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**Christological Application of the Mosaic Law:  
A Hermeneutical and Exegetical Exploration**

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in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
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## APPROVAL SHEET

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A Hermeneutical and Exegetical Exploration

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## Abbreviations

<i>ANE</i>	<i>Ancient Near East</i>
<i>BECNT</i>	<i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>
<i>ESV</i>	<i>English Standard Version</i>
<i>HNTC</i>	<i>Holman New Testament Commentary</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBTM</i>	<i>Journal of Baptist Theology &amp; Ministry</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSJSup</i>	<i>Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
<i>LEC</i>	<i>Library of Early Christianity</i>
<i>LHBOTS</i>	<i>The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies</i>
<i>NAC</i>	<i>New American Commentary Studies in Bible and Theology</i>
<i>NIVAC</i>	<i>The NIV Application Commentary</i>
<i>NLT</i>	<i>New Living Translation</i>
<i>NSBT</i>	<i>New Studies in Bible and Theology</i>
<i>OTL</i>	<i>The Old Testament Library</i>
<i>PRJ</i>	<i>Puritan Reformed Journal</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>SSST</i>	<i>Short Studies in Systematic Theology</i>
<i>TNTC</i>	<i>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>TOTC</i>	<i>Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>WBC</i>	<i>Word Biblical Commentary</i>
<i>ZECNT</i>	<i>Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>

## **Abstract**

This study is a hermeneutical and exegetical exploration of the Christological application of the Mosaic Law for Christians. It involves a clear understanding of the relationship between the continuity and discontinuity from the Old Testament to the New Testament, the relationship between Israel and the Church as people of God, and the relationship between the Old and the New Covenant. It also requires a clear understanding of the meaning and purpose of the law for the initial audience, and its current significance for Christians today. Romans 10:4 presents Christ as the culmination of the law as it sees him as the final goal and its temporal end. 1 Corinthians 9:20–21 reveals that a believer is not under the law of Moses, but he is under the law of Christ. The law of Christ is not presented as a list of rules to be followed. Rather it is the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit which is the ground of the conduct of a believer who has been justified because of faith in Christ. It is the fulfillment of the promises of the New Covenant foretold in Isaiah 55:1–5; Jeremiah 31:31–34, 32:36–41; and Ezekiel 36:22–28. However, this does not mean that the law of Moses is useless for Christians. Paul says that it was written for our instruction (Romans 15:4) and is profitable for our training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). The distinctive feature of this study is that it is not applying Scriptures or the law of Moses directly to Christians. Rather the law and the other Scriptures are applied first to Christ and then seeing their application to Christians in the light of fulfillment through Christ. So, this study arrives at the conclusion that the Mosaic Law is applied to Christians through the grid of fulfillment in Christ which involves recalibration of each of its commandments around Christ without making Christians subject to it. The four hermeneutical principles of transformation, ending, maintenance, and extension of the commandments guide through the recalibration of each of its commandments around Christ for the application for Christians.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The accomplished work of Christ is the source of a Christian's accomplishment to do the will of God. As the law of Moses is among the earliest and clearest revelation of the prescriptive will of God available in written form, a Christian must know what needs to be done with the law. However, what a Christian should do with the law depends on what Christ has done with the law. This study is a hermeneutical and exegetical exploration of this significant matter. However, this is not a simple, straightforward, and easy task. Thomas Schreiner rightly admits, "The study of the law is intellectually challenging, theologically crucial, and practically relevant."<sup>1</sup> A brief description of these three dimensions of the study of the law depicts the significance of this exploration.

This study is intellectually challenging because the complexity of the matter often turns a discussion on the application of the law into a debate between theological systems and their conclusions about the law.<sup>2</sup> It requires a vivid and comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the continuity and discontinuity from the Old Testament to the New Testament, the relationship between Israel and the Church as people of God, and the relationship between the Old and the New Covenant. Additionally, it also necessitates a vivid and comprehensive understanding of the original meaning and purpose of the law for the initial audiences, the theological principles embedded in the law, and the current significance of the law for Christians today. Furthermore, Scripture presents both criticism and appreciation for the law

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of Church: Reading the Torah in Light of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 20.

of Moses which becomes difficult to be synthesized in a coherent whole. The goodness of the law is affirmed, and the weakness of the law is acknowledged.

