

Law 2: What is the purpose of the Mosaic Law?

To clarify and highlight sin

The Mosaic Law encompassed the pre-existing moral law and was conjoined with other laws to regulate the religious and civil life of Israel under the Old Covenant. The Ten Commandments represented the nub of the moral law and were the centre of the Old Covenant (Ex 34:28; Deut 4:13); thus they were placed in the Ark as the symbol of the Old Covenant. The purpose of these was not to save but to condemn (2 Cor 3:9); and emphasise the sinfulness of sin (Rm 5:20). It was the ministry of death not life (Rm 7:5; 2 Cor 3:7). The Mosaic Law speaks to the old Adamic nature, which Christians are to consider dead (Rm 6:6, 11; Col 3:9), and condemns sin in it.

To point to the need for Christ and the Gospel

The Mosaic Law was a temporary institution (Gal 3:19, 25) brought in after the Gospel promise to Abraham that pointed forward to the revelation of Christ. It has now been cancelled (Eph 2:15; Col 2:14; Heb 8:13) and there is now a new and living way (Heb 7:18, 10:9, 10:18-19). Thus the law is in opposition to the grace that Christ brought (Jn 1:17). The law cannot result in justification (Gal 3:11), which is only by faith in Christ. Similarly, law is not the rule of the Christian's walk with God; the believer is led by the Spirit (Rm 8:14; Gal 5:18).

Contrasts between Mosaic Law and the New Covenant?

- The Law could not change men's hearts (Heb 8:7, Heb 9:9-10). The Gospel gives men a new heart. The Mosaic Law could not cleanse the conscience, only the blood of Christ in the New Covenant can (Heb 7:19, 10:1).
- The Mosaic Law was the shadow to the reality in Christ (Col 2:16-17; Heb 8:4-5, Heb 10:1). We receive Christ himself in the Gospel.
- The New Covenant has a better hope and sacrifice (Heb 7:19, 9:22-23).
- The Law / Old Covenant was cancelled (2 Cor 3:11-13 Eph 2:14-15; Col 2:13-14; Heb 7:18, 8:13).
- The priesthood of the Mosaic Law was Levitical; the priesthood of the New Covenant is of the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6, 10, 6:20, 7:11, 15, 17, 21).
- The power of the New Covenant is eternal life, the strength of the Law was the fleshly command (Heb 7:16).
- The Law exposes sin, brings wrath and cannot make alive (Rm 3:20, 4:15, 7:7; Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 1:9). The New Covenant brings life (Gal 3:21, 5:18).
- The Law is external, the New Covenant is internal (Heb 8:10, 10:16) amending behaviour by grace (Jn 1:17; Rm 7:6, 8:2; Gal 5:18). The New Covenant deals with thoughts as well as actions (2 Cor 10:5).
- God now speaks through his Son, not through the Law (Heb 1:1-2).

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