

Using the Old Testament to Better Understand New Testament Laws

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The New Testament is Our Only Law Today

“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God . . . by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:18-22).

- The Old Covenant “made nothing perfect,” but we now have the “perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25).

“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” (Col. 2:13-14).

- We are not bound to the requirements of the Old Law. These requirements were taken away upon Jesus’s death on the cross.

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“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law” (Heb. 7:12).

- Jesus is our high priest, but He is descended from Jacob’s son Judah and not Levi. Thus, the priesthood has changed. **Since one part of the law has changed, the whole law has changed.**

“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal. 3:24-25).

- Tutor (NKJV), Disciplinarian (RSV), Guardian (ESV, ASV, NIV), Schoolmaster (KJV) = the Old Law.
 - We have been brought to Christ, so we are not under the tutor now.

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This is serious . . .

“And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law” (Gal. 5:3).

- If we bring one law from the Old Testament forward, then we are bound by consistency to keep every law of the Old Testament.
- But even being consistent will not save us because if we bind any part of the Old Testament law, we lose our salvation.

“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

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- Though we should never never bind any Old Testament law, we know there are still reasons for us to regularly study the Old Testament.
 - *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).*
 - *“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11).*
- Specifically, I believe there are many ways that, by examining the Old Testament, we can better understand some New Testament laws that are binding for us today.

The Old Testament Helps Us Know God Cares How We Worship

- We are commanded in the New Testament to worship God in song today.
 - *“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).*
 - *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16).*
- Many believe there is nothing wrong with adding to the command to “sing” by including various musical instruments. They say, “It doesn’t matter.”
 - We know from **Col. 3:17** that it does matter, and if we look at an Old Testament example, we can see just how much it matters to God if we worship Him in ways that are unauthorized.

The Old Testament Helps Us Know God Cares How We Worship

The Old Testament helps us see that it matters how we worship:

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev. 10:1-2).

- We can learn from Nadab and Abihu’s example that if we do not worship God today in the exact way He has specified, God does not accept our worship.
- God had just spent several chapters explaining what to do and what not to do, and after Nadab and Abihu worshipped Him in an "*unauthorized*" manner (**v.1, ESV**), God struck them down.
- We can learn from this Old Testament example that we should never do something God has said not to do (or been silent on) in the New Testament.

The Old Testament Helps Us Know The Seriousness of Homosexuality

Homosexuality is condemned in the New Testament.

- *“As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7).*
- *“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” (Rom. 1:24-27).*

The Old Testament Helps Us Know The Seriousness of Homosexuality

Homosexuality is condemned in the New Testament.

- *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).*
- *“For fornicators, for sodomites [**men who practice homosexuality, ESV**], for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10).*

The Old Testament Helps Us Know The Seriousness of Homosexuality

If we look in the Old Testament, we can see how God once described this behavior.

- *"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion"* (Lev. 18:22-23).
 - God saw homosexuality in the same category as having relations with an animal.
- **Gen. 19:1-28** – God utterly destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their homosexuality.
 - Sodom and Gomorrah still serve as examples for how seriously God views this sin.
 - *"By turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly"* (2 Pet. 2:6).

The Old Testament Helps Us Know The Importance of Warning the Wicked

- We are commanded in the New Testament to warn those who are steeped in sin and/or false doctrine.
 - *"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths" (2 Tim. 4:2-4).*
 - *"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27).*
- Spreading the gospel as we ought requires us to declare the "*whole counsel of God*," not just the parts that make us feel good or in which we already agree.

The Old Testament Helps Us Know The Importance of Warning the Wicked

If we look into the Old Testament, we can see how important this truth is.

- *"If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul" (Ezek. 33:18-19).*
 - Prior to this, God told Ezekiel three times, "*whether they hear or refuse to hear*," that he must warn the wicked (**Ezek. 2:5 & 9; 3:4 & 27**).
 - Today, even though people will likely "refuse to hear" our message of truth, we still must warn them. **Not only are their souls reliant on us warning them, but our souls' salvation is equally dependent on those warnings.**

The Old Testament Helps Us Know How to Pray Without Ceasing

We are commanded in the New Testament to remain in continual prayer to God:

- *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer” (Rom. 12:10-12).*
- *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6).*
- *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2).*
- *“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15).*
- *“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).*

The Old Testament Helps Us Know How to Pray Without Ceasing

The Old Testament helps us see what continual prayer looks like:

- The Psalmist
 - *“As for me, I will call upon God, And the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:16-17).*
- Daniel
 - *“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days” (Dan. 6:10).*

The Old Testament Helps Us Know How to Pray Without Ceasing

The Old Testament helps us see what continual prayer looks like:

- Compare David with King Saul
 - One of the reasons God handed the kingdom to David was because Saul did not inquire of Him.
 - *“So Saul died for his unfaithfulness . . . he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse” (1 Chron. 10:13-14).*
 - David, on the other hand, inquired of the Lord nine times.
 - (1 Sam. 23:1-3, 4-5, 10-11, 12-14; 30:8-9; 2 Sam. 2:1-2; 5:17-21, 22-25; 21:1).

