

Ceremonial and Civil Law the **discontinuity** between OLD and NEW. But realizing the Moral Law of God is an expression of His character and is a necessary guide into the knowledge of His will, and will always abide with us until all is fulfilled in the Messianic Age of salvation.

Matthew 5:17-19 - 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. NASB

The Moral Law then, being an expression of God's character, is the exhortation to our obedience, not as a rule or condition for salvation, but as a gracious response to what God has done in Christ to save us. The New Covenant is still a covenant with the element of obedience, whereby the truly redeemed covenant people of God express their obedience as a grateful response to God for His saving acts. However, now the believer is empowered by union with Christ *through* the Holy Spirit in order to achieve what we were powerless to do under the Law, because of the weakness of the flesh. And even though perfect obedience is still something beyond our grasp, God's purpose now in our sanctification is being fulfilled according to His gracious work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we seek to glorify and enjoy Him all of our days. All of this we do, having all our sins cancelled and forgiven and the Law no longer looms over us with a guilty condemnation, but rather we live in the newness and freedom of forgiven sins.

Romans 8:1-4 - 1 **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 **For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,** 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. NASB

This then, is the **effectual** and **eternal** blessing of the New Covenant we now live under because of God's free grace to us, and because of Christ's finished work.

Lutheran, Reformed, and Dispensational Views

Lutheran and Reformed Christians have long held distinctions between Law and Gospel as a fundamental element in their worship. They have taught that the Law continues to serve a vital purpose for both sinner and saint and that the Gospel frees any person from the condemnation of the Law and grants eternal salvation to those who believe. Both Lutheran and Reformed traditions have upheld that there are three uses of the Law in the New Covenant age.

Lutheran view – From the Lutheran *Formula of Concord*.

1. **Curb** - that "thereby outward discipline might be maintained against wild, disobedient men [and that wild and intractable men might be restrained, as though by certain bars]"
2. **Mirror** - that "men thereby may be led to the knowledge of their sins"
3. **Guide** - that "after they are regenerate. . .they might. . .have a fixed rule according to which they are to regulate and direct their whole life"

Reformed view - In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the Reformer John Calvin likewise distinguished three uses in the Law. Calvin wrote: "That the whole matter may be made clearer, let us take a succinct view of the office and use of the Moral Law. Now this office and use seems to me to consist of three parts."

1. **Mirror** - By "exhibiting the righteousness of God, — in other words, the righteousness which alone is acceptable to God, — it admonishes every one of his own unrighteousness, certiorates, convicts, and finally condemns him."

2. **Curb** - It acts “by means of its fearful denunciations and the consequent dread of punishment, to curb those who, unless forced, have no regard for rectitude and justice.”
3. **Guide** – “The third use of the Law. . . has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already flourishes and reigns. ... For it is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what that will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this knowledge...”

Dispensational view – The Dispensational view of the Law has undergone a bit of revision from the Classic Dispensationalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, yet its basic precepts have remained in modern times under the common Progressive Dispensationalism of today. They see a more sharp division between the Old and New Covenants and their applications because these two covenants exist in two separate **dispensations** in God’s redemptive program. Therefore they would say that the **Mosaic Law is NOT binding on Christians** in any way because it was a covenant that God made specifically with Israel and therefore has now been replaced by the **Law of Christ**, which is defined specifically in the New Testament by commands given therein. Depending on which dispensational writer you read, you see some easing on this sharp distinction in how the Law is to be applied. Some would say specific commands are binding because they have been repeated in the New Testament, and others would say the Old Covenant is completely *abrogated*, but because God’s nature is fleshed out in the Moral Law, the moral portions of the Law bear a very consistent nature to the Law of Christ expressed in the New Testament.

It is apparent to me that even though these positions seem to be in contrast to one another, that the application of the Moral Law is effectively the same in all 3 views. In other words, **the way that these different Christians apply the Moral Law is effectively the same**. With respect to the Ceremonial and Civil aspects of the Law, all would agree that these have been abrogated, except for those sects of Christianity that try to maintain, in varying degree, certain aspects of the Ceremonial and Civil Law, such as Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Reconstructionists, and certain forms of Messianic Judaism. This is also true of non-Christian cults like the new Liberalism of the mainline denominations of the 19th-20th centuries (antinomianism), Armstrongism, and certain forms of Messianic Judaism. It is my opinion that these differences are easily reconciled and properly applied by the Reformed and Baptist confessions of the late 17th Century. These hold a balanced view and speak to a correct application of the whole of the Mosaic Law and the Old Covenant.

Summary

We have seen then that the Old Covenant is that covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai through Moses, and was served as a specific work of God in the course of redemptive history to accomplish certain things in the plan of God in order to establish a legal basis for judgment and justification, and to bring to light the knowledge of sin to the whole of humanity, and established a pattern for the true worship of God in the Priesthood, tabernacle/temple worship and ceremonial laws. Because of this we see that the Old Covenant was **temporary** and **ineffectual** in regard to salvation having fulfilled its place in redemptive history. This was all a preparatory, laying the groundwork for the New Covenant age of Messianic salvation which was a mystery under the Old Covenant but has now come in the person and work of Christ, and is both **eternal** and **effectual** having accomplished the salvation of all of God’s people of every age.