This study is theologically crucial because it describes the relationship between the grace of God in the gift of salvation and the demand of God in the call for holy living.<sup>3</sup> Thus one's understanding of the doctrine of justification and sanctification depends upon one's understanding of the role of the law in justification and sanctification. It is a matter of understanding and living the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's stern warning to the churches of Galatia depicts that misplaced trust in the law can be equated with deserting Jesus and embracing a different gospel that distorts the gospel of Christ (Gal 1:6–7). The false teachers of law usually fall into one of the two opposing errors about the gospel of Christ: legalism or lawlessness. Charles Leiter aptly defines both errors, "Those who are legalists have substituted *law* for *grace*, and those who are lawless have 'turned the *grace* of our God into *licentiousness*.'"<sup>4</sup> Both of these errors must be avoided in a theologically sound study of the law.

This study is practically relevant because obedience to the commandments of Christ is an indicator of a Christian's love for Christ. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).<sup>5</sup> Discerning the extent of the commandments of Christ is very significant for living a life of love with Christ. Thus, the love for Christ is intricately related to knowing and obeying the law of Christ which in turn is only fulfilled through love as it is synonymous with the law of love. Jesus further said, "A new commandment I give to you, that

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<sup>3</sup> Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*. NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Leiter, *The Law of Christ* (Hannibal: Granted Ministries Press, 2012), 316.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version), copyright 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:34). It is insightful to observe that even the new commandment of love given by Jesus is to be followed considering his own life. Thus, the imperatives of the new covenant are to be followed in relationship with the indicatives of fulfillment through Christ. Similarly, the imperatives of the old covenant are to be followed through the indicatives of the fulfillment through Christ.

### **The Problem**

The first theological problem that the New Testament church faced was the application of the law of Moses for Christian believers coming from the Gentile nations (Acts 15:5).<sup>6</sup> There was a hot debate between the two parties with opposing issues on this matter. Glenn Kreider and Michael Svigel note, “The question was not which side was using Scripture, but which side was reading and applying Scripture rightly.”<sup>7</sup> The first church council meeting at Jerusalem resolved this problem. However, everyone was not in agreement with this resolution. Ben Witherington notes, “Various Jewish followers of Jesus who remained torah-true (the predecessors of the Ebionites perhaps), were not wholly satisfied with that sort of compromise.”<sup>8</sup> They wanted to keep the Jewishness of Christianity prominent.

Later, as the church became predominantly comprised of believers coming from Gentile nations, this problem took another form. Then, the Jewish context of the law was ignored in the interpretation and application of the law for Christians. One of the major reasons for this

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<sup>6</sup> The first administrative problem faced by the New Testament church was regarding the Hellenistic widows were being neglected by the Hebrews in the daily distribution (Acts 6:1–6).

<sup>7</sup> Glenn R. Kreider and Michael J. Svigel, *A Practical Primer on Theological Method: Table Manners for Discussing God, His Works, and His Ways* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 71.

<sup>8</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Tora Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 352.

ignorance was the study of the New Testament in isolation from the Old Testament. The two major groups who followed this track during the second century were Gnostics and Marcionites.<sup>9</sup> Ronald Heine notes, “Somewhat like the Gnostics, Marcion thought that the God revealed in the Old Testament was not the God revealed in Christ.”<sup>10</sup> He fully rejected the Old Testament as a document only applicable to Jews. As the term Gnostic was the term applied to a diverse group of people, some of them fully rejected the Old Testament whereas others partially rejected and used some parts of it with their own interpretation. The result was a full or partial rejection of the law as being applicable to Christians. Anti-Semitic overreaction to Judaism was one of the leading causes of this development.<sup>11</sup> This approach of rejecting the Old Testament was counter to Paul’s affirmation of the usefulness of all Scriptures for Christians, which includes the law of Moses in the Old Testament (2 Tim 3:16–17).

On the other hand, as a reaction to a full or partial rejection of the law, many have attempted to make Christians subject to the law of Moses in its entirety. They have taken pleasure in the Jewish roots of Christianity and are endeavoring to make Christians live like Jews of the first century. They think that defiance of the law of Moses is a way to disobedience of God. The Seventh-day Adventists and Messianic Judaism fall into this camp.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For a brief and insightful study on Gnostics and Marcionites, see Alister E. McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010), 117–132. For a detailed study of Marcionites, see Judith M. Lieu, *Marcion and Making of a Heretic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Ronald E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 48.