The Old Testament Helps Us Know The Danger of Unchecked Anger

- We are warned about anger in the New Testament (**James 1:19-20; Eph. 4:26-31**).
- Unchecked anger gives Satan the opportunity to enter our hearts. Consider the example of Cain and Abel in **Gen. 4**.
 - When God showed no regard for Cain's sacrifice, Scripture tells us, “*Cain was very angry, and his face fell*” (v.5).
 - God warned Cain, “*Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it*” (v.7).
 - What was the result of that unchecked anger? – “*Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him*” (v.8).
- If we do not put away anger as quickly as it enters our hearts (**Eph. 4:31**), we provide Satan with prime ground to plant and harvest sin.

The Old Testament Helps Us Know . . .

. . . Defining Qualities of Holiness

- In **1 Pet. 1:15-16**, we are commanded, “*But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’*”
- This command stems from a command given under the Old Covenant.
 - “*And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy’*” (**Lev. 19:1-2**).
- Though not all the conditions for holiness listed in Lev. 19 are required for us today, many of these qualities are still applicable under the New Covenant.

The Old Testament Helps Us Know Defining Qualities of Holiness

Holiness, as defined by Lev. 19:

- Revere parents (**v.3; Eph. 6:1-2; Col. 3:20**).
- Don't turn to idols (**v.4; Mark 8:36**).
- Worship God as He instructs (**v.5-8; Col. 3:17**).
- Provide for the poor (**v.9-10; 1 John 3:17**).
- Do not steal (**v.11, 13; Eph. 4:28**).
- Do not deal falsely/lie (**v.11-12; Rev. 21:8**).
- Do not profane God's name (**v.12; Matt. 6:9**).
- Show kindness to the disadvantaged (**v.14; Col. 3:12; James 2:15-17**).
- Judge righteously; avoid partiality (**v.15; James 2:1-4**).
- Do not gossip (**v.16; 1 Tim. 5:13**).
- Do not hate your brother in your heart (**v.17; 1 John 3:15, 2:11**).
- Do not take vengeance (**v.18; Rom 12:19**).
- Love your neighbor as yourself (**v.18; James 2:8**).

The Old Testament Helps Us Know True Repentance

- Repentance is a requirement of salvation (**Acts 2:38**). All are required to repent (**Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30-31**).
- If we look in the Old Testament, we can see what true repentance looks like. Consider what God, through Ezekiel, told His people.
 - *"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live" (**Ezek. 18:30-32**).*
- The Proverbial writer describes one who does not turn away from sin like this:
 - *"As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly" (**Prov. 26:11**).*

The Old Testament Helps Us Know True Repentance

- We find this Proverb exemplified by God's people in Jeremiah.
 - *"You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty, each to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name, but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your slaves" (Jer. 34:15-16).*
- Instead of turning from their sins, the people – as dogs returning to their vomit – went right back to committing the same sins again. We must heed their mistakes.
 - *"Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19, ESV).*
 - *"As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways" (Ezek. 33:11).*

The Old Testament Helps Us Know How We Can (or Cannot) Be Saved Today

- Many try to use the thief on the cross to prove we do not have to be baptized today to be saved (**Luke 23:39-43**). Though the thief's salvation appears in the New Testament, we know that the thief lived under the Old Covenant.
 - *"Therefore He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive"* (**Heb. 9:15-17**).
- The thief on the cross did not need to be baptized just like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, and a host of other faithful Old Testament children of God did not need to be baptized. They all lived before Christ's death.

The Old Testament Helps Us Know How We Can (or Cannot) Be Saved Today

If we want to be saved today, we must comply with these New Testament verses:

- Have faith in God and Christ

“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

- Confess Christ and your faith in Him

“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10).

- Repent and be baptized for forgiveness of sins:

“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

Won’t you obey these New Testament passages today?