

# WHAT IS THE LAW OF CHRIST?

## WHAT IS THE QUESTION ASKING

There is much confusion in Christendom about what rules Christian ought to follow. This can become more confusing if the Christian is a Jew – and indeed if one reads the Book of Acts we see the early church grappling with this question, for instance [Acts 15](#).

The question seeks to clarify what the 'Law of Christ' (or Messiah) is. In answering this question, one must discern whether this law, mentioned by the Apostle Paul in [Galatians 6:2](#), and [Romans 8:2](#) is: 1) the same as the whole Mosaic Law as stated in the Torah, 2) comprises parts of the Mosaic Law, say just the 10 Commandments, or 3) a new law altogether.

*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the **law of Christ**.  
(Galatians 6:2)*

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the  
law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2)*

## ANSWER

### The Law of Christ

The Law of Christ is first mooted by Jesus, and spelt out by Apostle Paul in [Galatians 6:2](#). It is also called the Law of the Spirit of life in [Roman 8:2](#). This is because born-again believers have had their sin-nature done away, which was dead, and now have been made alive (quickened in the King James Version), through the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that writes on our hearts the new law.

The Law of Christ is the new law a born-again believer find themselves under. It is not the Law of Moses but a new law.

### Some basics

The Law of Moses consists of 613 ordinances but is always referred to as "the law" in the singular. Even in the Greek the *Law of Moses* is always singular. It is one unit, and each ordinance belongs with the other – it cannot be divided up. This characteristic is highlighted by the Apostle James; the law is a single unit, it cannot be subdivided.

*For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is  
guilty of all. (James 2:10)*

Based on this, and the fact Scripture does not subdivide the law, it is paramount we do not say the Law of Moses is composed of sections. For instance, Scripture does not divide the Mosaic Law into ceremonial, legal, moral and ethical sections.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Law of Moses has been disannulled (rendered inoperative) by the work of Jesus**

The Jews were under the Mosaic Law – often just referred to as the Law in the Bible. This law has been disannulled (cancelled) by the work of Jesus Christ, and therefore believers in Jesus Christ, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit are not under this law, but another new law. Indeed, Apostle Paul devotes a part of Romans (Rom 7:1-6) to this issue as he does in his letter to the Galatians and the writer of Hebrews. In Romans Paul concludes:

*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.  
(Romans 10:4)*

Here 'end' (*telos*) means to terminate – to put a stop to. Jesus was the goal of the law, which he terminated.

*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. (Galatians 2:16)*

Thus the law could not justify and further, [Hebrews 7:19](#) notes that sanctification or perfection is not possible under the law. Indeed this verse is made in the knowledge the Law has ceased to function, while [Galatians 3:19](#) states the Law of Moses was temporary until Jesus who is the 'seed' or 'offspring' came.

Christians are now under the Law of Christ. **The Law of Christ is totally distinct from the Law of Moses.** The commandments for this law are found in the New Testament as spoken by Jesus Christ and the Apostles, but they might be similar to or the same as found in the Old Testament.

In any case, as the book of Hebrews argues, there is now a new priesthood (Christ), under the order of Melchizedek, and not after the order of Aaron. The later was established under the Law of Moses which as [Hebrews 7:18](#) has been annulled. And with the annulment of the Law of Moses, the new law came into being, with the church.

*For it is witnessed of him [Jesus Christ], "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside [annulled, nullification], because of its weakness and uselessness (for*

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of study, it might be expedient to group certain ordinances together, but remember that not keeping the Sabbath means you have also broken ever other ordinance.

*the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. (Hebrews 7:17-19)*

### **Where the Law of Christ is the same as the Law of Moses**

Many elements of the Law of Christ are the same as the Law of Moses. Indeed, many components of the Law of Moses were operational before they were codified. For instance, killing another was forbidden right back from the beginning. We see this in Genesis chapter 4 when Cain murdered Able.

More importantly one can find 9 of the so called 10 Commandments in the New Testament (which are merely part of 613 ordinances of the Mosaic Law).

