

10. Old Covenant Made Obsolete

Introduction: Inquiring minds want to know ...

What effect did the new covenant have on the old?

How should the new covenant believer view the Law of Moses?

What is the difference between the law of Moses and the law of Christ?

Should churches have priests, altars and sanctuaries, like under Moses?

Is infant baptism the new covenant equivalent to circumcision?

The church and state were merged in ancient Israel; should the same be true today?

The goal today is to determine what impact the new covenant had on the old covenant.

****** According to Hebrews 8:13, what effect did the new covenant have on the first (old) one? It made it obsolete.**

7. What does “obsolete” mean (Hebrews 8:13)? It is from *palaios* (#3822), which means to “make old, declare or treat as obsolete.”¹ Webster defines “obsolete” as “no longer in use, outmoded, of a kind no longer current.” Tyndale said that it has been abrogated.²

Obsolete Example: My dad and I restored a 1930 Model A Ford. We often bought supplies from a place called Obsolete Ford Parts. Everyone knows that a Model A is obsolete. Not only are they are not made any more, but they represent inferior technology: mechanical brakes, plate glass windows, no crumple zones, no side impact beams, no seat belts, no turn signals, only one brake light, no reflectors and they couldn't go very fast (thank goodness!). They are truly obsolete in every sense of the word. So too, the old covenant is obsolete. It is interesting nostalgia, but is not really useful anymore.

The author wrote that the first covenant is obsolete. What other words did he use to describe it in Hebrews 8:13? He said that it was old and vanishing away.

Important Theological Truth: The new covenant made the first covenant obsolete.

There is the new covenant and the old covenant, the new covenant and the obsolete covenant, the new covenant and the vanishing covenant.

8. At the time Hebrews was written, the first covenant and its system of worship were in the process of vanishing away. It was “ready” to disappear (Hebrews 8:13). When did it actually disappear? It finally went away in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem along with the temple. It put a definitive end to the sacrificial system. Christ's death made it obsolete in A.D. 33, but the unbelieving Jews kept on sacrificing until A.D. 70.

¹ Bauer, *Lexicon*, 606.

² FF Bruce, *Hebrews*, 177.

Summary: What did we learn about the Law of Moses from Hebrews 8:13? The first covenant and its laws are *obsolete*. God's people now operate according to the new covenant and the law of Christ (more on this in a later lesson).

1. A high priest under the old covenant had to be not only from the tribe of Levi but also from the family of Aaron. Jesus was neither. He was from the tribe of Judah and so was not qualified to be a priest under Mosaic Law. Instead, Jesus was a priest in the order of Melchizedek, a much older and higher priesthood. According to Hebrews 7:11-14, what impact did the change of priesthood have on the Law of Moses? It is not simply that the Law has been changed in the sense of amended. Rather, there has been a fundamental change of law. The law (of Moses) is no longer the law of the land; it is over, done with, passed away, out dated. Though not stated in 7:12, the fact is that it was replaced by the law of Christ. Both the Aaronic priesthood and the Law of Moses served a temporary purpose that has now been fulfilled in Christ.

2. What is the answer to the question in Hebrews 7:11? The obvious answer is that if perfection was possible through the Levitical priesthood, then there would have been no need for the Melchizedek priesthood.

Review: Who was Aaron (Hebrews 7:11)? See *all of Exodus and Leviticus 8*. Aaron was the first Levitical high priest, Moses' brother a descendant of Levi. Aaron was born three hundred years after Levi lived.³

• **“another” (priest, 7:11):** From *heteros*, which means “another,” but another of a *different* kind (rather than another of the same kind), as in heterosexual or heterodox. Aaron and Melchizedek were both priests, but they were different (opposite) kinds of priests. There is a profound and important difference between the Aaron and Melchizedek priesthoods, between the old covenant and the new covenant, between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ.

3. Why did a change in priesthood necessitate a change in law also (Hebrews 7:13-14)? Jesus was not qualified to be a Levitical priest because Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. If there were no change of law, then a change in priesthood would be unlawful. As will be explained in Hebrews 8, the entire Sinai covenant was rendered obsolete by the New Covenant. When the Old Covenant was terminated, so were its laws.

Summary: What did we learn about the Law of Moses from this paragraph (Hebrews 7:11-14)? There has been a *change in law*. The old rules are no longer in effect; they have been superseded.

³ *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*, 1.01, BibleWorks.

4. What can we learn about the Law of Moses from this paragraph (Hebrews 7:18-19)? The former law has been “set aside” because it was weak and useless with respect to making things perfect.

The law pointed to perfection, but it could not offer perfection. “Run and do, the law commands, but gives me neither feet, nor hands. Better news the Gospel brings, it bids me fly and give me wings!”

ESV **Hebrews 10:4** ... it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Package Deal: The Law of Moses stands or falls as a unit. Though there are clearly three types (categories) of Mosaic Law (civil, ceremonial, moral), a person is either under all of the Law, or none of it. It is not valid to pick and choose some parts of the Law and claim those parts are somehow still binding.

