

APPENDIX THE OLD TESTAMENT AND SALVATION

The Law and Salvation

How were people saved in the Old Testament? People of the Old Testament entered into a relationship with God the same way you did (i.e., by grace through faith).¹⁴⁷ Historically speaking, the crucifixion had not yet occurred during Old Testament times. They lived in a "pre-cross" time, and you live in a "post-cross" time.

While they did not yet know Jesus would come, they did trust God to forgive their sin (Romans 4:1-8). "The Old Testament presents the law as a means of regulating the covenant relationship that had already been established through God's grace."¹⁴⁸ But, the people of Israel often wrongly thought that obeying the law without faith would save them (Romans 9:32).

The New Testament offers insight concerning the Old Testament concept of the law. Much debate exists over what New Testament writers meant when they used the word "law."¹⁴⁹ "Law" can refer to the five books of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy). "Law" sometimes refers to the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20 (also see Romans 2:14 and 7:47). At other times, "law" and "prophets" refer to the entire Old Testament (Matthew 5:17).

In general, the word "law" refers to specific rules God gave His people. The law consisted of principles for how people should worship God. The law gave knowledge of sin and eventually pointed people to their need for the Savior (Romans 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; Galatians 3:24). The law's righteousness demonstrated humanity's inability to obey God (Galatians 2:19).

Besides Jesus, no one ever completely obeyed the law (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 7:19). If a person breaks one law, he is guilty of breaking them all (James 2:10). Furthermore, no one can ever be righteous by obeying the law (Acts 13:39; Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16, 21; 3:11).

The law should not be viewed as a bad device since God gave it as a positive entity (Romans 7:12). However, since Christ fulfilled the law, God does not require Christians to keep it (Matthew 5:17; Romans 6:14; 7:47; 10:4).

Does this mean that believers can live completely lawless and unrestrained lives? No! The New Testament contains commandments Christians need to obey. The law of

¹⁴⁷ See Romans 4:1-29. Obeying the laws of the Old Testament and offering sacrifices were only temporary expressions of how people were supposed to relate to God. The permanent way to relate to God would be revealed through the new covenant (i.e., Jesus).

¹⁴⁸ Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Clarke, 1983), 175.

¹⁴⁹ See F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: IVP, 1987 reprint), 50-56.

grace doesn't rule out God's law. In Mark 12:29-31, Jesus summed up the law by saying that if believers love God and others, they will not violate God's principles (also see Romans 3:31; 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). In other words, you now live under a new law--the law of grace in which the Spirit will not leave you, and will continually direct you (Galatians 5:18). Put another way, the ultimate consequence of the law required you to eternally suffer the penalty for your sin (Romans 8:2-4). However, Christ suffered the penalty for your sin. Through His death and resurrection, Christ, with love and obedience, fulfilled the law and destroyed the curse of the law--separation from God for all who disobeyed the law (Galatians 3:10-13).

Animal Sacrifices and Salvation

The Bible explains in Hebrews 10:1-18, especially verses 4 and 11, that animal sacrifices could not take away sin. Priests offered sacrifices, for themselves and others, as a way of expressing faith and obedience. Even though the Israelites unfortunately came to view the law and sacrifices as their way of obtaining God's favor, it never forgave sin.

The sacrifices, as explained in Leviticus, demonstrated what Christ would one day accomplish on the cross (Isaiah 53:10; Hebrews 9:22). Christ died as the final sacrifice for sin.¹⁵⁰ Believers, therefore, no longer need to sacrifice animals to the Lord.

God wants true obedience (1 Samuel 15:22). True sacrifice is a broken and repentant attitude (Psalm 51:17).

Circumcision and Salvation

Circumcision outwardly expressed God's covenant with Israel (Genesis 17:2, 10), allowing the men to physically demonstrate their submission to God. It possessed no saving ability (Romans 2:25-29; 4; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:2, 3). Also, notice the figurative use of circumcision in Deuteronomy 10:6; 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4, and Colossians 2:11-13.

¹⁵⁰ John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 10:10, 12; 1 John 1:7.