

The Law Fulfilled

Eric Michael Teitelman

Pastor • Teacher • Worship Leader



House of David
MINISTRIES

Introduction

Early arguments within the church and even arguments today between Jewish and Gentile believers often revolved around a theological disagreement over the Law of Moses. The word *law* is translated from the Hebrew word *Torah* and means instruction. This instruction was intricately woven into the Mosaic Covenant and included 613 positive and negative obligations, essentially a long list of does and don'ts. Thus, while the Law functioned as a binding and unbreakable unit, it can be generally divided into three areas of instruction:ⁱ

1. The Moral Law is often labeled as the Ten Commandments: This part governed the life-giving moral guidance to Israel in principles of right and wrong. In addition, it handled the relationship between man and God and fellow men.
2. The Judgments, Civil, and the Social Law: This part governed Israel in her secular, social, political, and economic life and ruled the nations on principles of right and wrong in the relationships between fellow men.
3. Lastly, the Ordinances or the Ceremonial Law: This was the religious portion of Law that guided Israel in her worship and spiritual relationship and fellowship with God. It encompassed the priesthood, the Tabernacle, and its sacrifices.

Through these arguments regarding the observance of Old Testament laws, the church has resolved that we are no longer under the Law but are under grace. At first, this opinion sounds plausible, given the Apostle, Paul, said that *"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes"* (Romans 10:4, NKJV).ⁱⁱ

His statement thereby implies that God's Law, or instruction, has been either done away with or replaced with a new Law. However, Paul also said, *"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet'"* (Romans 7:7).

I believe the church's view regarding the Law has been misinformed, in part, by its improper understanding of her relationship with Israel. Many in the church believe they are the new Israel (called supersessionism or replacement theology). They view the church as something new and entirely separate from Israel (called separation theology). Both views are unbiblical and imply that God has either replaced Israel with a new group of people called the church or has abolished His Law for Israel by entering a New Covenant with them.

On the contrary, God's Law and many of His statutes which He gave to Israel, are eternal. For example, the Lord established both the Sabbath and Feast of Passover as eternal ordinances.ⁱⁱⁱ And He appointed the Aaronic priesthood as an everlasting service unto the Lord.^{iv} Yeshua Himself said, *"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 5:18).

These scriptures contradict the church's assumption that the Law has somehow ended as an unfortunate dispensation for the Jewish people. This old and irrelevant dispensation, given to the Israelites, was for them to suffer through until Christ would come. But then, because Israel rejected their Messiah, the Lord would turn His full attention to the Gentiles. They would enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant without any obligation to uphold God's biblical and moral foundation that He established through the Mosaic Law.

Yeshua's very statement, *till all, is fulfilled* summarily includes but is not limited to, for example, the feasts of the Lord. These holy convocations point not only to the first Advent of Christ but His return as well. This prophetic declaration by Yeshua, *till all is fulfilled*, also implies the complete physical and spiritual restoration of Israel's governance, comprised of both the throne of David and the Levitical priesthood. Therefore, because the throne of David and the Levitical priesthoods will one day be restored in Christ, God's Law, which is His instruction to Israel, will govern them up to and through the Millennial Kingdom.^v After that, God will make all things new.

It should now be evident that Paul never declared the end of the *Law* in the book of Romans. He was announcing the end of the Law in our current dispensation as a means of instruction leading to righteousness. Paul affirmed that salvation is found only by faith in Christ Yeshua, and not by any works of the flesh learned through the Law of Moses; as it is written, *"But now He [Christ] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better [new] covenant, which was established on better promises"* (Hebrews 8:6).

This new and better covenant that Yeshua made with Israel came with a promise in Jeremiah chapter 31, that, *"I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people"* (Jeremiah 31:33). Therefore, God's Law would not be learned through our old sinful nature and hearts of stone, but rather the old instruction now would be revealed through the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. It would be eternally written into our new nature and hearts of flesh. In other words, Israel was to become one with Christ and His eternal Law.