<sup>11</sup> See Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era*, Sources for Biblical Study 13 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978).

<sup>12</sup> For Seventh-day Adventist’s view on the law of Moses, See Minnie Warburton, “Letting the Voice of Leviticus Speak,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 37 (1994): 163, and S. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*. Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977. For Messianic Judaism’s view on the law of Moses, see David Rudolph, “Introduction to Messianic Judaism,” *Hebrew Studies* 57 (2016): 355–58.

### **The Proposed Solutions to the Problem**

The issue of the application of the law of Moses for Christians has not been resolved. Rather, over the years, more and more distinctive approaches have been developed to see the relevance of the law of Moses for Christians considering the fulfillment through Christ. On one extreme is the approach of Theonomy which contends for the submission of Christians to the law of Moses at the moral and civic levels. On the other extreme is the approach of classical dispensationalism which considers the law of Moses irrelevant to Christians. Some intermediate positions have also been established as well.<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Edwards informs us about the situation at his age when he writes, “There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with much intricacy, and wherein orthodox divines do so much differ, as the setting of the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ.”<sup>14</sup> Many more approaches have developed since Jonathan Edwards penned the above words. Stanley Hauerwas admits the presence of conflicting interpretations of the law among Christians which he thinks further leads to the misrepresentation of one another’s theology.<sup>15</sup> So, the misinterpretation is usually associated with the presence of the conflicting interpretations due to the complexity of the issue of the application of the law for Christians.

Most of the proposed solutions have failed to adequately address the complexity of the problem and have imposed conclusions of their theological system on the issue of the application

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<sup>13</sup> For a detailed description of these extremes and intermediate positions, see Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) and Benjamin L. Merkle, *Continuity to Discontinuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “A Humble Inquiry,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. I*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 465.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “Christian Ethics in Jewish Terms: A Response to David Novak,” in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, ed. Tikva Frymer-Kensky et al. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 137.

of the law of Moses for Christians. This study takes a different route keeping the application of the law of Moses at the center and seeing which system best works out the solution through hermeneutical and exegetical exploration.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, this study contends that rather than asking what part of the law of Moses is applicable to Christians, one should be asking how the law of Moses is applicable to Christians. The answer to this question is intimately related to the way Christ is seen as τέλος (*telos*) of the law. The Scripture keeps Christ at the center as a guiding principle for interpreting the law is evident from the simple reading of Luke 24:27 and John 5:39 where the Old Testament is seen pointing towards Christ and bearing witness to Christ.

Origen rightly emphasized the impossibility of sound application of the law of Moses without interpreting them in the light of Christ as he writes, “We do not regulate our lives like the Jews because we are of opinion that the literal acceptance of the laws is not what conveys the meaning of the legislation. And we maintain that, “When Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart” [2 Cor 3:15]. The meaning of the law of Moses has been concealed from those who have not welcomed the way which is by Jesus Christ.”<sup>17</sup> Christians are not like the Jews because they are members of the new covenant community, not the members of the Sinai covenant. Thus, the meaning of the law of Moses for Christians cannot be grasped without the guidance of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the right interpretation of the law is attained by seeing it through the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>16</sup> The key methodological difference between the approach of this study from the previous approaches is its emphasis on the canonical interpretation of the law and keeping the interpretation Christological. See more on this in the section on methodology.

<sup>17</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 5.60. in Ante Nicene Fathers. Vol 4. trans. Philip Chaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1885), 1003-4.



### Thesis Statement

This study contends that the Mosaic Law is applied to Christians through the grid of fulfillment in Christ which involves recalibration of each of its commandments around Christ without making Christians subject to it.

Christ is not only the source of justification but also the source of sanctification for Christians. If the relationship of Christians with God is established by the accomplished work of Christ, then their growth in that relationship as depicted in their obedience is also guided by the accomplished work of Christ. Christ is the source of the Christian ethics. The Christian life is in fact the life of Christ in the believers so there is no other way to see the commandments of God except through the interpretive grid of Christ. There can be no other standards of conduct for Christians other than to follow Jesus Christ (Matt 9:9).

