

Not Under the Law

What is the Law?

The Law is a unit of 613 commandments given by God to the people of Israel. The word Law is sometimes used when referring to all Old Testament writings such as in John 10:34, 15:25 when Jesus quotes Psalms and 1 Cor. 14:21 when Paul quotes Isaiah. But it is important to remember there is only one Law. When people refer to the moral, ceremonial, and civil laws, they are speaking of three aspects of the Law, not three laws. Those who say we must keep the Law tell us that Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial and civil laws, but not the moral law. However, over twenty passages in the New Testament tell us that there is only one Law.

The Purpose of the Law

First, the Law was given to point out our sins.

Galatians 3:19 says, "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions..." The Law is the perfect standard that is used to show how sinful we are. When I get up in the morning and look in the mirror, it tells me that I need to shave. It points out the problem by revealing what I look like. I don't take the mirror off the wall and use it to shave my face. The mirror has served its purpose by pointing out the problem, but I must find a different way to solve the shaving problem.

Some people think the Law was given so that we will become righteous by keeping it. This is a wrong understanding of the Law. It's like a football player running down the sidelines 99 yards for a touchdown. But the referee calls it back because he stepped out of bounds on the 4, 12, 23, 36, 47, 43, 31, 22, and 3 yard lines. The player says, "But look how many times I stayed in bounds." All it takes is one violation to penalize the play. The Law is our referee to show us how many times that we step out of bounds. It shows how utterly filthy and wicked our sin is (Rom. 7:13). In God's eyes, even our righteousness is called filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

Second, the Law points to the Savior.

"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us Christ, that we may be justified by faith." (Gal. 3:24). The Law not only points out the problem, but also points to the solution. It is our tutor (teacher) to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith, not by keeping the Law. Jesus paid for all of the sins of the world (1 John 2:2, 1 Pet. 2:24), the very sins the Law pointed out. The only way to receive forgiveness from sins is by receiving Jesus Christ into our lives because there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12).

No One Can Keep the Law

The Law is weak.

No one is able to keep the Law. Hebrews 7:18-19 tells us the Law was set aside because of its weakness and it made nothing perfect. As a matter of fact, the power of sin comes from trying to keep the Law (1 Cor. 15:56). This is why Paul said the Law was given so that transgression might increase (Rom. 5:20). Sin takes opportunity through the commandments and becomes alive by increasing the desires to break them (Rom. 7:8-9).

The Law is a unit.

It's not "Laws" but "Law." If we keep the entire Law and break only one command, we are guilty of breaking them all. "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all" (James 2:10). The Law is not like a carton of eggs, where if you break 5 you still have 7 unbroken eggs. It is like a sheet of glass—if you break one part, the whole sheet is broken. If you try to keep one part of the Law, such as the Sabbath, you are obligated to keep them all.

The Law doesn't justify.

No one will be justified by the Law. "Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). If the Law was able to impart life, then righteousness would have been based on the Law (Gal. 3:21). But it can't, so it isn't. The following verses show that Christians are not obligated to keep the Old Testament Law.

Matt. 5:17 Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of the Law.
John 1:17 The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth realized through Christ
Rom. 3:20 Through the works of the Law no one will be justified
Rom. 3:28 Justified by faith apart from the works of the Law.
Rom. 4:5 God justifies those who do not work.
Rom. 6:14 We are not under law, but under grace.
Rom. 6:23 Eternal life is a free gift.
Rom. 7:4 We were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ.
Rom. 8:2 The law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death.
Rom. 8:3 The Law was weak through the flesh and could not save us.
Rom. 10:4 Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
Rom. 11:6 Grace is no longer on the basis of works.
Gal. 2:16 By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified
Gal. 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law
Gal. 3:24 The Law is our tutor to lead us to Christ
Gal. 3:25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the Law.
Gal. 5:18 If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.
Eph. 2:8-9 We are saved by grace, not as a result of works.
Eph. 2:14-15 The Law was abolished in the flesh of Christ
Phil. 3:9 Righteousness is not derived by the Law.
Col. 2:14 Christ took the decrees out of the way on the cross.
2 Tim. 1:9 Salvation is not according to works.
Titus 3:5 He did not save us according to our deeds, but according to His mercy.
Titus 3:7 We are justified by His grace.
Heb. 7:12 A change of law has taken place.
Heb. 7:18-19 Law set aside because of its weakness
Heb. 7:19 The Law made nothing perfect
Heb. 8:13 The New Covenant makes the Old Covenant obsolete.
Heb. 10:1 The Law was only a shadow of good things to come.
Heb. 10:9 God takes away the first covenant to establish the second.

Now Under Grace

Some people try to argue, "If we are no longer under Law, what's left to keep us in line? That means we can now sin all we want." On the contrary, the Law doesn't give any power to live godly lives, while grace does give us the power. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age." (Titus 2:11-12).

Grace is actually a higher law than the Old Testament Law. Airplanes can fly because the law of aerodynamics is a higher law than the law of gravity. Grace changes our hearts so that we want to do God's will. Grace is called the law of liberty (James 1:25, 2:12), the royal law (James 2:8), the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:1-4), the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), the law of faith (Rom. 3:27), and the law within (Heb. 8:10). We are now under the law of the Spirit who lives within every believer, and are not under the letter of the Law. "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor. 3:6)

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