

What is the usefulness of the Old Testament's law? What is the benefit of the commandments of Moses?

If the Old Testament law were good and effectual, it would have no need to be replaced by the law of love and mercy that Jesus brought from God Father.

By saying "*I give you a new commandment*" (John 13:34), Jesus established a new, much higher ethical and moral standard, which the Jews never knew in the commandments of Moses. He said in John 14:15, "*If you love me, keep my commands*".

Prior to his conversion, Paul was a zealous Pharisee of the Old Testament's law. In his fanaticism he persecuted the church and ravaged many people.

However, Paul said in Philippians 3: 5-8 ... "*Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them **garbage** that I may gain Christ*".

Therefore, he who values the Old Testament's law is prizing something that the very apostle Paul devalued and considered as "garbage". In addition, this person confirms to be bound to an obsolete law, that was replaced by new rules, that are, the commandments of Jesus.

This "failure" of the Old Testament's law was extremely beneficial to mankind, for that law ceased to be a stigma of death and eternal damnation for all men. In Jesus, a door of hope was opened for all believers who invite him to live into their hearts.

Thus says Colossians 2:14 ... "*having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross*".

With that defeat of the ancient law, occurred also the stripping away of the angels, principalities, and powers, who indeed were the authors of Old Testament's law (Acts 7:38, 7:53, Galatians 3:19).

There was no hope in the Old Testament ministry. That is why the ministry of Jesus is the effective ministry of reconciliation with the true God Father (2 Corinthians 5: 18-21).

In treating the Old Testament's law as a "preschool teacher" in Galatians 3:24, Paul criticized the evasive, superficial and grotesque form of that law. The term "preschool teacher" means the one who alphabetizes children and initiates them in the teaching of the first letters. However, in the next verse, Paul said that now that the adult phase of faith has come, Christians no longer need a preschool teacher.

Hebrews 7:18 says thus: "*The former commandment is abrogated because of its weakness and ineffectiveness*", where the author (Paul?) makes it clear that the Old Testament law is weak and ineffective.

The stoning of those who work on the Sabbath, or the adulterers and rebellious children (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 21: 18-21, 22:20 and 21), as well as the approval of slavery (Leviticus 25:44 -46) and other absurdities of the Old Testament's law are inconsistent with the long-suffering attitude of God the Father in the New Testament.

The redemptive plane of God the Father did not consider the "time of ignorance" of the past (Acts 17:30) and propitiated through Christ such an atonement that no blood of goats, goats, and sheep could provide (Hebrews 10: 4-6).

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3: 14-16 ... *"their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away"*.

The meaning of this teaching is that the Old Testament is like a veil put on the understanding of men, which does not allow them to appropriate themselves of the reality of Christ. When someone knows the true Father God, this "veil" of ignorance is removed, as verse 16 says.

In John 1:17 we read that *"the law was given through Moses, but **grace** and **truth** came through Jesus Christ"*. So, if truth came exclusively through Jesus Christ, what of good could have there in the Old Testament law, with all its ritualistic complexity and illusory appearance?

The opposite of "grace and truth" is "damnation and lying." How could we consider any benefit in something that only produces condemnation and lying?

Effectively, the law of the Old Testament has only brought condemnation and guilt to men.

If the law of the Old Testament were in any way fruitful, it would have no need to give place to the law of love that Jesus brought from the part of God the Father, as we read in Hebrews 7:11 ... *"If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood, why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek?"*

Hebrews 7:18 confirms the fallacy of the law, when it says: *"Therefore the former commandment is abrogated because of its **weakness** and **inefficacy**"*. Even in Hebrews 7:19 we read that *"the law has perfected **nothing**."*

Jesus would never recommend to someone to obey a law that is only of appearance, for it was exactly that which stimulated the rise of fanatical Pharisees, concerned only with an outward religiosity.

The Pharisaism of the Jews was fueled by the violence and severity of the Old Testament commandments. The disciples of Jesus were impregnated with that spirit when they asked permission from the Master to send down fire from heaven, as Elijah did to fulminate a hundred men sent by the king (1 Kings 1: 9-12). But Jesus answered them: *"You do not even know from what spirit you are of"* (Luke 9:54 and 55).

It was certainly not the Holy Spirit of God the Father who was over those disciples on that occasion, but the spirit of violence typical of Jehovah.

