

**THE LAW: The Authority of the Old Testament Scriptures in
the Church Today**



**DENVER
REFORMED
CHURCH**

(PART 0)

Introduction

The issue of whether or not the Old Testament Scriptures¹ are an authoritative part of the New Testament Church is a subject which suffers no lack of opponents on both sides. As a matter of fact, this may be one of the most controversial issues in the history of the Church². It may also be one of its most important given the fact that it also determines the canonical scope of the Church's Bible³.

Thesis

The purpose of this study will be to demonstrate through the witness of the New Testament Scriptures that though there are differences in its administration and application⁴, the truths established in the Old Testament Scriptures are to be understood as a necessary part of the New Testament Church's Rule for Faith and Practice being just as authoritative today as when they were originally written. To summarize, they are the same in authority, different only in administration and application.

In the words of A.A. Hodge,

"The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, having been given by inspiration of God, are the all-sufficient...Rule of Faith and Practice, and judge of controversies...Whatever God teaches or commands is of sovereign authority. Whatever conveys to us an infallible knowledge of his teachings and commands is an infallible rule. The Scriptures of *the Old* (emphasis mine) and New Testaments are the...organs through which, during the present dispensation, God conveys to us a knowledge of his will about what we are to believe concerning himself, and what duties he requires of us."⁵

3. Hermeneutics

The hermeneutical principles which will govern the arguments and interpretive process in this study are the same as those adopted by Jesus and the New Testament authors. It is necessary that they are stated and discussed beforehand since as this study will show, it is their lack of execution which poses the main reason for confusion surrounding Paul's use of the phrases "the law" or "works of the law" and subsequently, the tension that seems to exist between his view of the Old Testament Scriptures and what is taught by Jesus. Those principles are as follows:

¹ The 39 books of the Protestant Old Testament.

² "There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with so much intricacy, and wherein orthodox divines do so much differ as stating the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ." Jonathon Edwards, "Inquiry Concerning Qualifications for Communion", *The Works of President Edwards*, (1858); "Christians disagree about the place of the [Old Testament Scriptures] in the life of the believer because the New Testament itself contains statements that seem to support opposite conclusions. Such diverse statements about the [Old Testament Scriptures] have both fascinated and frustrated theologians since the inception of the church. Yet nothing even approaching a consensus has emerged." Douglas Moo, "The Law Of Christ As The Fulfillment Of The Law Of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View", *Five Views On Law And Gospel*, (1993), 319-320.

³ The word "canon" comes from the Greek "κανών", meaning "rule" or "measuring stick". It has traditionally been used to indicate what among the written documents of the Church should be viewed as inspired by God and authoritative for Christian Faith and Practice. In this respect, the Church's decision on the binding nature of the Old Testament scriptures equally determines the extent to which she views it as biblical canon.

⁴ Under the New Covenant, the administration of the Old Testament scriptures is no longer the responsibility of Moses, the Levitical Priesthood or the Prophets but rather the final Lawgiver, Priest and Prophet, Jesus Christ. As a result, there is also a change in the way those scriptures are applied to God's people (Heb 7:12).

⁵ Hodge, "The Rule Of Faith and Practice", *Outlines of Theology*, (1860), ch.5.

3.1. Context determines meaning.

Words, like all forms of communication, take their meaning from the context in which they are found. It is therefore essential that those attempting to understand the teaching of the Bible, first understand its grammatical and historical⁶ context:

3.1.1. Grammatical

Understanding the grammatical context of any biblical text requires a familiarity with the common rules of grammar as well as those which may be peculiar to the Bible's original languages⁷. Unless explicitly indicated by the author, understanding the grammatical context also requires a commitment to not only consistency in the way a word or phrase is defined within the same context but also the possibility of diversity (in meaning and scope) when the same word or phrase is used in a different context. Lastly, as part of understanding the grammatical context, it is important to identify the different genres: narrative, didactic, poetic, prophetic or apocalyptic as well as the various literary devices: idioms, sarcasm, symbolism, hyperbole and metonyms. For the New Testament this includes also the literary device of allusion since one out of three verses function in this way either directly or indirectly⁸. Failure in the area of grammatical context is the reason for the wooden literalism and futurist eschatology of Dispensationalism (e.g. the doctrine of Premillennialism). It is also why Nicodemus could not initially understand Jesus' teaching on the New Birth (Joh 3:1-15).

3.1.2. Historical

Understanding the historical context of any biblical text requires sufficient knowledge of the cultural, social, political and religious world in which the author and his recipients lived as well as the instruction, events or circumstances surrounding the particular text in question. Historical context is also dependent upon the assumption that whatever is being communicated has some immediate relevance to the lives of its original audience. That being said, understanding the historical context demands that we be careful to never project our own prejudices, biases, ideas, worldviews or modern understanding of a particular word or concept back into the text as though these were mutually held convictions⁹. Lastly understanding the historical context requires that once we identify the specific question or issue the author is attempting to address, we not allow that text to be used as the answer for other questions or issues we might possess. Failure in the area of historical context was at times a struggle for Jesus' disciples (Mat 16:6-12).

⁶ One of the hallmarks of the Protestant Reformation was its advancement in the area of biblical hermeneutics from a method which was largely allegoric to one which was grammatical and historical (i.e. the grammatical-historical method).

⁷ For instance, in the English language, the subject of a sentence is often identified by the fact that it precedes the verb. In Greek or Hebrew, the primary languages of the Bible, word order is not as significant nor how the subject of a sentence is identified.

⁸ The vast majority of the allusions found in the New Testament are in relation to the Old Testament.

⁹ By way of example, consider Paul's statement about women being "workers at home" in Tit 2:5. Many in our day have understood this to be a prohibition against women seeking employment or a career outside of the home. Hardly however could that be what Paul is referring to since the infrastructure of his day made it almost impossible for women to find such work. Prostitution was about the only field truly open to women as employment outside the home. Surely this cannot be what Paul was referring to! Rather, when compared to 1Ti 5:13-14, it becomes obvious that where the emphasis in Paul's instruction should be placed is on the word "workers" not "home". In other words, God does not approve of lazy women—no doubt a problem in Paul's historical context!

3.2. Covenant informs everything.

The Bible is a covenantal book. This is clearly seen:

3.5.1. By its two main divisions (Old and New Testament) which distinguish between those Scriptures written under the Old Covenant and those written under the New Covenant (e.g. 2Co 3:14)¹⁰.

3.5.2. Through its redemptive (gospel) framework which makes covenant the exclusive means by which God has a saving relationship with man (Hos 6:7; Gen 6:18, 17:1-9; Exo 24:1-8; Mat 26:26-28).

3.5.3. In the terms used when referring to God in relation to His people. The words “Lord and slave”, “Father and son”, “Husband and wife”, “brother and brethren” were all terms used in Ancient Near East cultures to indicate covenant relationship between un-related parties¹¹.

3.5.4. By considering how often Paul explicitly¹² mentions covenant or refers to the covenant model as a means to reinforcing a particular truth (e.g. Rom 11:25; 1Co 11:25; 2Co 3:1-18; Gal 3:15-29, 4:21-31).

As such, it is absolutely vital to the interpretive process that a person not only understand the biblical model of covenant (especially Divine-human covenants) but also learn to view the entire corpus of the Bible through this particular lens. Anything less than this approach will most assuredly produce theology that is less than biblical.

3.3. Christ before Christians.

It is not uncommon today to find Christians who by their interpretation of Paul’s teachings, inadvertently pit him against the teachings of Jesus. This is especially true when dealing with the questions related to the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul however, considered what he wrote to be consistent with what Jesus spoke (e.g. 1Co 7:10, 25; 2Co 2:17, 4:1-6). Likewise, he saw the teachings of Jesus as the foundation or standard for his own (1Co 3:10-11; Gal 1:12). It is therefore this principle which must be the starting point for our understanding of the Christian Faith: we are to see the doctrine and theology established through the teachings of Christ as the standard which all the Christian writers of the New Testament are conforming to—and not the other way around¹³. In other words, it is the principle of Christ before the other Christian teachers of the New Testament.