God's Law versus His Covenants

It is essential to make a distinction between God's Law and His covenants. A covenant is a legally binding contract between two parties, each with its respective obligations. I like to think of God's covenants as a marriage vow, like what the Jewish people call a *Ketuba*, a marriage

contract. God's eternal and perfect Law was thereby attached to the old contract to make it binding upon all Israel. This contract, as we know, was provisional and came with blessings and curses—namely, the curse of death which came through violation of the Law.

In differentiation to a contract, God's Law has stood by itself as an eternal truth that existed before creation. For example, the commandment to not commit murder was never done away with when Christ died on the cross. What died on the cross was God's eternal condemnation for those who have committed murder but are now forgiven in Christ.

Because of Christ's propitiation for our sin (His fulfillment of the law of sin and death by His crucifixion), a person who committed murder can repent and be forgiven of their sin. They can believe that Yeshua died for their sin and receive Him as their Lord and Savior. Hence, we are saved by God's grace alone and not by any instruction of the Law. Nor are we saved by any human effort to fulfill the legally binding Mosaic Contract which came with the death penalty to anyone who broke the Law—namely, everyone. For it is written, *"There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).*

Once again, God's Law is uncreated and has eternally existed with Him and within Him,^{vi} and since nothing exists apart from Him, His Law exists because of Him. This eternal and perfect law reveals His hidden nature to creation, and therefore when God promised to write His law in our minds and hearts, He was telling Israel that He intended to write His character into our created being.

This promise was revealed in the Aaronic priestly blessing, where the Lord wrote this prayer to Israel, *"The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face [His glory] shine upon you, and be gracious [show mercy] to you; The Lord lift up His countenance [His essence] upon you, and give you peace [shalom]" (Numbers 6:24-26).*

God's eternal Law was to become a part of us and is, in fact, inseparable from our new nature, which is in Christ. The Lord has made us a new creation by giving us a new spirit, the Spirit of the living God that dwells within us. And since God is love, it now becomes evident that *"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8)*. Some people call this the "law of love," and its attributes are measured by the fruit of the Spirit.

In this, we read, *"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).*

The *Talmud* relates that it was Rabbi Hillel who authored the well-known statement that "the love of one's fellow Jew (*Ahavat Yisrael*) is the basis of the entire Torah." Hillel had been approached by a Gentile who declared that he wished to convert to Judaism, but only if Hillel

would teach him the entire Torah while he stood on one foot. Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is but commentary."

Since the law remains an eternal truth about God's nature, and we now have this law of truth (the Holy Spirit) dwelling within us, we need to understand God's covenants from the perspective of the legal requirements (meaning contractual obligations) that are stipulated under each one.

Regarding the covenant with Abraham, God promised the land of Canaan to the descendants of Israel as an eternal inheritance. Abraham's obligation, in return, was to circumcise his flesh.

Regarding the covenant with Moses (the Mosaic Law), the Lord imparted his moral standards for the nation of Israel, these being the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial and civil laws that we discussed earlier. The Mosaic covenant thereby made God's eternal Laws binding upon the Jewish people, blessing the nation of Israel when they obeyed His Law and cursing them when they did not. Israel's curses under the Law would only be annulled in Christ.

The Lord then established the eternal priesthood of Aaron and his sons with all its services and sacrifices that would be fulfilled in Christ. This law of sin and propitiation for sin (atonement) has now forever been written into our minds and hearts. As the Lord promised Israel: *"I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts"* (Jeremiah 31:33).

For this reason, when we take communion, we are continually reminded of the Lord's death, His propitiation; as it is written, *"This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me"* (1 Corinthians 11:25). The Lord also established His eternal feasts and holy convocations with the nation of Israel, including the Sabbath, all pointing to her redemption and eternal rest that would come through her Messiah.

Lastly, regarding the New Covenant, Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law and replaced the old contract with a new one. This new contract does not do away with the law but takes away the contractual obligations under the Old Covenant to fulfill the law as a means of righteousness. It also does not do away with Israel's national responsibilities that are foundational to the Kingdom of God. In other words, personal salvation was never achieved through corporate commitment, such as attending synagogue or church. Salvation is an individual and personal decision and a unique marriage covenant between God and every man and woman.

