



LAW & GRACE

Use and Misuse

Biblical principles for utilizing the Mosaic Law in the age of grace.

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The Day of Pentecost, almost two thousand years ago, was a watershed moment in history. The church was born and the dispensation of grace began, ending the Mosaic Law which had been in effect for Israel for about fourteen hundred years.

The way in which God managed the dispensation of law is different from how He manages the present dispensation of grace.

Quite a bit of controversy, and sometimes animosity, has arisen with respect to the use of the Mosaic Law in the present dispensation of grace. Sometimes, when a child of God utilizes the Mosaic Laws to proclaim right and wrong behaviors, he is met with this rebuttal, "We are not under the law but under grace." Debate continues, tensions grow, and accusations legalism and license are angrily hurled.

This paper, "Law and Grace: Use and Misuse," will not settle the law and grace debate. Its purposes, however, are to provide some Biblical principles for properly utilizing the Mosaic Law in the age of grace, to plant "seeds" in people's minds which will assist in further study of law and grace, and to provide some answers and clarity for people's questions and struggles with respect to law and grace.

This writer has been growing in the truths about law and grace, refining his beliefs and the application of them, and quelling fear of grace's ramifications for pastoral ministry—a process which will continue until death or Jesus' return. Only then will there be a fuller understanding of law and grace.

1. DISPENSATIONALISM

- 1.1 A dispensation is a period of time (age) in which God chooses an individual or group of people to accomplish His purpose.¹
 - 1.1.1 God reveals His code to the one(s) chosen.²
 - 1.1.2 They are expected to obey His code.³
 - 1.1.3 If they fail to obey God's code and fulfill His purpose, then God can choose to work with a different individual or group.⁴
- 1.2 Beginning with the creation of man, God's eternal plan is composed of many dispensations.
- 1.3 Three Sine Qua Nons of Dispensationalism
 - 1.3.1 Distinction between Israel and the church.
 - 1.3.2 God's purpose is His glory.
 - 1.3.3 Normal interpretation of Scripture.

2. ALL OF GOD'S LAWS IN EVERY DISPENSATION ARE ROOTED IN HIS NATURE, THE PRODUCT OF HIS NATURE (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15, 16).

3. THE MOSAIC LAW WAS A CONDITIONAL COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND ISRAEL (Exodus 24:1-7; Romans 9:3, 4).

4. THE MOSAIC LAW IS A UNIFIED CODE.

- 4.1 The tripartite division of the Mosaic Law (moral, ceremonial, and civil) is an invention of man.
- 4.2 The law can be summarized by two commandments, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 38).

5. THE MOSAIC LAW WAS A TEMPORARY COVENANT THAT HAS BEEN REPLACED BY THE NEW COVENANT.

- 5.1 Jesus referred to His blood as the basis for the New Covenant (Luke 22:20).
- 5.2 Jesus shed blood ratified the New Covenant.
- 5.3 The New Covenant's inauguration occurred on the Day of Pentecost.
- 5.4 The main focus of the New Covenant is the Holy Spirit.
- 5.5 Hebrews 8:1-13; Romans 7:1-6; Galatians 4:21-5:1

¹ Charles Ryrie, Dispensationalism (Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 1966), pp. 23-29.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

6. THE LAW WHICH IS IN EFFECT FOR THE PRESENT DISPENSATION OF GRACE IS THE "LAW OF CHRIST."
 - 6.1 Galatians 6:2: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."
 - 6.2 John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."
 - 6.3 2 John 5, 6: "[N]ot as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning—that you love one another. This is love: that we walk according to His commands. This is the command as you have heard it from the beginning: that you walk in love."

7. BAPTIST HISTORY (THOSE WITH DISPENSATIONAL BELIEFS)
 - 7.1 The core of Baptist history and distinctives is Biblical Authority.
 - 7.1.1 The 66 books composing the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God through the superintendence of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).
 - 7.1.2 All 66 books were equally inspired.
 - 7.1.3 All 66 books are fully authoritative.
 - 7.2 Historically, Baptists have believed that preeminence is given to the New Testament because it is the rule for church polity and practice.
 - 7.2.1 Autonomy of the local church
 - 7.2.2 Priesthood of all believers
 - 7.2.3 Two offices
 - 7.2.4 Saved, Baptized membership
 - 7.2.5 Two ordinances
 - 7.2.6 Separation of church and state
 - 7.3 The church is a New Testament institution.
 - 7.4 Francis Wayland: "What is the creed, and what are the acknowledged standards of the Baptist churches in this country? To this, the general answer has even been, 'Our rule of faith and practice is the New Testament.' We have no other authority to which we all profess submission."⁵

8. CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE MOSAIC COVENANT AND GRACE.
 - 8.1 The Mosaic Covenant is not the preeminent law for the present dispensation of grace.
 - 8.2 The Mosaic Covenant is not the law for the church in the present dispensation because the law was given exclusively to Israel. The church is neither Israel, nor replaces Israel.

⁵ Francis Wayland, Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, 1857), p. 13.