3.4. Contradiction indicates error.

Central to the convictions of the Protestant Christian Faith and this study are the following:

3.2.1. The Bible’s claim to internal consistency and inerrancy among its authors and their original manuscripts (Deu 32:4; 2Sa 22:31; Psa 19:7; 2Ti 3:16; 2Pe 1:20-21 w/Heb 6:18-19).

¹⁰ “Our traditional designations ‘Old Testament’ and ‘New testament’ have been all the while more precisely appropriate than we have realized. The documents which combine to form the Bible are in their very nature, it turns out – covenantal. In short, the Bible *is* the old and new covenants.” Meredith Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, (1989), 78-79.

¹¹ See Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, (1994), 177-180. This can also be demonstrated through the witness of the Bible itself. In relation to these different relational combinations consider: Gen 50:18; Jos 9:8; 1Sa 25:8, 27:12; 2Ki 10:5-6, 16:7, 24:1; Psa 116:16; 2Sa 7:14; 2Ki 16:7; Jer 31:9; Psa 2:7; Jer 31:31; Hos 1, 3; Isa 43, 49, 51, 62, 63; Jer 2, 3, 30; Eze 16, 23; Jdg 9:3; 1Ki 9:13, 20:32; 2Sa 1:26; Amo 1:9.

¹² I believe Paul refers to covenant far more than just what is explicit and will attempt to show this as part of my argument for the Old Testament Scriptures as continuing in authority.

¹³ This truth is further supported by Jesus’ words to His disciples regarding the Holy Spirit as One who “bring to remembrance” all that He had taught them (Joh 14:26). That is, it would be His teaching which would function as the foundation of the Christian Faith and to which their teaching would need to conform. This no doubt is also behind John’s warning in 2John 1:9-10.

3.2.2. The paradigm established by Jesus and His New Testament writers who – though not possessing the original manuscripts, relied on their “literal copies” to be an accurate and able witness for providing sound doctrine to the Church and refuting heresy (2Ti 2:15, 3:15¹⁴).

As such, any contradiction created by our interpretation of the text - or theology when compared to others, is the first indication of error in our understanding. This too then becomes a very helpful and important hermeneutical principle when attempting to discover the Bible’s teaching. It is no doubt why Paul gives such warning to Timothy (1Ti 6:20-21).

3.5. Correct equals logical.

As demonstrated through prior studies, the Bible as the revelation of a perfectly logical God, is itself perfectly logical in its communication of truth¹⁵. That is, it always operates according to the 4 laws of logic:

3.5.1. The Law of Identity: Context determines meaning (e.g. 1Co 5:9-11).

3.5.2. The Law of Non-Contradiction: Cannot be true and false at the same time (e.g. Mat 22:41-46).

3.5.3. The Law of the Excluded Middle: True cannot be treated as false (e.g. 1Co 15:12-13).

3.5.4. The Law of Rational Inference: Valid premises draw valid conclusions (e.g. Mat 16:1-3; 22:31-33).

Hence, one of the key ways to determining the accuracy of any interpretation or doctrine in relation to the Bible is by examining its logical veracity.

¹⁴ Clearly what Paul is telling Timothy to give attention to in both of these verses were “literal copies” of the Scriptures and not the original themselves. Nonetheless, Paul sees them as incredibly able alternatives – even referring to them in terms such as “sacred” or “the word of truth”. If Paul could possess such confidence in “literal copies”, the same should be expected in relation to our modern “literal copies” (e.g. NASB, ESV).

¹⁵ See www.denversoundchurch.org/audio/logic.

(PART 1)

Jesus and Matthew 5:17-20

The Christian Faith is a religion based exclusively upon its founder, Jesus Christ (Heb 12:2). This means that though the New Testament boasts of several authors, it is His teachings which serve as the theological foundation for their own (1Co 3:11). Therefore, any serious inquiry regarding the Old Testament's authority in the Church today will begin and be established upon an accurate interpretation of Jesus' cardinal teaching on this subject, Matthew 5:17-20. This requires both contextual analysis and exposition of the individual verses.

Contextual Analysis

The immediate context is Jesus' "Sermon On The Mount" address - a concise yet comprehensive collection of teaching meant to prepare God's people for life in His New Covenant kingdom (of heaven) on earth¹⁶. The larger context however, is Matthew's prior Exodus allusions of "Egypt-Water-Wilderness"¹⁷ making what Jesus says in chapters 5-7 a strong allusion to another concise yet comprehensive collection of teaching meant to prepare God's people for life in His covenant kingdom (of heaven) on earth – Moses' "Sermon on the Mount" address at Sinai (Mat 2:15, 3:13-17, 4:1, 5:1-2 w/ Exo 13:3; Exo 14; Num 14:33; 19:1-8...23:33; also Deu 1:1-6). As such, this particular discourse in Matthew carries the following significance: it reveals Jesus to ultimately be the prophesied "new Moses" who would again make faithful obedience to all of God's Word the obligation for those desiring to enter into relationship with Him (Deu 18:15-19 w/5:21-22, 27-28, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44; 7:28-29; also Act 3:22, 7:37).

Exposition of Verses 17-20

According to Jesus, it is the entire corpus of the Old Testament Scriptures that those entering into this New Covenant kingdom must regard as the Word of God and therefore must commit themselves to in faithful obedience as their relational/covenantal obligation to Him. Consider:

1. Jesus had no intention of annulling any portion of the Old Testament Scriptures for His New Covenant kingdom.

(17a) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish them..."

The phrase "the Law or the Prophets" or one of its derivatives is frequently used by Jesus and others in the New Testament when referring to all 39 books of the Old Testament¹⁸ (Mat 7:12, 11:13, 22:40; Luk

¹⁶ Though there has been debate over whether the establishing of such a kingdom on earth was the accomplished intention of Jesus during His earthly ministry, the evidence is undeniable. Consider: 1) this is was the goal of His gospel and purpose in preaching (Mat 4:23, 9:35; Luk 4:43; Act 1:3), 2) this is also what defined the gospel and preaching of those He commissioned (Mat 10:7; Luk 9:2, 11), 3) He viewed His entire ministry as ushering in the fulfillment of God's promised New Covenant kingdom (Mar 1:15; Mat 4:17; 12:28, 21:43; Luk 9:27, 10:9-11, 12:32, 17:20-21, 22:28-29).

¹⁷ The allusion actually extends back to the beginning of both books. Each starts (chapter one) with the genealogy of God's chosen people (12 tribes of Israel)/person (Jesus the true Israelite) then moves immediately (chapter two) to recording the birth of God's chosen leader – the one who will free His people from their bondage (Moses – slavery to Egypt)/(Jesus – slavery to sin).

¹⁸ Though the number of books differs in Jewish tradition, the total content is the same.

16:29, 24:27, 44; Joh 1:45; Act 13:15, 28:23; Rom 3:21). This then represents the scope of what Jesus promises (twice) will not be “abolished” (καταλύω: to destroy, remove, make invalid or annul; Mat 26:61, 27:40; Luk 23:2; Act 6:14; Rom 14:20; 2Co 5:1; Gal 2:18). It is the entire corpus of the Old Testament Scriptures which will remain binding as part of His New Covenant kingdom (e.g. Mat 8:4). Jesus’ initial prohibition (“Do not think”) however clearly implies that some among his original audience were under the opposite assumption¹⁹. Unfortunately, similar assumptions are held by many today. The argument is as follows: though Jesus did not “abolish” the Old Testament Scriptures, He did “fulfill” them for us. In so doing, Jesus has both brought to an end their authority over us as well as freed us from our obligation to them. The problems associated with this view are manifold as the next point will show.