Israel still has national responsibilities, and so does the church, which is the larger assemblage of Israel, and the nations who have been grafted into her. So, therefore, we read, *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:23-25).

The Mosaic Law

Understanding that the Mosaic Covenant was a temporary contract attached to God's perfect Law, revealing His nature, how are we, the church, to approach it?

We certainly cannot come back under the bondage of the Old Covenant contract, for with it came punishment and death, which is the curse of the Law. Yeshua took away this curse by fulfilling the law of sin and death, and He became our curse by dying on the cross for our sins. Therefore, we can now approach God's Law with grace rather than condemnation.

When we fail, God's mercy prevails because the blood of Yeshua has already covered us, as it is written: *"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God"* (1 John 3:9). And still, we know that God's mercy and grace are not a license to sin.

Suppose the Law is an eternal truth about God's nature, and Yeshua has not done away with it. In that case, it appears logical that Israel as a nation is still corporately bound to God's eternal legal expectations. But, once again, these are not a means to salvation but will be used to set up the civil and moral foundation of the Messianic kingdom that Christ will establish through Israel when He returns.

For it is written: *"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach [instruct] us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem"* (Isaiah 2:2-3).

And who explicitly is called to instruct the nations in the ways of the Lord? It is Israel, and now the larger assemblage of the nations that have been grafted into her—the church. God's Law, His nature will be revealed through Zion, and the ways of the Lord, God's instruction will go forth from Jerusalem.

If God has written His Law on our hearts and minds, then He is telling His people that we will be sent into the nations of the earth to reveal His perfect and loving nature, which is expressly bound within His eternal laws. As we are conformed to the image of Christ, each of us will become the express image of our heavenly Father. We will, therefore, not only teach God's laws, but we will become living examples of them.

To be clear, I am not speaking of rabbinic Judaism, which has expounded upon God's Law as a means of righteousness. Instead, I am talking about God's eternal Law encapsulated in scripture, what I like to call "biblical Judaism." Part of this Law has been fulfilled at Christ's first Advent, but the entire fulfillment is yet to come at His second Advent when Yeshua returns to establish His Millennial kingdom.

If we are to become living examples of God's Law, we will forever bear the testimony of Christ and how He died on the cross for our sins. We will forever hold Christ's attributes, which are love and mercy. We will forever model His ways, the Sabbath, and the feasts of the Lord.

We will forever be His priests, Holy unto the Lord, serving our heavenly Father in His holy Temple in Jerusalem. We will forever be His judges, executing His Law of justice and righteousness. And, we will forever be His kings, shepherding and instructing the nations of the earth in the Law of the Lord.

The Law is the Foundation

It is not surprising to see why Paul and the early disciples extensively quoted from the Old Testament. After all, it would take nearly 400-years for the New Testament to be thoroughly canonized. However, I believe the more important realization is that the early church was built upon the foundation of the Mosaic Law given to Israel. Christianity was never intended to replace biblical Judaism or substitute the Jewish people with the Gentile nations to create a new religion apart from Israel.

Christianity is and remains the fulfillment of every promise given to Abraham, for the nation of Israel, and those from the nations who have been grafted into God's family, becoming one with the Jewish people and fellow heirs and partakers of these same covenant promises and blessings.

If the Gentiles have been grafted into Israel, they have also been grafted into God's Law—the foundation for the Messianic Kingdom. These include God's moral Law eternally written on our hearts. His ceremonial Law in which we, as a Kingdom of priests, will serve Him in His Temple. And God's civil Law in which we, by the authority of Christ, will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

Removing God's Law from Christianity is just another subtle form of replacement theology. Anyone holding to these opinions incorrectly believes that God has somehow rejected everything old and started over, creating a new nation called the church that replaces Israel and eradicating the foundation of God's kingdom. It also implies that God's Mosaic Law was somehow imperfect, even though scripture tells us otherwise. As King David said, *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul..." (Psalm 19:7).*

Yeshua is that perfect Law, but it should not surprise anyone He taught from and quoted from the Mosaic Law. Why? There are several reasons. Yeshua was preaching to the Jewish people, who were still living under the letter of the Law. Also, God's Law is both eternal and is perfect. It is we who are finite and imperfect. Therefore, fallen, and broken people separated from God through sin cannot fulfill a perfect Law, nor can they make themselves perfect by impossibly trying to achieve a perfect Law and rising to a standard of perfection they can never attain.