- 8.3 The New Covenant is in effect in the present dispensation.
- 8.4 In order to fulfill the law of Christ, New Testament saints have been given the Holy Spirit and His indwelling work.
- 8.5 "Baptists do not reject the general authority of the Old Testament. Baptists hold the Old Testament in high esteem."⁶

9. QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE MOSAIC COVENANT AND GRACE.

- 9.1 If the Mosaic Covenant is binding for the age of grace, then where in the New Testament is the command to keep the Sabbath?
 - 9.1.1 Since the weekly Sabbath is kept on the seventh day, then why does the church meet on Sunday, the first day of the week?
 - 9.1.2 Where is the command switching the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday?
- 9.2 If the Mosaic Covenant is binding for the age of grace, then why does Paul refute the Colossian Heresy which was steeped in the Mosaic Covenant (Colossians 2:16-18)?
- 9.3 If the Mosaic Covenant is binding for the age of grace, then why were Hebrew Christians warned about going back to the Mosaic system?
- 9.4 If the Mosaic Covenant is binding today, then why does the church practice church discipline for adultery rather than the death penalty?
- 9.5 If the Mosaic Covenant is binding today, why do churches not practice circumcision?

10. CLARIFYING THE CONFUSION ABOUT THE MOSAIC LAW IN THE AGE OF GRACE.

- 10.1 All of God's laws in every dispensation are rooted in His nature, the product of His nature. God is immutable.
- 10.2 Some of God's laws transcend periods of time.
 - 10.2.1 Murder
 - 10.2.2 Adultery
 - 10.2.3 Love
- 10.3 Some of God's laws contained in the Mosaic Code have been modified in the age of grace.
 - 10.3.1 Murder and hatred in the heart.
 - 10.3.2 Adultery and looking intently with lust toward one who is not one's spouse.
 - 10.3.3 In the Mosaic Law: "Love your neighbor as yourself;" in the age of grace: "Love one another as I have loved you." The Greek word for "new" in John 13:34 is "new" with respect to "fresh" rather than "new" with respect to "time."

⁶ Kevin Bauder, Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2012), p. 20.

- 10.4 Some laws which transcend periods of time have different penalties—stoning versus church discipline.
 - 10.4.1 Israel was both a “religious” institution and a government. In the church age, the church and government are distinct entities with their own spheres of responsibilities.
- 10.5 Some of God’s laws were unique to Israel and are not a part of the age of grace.
 - 10.5.1 Priesthood
 - 10.5.2 Sacrifices
 - 10.5.3 Sabbath
- 10.6 Just because a law contained in the Mosaic Covenant is found or cited in the New Testament, it does not translate into the Mosaic Covenant being binding for the church in the age of grace.

11. SCRIPTURE PASSAGES PERTINENT TO THE USE OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT (AND THE OLD TESTAMENT) IN THE AGE OF GRACE.

11.1 2 Timothy 3:15-17

- 11.1.1 Both testaments are equally inspired of God.
- 11.1.2 With respect to Timothy’s childhood, the only written revelation of God was the Old Testament. Additionally, Paul’s letter to Timothy was written in the age of grace.
- 11.1.3 The Old Testament (and new) is profitable—beneficial, serviceable, useful.
- 11.1.4 Since all Scripture is inspired and profitable, one must consider the totality of Scriptural teaching about issues of life.
 - 11.1.4.1 Sabbath
 - 11.1.4.2 Marriage (teaching about marriage in the various dispensations refer to Genesis 2.)
 - 11.1.4.3 Murder

11.2 1 Timothy 1:5-11

- 11.2.1 The Mosaic Law is good, and any law of God is good, since it is from Him and rooted in His nature.
- 11.2.2 There is a proper use of the law in the present dispensation of grace.
- 11.2.3 In the context, there were those who were wrongly teaching the Mosaic Law and laws which are not based in Scripture (4:3).
- 11.2.4 One proper use of the Mosaic Law is to reveal behavior which is contrary to God’s glory.

11.2.5 The goal of Paul's teaching in the age of grace is to develop "love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

11.3 1 Corinthians 10:1-11

11.3.1 Events of the past serve as examples, relaying principles about desires of the heart and behaviors.

11.3.2 Israel and the church share the same Adamic guilt as all other human beings.

11.4 Matthew 5:21, 22; 5:27, 28

11.4.1 The Mosaic Law focused mainly on behavior whereas the age of grace is more stringent in that it addresses the desires and motives of a person.

11.5 James 2:8

11.5.1 James states that a believer who "loves his neighbor as himself" is doing "well."

11.5.2 He is acting virtuously, his motives and desires are good, he is acting out of faith.

12. SUMMARY PRINCIPLES FOR THE USE OF THE MOSAIC LAW (AND OT) IN THE AGE OF GRACE.

12.1 The Mosaic law is relevant and useful for the age of grace. The teachings of grace, however, take precedence.

12.2 In the age of grace, all teachings of Scripture should not be solely directed toward behavior, but towards the inner man—his motives and desires.

12.3 One should not focus solely on the Mosaic Law for teaching in the age of grace, but also address the teachings of grace.

12.4 One must consider the totality of God's Word through the various periods of time with respect to issues of life.

12.5 Just because the Mosaic Law is cited in the age of grace, it does not mean that the Mosaic Law is binding.

12.6 We must not use the Mosaic Law or "cherry pick" parts of the Law for selfish purposes.

12.7 All teaching should seek to foster love, faith, and a good conscience.