2. Jesus had every intention of seeing all of the Old Testament Scriptures fully carried out by His New Covenant people.

(17b) “I did not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

The word translated “fulfill” (πληρώω: to complete or fully carry out; to fill up; to be in full compliance; Phi 2:2; Col 1:25, 4:17; Mat 13:48; Act 5:28; Luk 3:5; 2Co 10:6) occurs in various forms throughout the New Testament and at times can refer also to something which once completed is coming to an end (e.g. Luk 7:1; Act 13:25). This is especially true when used in relation to prophecy (Mat 1:22; 13:35; 26:54, 56; Mar 14:49; Luk 9:31, 22:16; Joh 18:9, 32, 19:24, 36). However this particular understanding proves to be far afield from Jesus’ intended meaning here for the following reasons:

2.1. It contradicts Jesus’ previous emphasis regarding abolishment and indicts His character.

If by “fulfill” Jesus truly means that the Old Testament Scriptures will come to an end, then how is it any different in its intended goal than “abolish”? At some point, both ultimately make the Old Testament Scriptures null and void (i.e. annulled). Such an understanding of the word “fulfill” portrays Jesus as not only logically contradictory in what He says, but also no different than the Jewish leaders He condemns for their attempts at finding clever ways around God’s commands (e.g. Mat 15:1-9, 23:16-22).

2.2. It violates the New Testament’s usage of πληρώω when referring to the commands of Scripture.

Though as mentioned, the term can be used to refer to prophetic Scripture that once fulfilled, comes to an end, this is never the case when referring specifically to the commands of God. In this respect, it always refers to actions which are to be seen as continually in need of fulfillment (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8). Based on Jesus’ mention of “these commandments” in verse 19, this is clearly what is in focus when speaking in relation to fulfillment of “the Law or the Prophets”: a continual fulfillment of those commands established by the Old Testament Scriptures.

2.3. It denies the time-frame and difficulty emphasized by Jesus.

(18) “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

¹⁹ This was the central problem of the Pharisees condemned by John the Baptist and Jesus: though they claimed the Old Testament Scriptures to be authoritatively binding and necessary to covenant relationship with God, in practice it was denied (Mat 3:1-9, 15:8; Luk 16:14-17 w/Matt 11:13 w/Mal 4:4-6).

The words “iota” and “dot” literally refer to the smallest letter and stroke within the Greek alphabet. More importantly, they were an idiomatic way of directing our attention to those commands given in the Old Testament Scriptures which would have been viewed as the least important. According to Jesus, the time-frame for even those kinds of commands (“one of the least of these commandments” – v19) becoming null and void was far beyond His earthly life and ministry. It was the time-frame of “until heaven and earth pass away”. That is, it would not be until His second coming that the removal of “the Law”²⁰ would become reality (2Pe 3:10). This then is what is meant by the second (and very similar) preposition, “until all is accomplished” (literally, “until all has come to pass or passes away”). It functions as yet another point of emphasis regarding the Old Testament Scriptures as God’s continuing authoritative and obligatory standard for His people. Interestingly enough, the same can be said about the words actually translated here as “pass” and “pass away”. In both cases, it is the Greek word (παρέλθῃ: come to an end; Luk 21:32; Jam 1:10; 2Co 5:17). The choice to use identical terms to describe the time-frame of “the Law” as was used to describe “heaven and earth” is not by accident. It is a rhetorical/literary device meant (in this text) to emphasize that what is said about “heaven and earth” is to be understood with equal (or greater) force in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures (i.e. “Law”)²¹. In other words, not only will the former precede the latter in coming to an end, but will also be easier to accomplish! (Luk 16:17 – “void”: to fall or fail).

2.4. It ignores the context which is focused on what we must do, not what Jesus will do.

Moses did not ascend Mount Sinai to tell the people about his personal obligations before the Lord. Rather, his intention was to communicate the obligations necessary of all people if they were going to be in covenant relationship with God. And as previously discussed, this allusive paradigm is now being repeated as the larger context of Matthew chapters 5-7. Jesus “ascends the mount” with the purpose of communicating not His obligations, but those entering His New Covenant. In other words, it was their fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus is most concerned with in these verses not His own. This is easily confirmed by considering the more immediate context of verse 19...

(19) “Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Extending the idea of the “iota” or “dot”, Jesus now uses such thinking to emphasize once more the abiding authority of the entire Old Testament Scriptures by explaining what will happen to the person who “relaxes (λύσῃ: to break or annul; Joh 5:18, 10:35) one of the least (ἐλαχίστων: insignificant, of no value, nothing; Mat 2:6, 25:40,45; 1Co 4:3) of these commandments and teaches others to do the same”. They “will be called least (i.e. insignificant, of no value, nothing) in the kingdom of heaven”. In other words, the kingdom will view them in the same way they chose to view its laws – as insignificant, of no value, nothing. Likewise, for “whoever does them (i.e. practices or observes them) will be called great in the kingdom of heaven”. No doubt what Jesus is referring to by both of these conditional statements is final judgment: the time when all people will be assessed based upon their deeds (i.e. whether or not they were in

²⁰ In this context, it is plain that what Jesus is referring to by using this phrase is simply shorthand for “The Law or the Prophets” or again, the entire Old Testament Scriptures (e.g. Joh 12:34, 15:25) rather than simply the first five books of Moses (e.g. Jos 1:7-8).

²¹ For another example of this same rhetorical device see Gal 2:19-20.

full compliance to all that God has said—including the Old Testament Scriptures; Rom 2:6; 2Co 5:10; Rev 20:11-15). This conclusion is affirmed by Jesus' closing words regarding those who will (and will not) "enter the kingdom of heaven" (20). As such it should be abundantly clear that where the focus lies in Jesus' usage of this word "fulfill" is not in what He will do, but what we must do²². It is earthly obligations of the New Covenant citizen which are the concern; obligations which stand also as the conditions of our eternal judgment²³.

3. Jesus had no intention of producing New Covenant people who were attempting to earn their righteousness, yet every intention of building a New Covenant kingdom based on faithfulness to all of the Old Testament Scriptures.

(20) "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

These words are understood by many (if not most) within the current Evangelical climate to be the point at which Jesus proverbially tips His hand and reveals the full extent and absolute impossibility of His demands. Heaven therefore is a pipe dream for all who would attempt to "fulfill" the Old Testament Scriptures as their means to righteousness before God. This understanding however is based on two seriously flawed assumptions:

3.1. Flawed assumption #1: The "scribes and Pharisees" were meticulous in their attention to the Old Testament Scriptures and attempting to earn their righteousness through it.

This soteriological system is commonly referred to as "works/merit-based": a person will gain heaven only if their adherence to God's law (i.e. obedience = merits) outweighs their violations (i.e. sin = de-merits) at final judgment. In essence, I by my good works am able to forgive my bad deeds. Historical context however reveals that neither the scribes nor the Pharisees of Jesus' day believed in such a ridiculous view²⁴. Such thinking was considered by them to be blasphemy²⁵. In addition, they were not meticulous in their attention to the Old Testament Scriptures. Rather they only gave the appearance of such while actually living lives that were

²² The untenable nature of those holding to the position that Jesus somehow fulfilled obedience to the Old Testament Scriptures on our behalf is easily perceived when considering the New Covenant prophecy of Jer 31:31-34. The obligations of the Law are placed upon those with whom God is making this New Covenant, with no mention of some "vicarious host" who will instead take this burden upon himself (33). In addition, what distinguishes the New kingdom from the Old is not the removal of the Law (which has now been "written" on our "hearts"), but the disobedience that characterized the Old kingdom (32 = "my covenant which they broke"). The promise of the New Covenant kingdom was therefore not freedom from obligation to the Old Testament Scriptures, but the rebellion associated with keeping it faithfully. Consider also: Isa 2:1-5; Mic 4:1-3.

²³ This is not the first time Jesus deals with the concepts of earthly obligation and eternal conditions in this address. The soil for such a discussion is actually prepared in the verses prior to those under discussion (see vv13-16).

²⁴ See any of E.P. Sanders' books on 2nd Temple Judaism. No Jew was ever stupid enough to think that they could somehow earn their way to heaven. Such thinking is instead the spawn of Martin Luther and his Roman Catholic projections upon the New Testament.