Only God can make us a new creation in Christ, building upon the foundation of truth He established with the nation of Israel. He has given us a new incorruptible spirit that is inclined towards His will, and He is conforming us into His image, making us living examples of His perfect Law. Therefore, it is exclusively God who can take a flawed person and make them a new perfect creation.

If God's Law is perfect, then we know that He is recreating us into His perfect image, then this perfect image now includes His perfect and eternal Law written on our hearts and minds. For this reason, Paul said, *"Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law"* (Romans 3:31). When God's perfect nature shines through us, then our faith establishes God's perfect and eternal Law as an express image of our heavenly Father.

Circumcision

You might still be wondering about the Law of circumcision. We read: *"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved"* (Acts 15:1).

The church has errantly used this scripture to negate God's law for the Gentiles, but the only issue addressed here is circumcision as a requirement for salvation. The council in Jerusalem rightfully rejected the assertion that the Gentiles, or for that part even the Jewish people, required circumcision as a means of obtaining salvation in Christ,

As it is written, *"We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they"* (Acts 15:11). Salvation can only come through faith in Christ alone and not by any works or acts of the flesh, including circumcision. Neither can we add any human effort to God's plan of salvation.

None-the-less, the council did provide instruction (meaning laws) for the Gentiles, even quoting the Law of Moses as a foundation for teaching and righteous conduct, as it is written, *"we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath"* (Acts 15:20-21, NIV).^{vii}

The last point to remember regarding circumcision is that it was given to Abraham as a sign of God's covenant with Israel, primarily as it pertained to the inheritance of the land of Canaan. The Gentile's exclusion from this obligation further implies that the Jewish people hold a unique identity within the larger assemblage of global believers we call the church. And Paul was always careful to distinguish his kinsman—who were Israelites—according to the flesh, which he called "of the circumcision."^{viii}

Conclusion

In conclusion, has God done away with His Law? Certainly not.

Christ has fulfilled the Law of Moses, and He indeed is a perfect Law. If Christ now lives in us, then His eternal Law also does. The moral aspect of God's Law has now become part of our newly created being. God's ceremonial Law (the priesthood service) also lives within us as an eternal reminder of what Christ did for us on the cross, hence our communion. But it also established the foundation for our future Temple service as a Kingdom of priests.

Lastly, the civil code of God's Law (the laws governing the conduct of men and laws about the land) will become the foundation of Yeshua's Messianic Kingdom. And we, the church, will rule and reign with Christ over all the nations of the earth.

Israel will be strategically situated at the very center of Christ's worldly government, and the Law He gave to them will become the instruction for all nations. As it is written, *"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles"* (Zechariah 14:16).

So, are Gentile Christians excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and the Law of God established by their faith in Christ? No.

You are now part of *spiritual* Israel and the seed of Abraham. Like us, you are now under the bond of the New Covenant—which is the circumcision of our hearts.^{ix} The indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit continue to instruct, guide, and write God's eternal Law on our hearts and minds so that our souls would be redeemed and conformed to the Kingdom of God. We are perfectly being recreated into the image of Yeshua, who is the express image and nature of our Heavenly Father. May the Lord fulfill His perfect Law in us so that we might serve as a witness of His glorious nature in all the earth.

Amen!

ⁱ J. Hampton Keathley, III. *The Mosaic Law: Its Function and Purpose in the New Testament*. Bible.org.

ⁱⁱ Scripture taken from the New King James Version® unless otherwise noted. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ⁱⁱⁱ Exodus 12:24, Leviticus 16:31.

^{iv} Exodus 27:21, 28:43.

^v John 3:35.

^{vi} Romans 7:14.

^{vii} Scripture quotation taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV® Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc. TM. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

^{viii} Colossians 4:11.

^{ix} Deuteronomy 10:16, Romans 2:29.