The entirely questionable religious content of the Old Testament gave rise to the doctrine of the Pharisees, the doctrine of the scribes and the tradition of the elders. To all of them, Jesus pointed out the hypocrisies and inconsistencies of his doctrines.

The Pharisees took the violence and severity of the Old Testament and added in them the hypocrisy and falsehood. In the same way, the scribes took the complexity and complication of the Old Testament's law and added the religious radicalism in them. As for the traditions of the elders, they mean the customs of the ancestral patriarchs that are put into use under an appearance of a sacred religiosity.

Jesus reprovved harshly the Pharisees and scribes, as we read in Matthew 23: 23-36; he also reproached the tradition of the elders, as we read in Matthew 15: 1-7.

In addition, he invalidated certain Old Testament commandments, for example, by not stoning an adulteress (Deuteronomy 22:22 and 23) and by not observing the Sabbath day for healing and miracles (John 5: 15-18), that were fundamental points in the law of Moses.

For Jesus, more important than rigidly observe the commandments of Jehovah is to fulfill the will of the true God Father, and this is what he did by bringing physical healing and spiritual deliverance to those who were needy.

A law as full of partiality and discrimination as that of the Old Testament could only generate obstinate and arrogant individuals, such as those religious contemporaries of Jesus.

There is no doubt that Jesus gave the law a meaning that it never had, not just arbitrating what man does, but also what he fails to do, that is, omission.

Jesus' commandments produce a positive effect on the life and character of his followers, whereas those obsolete Old Testament's commandments only produced pride and presumption in the Jews, as we clearly note in Luke 18:11 and 12.

By comparing the Old Testament's law, which authorized the "eye for an eye, tooth by tooth," and the radical punishments of stoning, with the commandments of Jesus, in which love and understanding prevail, we can conclude that they are totally opposite.

In numbers, for each of the Old Testament's blessings related in Deuteronomy 30: 1-10, there are five more curses in that very book at Deuteronomy 28: 15-68.

To make evident the difference between the two Covenants in the Bible, note that the last word of the Old Testament is "CURSE" (Malachi 4: 6), whereas the last verse of the New Testament mentions the word "GRACE" (Revelation 22:21).

Would not that be a sign of the abyssal difference between the Old Testament, characterized by violence, cruelty, discrimination, terror and expectation of punishment, and the New Testament, characterized by understanding, love and manifestation of the grace of God that brought salvation to all who believe (Titus 2:11)?

The former Pharisee Peter was usually armed because the Old Testament's law allowed him to resort to violence in a just cause. Thus, with his sword Peter cut the ear of one of those who came to arrest the Master, but Jesus reinstated the ear and warned Peter that this resource of human strength was not necessary in his ministry (Luke 22:50 and 51) .

If Jesus wanted to, he could require twelve legions of angels who were at his disposal, as he himself says in Matthew 26:53, but Jesus' leaning was not for destruction, but for goodness.

The ethical pattern of the Old Testament is not different from the ethical standard of all religions and philosophical groups, that is, doing good for those who do us good.

On the other hand, the ethical standard we see in the commandments of Jesus is different because it includes the forgiveness and mercy for the opponents and enemies, just as it is the love with which God the Father has loved us. That is why we read in Romans 5:10 this way *"For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"*

The pattern of Jesus does not seek reciprocity, because it is based on an altruistic love and without selfishness. This is a great difference that confirms the abyss between the Old and New Testaments.

The proposal Christ brought for men was not merely to increase the number of precepts and commandments, but to change the inclinations of the hearts of men and women through the Holy Spirit, making them new creatures, as 2 Corinthians 5:17 says.

The commandments written on stone tablets on Mount Sinai were replaced by commandments written on tablets of flesh in the hearts of men and women in the Mount of Beatitudes, as we can read in 2 Corinthians 3: 3.

If the Old Testament's law had to be fulfilled faithfully in our day, males would have to be circumcised, the food precepts would have to be accomplished, the Sabbath would have to be kept strictly, and the pulpits of the churches would have to be replaced by altars in which the faithful would put on the offerings of animals and incense.

In addition, many stones would be needed to stone all adulterers, incestuous, idolaters, and rebellious children, as ordered by the absurd Old Testament's law prescribed in Leviticus 20: 10-12 and Deuteronomy 21: 18-21.

