

Question: How should the Old Testament be used today? (Final)

Paul stated that God “*wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross*” (Col 2:14). In the context of this verse, Paul is showing that the Old Testament was brought to an end as a guide to God’s people.

Paul tells the Christians in Rome that they are “*dead to the law through the body of Christ*” (Rom 7:4). He further stated that the people of God are married to Christ and not to Moses and the Old Testament. That was the law that said, “*You shall not covet*”, i.e., the Ten Commandments law (Rom 7:7). To the church in Corinth, Paul spoke of those who wore a “*veil*” on their hearts when they read the Old Testament. In other words, they refused to accept that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of that law, a law that “*was passing away*” (2 Cor 3:7-18). To the church in Ephesus, Paul wrote that Christ “*abolished in His flesh...the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace*” (Eph 2:15-16). The Old Testament, which had for many years been “*the middle wall of division*” separating God’s people from the rest of the world, was finally “*broken down*” (Eph 2:14). All people everywhere now have the opportunity of drawing near to God “*by the blood of Christ*” (Eph 2:13).

In summary, then, the Old Testament as a law for God’s people was removed by the death of Christ. Christians, therefore, are not to observe the Old Testament as the law for God’s service today.

The Old Testament can develop patience and comfort in the heart of a Christian (Rom 15:4); this is accomplished in various ways. For example, there are numerous examples of God’s fatherly care for His people despite their frequent failings and sins (cf. Lev 26:3-13; 2Chr 7:14; Psa 23; 27; 103; 121). Furthermore, God cares not only for His people as a whole, but also for them individually. Thus, we find numerous cases of God standing by individual people to give them instruction, guidance and discipline through His commandments.

Indeed the Old Testament, since it is the word of God, is rich in divine wisdom, but it should not be regarded as the law for God’s people today. If it were, then Christ did not need to come to this earth, to be baptized by John, to teach us His doctrine or to give His life a ransom for many. Today, all are answerable to the law of Christ (John 12:48; Rom 7:4; 1 Cor 9:21; 2 Jn 9).

In fact, Jesus said it best when He said, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill*” (Matt 5:17). To “*fulfill*” means to carry out as a promise; to do a duty; to satisfy; to bring to an end, complete.” Let me give you an illustration: When two people enter a contract and both people meet the terms of that contract, the contract has been “*fulfilled.*” To fulfill it is not to destroy it, but it is no longer recognized as an active, binding contract. The people involved, in this case, are not out to destroy the contract, nor could they be considered enemies of it. They simply have carried out the promise; done their duty; satisfied the terms; and thus have completed, fulfilled and ended the contract. That explains the relationship between the Law and the Prophets and Jesus’ life and teaching.

We hope you have enjoyed reading this short series of articles on the Old Testament. If we can be of assistance to you please let us know. Write or call us today to enroll in a free Bible correspondence course through the mail. Thanks for reading! -- C. Boyd Jennings