²⁵ Consider Luk 5:21. Hardly would the Pharisees consider a man who is able to forgive sins blasphemous if they were works or merit-based in their soteriology since that again is the basis of such a system: my good deeds forgive my sin.

very selective in their overall obedience (Mat 23:1-6, 23-28)²⁶. As discussed earlier, they were also guilty of teaching their traditions as more authoritative than the Old Testament Scriptures (Mat 15:1-9). This is why then Jesus refers to them as “hypocrites”, “blind guides” and “white-washed tombs”. Though they claimed adherence to the Old Testament Scriptures, it was nothing but a farce. Their religion was no different than their apostate descendants who believed that as long as they could keep making the necessary sacrifices for their sin (Amo 5:20-25; Act 7:35-53 w/6:13-7:1), full compliance to God’s commands was not necessary to maintain their covenantal relationship with Him. This is why then also Jesus claims that like their ancestors, they too will kill the prophets sent from God (Mat 23:29-36)²⁷. In reality then, the scribes and Pharisees were not meticulous law-keepers but reckless law-breakers²⁸.

3.2. Flawed assumption #2: What Jesus means by “righteousness” is the justification we gain only by faith.

Though the word “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) or one of its derivatives (δικαίω) can refer to justification (e.g. Rom 3:21, 28, 5:17), it oftentimes refers to a person’s faithfulness in obedience to God’s commands (e.g. 1Pe 2:24; 1Jo 2:29; Rev 22:11; Mat 6:1; Heb 11:33). It is in this latter sense that Jesus is using the term here. Consistent with both the larger and more immediate context, Jesus is once more revealing the conditions of kingdom living. Its people would be characterized by lives lived in faithful obedience to all that God commanded – just the opposite of the scribes and Pharisees!

Plugging all of this back into the text yields a picture very different from that taught by many contemporary teachers. Jesus’ intention in giving this kingdom condition is not to promote earning one’s way to heaven. Nor is it meant to create an impossible scenario. Exceeding the “righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” did not mean perfection. If that were the case why pick on them? They were the worst example! Besides, no-one is perfect. However the scribes and Pharisees were the perfect antithesis to the kind of people Jesus was looking to be a part of His New Covenant kingdom: people committed to faithful obedience in relation to all that God has said—including the Old Testament Scriptures (Mat 24:45, 25:21-23; Act 11:23; Rev 2:10)²⁹. And herein lies the final yet vital connection to Jesus’ word “fulfill”. In no respect does it refer to perfection either. Rather it too is a call to faithfulness. However, if such faithful fulfillment is to be achieved, it will only be when the entirety of God’s testimony—including His Old Testament Scriptures are embraced as the perfect standard and goal for the follower of God (Mat 5:48)³⁰.

²⁶ James makes it very clear that selective obedience is the same as no obedience (Jam 2:10). This is why many who claim to be in covenant relationship with God will be condemned on judgment day—they were selective in their obedience rather than giving full compliance to what He commanded (Mat 7:21-27).

²⁷ The message of the prophets was always a call to repentance and fulfillment of God’s commands (e.g. Nah 1:15).

²⁸ Though it is true to say the scribes and Pharisees were legalists - adding their laws to God’s laws, it is far more accurate to view them as antinomian since this is what defined their soteriological position as well as why they had no problem in making their traditions tantamount to the Old Testament Scriptures (Mat 15:3, 9).

²⁹ This is what God required under the Old Covenant as well; not perfection but faithfulness to all that He had commanded (e.g. Deu 28:1-2).

³⁰ Though it is beyond the scope of this present context, it is important to understand the soteriological distinction that exists as part of the gospel presented in both the OT and NT. What a person does to enter into covenant with God (justification through the “works of the law” - i.e. clean laws of the OT v. justification through faith - i.e. the clean law of the NT), is not the same as what a person must do to maintain that relationship once it has been gained (faithful obedience and full compliance to all of God’s Word). Without this vital distinction Jesus’ words

Conclusion (PART 1)

Matthew 5:17-20 epitomizes Jesus' role as the "new Moses". There upon similar mountain-top ground, Jesus like His predecessor is calling people into covenant relationship and kingdom citizenship with God. And like the kingdom of Old, Jesus' New Covenant kingdom would also demand full compliance and faithful obedience to the Old Testament Scriptures. Unlike the Old however, this kingdom would actually produce people who met its standards. It would be a kingdom characterized by righteousness; by people who were continual fulfillers of "the Law" rather than perpetual covenant breakers (Mat 21:43; Rom 8:4). To this end, Jesus had come. This was His gospel goal. And to this end He would see the "Law and Prophets" fulfilled³¹.

here as well as places like Mat 19:16-30 make Him essentially nothing more than the protagonist of a very cruel joke.

³¹ In this light, consider Mat 23:1-3, 28:20.

(PART 2)

The Inspired Teachers of the New Testament³²

Jesus' teaching on the continuing authority of the Old Testament Scriptures for the Church today not only establishes what her position must be in relation to them but also a vital hermeneutical control for how we interpret the rest of the Inspired Teachers found within the pages of the New Testament. In other words, what is known about Jesus' view on the continuing authority of the Old Testament Scriptures is what we should expect as their position as well³³. Such doctrinal consistency is the hallmark of biblical inspiration and historic Christian orthodoxy. This however is not the only reason that such assumptions should be made. More importantly it is due to what we find in their biblical witness. The Inspired Teachers of the New Testament (ITNT) taught the Old Testament laws in full agreement with Jesus. Though like Him, they knew differences existed in the application of those laws, they also knew their authority remained intact for the Christian under the New Covenant. This is proven by considering the following:

1. The ITNT viewed the Old Testament Scriptures as the standard for teaching and training.

Proper interpretation of the Scriptures is as much about asking the right questions as it is retrieving the right answers since oftentimes, it is through the question that the answer is revealed. This first truth becomes abundantly clear when one asks the question, what bible (or Scriptures) were the first Christians using to instruct them in their faith? We tend to picture them as possessing nicely bound Old and New Testaments similar to ours, but nothing could be further from the truth! Those books which would later comprise the New Testament would not even begin to be written until several decades after the inception of the Church. What this means is that when Luke (many years later) records the activity of those first Christians as "devoting themselves to the Apostles' teaching" (Act 2:42) or when Paul tells Timothy, "Until I come devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching" (1Ti 4:13) or "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." (2Ti 3:15-17), the Scripture in focus is the Old Testament. This then was the source material for their Christian Faith; the place they turned to discover what God required of them as His people. Though it would take Jesus, the Apostles and other inspired men to explain their proper application under the New Covenant – a subject to be discussed later, it was nonetheless the laws established by the Old Testament Scriptures which were considered sufficient for Christian salvation and sanctification. In other words, the canon for the first Christians was the Old Testament Scriptures. And the addition of the New Testament many years later did not somehow change that. The Old Testament Scriptures did not become obsolete or inferior, but rather continued to function at the same authoritative capacity as before. If not, then why would Paul give such instruction to Timothy regarding their use in teaching and training? To take the position that the ITNT were somehow opposed to the Old Testament laws as authoritative also creates serious problems when attempting to interpret many of the commands found in the New Testament³⁴.

³² This includes both the authors of the NT and those teachers whose work is referenced by them (e.g. Stephen, Act 7).

³³ Unfortunately this is not the position of many professing Christians or the Evangelical Church today. Though reluctant to admit it, in practice they interpret the Inspired Teachers of the New Testament as directly opposed to Jesus on this issue of the OT laws. The result of placing them on such a collision course with Jesus is – as would be assumed, devastating. It essentially creates two versions of Christianity: one taught by Jesus, the other by those Inspired Teachers after Him (Cf. M. Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 1951). This unfortunately is only the beginning of the heresies associated with this kind of thinking. The history of the Church reveals similar faulty thinking to also be the cause for some to outright reject certain portions of the NT as though they are corrupt or pseudo in origin (e.g. Marcion rejected almost everything in the NT except those books written by Paul; Martin Luther rejected James and Hebrews).