Teacher’s note: “Former” (Hebrews 7:18) is from *proago* and fundamentally means to go before or to precede. In this case, it means to precede in time.⁴ In and of itself it does not mean that the first was replaced by what followed. However, based on the other things the author wrote, the former clearly was replaced by what followed.

5. What does “set aside” (Hebrews 7:18) mean? It is from *athetesis* and carries the idea of doing away with something established. The KJV here says, “there is verily a disannulling.” It was a technical term used in legal documents that meant “to invalidate, to abrogate, to disannul.”⁵ It means to “cancel.”

6. Setting aside the former commandment allowed for the introduction of a better hope (Hebrews 7:19). What does this “better hope” (Hebrews 7:19) enable us to do? Though this better hope we can draw near to God. Jesus is better than Aaron. Jesus is better than Levi. Jesus is better than Moses. Jesus is even better than Abraham. Jesus represents genuine hope and change.

Summary: What did we learn about the Law of Moses from this paragraph (Hebrews 7:15-18)? The Law has been *set aside* because of its weakness and uselessness with regard to making things perfect.

******Why could sacrifices done according to the Law never make people right with God (Hebrews 10:1-4)?** See *Hebrews 8:5*. “Since” the things of the law were merely shadows and not reality, they could never make anyone perfect (**10:1**). In fact, instead, they were designed to serve as reminders of sin (**10:3**). Frankly, it is impossible for animal blood to take away sin (**10:4**).

⁴ Bauer, *Lexicon*, 702.

⁵ Jon Zens, “Searching Together”, Volume 25:1, 2, 3, p. 11.

ESV **Hebrews 8:5** They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.

In Hebrews 10:1, the author made a contrast between a shadow and reality. How substantive is a shadow? Kittens will sometimes chase a shadow; it can be seen but there is really nothing there. Sometimes food that is not filling is said to be like snapping at a fog; it is the same with a shadow. The difference between a shadow and the reality that cast the shadow is great; it is like the difference between the shadow of your spouse versus your actual spouse!

Burger King Example: Imagine you go the drive-through window of a Burger King restaurant. After you pay, the attendant holds up your hamburger bag so that its shadow falls on your seat. *Would you be content with the shadow or would you want the actual bag of food?*

9. What is the answer to the question in Hebrews 10:1-2? The answer is yes, the sacrifices would have ceased if they had been effective in cleansing the worshippers.

10. According to Hebrews 10:3, what purpose did the yearly sacrifices serve? See *Romans 3:30 & 7:7*. They reminded people that they were sinners. One purpose of old covenant sacrifices was to remind people of their sins. One purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remind people of Jesus' death for the forgiveness of their sins!

11. What "Mission Impossible" do we find in 10:4? It is impossible for the blood of sacrificial animals to take away sins. The ESV Study Bible notes that "no animal was worthy of paying the price for a human being's sin before a holy God."⁶

Summary: What did we learn about the Law of Moses from 10:1-4?

1. It is a shadow, not the reality.
2. Its sacrifices can never make one perfect.
3. Its sacrifices served to as a annual reminder of sin.
4. Its sacrifices can never take away sins.

The Law of Moses, the Mosaic covenant, all Old Testament offerings and sacrifices are nothing but shadows (**10:1**) It could be said that the Bible is divided into two big parts: The Shadow Covenant and the Substantive Covenant. The things of the old covenant were designed to last only "until" the time of reformation (**9:10**); it had an expiration date. The old covenant is now "obsolete" (**8:13**). The law made nothing perfect (**7:19**). The former commandment has been "set aside" because of its "weakness" and "uselessness" (**7:18**). There has been a "change in law" (**7:12**).

******12. What impact did Christ's offering have on the sacrifices of the law (Hebrews 10:5-10)?** The need for sacrifices done according to the Law was done away with by Christ's sacrifice, **10:9**.

⁶ Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2376.

13. In Hebrews 10:9, what did the author mean when he wrote that Christ “does away with the first in order to establish the second”? See 7:12, 7:18-19, 8:13, 9:15. The first covenant (Mount Sinai, through Moses) was done away with by the second covenant (the New Covenant, 9:15). Thus, it could be said that the Bible has two big sections: the “done away with” testament and the established testament.

Summary: The things of Sinai worship have been “*done away with.*”

So What?

The Sinai Covenant is Old, Broken, Obsolete: *GONE*

It is Over, Done, Abrogated, Finished, No Longer in Force: *GONE*

The Law of the Covenant: “change”, “former”, “set aside”, “weakness”, “uselessness”, “made nothing perfect”, “shadow”: *GONE*

Moral, civil and ceremonial law: *GONE*

The Law stands or falls as a unit. It is all or nothing.

NIV **James 2:10** whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

******14. Relative to the law, how did Paul describe Jews versus Gentiles in Romans 2:12, 14, 17?** Gentiles are described as those “without the law” (2:12, 14) and Jews categorized as those “under the law” (2:12, 17).