If the pattern that Jesus praised signified merely having "good behavior" in society, such as being honest and fulfilling their duties as citizens, many people could be considered Christians and children of God, but the path Jesus pointed out is narrower.

A young man who fulfilled the Old Testament commandments from his youth was reprobated, in spite of his apparent religiosity, and then Jesus presented him a higher standard (Luke 18: 20-23).

The commandments of the Old Testament are tasteless, for they do not make any difference; after all, most of religions and philosophies preach charity, honesty, patience, and so on.

What indeed makes the difference are the commandments of Jesus; this is what the "second mile" from Matthew 5:41 means, or the "narrow way" from Matthew 7:14; or even the attitude of "denying himself" from Luke 9:23.

The law of retaliation (Talion) "eye for an eye, tooth for tooth" is the same in the Old Testament of the Jews and in the Talmud of the Islamists. However, this rule opposes the principles of non-retaliation taught by Jesus, who said: *"You have heard that it was said, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also"* (Matthew 5: 38-39).

Paul also adopted this very principle by saying, *"Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?"* (1 Corinthians 6: 7).

And also Peter adopted the same principle, for he said, *"If by doing that which is good you suffer and bear it, this is certainly approved before God"* (1 Peter 2:20).

That which makes real difference between true Christianity and other religions are not the Old Testament commandments, but the principles taught by Jesus, which he received from his Father.

To be honest, what difficulty is there in observing just one day a week, or being submitted to a circumcision surgery, or to follow certain food diets set forth by the commandments of Moses? The "narrow road" that Jesus proposed is not related to those merely liturgical rules, but consists in renunciation of revenge feelings and selfishness, which is why few people walk in it (Matthew 7:12).

All religions teach to treat others with justice, but the law of Jesus, which he learned from his Father, is the law that teaches to treat others with mercy and clemency.

If the Father were to treat us according to our "righteousness", probably we should already have been consumed. But fortunately God is merciful and long-suffering, for Christ died for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5: 8).

The text of Hebrews 7:18 and 19 evidences clearly the overthrow of the old law and the replacement by the new law ... *"On the one hand, the former law is nullified by being useless and ineffective, since it perfected nothing, and on the other, a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God"* .

That text affirms that the previous law (Old Testament) is annulled for being useless and ineffective, since it did not perfect anything. It also says that a better hope is introduced, by which we approach God. That "better hope" is solely provided by the New Covenant with Christ.

Thus, futility and ineffectiveness are the peculiar characteristics of the law which Christ abolished, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:14.

The Levitical priesthood commandments are part of the Old Testament structure, as we see in Numbers 8: 5-26. Therefore, because the previous commandment was abrogated, the Levitical priesthood and the Old Testament's law (Hebrews 7:11, 22, 23 and 8: 7) were also abrogated.

Certainly because of this evident uselessness, Paul considered the whole Old Testament's law to be "garbage" (Philippians 3: 8).

Melchizedek was the High Priest of the Old Concert while Jesus is the High Priest of the New Concert.

Melchizedek was the high priest of a temporary, fallible, imperfect, and ineffectual concert, whereas Jesus is the high priest of an eternal, infallible, perfect, and fully effective concert, as Hebrews 9:11 and 15 say.

The "annulment" of the former law occurred when the record of the decrees against us, which were fighting against us, was totally annulled and Christ tore it in the middle, exposing it in the cross, as Paul said in Colossians 2:14.

So the law that remains valid is the law of Christ, which Paul defined in Galatians 6:2 ... *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"*. Therefore, the fulfillment of the law of Christ consists more in supporting the neighbor with their afflictions rather than ourselves.

The law of Jesus belongs to the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3: 7-11). As for the Old Covenant, it was taken away by Christ, as 2 Corinthians 3:14 claims.

The "transient glory" of the Old Testament was like the glow of Moses' face, which Moses tried to hide with a veil, for the glow was fading, as 2 Corinthians 3:13 describes. To this day, many Christians behave like Moses, trying to hide with the veil of religiosity the faded glow of the Old Testament commandments.

To conclude, we can affirm that the law and the commandments of the Old Testament, as well as its religious content, have absolutely no meaning at this present age.

If in the past the law served to guide the Jewish people with a certain moral ethic, today the Old Testament has nothing to increase in the character of a Christian who follows the principles and commandments taught by Jesus Christ. And so, we can say like Paul that the entire Old Testament's law became TRASH because of their uselessness and inefficiency.

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