### **Mosaic Law not included in the Law of Christ**

However, many components are very different. The New Testament expressly says Christians can eat all food – there is no distinction between *clean* and *un-clean* foods (Mark 7:19; Romans 14:20).

*And he [Jesus] said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" Thus he declared all foods clean. (Mark 7:18-19)*

*Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure (Romans 14:20)*

Indeed, this matter caused great concern for Peter who was shown this to be the case – the ordinance pertaining to unclean food had been abolished – see Acts 10.

There is no law in regard the Sabbath Day, nor any other Sabbaths, including the Jubilee Sabbath every 50<sup>th</sup> year.

*One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honour of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honour of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:5-6)*

### **Some ordinances from the Law of Moses have been emphasised**

The Mosaic ordinance 'love you neighbour as yourself' ([Leviticus 19:18](#)) was extended by Jesus and emphasised. He extended it to loving anyone we come in contact with, not just those of our own race ([Luke 10:25-37](#)) and Jesus emphasised it by setting himself as the standard – we are to love to the extent of laying down our life for another.

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

And Jesus said:

*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.  
(John 15:12)*

An example of the extent of this love using Jesus as the standard is set out by the Apostle Paul in relation to the extent husbands should love their wives – to the same extent as Christ, *who loved the church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25)*. Jesus says:

*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:13)*

### **The Law of Christ motivates believers<sup>2</sup>**

Under the Law of Moses, keeping the law was motivated by curses (punishment) – this law was conditional: do this, else something bad would happen. The Law of Christ is unconditional – the grace of God is a free gift (Romans 5:15-18) to all those that believe. A believer delights in the Law of Christ because of Christ's work on the cross – bearing my sin. It motives the believer to offer themselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1, 2).

## **ERRORS SUFFERED BY SOME CHRISTIANS**

**Most errors on this topic arises when there is no acknowledgement of the annulment of the Mosaic Law.** If we are still under the Law of Moses we are not free – we must keep the whole – all of it! The Law of Moses is one – breach one ordinance and all are breached (([James 2:10](#))). But in fact we are not under the Law of Moses, which means we are free to keep some or part of it if we wish.

The biggest error is made by some who say the Law of Christ is the Law of Moses, when these folk do not keep the Sabbath<sup>3</sup>, attend the three festivals in Jerusalem as demanded by law, nor indeed do not keep most other parts of the law, remembering there are 613 ordinances. It is obvious that if the Law of Christ was merely a subset of the Law of Moses, Apostle James could not argue that the Law was one. Thus, it is obvious that Jehovah in this day of grace has given a new law. Some at this point some like to scream (and indeed they do scream) – God does not change His mind; He cannot have two laws.

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from Dr Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology, The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*. Ariel Ministries, Texas, USA 2016

<sup>3</sup> And if they do, they need to cheat given the earth is a globe – the original Sabbath day commenced at sun-down in Jerusalem, hardly possible if you live in the Pacific!

Well, such statements are obvious wrong. It is God's nature that never changes, but as to how He governs, why cannot the sovereign Lord change His methods? Indeed, the manner in which He governs His economy certainly changes and has changed<sup>4</sup>. This was necessary due to the sin of Adam, then the abhorrent sin of various men and women in Genesis 5 and so on and so forth.

And secondly He does not have two laws – the Mosaic Law has been annulled (disallowed) and it is the Law of Christ which is currently operational. But in saying that, it is obvious that some elements of one can be found in another – “thou shalt not kill” has been in operation since the days of Adam, but this does not mean the code that comprised this element is functional today; it is not. And indeed this is how our own law operates. We have elements from the old and ancient laws of Britain, but it does not make our law British nor our country – these were annulled when our country was federated; yet many elements of those laws exist in our current laws. Federation did not prevent people from murdering – so we have a comparative law in relation to murder. So also the Law of Christ comprises some elements of the Law of Moses, but notably, due to its absence, there is no ordinance concerning the Sabbath; indeed Jesus nullified this himself ([Matthew 12:8](#)).

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<sup>4</sup> A great example of this is YHWH's governance of Israel, firstly under Moses then under judges, then as demanded by the people a king (1 Samuel 8).