³⁴ Two examples will suffice to make the point: (1) Romans 13:8-9. The particular laws Paul is referring to in these verses are clearly those found in the OT. If however they are no longer binding, why mention our need to see them "fulfilled" through our love for one another? Rejecting the authority of the OT laws make verses like these

2. The ITNT directly reference the laws established in the Old Testament as support for their own instruction.

Holding the position that the ITNT rejected the laws established in the Old Testament as binding upon Christians becomes increasingly difficult to maintain when one also considers the fact that they are oftentimes quoting directly from those laws in support of their instruction to the Church. This is especially true as it relates to the Apostle Paul (Rom 13:8-9; 1Co 9:7-11, 14:12-34; 2Co 6:14-18, 8:15; Gal 5:14; Eph 6:1-3). Ironically many today would see Paul as the champion who frees us from the bondage of Old Testament law. As demonstrated however, nothing could further from the Paul of the New Testament³⁵. The same however can be said about the other ITNT. Rather than treating the Old Testament laws as though they were to be opposed, they are again directly referenced and re-enforced as expected Christian orthopraxy (Jam 2:8-13; 1Pe 1:14-16, 3:9-12; Heb 3:6-15, 10:36-39, 12:4-6).

3. The ITNT defended the laws established in the Old Testament as holy, perfect and righteous.

It is not uncommon today to hear people speak about the laws established under the Old Testament in a way that makes them seem almost sinful. They are cast in a suspicious, reproachable light and treated as though God Himself is apologetic for ever giving them! As before however, this is not an accurate biblical picture – nor the position of the ITNT. They instead defended the Old Testament laws as God’s holy, perfect and righteous standard (Rom 7:12-16; Jam 1:25 w/2:8-12³⁶). This position is consistent with the Old Testament writers who also appealed to and found comfort in such laws as the epitome of holiness, perfection and righteousness (e.g. Deu 4:8; Isa 8:20; Psa 19:7-9, 119:17-24, 33-35, 46-48, 52, 75, 86, 97-98, 103, 111, 136-38, 142-144, 171-174) (Consider also Act 25:8).

4. The ITNT knew that the laws established in the Old Testament Scriptures were permanent regardless of when they were given.

The Old Testament law’s continuing authority is clearly the kind of theological issue where the Church has no latitude for error due to its soteriological implications. Discovering its answer however requires first understanding the nature of God’s law. Though previous covenants and their administrators have become obsolete³⁷, the laws established under them are considered a permanent fixture in God’s redemptive program (Deu 29:29; Psa 19:9, 111:7-8, 119:152, 160). This no doubt, is the main impetus behind Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:17-20³⁸ as well as those Old Testament commands repeated by the ITNT³⁹. The fact that such permanency extends to all of God’s laws and not just those established under the Old Covenant is also a demonstrable feature of both the theology of Jesus and the ITNT. For example, in Matthew 19 Jesus supports His teaching on marriage by quoting from the laws given under the Adamic Covenant (see Mat 19:3-6⁴⁰). As it relates to the ITNT, this principle of permanency

completely nonsensical. (2) The NT commands against “sexual immorality” (Mat 5:32, 19:9; Rom 13:13; 1Co 6:18; Eph 5:3; 1Th 4:3): Without the authority of the OT Scriptures determining the scope of this particular law, we are left with a law which now gives license to certain forms of sexual immorality once prohibited (e.g. bestiality – Lev 18:23) since such things are never included in the scope of examples/situations where this particular prohibition is addressed in the NT. Some have suggested that this is inferred based on its prior OT references, yet they do so without realizing the position of duplicity they have just assumed. One cannot reference laws they claim are no longer “on the books” without at the same time, acknowledging that they continue to possess some sense of authority within that present context. This is rudimentary to the principles of both law and logic.

³⁵ As many scholars have shown over the centuries, Martin Luther is more to blame than any other historical figure for the unbiblical picture of Paul which makes him a vehement opponent of OT law for the NT Church (Cf. James Dunn, *The Justice of God*, 1994, p. 13-14; K. Stendhal, *The Apostle Paul And The introspective Conscience Of The West*, 1960, p. 62-77).

³⁶ Based on James’ identification of the OT laws (or “royal law”) as the “law of liberty” (2:8-12), it is clear that he also views such laws as perfect since this the connection made in 1:25 (“law of liberty” is called “the perfect law”).

³⁷ This subject will be discussed in more detail in the final point.

³⁸ Consider also Mat 10:35.

³⁹ Consider also the book of Hebrews. It is the permanent nature the Old Covenant laws which establish the basis for contrasting the superior nature of the New Covenant with its predecessor.

⁴⁰ Though it is not the intention of this particular paper to discuss the changes that exist between how God’s laws are applied in each covenant, it is important to note that change is not antithetical to the concept of permanency. By definition, it actually communicates just the opposite – the original still existing, only in a different form. This then is also the idea behind what follows in Jesus’ explanation of marriage/divorce under the Moses (i.e. the Old Covenant) (v7-8) – what constituted a valid divorce under the OC was different than the NC, both however

(regardless of when established) is also highlighted (e.g. Heb 7:1-5). This is especially true in Paul's letter to the Romans where the "law of faith" (Rom 3:27) established under the Abrahamic Covenant becomes his *sine qua non* argument for its validity under the New Covenant (Rom 3:31-4:3⁴¹).

5. The ITNT condemned as false teachers all those who were antinomian in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures.

The term antinomian (i.e. "against the law") is historical rather than biblical in origin. Its initial use was in relation to John Agricola (1494-1566), a preacher who taught that Christians were entirely free from the laws of the Old Testament⁴². This therefore is truly what it means to be antinomian. It means rejecting the authority of those laws established under the Old Testament Scriptures. And though Agricola was the first to be stigmatized by this term, the history of the Church is filled with similar individuals and teaching. The same could be said with greater force today. The current position of the Evangelical Church is predominately antinomian. Like Agricola, they believe Christians to be entirely free from the laws of the Old Testament⁴³. There is however a serious problem with this position. Not only does Church History always view antinomianism as heretical⁴⁴, but so does the New Testament! The ITNT condemned as false teachers all those who were antinomian in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures. For example:

5.1. 2 Peter 2:1-2 and Jude 1:4.

Though written by different authors, these passages bear a striking resemblance. Each identifies false teachers and their damning heresy according to the same singular criterion: a denial of Jesus as the Master they will submit to in obedience ("denying the Master who bought them", "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ"). In this respect, these passages are therefore also a direct allusion to Deuteronomy 18:15-19⁴⁵. There Moses speaks of a "future Moses" who in similar fashion to himself, will demand obedience under the threat of Divine punishment (15b, 19 -"it is to him you shall listen...And whoever will not listen to My words that he shall speak in name, I Myself will require it of him."). With that in mind, the question that now becomes most in need of an answer is, "What did Jesus demand obedience to?" And once again it is Matthew 5:17-20 and Jesus' teaching about the continuing authority of the Old Testament laws that comes to the forefront. According to Malachi 4:1-6, this too is what would identify His coming: a calling of God's people back to "the law of My servant Moses" (v4). In conclusion then, this is how the false teachers will deny Jesus as Master; they will deny His demands for obedience to the Old Testament laws. In other words, it was the antinomians Peter and Jude had in mind.

5.2. 1 John 2:24-29.

John's concern in these verses is the same as that of Peter and Jude: warning Christians about false teachers (v26 -"I write these things about those who are trying to deceive you"). Likewise, John's criterion for identifying these deceivers is also the same: they are antinomian in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures. This is made abundantly clear once a person understands the phrases "what you have heard from the beginning" (v24), and "everyone who practice righteousness" (v29) and their connection to the rest of John's instruction. As it relates to the first, the answer is found in 2:7. There we are told that what John has written about loving the

operated by the law of marriage est'd in Gen 2. For further discussion, see the third paper in this series as this will be its focus.

⁴¹ The same argument is made in Gal 3:15-29.

⁴² Cf. Ernest F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology*, 1965, p.23; Walter F. Hook, "Antinomians", *A Church Dictionary*, 1877, p.33; Alexander Renwick, "Antinomianism", *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 1960, p.49.

⁴³ See for example, Charles Ryrie's article, "The End of the Law", *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 124, 1967, p. 239-242; F.F. Bruce, "The Grace of God and the Law of Christ", *God and the Good*, 1975, p.26-30.

