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Old Testament Literature 102 OA

21 February 2023

Old Versus New

The topic of Old Testament law and New Testament grace is often debated within the Christian church. Some are strict on either side and some claim to fall somewhere in the middle. There are Christians that argue or take the stance, there is no need to follow the law anymore at all because we cannot gain righteousness through it but through Christ Jesus only. As I consider this stance or statement it calls into question for me, what the purpose of the law even was if it is totally disposable now. As well as where the law is mentioned in the Old Testament and how it is referred to in the New Testament.

The Ten Commandments appear throughout scripture. It is mentioned and listed in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 after God takes the Jewish people out of Egypt from slavery. Here, we see the establishment of the nation of Israel as set apart. They had lived so long in slavery and now God is making it clear to them what kind of people they will be and how to please Him. Although the law is listed for the first time here, the law is still seen before this establishment in earlier scripture. For example, with the story of Cain and Abel. Cain murders his brother Abel in Genesis 4 and God's response is, "...What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand," (Genesis 4:10-11). Although up to this point in scripture God had not given the Ten Commandments yet like he had given the people of Israel, it was still wrong for Cain to kill. God was still displeased by this sin and Cain is cursed. In Genesis 4 Cain goes on to say that he would be hidden from the face of the

Lord. In Deuteronomy 27 the consequence of disobeying the law and instead sinning was depicted when Moses says, “Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image image, an abomination to the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret. And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen’,” (Deuteronomy 27:15). Here we can see people who do not follow God’s decrees and law being declared cursed. Cain was also cursed. Although Cain’s sin was before the law was established, disobeying it brought upon him a curse.

I believe this to be a clear depiction of what the Lord says in Malachi, “For I am the Lord, I do not change..” (Malachi 3:6). What bothered God before the law still bothered during the law and because He does not change must certainly bother Him today. In the New Testament Jesus says, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled,” (Matthew 5:17-18). Jesus does not abolish the Law and therefor I do believe that people must still follow it but not in the way that they did in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament the law is what saved them but because no one could keep it they needed sacrifices to make them clean again. In the New Testament, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast,” (John 3:16). Salvation in the New Testament always points to Jesus. In the book of John it is stated that no-one’s works can save them because we will always fall short. Therefor I believe that yes that the Ten Commandments still reveal the ways of God because He does not change but they do not save you. The people could not obey every law and still ended up unclean and cursed. God gives His perfect Son to be the ultimate sacrifice so that we would be forever clean in Him. We can only receive this gift by believing in faith, in Jesus and what He did as it is

stated in John. When we are saved by faith and can walk closely and commune with God that is when we are able to follow His decrees. We can only do it through Jesus.