******15. Based on Romans 3:19-20, what spiritual purpose did the law serve? See Romans 7:7.** The whole context leading up to Romans 3:19-20 is the contrast between Jews and Gentiles and how each group is sinful. The Jews sinned under the law and the Gentiles sinned without it. The law was not given so that those under it could gain righteousness by keeping it. Rather, the law speaks to those who are “under it” (i.e., the unbelieving Jews) so that they would be conscious of their sin.

ESV **Romans 7:7** ... if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

******16. According to Romans 3:21-24, how can a person be made right with God?** We are made righteous through faith in Jesus and the redemption he bought for those who believe. It is apart from law.

In what sense do the Law and the Prophets bear witness to God's righteousness (Romans 3:21)? The Law sets the standard for right and wrong but cannot make a person righteous (since no one can keep the laws found in the Law). The Prophets predicted the coming of the Righteous One who would take away our sins.

Note: "The Law and the Prophets" (3:21) is a way of referring to the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures.

******17. What can we learn about our relationship to the law from Romans 6:14?**

Believers are no longer under the law, but rather under grace.

What application of not being under the law is brought out in Romans 6:14-15?

Not being under the law is not a license to sin! Grace gives us the desire and power to overcome sin in our lives.

18. What did Paul write in Romans 7:1-6 about the new covenant believer's relationship to the law?

1. The law has authority over a man only so long as he lives, 7:1 (it is like the Jews were married to it)
 2. We died to the law through the body of Christ, 7:4.
 3. We now belong to Christ, 7:4.
 4. We have been released from the law, 7:6.
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******19. What, in Romans 7:7, shows that the "law" we are not under includes even the moral aspects of the Mosaic Law?** Paul's example of one Mosaic Law that we are not under is coveting, a moral law! This is not to say that we can now covet, however. The reason we still may not covet is that it is a part of the law of Christ. Certainly, what is ethical under Mosaic Law is ethical under the law of Christ. The fact to be observed here is that Christians are not under any of the laws of Moses (civil, ceremonial or moral).

The Law of Moses either stands or falls as a unit. It cannot be divided. Either you are under all of it or none of it. However, certain ethical aspects of the Law of Moses have been renewed under our covenant (the new covenant). In the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5), the laws Jesus dealt with were all moral.

Perspective: Many level the charge that New Covenant theology is **antinomian** (against law) and therefore libertine. This is not true. While NCT clearly teaches that believers are not under the Law of Moses, it does stress that they are under the Law of Christ. NCT adherents would counter that those who hold to Covenant Theology may be legalists when CT insists that believers are in some areas obligated to obey the Law of Moses, such as tithing or Sabbath observance (**legalism** is requiring a person to keep laws that God does not require). Happy, neither NCT nor CT proponents are **Judaizers** (insisting that the Law of Moses must be kept in order to be saved ~ a false gospel).

20. According to Galatians 3:23-25, what was the purpose of the law for the Jews? The law was given because of the Jewish people's sinfulness, to hold them as prisoners of sin, thus preparing them for the salvation Christ offered. The purpose of the law was to lead the Jews ("we")* to Christ, so that they may be justified by faith.

*Galatians 1:1-2 was penned by Paul ("I") in company with other brothers ("we"). Throughout the letter the words I, we, and you are used. I = Paul, we = the Jews, you = the Galatians. The whole problem of the letter is that false Jewish teachers were trying to get the Galatian Christians to live by the Law of Moses. Paul, himself a Jew, states that the law's purpose was to lead Jews to Christ, and once in faith, the law's ministry is finished, even for the Jews.

According to Galatians 3:24, what duty did the law have? The law served as a guardian until Christ came. The Greek here is *paidagomos*, and though often translated as "tutor," it actually refers to a trustworthy slave who was charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the slave-holders.⁷ It was more of a truant officer than a tutor.

21. Based on Galatians 3:25, once a Jewish person came to faith in Jesus, what role did the law play in his life? See Galatians 5:18. Those formerly under the law are no longer under the law.

- Paul was in-lawed to Christ, 1 Corinthians 9:20-21.

ESV **Galatians 5:18** ... if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

⁷ Joseph Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), #3807.

So What?

Just say no! To:

Tithing

Priests

Sanctuaries

Infant baptism

Lord's Day as a Sabbath day

Combining Church and State

Observance of Old Testament Holy Days

Promoting the Ten Commandments Today

22. What impact did the new covenant have on the old covenant? It made it obsolete.

The Law of Moses was written on tablets of stone, where are the laws of Christ written? It is written on our hearts.

23. What was the purpose of the Law of Moses? Its purpose was to show Jewish people their sins and to lead them to Christ.

24. What is the new covenant believer's relationship to the Law of Moses? He is free from the law; he is not under the law; he is released from the law. There has been a change of law; it was been set aside.

What new covenant fulfillment of Exodus 19:5-6 did the apostle Peter proclaim in 1 Peter 2:9-10? Peter picked up on Exodus 19:5-6 and applied it to the church, which he clearly sees as the new Israel.⁸

ESV **1 Peter 2:9-10** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession ... Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people ...

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Revised 12/12/2022

⁸ Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2408.