⁴⁴ For a concise yet well supported discussion on Church History's support for the OT laws and against antinomianism see Greg Bahnsen's article, "The Theonomic Antithesis to Other Law-Attitudes", 1982, section 3: Antinomianism, p.5-11.

⁴⁵ Act 3:22, 7:37 confirms that this is indeed speaking about Christ.

brethren is “no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have heard from the beginning.” This can be referring to nothing other than the Old Testament commands –most specifically Leviticus 19:18, where “from the beginning” loving the covenant community was established as law by God. This then is the meaning carried over to what John says in 3:24. Therefore, to “let what you heard from the beginning abide in you” is a call to obey the Old Testament laws. Ironically, the same is true of the second phrase as well. Though couched in different words, the instruction is the same since (as previously discussed), it is the Old Testament Scriptures which Paul reveals to be the key to righteous living (2Ti 3:16-17). In connection then to the rest of what John says, this represents how a person has a saving relationship with Christ (v24-25, 28-29). This also however represents exactly what the false teachers were attempting to convince John’s audience was a lie (v26-27). They were promoting the deceitful teaching of “freedom from the law of Moses”. As mentioned, John’s message was the same as Peter and Jude. It was a message against those who were antinomian in relation to the Old Testament Scriptures.

6. The ITNT embraced a biblical theology of maturity not mutation.

In Charles Darwin’s foundational book on the theory of Evolution, *The Origin of Species*, he teaches that life on this planet came into its current state through billions of years of natural selection. In other words, it was the result of biological mutation: permanent change to the DNA of an organism that is inconsistent with its prior genetic sequence. As would be expected, this view has not been historically supported by the Church. Besides the overwhelming scientific evidence, this theory also stands in complete contradiction to the biblical witness of Creation. More importantly however, it calls into question the character of God. Given the definition of mutation, it accuses God of trial and error; of not knowing what is best until He sees the results; of change due to failure. Evolution is therefore ultimately an attack on God’s omniscience, immutability and perfection. It is for these reasons then, that the vast majority of the Evangelical Church today continues to reject the theory of Evolution as false. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about its two most popular forms of biblical theology – Covenantalism and Dispensationalism, despite the fact that they too accuse God of mutation –one related to salvation. Both for example, teach that the “DNA of redemption” (i.e. how a person is saved) under the New Covenant, has been permanently changed in a way that is completely inconsistent with God’s plan of salvation under the Old Covenant. Whereas salvation was through obedience to the Old Testament laws (i.e. works of merit) now it is just the opposite of meritorious works; it is by grace (i.e. faith)⁴⁶. In short, both teach a sort of evolutionary process as God’s redemptive plan; a process of mutation. This time though, it is not just God’s character which is called into question, but also the Old Testament laws. They are now seen as a past failure, something permanently replaced. Hence another reason why so many Christians doubt their authority for today: “salvation has evolved from the law to grace”. That being said, nothing could be further from the truth when considering the ITNT. Rather than evolutionary mutation, they embraced a biblical theology of maturity. That is, they saw each redemptive covenant through history as contributing necessary elements which has moved God’s plan of salvation from prophetic infancy to mature fulfillment. This means that the elements contained in today’s gospel does not create a completely new picture in stark contrast to its predecessors, but instead a picture which reveals each of those prior elements as the means to bringing God’s redemptive plan to its fullest expression. And among such elements are the laws established in the Old Testament. It too was seen as necessary to creating the mature gospel they preached. The following table provides support:

⁴⁶ Under Covenantalism this is communicated as the change from the Covenant of Works to the Covenant of Grace. In Dispensationalism it is essentially the same thing only taught as the change from the Dispensation of Law to the Dispensation of Grace.

Covenant	Adamic	Noahic	Abrahamic	Old/Mosaic	New
Contribution	Sin	Baptism	Faith	Law	Grace/Just.
ITNT	Paul = Rom 5:12-14	Peter = 1Pe 3:21 ⁴⁷	Paul = Rom 4:1-25; Gal 3:7-29	John = Joh 1:17	John = Joh 1:17; Paul = Rom 5:15-21

In summary then, the biblical theology embraced by the ITNT would communicate the gospel as: We are sinners in need of grace/justification that is gained through faith (as recognized in the waters of baptism) which then must be maintained through faithful obedience to all of God's Old Testament laws as applied by Jesus (and the ITNT). All prior contributions to God's redemptive plan throughout history and through His redemptive covenants are intact as necessary to its understanding and prophetic fulfillment. And as demonstrated, this once more includes the Old Testament laws. It is a biblical theology of maturity *not* mutation.

7. The ITNT were only opposed to the continuing authority of the Old Covenant and its application of the clean laws as necessary for salvation.

In the bible, covenants represent the kind of agreement God always establishes when entering into a saving relationship with human beings.⁴⁸ As such, whatever covenant was in force at a particular time was the covenant that determined how God's law was to be applied. The opposite was also true. Whenever another "saving covenant" was established by God, the former became obsolete and its application of God's law replaced by those changes expressed under the succeeding covenant. This is especially true as it relates to the "clean laws" of the Old Covenant – those laws by which a person gained a spiritually clean, forgiven and justified state before God⁴⁹. Whereas under the Old Covenant, the way a person gained such a state before God was by observing circumcision, sacrifices, Sabbaths, separation from things deemed unclean⁵⁰, under the New Covenant it is simply through repentance and

⁴⁷ ἀντίτυπος ("antitype") is the word translated "corresponds" in 1Pe 3:21 lending further support to the idea that each prior covenant contributes necessary elements to God's redemptive plan as it develops through history. Noah's flood was therefore the type of what was to come under the NC in its mature form of baptism (its antitype fulfillment).

⁴⁸ There are five "saving covenants" recorded in the Bible: Adamic (Hos 6:7), Noahic (Gen 6:18), Abrahamic (Gen 17:2), Old/Mosaic and New (Jer 31:31).

⁴⁹ The belief that divisions/distinctions do exist in the OT laws between those laws that make the worshipper spiritually clean versus those which maintain his morally righteous status in the covenant community can be found going back to the early centuries of Christianity in the writings of such men as Barnabas, Tertullian and Augustine (Cf. Barnabas, *The Epistle of Barnabas*; Tertullian, *An Answer To The Jews*, ch. 2,5; *Against Marcian*, 2.17; Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, 6.2). However, it was Thomas Aquinas - and later the Reformers and their confessions, who did the most in establishing it as important Christian doctrine (Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* 2.6.99.3 -2.6.99.4.; John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, Bk 4, Ch. 20, Sec 14; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenction Theology*, 11.24.1; Westminster Confession; London Baptist of 1689; Heidelberg Catechism). Such division/distinctions however are not only a Christian construct. Judaism also recognizes that they exist and are key to understanding the Scriptures (Cf. Boaz Cohen, *Law and Tradition in Judaism*, 1959, 188-189; T.R. Rich, *Judaism 101*, 2005; R. Bisschops, "Case Study on Samuel Holdheim", *Metaphor, Canon and Community: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Approaches*, 1999, p.291). It must also be mentioned that though many have made a tri-partite distinction, the bible communicates only two (i.e. a bi-partite distinction) (Lev 10:10; 1Sa 15:22; Pro 21:3; Hos 6:6; Isa 1:11-17, 43:22-24; Rom 2:25; 1Co 7:19).

⁵⁰ See Lev 1-18. Though some will argue that under the Old Covenant it was impossible to be justified/righteous, this nonetheless is the language used by God Himself in His prescription of the clean laws. The inadequacy therefore did not exist in what was promised - men *were* made righteous before God (e.g. Lev 1:4, 4:20, 16:30).

faith in Christ (1Jo 1:9; Rom 3:28)⁵¹. In other words, both the Old Covenant and its application of the clean laws have been replaced as necessary to salvation. As such, this is the only place we find opposition in relation to the ITNT. This is seen most clearly when considering:

7.1. The Apostle Paul and his use of the word “law.”

Those who view Paul as somehow opposed to the Old Testament laws do so largely because they believe this to be the exclusive meaning behind the word “law” (νόμος) in his writings⁵². Critical analysis however reveals that Paul makes use of this term to refer to more than just the Old Testament laws. He uses it to refer also to the Old Covenant clean laws and the authority of the Old Covenant. And it is only in relation to these latter two that Paul expresses any antagonism:

7.1.1. As it relates to the Old Covenant clean laws (Rom 3:20-5:11, 9:30-10:10; Gal 2:16, 5:1-12, 6:12-15; Eph 2:8-22; Phi 3:3-9; Col 2:11-3:4).

