old Covenant were circumcision (Genesis 17:7-13, Romans 4:11), and keeping the Sabbath. Let’s look at the scripture about the Sabbath because it is a cause of confusion today.

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.’” Exodus 31:12-13

The Sabbath was given to the Children of Israel as a sign to continually remind them that they were in a special covenant relationship with God.

So what are the two signs of the New Covenant?

They are Baptism (Romans 6:3-5) and the Lord’s supper (Luke 22:15-19, 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

The Curse of The Law

The second part of the E-mailed question to me was, “don’t we come under a curse if we try to keep part of the law?” Let’s first look at this term “curse of the law.”

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ . . . Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’) . . .”

Galatians 3:10-13

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

Colossians 2:13-14

The curse of the law is simply this: the law condemns every one of us to an eternity in Hell because we cannot keep it perfectly. Every human being on the face of this earth has sin in his

life! However, Jesus kept the law perfectly for us, AND then paid the price for all our sins on the cross. It says in Colossians that He “wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us.” This refers to the writing of the requirements of the law. We cannot be saved by the law because of our inability to keep the law perfectly. This is why our salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing! We, ourselves can do NOTHING to earn our salvation. Jesus had to do it all for us. We must simply accept Him as God and believe in what He did for us on the cross.

Now here is where “keeping part of the law” comes in. Some of the Christian Jews were going to the gentile Christians in Galatia and telling them that they could not be saved unless they were circumcised. In other words, they were saying, “Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ plus circumcision.” This is what Paul wrote to the Galatians about this false doctrine:

“Indeed, I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” Galatians 5:2-5

What Paul is saying here is this. If you rely on keeping just a part of the law in order to be saved that you are then required to keep the whole law. Therefore, keeping just a part of the law for salvation, brings you under the curse of the law. As he wrote in Galatians 3:10 “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” You cannot ever keep just a part of the law in order to be saved. You have to keep all of it! Therefore, our ONLY hope of salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ who kept the whole law for us.

Never, never, never, let anyone tell you that you must have faith in Jesus Christ plus anything to be saved! Not circumcision, not keeping the Sabbath, not tithing, not anything! Our salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ, plus nothing! If you think you have to keep part of the law in order to be saved, then you come under the curse of the law.

What About The Rest of the Old Testament?

So now we know that the law defines sin for us and lets us know what God likes and what He hates. What about all the rest of the Old Testament? What does it have to do in our lives?

All the rest of the Old Testament shows us how God works in the lives of His people. It gives us God’s modus operandi, that is, His operating principles. When the Children of Israel turned away from God and did not keep His commandments, God dealt with them in discipline. When they kept His commandments, then God blessed them. Do you want the blessings of God in your life? Then live in a way that is pleasing to God. How do you know what is pleasing to God? Read the Old Testament!

“For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles . . . And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness. If you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.” Romans 11:13-22

In this scripture, the “branches who were broken off” are the Jews who refused to believe in Jesus Christ. We gentiles who accepted Christ are the branches that are “grafted in.” But Paul is

giving us a stern warning. We are branches, not the root! Therefore, he is putting us on notice, just as God dealt with the Children of Israel, so He will also deal with us. If we turn away from His commandments, He will discipline us just the same as He disciplined the Children of Israel. Therefore, everything written in the Old Testament applies directly to us! All the prophecies, all the examples of how God works, all the promises. We have been grafted into the nation of God's special people, so everything in the Old Testament applies directly to our lives.

So let us come back to the question we started out with. Why should we tithe and give love offerings? In order to obtain salvation? Absolutely not! We do it because God tells us this is what is pleasing to Him, and is the way He works in our lives. If we will honor Him with our tithes and offerings, then He will pour blessings into our lives. If we refuse to do this, then His chastisement will come into our life.

God knows that the one thing that is dearest to us is our money. He knows that the one thing that is the hardest for us to trust Him with is our money. It has always been so for the human race. So, God has set up a system to continually test us in our obedience and faith. It is the only place in scripture that I know of that God gives us the right to test Him. He says:

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,
Says the Lord of hosts,
'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you such blessing
That there will not be room enough to receive it.'"
Malachi 3:10

Does this apply to us today? You bet it does! Why? Because we have been grafted into the tree – we are a part of God's special chosen people. Do we have to tithe in order to be saved? No we don't! Our salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing. BUT, if we will obey God in this, we will open the windows of heaven for a blessing.

New Fields To Harvest

God has supernaturally open up a whole new field for us to harvest. Because of our agreement to confidentiality, I cannot name names. But through a whole string of purely supernatural events, two weeks ago, Daniel was made the official chaplain of a very large motorcycle association who most definitely is NOT serving God. He is the first chaplain they have ever had. (They prefer to call Daniel a counselor.) He was invited to attend their national convention where over 30,000 bikers attended. He performed three weddings that weekend, and prayed and shared the gospel with the whole crowd. The founder of the organization liked what Daniel had to say so much that he came up on stage, took the mike and announced to everyone that he was giving Daniel a "road name." Daniel's road name is now "Road Warrior." This is a great honor amongst bikers. He has already been able to lead over 20 to the Lord, and is teaching a weekly Bible study. This is a very large international group. But many of the members are getting older now, in their 50s and 60s, and they are beginning to think about death. The Holy Spirit is making a mighty move within this group. It is the first sign of a purely supernatural revival out on the streets that we have personally seen here in the U.S. Please pray for Daniel that he will have wisdom as he works in this field that is truly white for the harvest. We also need your support so that we can give out Bibles and other teaching materials that are so badly needed.

Concerning Personal Counseling

I am always flooded with requests by people to come to me for personal counseling and deliverance. Unfortunately, because of my busy schedule traveling and ministering, I simply do

not have the time or energy to get involved in this. However, I recognize the need for it and it has been heavy on my heart for a long time. Just this month, the Lord has opened a door to make it possible for this ministry to get involved in personal counseling and deliverance. God has moved so that the original pastor I worked with years ago in California, is now going to move here to Arkansas to help me with personal counseling and deliverance. Pastor Bill Woods and I worked together for five years prior to my marriage. He is a seasoned man of God who has a lot of experience in deliverance and spiritual warfare. After much prayer, Bill and his wife Marty, and Daniel and I received confirmation from the Lord that Bill and Marty are to move here to Arkansas to once again join us in the Lord's work. They will be available to help me with all the requests for personal counseling and deliverance. Our current goal is for them to move here in May, 2004. The reason for the delay is finances. We have a place for them to live, but we need to raise the money for their moving expenses, plus a minimal salary for them to live on until this part of the ministry gets up and running. Our needs are specifically as follows: \$5,000 to move them from Oregon to Arkansas, and \$1,400 per month to live on. I am praying that God will raise up people willing to help us meet these expenses. If we get the finances, I would love to get them moved here before May. I am asking each one of you reading this to pray and see if God would lead you to help us with this new aspect of our ministry. We are very excited about this move and know it will be a great blessing to God's people.

Love Offerings

We are a faith supported ministry. We depend on your love and obedience to God to continue and expand this ministry. We ask you to pray about supporting us. We deeply appreciate all of you who have been supporting us, and pray earnestly that God will grant each one of you His richest blessings.

Please send your love offering to us in the enclosed envelope.

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