Romans 10:4 presents Christ as *τέλος* (*telos*) of the law as it sees him as the final goal and its temporal end. 1 Corinthians 9:20–21 reveals that a believer is not under the Law of Moses, but he is under the Law of Christ. The Law of Christ is not presented as a list of commandments. Rather it is the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit which is the ground of the conduct of a believer who has been justified because of faith in Christ. It is the fulfillment of the promises of the New Covenant foretold in Isaiah 54:4–8, Jeremiah 31:31–34, and Ezekiel 36:22–32. However, this does not mean that the Law of Moses is useless for Christians. Paul says that it was written for our instruction (Rom 15:4) and is profitable for our training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). However, all this usefulness of the law does not entail that the law can serve as a source for the right standing before God. Therefore, Paul was affirming this usefulness of the law to the Christians who already had right standing with God through the accomplished work of Christ.

## Hermeneutical Methodology

This study employs a canonical-theological method of hermeneutics.<sup>18</sup> This approach endeavors to provide a hermeneutical key to interpreting the Scriptures.<sup>19</sup> The method agrees with the philosophical assertion that our presuppositions have a great impact on our interpretation and consciously acknowledges that presuppositions of this method are theological. Rather than claiming to do exegesis with an unbiased approach, this method explicitly states its presuppositions about Scripture and its interpretation. However, such theology-informed exegesis does not distort the meaning of the text but serves as a counter test to see that the theological presuppositions are the best frame of reference.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, constructing this frame of reference is an overwhelming but worthwhile task. A helpful rule can be stated in the following words, “To understand the theological grammar and syntax of Scripture, read Scripture in such a way that you learn how its various discourses both form and presuppose a larger theological vision.”<sup>21</sup> It is a sort of rule or standard against which all interpretations will be judged.

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<sup>18</sup> James Sanders coined the term “canon criticism” and presented it as a method like other methods of biblical criticism. See James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972). However, one of the major proponents of this method was Brevard Childs (1923-2007) who preferred the term “canonical approach” and presented it as a multi-level interpretation where exegesis and dogmatics are combined with canon as the context of interpretation. See Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testament: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1993). Also see his final published work, *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> This study does not undermine the significance of other theological methods and even employs some tools of other methods in integration with the canonical method. However, the canonical method is considered most suitable for this study as noted by Michael Hill, “Only a proper understanding of the whole Bible will answer the question about the validity and application of the Law.” Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love: An Introduction to Evangelical Ethics* (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2002), 45.

<sup>20</sup> R.B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022), 57.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

Some have called this “a rule of faith.”<sup>22</sup> Rowan Greer admits that the rule of faith is so much linked to the Scripture itself and writes “Text and interpretation are like twin brothers; one can scarcely tell the one from the other.”<sup>23</sup> Although difficult to define, “the rule of faith” according to the canonical-theological method is “the Christian Canon in its final form.” John Peckham’s words are instructive in this regard, “If the biblical canon is correctly recognized as the unequaled rule of faith and practice, then it follows that Scripture should function as the norming norm (or rule of faith) that is not normed by anything else (*norma normans non normata*).”<sup>24</sup> This claim leads to the conclusion that various parts of the Scripture are interpreted in the light of the whole. So, a sort of hermeneutical circle is developed in which each text is read and interpreted in relation to the other parts as well as the completed canon of Scripture.

Therefore, when the texts of different authors are read together, one text illuminates the fuller meaning of another text.<sup>25</sup> According to Brevard Childs, the final stage of the canon of Scripture is the legitimate context for reading and interpreting various parts of Scripture in relation to each other.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, this approach sees the redemptive-historical storyline of the scripture in such a way that the beginning is better understood by the end as the key themes developed in the earlier parts of the Scripture are eschatological in nature and these themes reach

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<sup>22</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons (ca.130–200 CE) is considered the first one to expound this concept in his writings to guard the Scriptures against the misinterpretations of the Gnostic teachers. He contended that the faith that had been handed down from the apostles of Christ is a regulative norm for interpreting the Scripture. See Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*. Trans. G.A. Williamson (London: Penguin Books). See, John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> James L. Kugel and Rowen A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*. Vol. 3. LEC (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 157.

<sup>24</sup> John Peckham, *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 101.

<sup>25</sup> Robert W. Wall, “The Canonical View,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. eds., Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 116–17.

<sup>26</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 98.

their culmination in the later parts of the Scripture.<sup>27</sup> D.A Carson writes, “The NT writers insist that the OT can be rightly interpreted only if the entire revelation is kept in perspective as it is historically unfolded (e.g., Gal.3:6–14).”<sup>28</sup> This intra-canonical consciousness is considered a hermeneutical skill that aids in the interpretation of texts that have intertextual connections with some other texts within the canon through linguistic and thematic unity.