The phrases “works of the law” (e.g. Rom 3:20), “law for righteousness” (Rom 10:4), or “righteousness...that comes from the law” (Phi 3:9) establish the context for every passage or section of verses listed above. Likewise, they all represent Paul’s way of referring to the Old Covenant clean laws since:

7.1.1.1. The clean laws did require physical “work” by the worshipper (e.g. cutting off the foreskin, delivering/killing a lamb, etc.) and were for the purpose of gaining one’s “righteousness” before God.

7.1.1.2. They appear only in relation to Paul’s discussions on justification (e.g. Rom 3:28) and/or one of the Old Covenant clean laws (e.g. circumcision, Gal 5:3-4).

7.1.2. As it relates to the authority of the Old Covenant (Rom 5:12-8:14; 1Co 9:20-21; Gal 3:15-4:24, 5:18).

The phrase “under the law” establishes the context for every passage or section of verses listed above. Likewise this phrase represents Paul’s way of referring to the authority of the Old Covenant since:

7.1.2.1. It was “under” the Old Covenant that God codified His Old Testament laws (Joh 1:14; Rom 5:13-14).

7.1.2.2. The inspired teachers of the Old Testament saw the Old Covenant and its laws as so inseparable as to share the same identity. Therefore, to speak of one was to refer to the other (e.g. “transgress the law” v. “transgress the covenant”: Deu 26:14; 1Sa 15:24; Isa 24:5; Dan 9:11 w/Deu 17:2; Jos 7:11, 15, 23:16; Jdg 2:20; Hos 8:1; e.g. “Book of the Law” v. “Book of the Covenant”: Exo 24:7; 2Ki 23:2-3, 21; 2Ch 34:30-31 w/Deu 30:10, 31:26, Jos 1:8, 8:31, 34, 23:6, 24:26; 2Ki 22:8; 2Ch 17:9, 34:14-15; Neh 8:1-6; 2Co 3:14-15).

Rather where the problem existed was in the kind of justification/righteousness received – it was Passover v. Propitiation (Rom 3:25). In this way then the Old Covenant and its clean laws failed. Though they produced a form of justification/righteousness, it never offered real payment for sin, therefore only bringing the worshipper into remembrance of their sin rather than truly taking it away (Rom 3:19; Gal 2:21, 3:21; Heb 10:1-4, 11).

⁵¹ The symmetry between the former clean laws and faith in Christ becomes apparent once one considers that the New Testament: depicts Jesus as the antitype fulfillment of circumcision (Col 2:11), animal sacrifice (1Co 5:7), Sabbath (Heb 4:1-10), and separation (Heb 13:13). Faith also finds a connection-though not under the Old Covenant, but the Abrahamic (Rom 4:1-12).

⁵² Douglas Moo would be a good example of someone who sees this term as always referring to the entire Old Testament laws. See his essay, “The Law of Christ as the fulfillment of the law of Moses: a modified Lutheran view”, *Five Views of Law and Gospel*, 1996, p.319-376.

7.1.2.3. This is how Paul distinguishes between Jew and Gentile – those in covenant and those outside (Rom 2:12, 3:19).

7.1.2.4. Hebrews makes it clear that what determines whether a person possesses the promise of real cleansing from sin - as well as power over the practice of sin, is not the laws of God but the covenant they reside under (Heb 8:6-13)⁵³.

As demonstrated, by a correct understanding of this term “law” in its given context, Paul’s (as well as the other ITNT’s) opposition is not against the Law, but the Law under its Old Covenant Administration:

AGAINST			FOR		
Administration	Law	Application	Administration	Law	Application
Old Covenant	Clean	Works of the Law (Gal 2; Rom 3)	New Covenant	Clean	Faith in Christ (Gal 2; Rom 3)
	Moral	w/o HS power (Rom 7)		Moral	w/Holy Spirit power (Rom 8)

7.2. Jerusalem Council (Act 15:1-21).

The importance of this event to the current argument cannot be under-estimated for two reasons. First, because it was here that the ITNT confirmed what the Church’s view would be in relation to the Old Covenant laws. Secondly, because this no doubt, was the event that clarified for Paul – as well as the other ITNT, who the true enemies of the gospel really were. Likewise, this too determined the course of Paul’s polemic in his epistles⁵⁴. Combating issues related to the laws of God meant defending the position of the Jerusalem Council. And as before, where the battle raged was not over the Old Testament laws *in toto*, but rather only the clean laws. It was again the necessity of the Old covenant clean laws that the ITNT stood opposed to – especially as it related to the Gentiles. This becomes plain when the following is considered:

7.2.1. The position of the Council on the Old Testament laws would never contradict the teaching of Jesus on this subject. This therefore makes any interpretation of the text which would pit the views of the ITNT against Jesus absolutely impossible.

7.2.2. The historical context which prompted the meeting was the issue of circumcision (1). In other words, the focus was the Old Covenant clean laws. This then also determines the scope of what is meant by the “law of Moses” when used in conjunction with circumcision in verse 5.

⁵³ Ironically, this is in direct contrast to position held by most Evangelicals. They would see the laws (or more specifically their removal) as the key to avoiding sin. For all practical purposes it makes sense: get rid of law and at the same time you get rid of sin (which by definition is “lawlessness” -1Jo 3:4). The problem is, such thinking denies not only the purpose of the indwelling Spirit (so that we might fulfill the laws of God -Rom 8:4), but also the New Birth. What is the point of becoming a “new creation” if what caused the problem under the old creation has been removed? , In other words, “Why mess with the pig, if you’ve already removed the mud-holes?” The bible however teaches just the opposite, it is the pig that is removed/changes not the mud-holes.

⁵⁴ All but one of Paul’s epistles (Galatians) were written after Jerusalem Council. Clearly then, whatever position Paul is arguing for in his epistles was in agreement with what was determined at that time.

7.2.3. The fact that this it is indeed only the clean laws which are being deliberated is strengthened by what is used to counter the arguments regarding circumcision - which is the testimony of Peter that the Gentiles have been "cleansed...by faith" (9).

7.2.4. Peter adds further light by his aversion to "placing a yoke upon the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" (10). The "yoke" can be none other than the clean laws which required meticulous attention to countless rituals and customs. In contrast, Peter cannot be referring to the whole law since do so would mean Peter is now lobbying against any obligation to holy living –the very opposite of what he stresses in his epistle (1Pe 1:14-16).

7.2.5. James' evangelistic concession that the Gentiles should "abstain from the things polluted by: idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood" (20) is a clean law issue – the clean laws regarding kosher foods. As such it too reveals this to be the subject under debate.

7.3. Conclusion (PART 2)

In light of the evidence hardly could it be argued that the ITNT took a different perspective on the Old Testament laws than Jesus. Though the ITNT recognized differences in their application under the New Covenant, they – like Jesus, believed the principles established by God during the prior eras to still be operative and authoritative in the life of Church. And there is no better example of this than the ITNT's preaching on justification by faith alone in Christ. Though a big change from the past, God's established clean laws were perfectly fulfilled and upheld (Rom 3:31). This then was their gospel goal. They endeavored to convince the world – and most especially their Jewish brethren, that new life in Jesus Christ was not antinomian heresy but rather what the Law and the Prophets had always envisioned: a covenant community of people not only fully forgiven, but completely faithful to *all* that God had commanded.

(PART 3)

The Application of the Old Testament Laws in the New Covenant/Testament

Jesus makes it clear that as far as this world is concerned, the Old Testament laws⁵⁵ are timeless (Mat 5:18). This too was the position of His apostles and other inspired teachers in the New Testament and why we find them constantly quoting those laws in their own instruction (e.g. Eph 6:1-2). As a matter of fact, the entire teaching of the New Testament is fully dependent on both understanding and embracing the continuing authority of the Old Testament laws (Rom 3:31, 13:8-10). This means that what Jesus gave as instruction to God's New Covenant community (i.e. the Church) was not really new (1Jo 2:7)⁵⁶. The same though, was not always true as it related to its application. In this respect, there can be "newness" (1Jo 2:8). Knowing however that only some of the Old Testament laws are explicitly addressed and applied in the New Testament, the question becomes, "What is the biblical process for accurately determining how we as the Church should apply the rest of those laws today?" The answer to that question is the sum of the following three:

1. Where does it fit in the Decalogue?

1.1. The Decalogue (i.e. Ten Commandments) represents the summary code (and table of contents) for the rest of God's laws in Scripture. They are therefore the foundation – or *code laws*, from which every other law of God (i.e. the *case laws*) are derived. To put it another way, every other law given by God is simply a further explanation, expansion and expression of one or more of the Ten Commandments. This includes the laws found in both the Old and New Testaments⁵⁷. As such our ability to accurately interpret what those other laws are teaching begins with this question, "Where does it fit in the Decalogue?"

1.2. This view is widely embraced among bible scholars and theologians⁵⁸:

1.3. More importantly however, this view is supported by Moses himself: the Ten Commandments as summary of God's covenant law, the additional rules and statutes (i.e. case laws) as further explanation, expansion and expression (Deu 4:13-14, 44-45, 5:31)⁵⁹.

1.4. This first step or question in relation to the Decalogue is crucial since:

1.4.1. It allows us to see that each of the Ten Commandments (Exo 20:1-17) also function as "covenantal categories"⁶⁰. Consider below the proposed categories and their associated case law examples:

⁵⁵ Old Testament laws (scope): Genesis to Malachi (Mat 5:17 – "Law and the Prophets" refers to the entirety of God's law as found in all 39 books of the Old Testament scriptures; Mat 7:12, 11:13, 22:40; Luk 16:29, 24:27, 44; Joh 1:45; Act 13:15, 28:23; Rom 3:21).

⁵⁶ Jesus did not give new law, but a new application of the old laws (Moses gave "the law" - Joh 1:17).

⁵⁷ Understood in this way, it is true to say that the New Testament repeats all of the Old Testament laws since we find the entire Decalogue re-asserted in its pages. This will be demonstrated in the final question/step.

⁵⁸ "...each of the case laws of the Bible can be subsumed under [at least] one of the Ten Commandments", James B. Jordan, *The Law of the Covenant*, 1984, p.22-23; "The Ten Commandments cannot be understood and properly applied without the explanation given them throughout the case laws of the Old Testament. The case illustrates the application or qualification of the principle laid down in the general commandment.", Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, 1984, p.313.; "The Ten Commandments are not therefore laws among laws, but are the basic laws, of which the various laws are specific examples." R.J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 1973, p.10; "God's law may be summarized in brief maxims, such as when God Himself provides the Ten Commandments as a summary of His fuller law." Kenneth Gentry, *God's Law Made Easy*, 2010, p.6.

⁵⁹ This is no doubt why the Decalogue is the only thing written by God on the tablets of stone and said to represent the covenant with Israel (Exo34:1; Deu 9:15 w/10:4).

⁶⁰ The reason behind referring to these as "covenantal categories" is due to their importance to covenant relationship and life. In other words, these categories represent what is necessary for relationship with God and life within the covenant community.

One (1-3)	Two (4-6)	Three (7)	Four (8-11)	Five (12)
Orthodoxy (Sovereignty & Authority) Deu 6:4, 13:1-18; Exo 22:28	Orthopraxy (Worship & Priority) Exo 25-30 Deu 6:5	Proper representation Deu 22:5	“Orthoaphory”: Consecration/Separation (Holiness) Deu 7:1-5	Sacred office of parents Exo 21:15, 17; Deu 21:18-21

Six (13)	Seven (14)	Eight (15)	Nine (16)	Ten (17)
Sanctity of life Exo 21:13, 18-19	Sexual purity Lev 18:1-20	Personal property Exo 22:1-4	Truth in reporting Deu 13:1-5	Proper disposition toward others/other things Deu 22:1-8

1.4.2. It drastically reduces the number of viable options in interpretation as well as the potential for eisegesis in the overall process (e.g. Lev 19:19, 27-28 = #4 = btw: #1, 2, 4 = idolatry).

2. What is the “spirit of the law”?

2.1. Since the Protestant Reformation, the Church has understood what continues forward in relation to God’s Old Testament laws is not the “letter” – but the “spirit of the law”. In other words, though adherence to both the literal interpretation (i.e. the “letter”) and intent of the law (i.e. the “spirit”) are necessary when considering its application under the covenant in which it was given (e.g. Exo 22:1 w/Luk 19:1-10), it is only the latter aspect that is treated as timeless.

2.2. This is demonstrated best by the Apostle Paul (1Co 5:1-13 w/Lev 18:8,29 and Deu 17:7; 1Co 6:9-10 w/Lev 20:13 [LXX]; 1Co 9:9-10⁶¹ and 1Ti 5:18 w/Deu 25:4).

2.3. The next step in this process of determining the Old Testament law’s application in the New is therefore discovering “What is the ‘spirit’ of the Old Testament law under consideration?” As such, it requires:

2.3.1. (D) = Consideration of its place in the code laws of the Decalogue (what is its intent in relation to its covenant category within the Decalogue?).

2.3.2. (C) = Determining the Context: Scope, History and Audience (e.g. Mar 2:18-22: (S) Mat 9:14-17/(H)tradition v. command/(A)Mar 1:14-15) (e.g. Joh 8:1-11: (S) “hapax legomenon” account /(H) Deu 22:22-24/(A) Deu 17:6-7).

2.3.3. (LG) = Good logic (e.g. Mat 22:31-33) and grammar skills (e.g. Joh 1:21).

2.4. Text to consider: (Lev 19:19, 27-28: (D) 4/(C) Deu 7:1-5; 14:1, 22:9-12; Isa 15:2; Jer 9:26, 16:6, 41:5, 47:5, 48:37; 1Ki 18:28/(LG) 2Ki 1:33 –“mules”⁶²) = *Separation from anything which is/has become symbols of the world’s sinful ideologies.*

⁶¹ Paul’s statement, “It was written for our sake” in this verse makes it clear that God’s intent in giving any law was always to establish authoritative precepts for the human race (including those laws originally given to animals).

⁶² Part of logic and getting to the truth is ruling out the impossible and contradictions. In the spirit of Sir Conan Doyle, “Eliminating the impossible is what makes the probable the discovery of the truth”.

3. How does it continue under the New Covenant?

3.1. In other words, how is the spirit of those Old Testament case laws – and the Decalogue code (laws) they represent further explained, expanded and expressed through Jesus and the inspired teachers of the NT?

3.2. Texts to consider:

3.2.1. (Lev 19:19, 27-28) = (1Th 5:22; in re: to idolatry: 1Sa 16:23, 3 w/Deu 7:1-6; 1Co 10:14-22 w/context = chs. 8-10; 2Co 6:14-7:1; 1Pe 2:12 w/3:13-4:5; 2Pe 2:18-20; 1Jo 2:15-17; teens and Dickies' jeans, the colors red or blue; right ear piercing on males; Goth scene).

3.2.2. (Deu 22:5: (D) 3/10) = (1Co 6:9 -οὔτε μαλακοί = "nor the effeminate"; 1Co 11:1-16; 1Ti 2:12; Isa 5:20; acting/movies/music that portrays evil as good –or funny - or that glorifies it – or makes the villain the hero; Friday the 13th; Brokeback Mtn.).

3.2.3. Text to consider: (Lev 14:19-20: (D) 3/(C) Lev 10:10ff, 14:1-18, 16:30-31) = (1Co 6:11; 1Jo 1:9; Heb 9:11-14, 10:1-4, 11-22).