Otherwise, the diversity of authors and genres in Scripture will seem like an anthology of writings with a limited number of common themes. Brevard Childs contends, “The function of canon was not only to render a decision on the scope of its Scriptures, but to provide a framework within which the multiple witnesses could be understood.”<sup>29</sup> This means that the Bible is not an anthology of writings but a work of single divine author who providentially ensured the shaping of the canon in way to facilitate the understanding of its unified message though communicated through multiple writers.

This method has some warrant in the approach of theology and interpretation by biblical writers. The Old Testament depicts the prophets to promote the teachings of the Scripture as a standard against which all claims and practices needed to be judged. Isaiah urges his nation to consider the Word of God as the source of clear witness to identify the truth when comparing God’s word with the inquiry from the mediums and necromancers. He writes, “To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn” (Isaiah 8:20). Thus, prior revelation serves as a guide to evaluate later revelations for the

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<sup>27</sup> G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 29–30.

<sup>28</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew, Chapters 1 through 12*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 92.

<sup>29</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 26.

Hebrew Prophets. This method gives sufficient significance to determining the text's plain meaning based on literary and linguistic analysis. The literal sense of the text is established by using all the tools of modern critical methods, but the interpretive task does not end there. The fullness of interpretation involves mining the theological truths embedded in the text using the grammar of faith.

In other words, this method endeavors to bring the task of biblical interpretation back to the domain of the church from the sole authority of the academy. Klink and Lockett succinctly locate the order of the task in the canonical method, "The sources of biblical theology include all the historical-critical tools of the university set within the framework of and guidance of the community of faith (the church)."<sup>30</sup> The end result is that the canon becomes the final source of biblical theology and the context of biblical interpretation.

The canonical method employed in this study warrants the Christological conclusions by keeping the fulfillment of the law of Moses through Christ at the center for knowing its application for Christians. Although the canonical-theological method appreciates the distinctive voice of each of the Two Testaments, it affirms the unified message communicated by the Scripture in its final form. In their description of the canonical approach to biblical theology, Klink and Lockett affirm, "The scope of the Bible is, in the end, its subject matter – Jesus Christ. Christ is of central importance not merely to the first-century historian, but also to the church

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<sup>30</sup> Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 135. This very dissertation is an illustration of this process. It is being written by a university doctoral student under the supervision of a mentor who is having two doctorates, keeping in view all the standards and norms of higher academic education. However, both are professing Christians, and the student is synthesizing theological conclusions in conversation with the mentor in a church-like setting, keeping the rule of faith and Christological conclusions at the center. It is in right accord with resurrecting the ancient vision of the "Pastor-Theologian" when there was no dichotomy between the academy and the church. See Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

throughout the ages; not merely to the NT, but also to the OT (cf. Luke 24).”<sup>31</sup> The forward pointing of the Old Testament to the person and work of Christ is explained by Jesus to the disciples as recorded in Luke 24:27, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Thus, the key texts relevant to the Christological application of the Mosaic Law for Christians will be exegeted in their canonical context using tools of linguistic, logical, and historical analysis.<sup>32</sup> Summaries of the exegetical findings will be synthesized to exhibit the conclusion of this study in the form of hermeneutical principles for the Christological application of the law.

### **Scope and Assumptions of This Study**

This study endeavors to present a well-pronounced view of the application of the law of Moses for Christians while affirming Christ’s fulfillment and enduring relevance of the law. It results in the formation of a balanced approach called the Christological application of the law which involves a recalibration of each of the commandments of the law of Moses around Christ while avoiding the need for Christians to again become subject to the law.

A range of theological systems from discontinuity to continuity including dispensational, covenantal, Lutheran, and others will be evaluated for their strengths and weaknesses to present a balanced and hermeneutically warranted position on the application of the Mosaic Law for

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>32</sup> Some of the key texts include Genesis 1:26; 3:15; 9:1–17; 12:1–7; 15:1–5; 17:4; Exodus 19:11–19; 20:8–11; Leviticus 1:3–7:34; 18:5; 20:25–26; Deuteronomy 4:6; 5:1–7, 14–16; 22:8; 2 Samuel 7:12–17; Psalm 1; 19; 110; 119; Isaiah 55:1–5; Jeremiah 31:31–34; 32:36–41; Ezekiel 36:22–28; Matthew 5:17–20; Mark 1:40–45; 2:18–22; 5:24–27; Luke 18:18–22; 22:44; John 5:39; Acts 15; Romans 3:21–28; 7:12; 8:3–4; 10:4; 15:4; 1 Corinthians 9: 20–21; Galatians 3:15–21; 4:10–11; 5:1–2; 2 Timothy 3:15–16; Hebrews 4:8; 7:18; 8:6; 12:1–2.

Christians. Thus, the function and enduring relevance of the law of Moses for present-day Christian will be identified and elaborated.

This study is based upon the assumption that Christ's fulfillment does not diminish the usefulness of the law of Moses for Christians. Rather it maintains the goodness and the usefulness of the law of Moses. Therefore, a correct understanding of the Christological application of the Mosaic Law for Christians is very significant to the edification of the believers.

### Explanations of Significant Terms

A brief explanation of the significant terms is given as follows:

#### תּוֹרָה

תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) is the key term for this study so explanation of its meaning, purpose and classification is presented as follows:

#### Meaning of תּוֹרָה

The Hebrew word for the law in the Old Testament is תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) and the Greek word for the law in the New Testament is νόμος (*nomos*). The most basic and primary meaning of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) is instruction in general. John Walton and J. Harvey Walton note, "Torah is also used in connection to proverbial sayings where it refers to the 'instruction' given by parents to children."<sup>33</sup> However, more specifically it refers to instructions of God to Israel through Moses. It may refer to the Pentateuch or even the Old Testament as a written record of instruction of God for his people through his prophets. Mostly, these instructions are seen as stipulations of the Sinai covenant. These instructions are not seen as legal codes like our modern understanding of

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<sup>33</sup> John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *The Lost World of The Torah: Law as Covenant and Wisdom in Ancient Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 6.

laws. Thus, the Law in the Old and New Testaments is primarily understood as a genre referring to the commandments of God given through Moses. It contains commandments that covered almost all the aspects of life in Israel and were the norm for their behavior before God and the world. Roy Gane notes that the meaning of the law involves a sense of regulations to which people are held accountable.<sup>34</sup>

The present study uses תּוֹרָה (*tora*) to mean instruction or commandments but retains using the English word law due to its common use in English. It is acknowledged that תּוֹרָה (*torah*) also means the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, However, this study retains the translation law for תּוֹרָה (*tora*) and means commandments of God through Moses.

### **תּוֹרָה Purpose of**

Revelation of God's Character and Human Condition was one key function of the law of Moses. Therefore, the law works to bring humanity under the conviction of sin and of their failure to meet the demands of the law. Paul writes in Galatians 3:24, "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian."

The purpose of the law can also be seen from two inter-related perspectives which are the promise to life but the deliverance of death because of human condition.<sup>36</sup> Both perspectives are well summarized by Paul as he writes, "The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me" (Rom 7:10). The first perspective focuses on the divinely intended purpose of the

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<sup>34</sup> Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 26.

<sup>35</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol.1 ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 29.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 81–82.



law as a promise of life for those who keep it, and the second perspective focuses on the revelation of human sinfulness and hopelessness as law puts all to death so the need of Christ may be realized. Jewish interpreters were able to identify the first perspective but missed the second one. Thomas Schreiner writes, “The typical Jewish view was that the law was given to bring about life. In Judaism there was the proverb, “The more Torah the more life” (M. Aboth 2:7). This was the standard Jewish view, which is confirmed by a number of texts (Sir. 17:11; 45:5; Bar. 3:9; 4:1; Pss. Sol. 14:2; 2 Esd. 14:30; 2 Bar. 38:2).”<sup>37</sup> It is noteworthy that the law promises life but doesn’t deliver on that promise apart from the Spirit’s work in grace. The law also promises death for transgression but does deliver on that promise for those who do not receive the Spirit’s work in grace.

Paul adds to this existing perspective the revelatory purpose of the law which helps identify the human condition apart from the grace of God revealed in Christ. As the purpose of the law is inseparable from its relationship with Christ, so its interpretation for Christians must be governed by the person and the work of Christ.

### **Classification of תורה**

The law of Moses has been classified in many ways. The most common classification is seen in reformed theology where the law is divided into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories. Although this classification can be useful in some ways, nevertheless, it is unwarranted in the Scriptures. Dorsey rightly contends, “The scheme of a tripartite division is unknown both in the Bible and in early rabbinic literature. Its formulation appears rather to be traceable to modern

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 81.

Christian theology.”<sup>38</sup> While reviewing the book of Matthews Ferris, *If One Uses It Lawfully*, Harper Geoffrey writes, “Ferris argues (again, rightly in my view) that the law must be considered a whole. Hence, attempts to subdivide OT law into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories are regarded as untenable (pp. 14 –18).”<sup>39</sup>

Another popular way of classification is to categorize laws into apodictic laws and casuistic laws.<sup>40</sup> Apodictic laws are considered as absolute principles without exceptions whereas casuistic laws are considered as conditional principles which depend upon specific situations. This way is also of limited use.

### Christological

This study is based upon the contention that the Bible is a Christological book. It means that every text in it relates to Christ in one way or the other. Mark Thompson notes, “He remains its principle point of reference throughout. Jesus stands in the middle of the Bible as the one to whom its entire testimony points.”<sup>41</sup> As the Bible was written by nearly 40 authors in about 15 hundred years, it is full of a diversity of themes and perspectives. However, it is noteworthy that this diversity is not without a unified purpose and message. Nicholas Piotrowski notes, “In all, it is the logic of the gospel that ties the diversity of the Bible together. Thus, the entire Bible is Christological.”<sup>42</sup> Talking more specifically, the Old Testament is *christotelic* as it looks

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<sup>38</sup> David A. Dorsey. “The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise.” *JETS* 34 (September 1991): 321–34.

<sup>39</sup> Harper G. Geoffrey. “If One Uses It Lawfully: The Law of Moses and the Christian Life.” *Themelios* 44, (April 2019): 133–35.

<sup>40</sup> Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 97–99.

<sup>41</sup> Mark D. Thompson, *The Doctrine of Scripture: An Introduction*, SSST (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 59.

<sup>42</sup> Nicholas G. Piotrowski, *In All the Scripture: The Three Contexts of Biblical Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 20.

forward to the coming of Christ and accomplishing the mission of God. The New Testament is Christocentric as it revolves around the person and the work of Christ with a special focus of his fulfilling the Old Testament.

Andrew David Naselli writes, “The theological message of the Old and New Testaments is unified. God reigns, saves, and satisfies through covenant for his glory *in Christ*. The prepositional phrase *in Christ* is not a superfluous add-on. It’s everything.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the author of Hebrews states, “But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things,” (Heb. 1:2), and Paul’s statement in Ephesians complements, “as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10). Craig Bartholomew writes, “Indeed, the great joy of the Spirit is to use Scripture to open us up to the reality of the Lord Christ.”<sup>44</sup> Thus the study of the Scriptures leads to the knowledge of Christ for salvation.

Therefore, the key for the biblical interpretation is Christ. Same is true for the topic of our study. Thomas Schreiner notes, “The OT law is reinterpreted in light of the Christ event. The central norm of the law is love, and Jesus Christ’s giving of himself on the cross is paradigmatic of the love expected of disciples.”<sup>45</sup> Thus Christological interpretation and application of the law of Moses is the hermeneutical goal of this study.

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<sup>43</sup> Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017), 237, emphasis original.

<sup>44</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2015), 5.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2008), 672.

## τέλος

Paul writes in Romans 10:4, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Richard Winston gives a detailed analysis of the following possible interpretations of the verse in the context of the application of the Law to Christians: (1) Christ Abolishes the Law, (2) The Messianic Age Ends the Age of the Law, (3) The Law Has Ended as a Way to Righteousness, (4) Christ Ends the Ceremonial Law, (5) Christ Prophetically Fulfills the Law, (7) Christ Obeys the Law, (8) Christ Ends the Exclusivity of the Law, (9) Christ is the True Meaning of the Law, (10) Christ Ends and Culminates the Law, (11) Christ is the Purpose of the Law, (12) Christ Ends using the Law to Establish Righteousness.<sup>46</sup> He evaluates all these interpretations and concludes, “While many try to impress God by their works of obedience, God insists that men and women seek right standing with Him by faith in His Son. Christ ends the pursuit of righteousness by works and gives rest to those who seek Him.”<sup>47</sup> Paul’s context seems to demand this interpretation.

Thus, the application of the Law for Christians requires the lens of Christ. Christ is the center of the historical redemptive story of the Scripture. It was in right accord with the plan of God to unite all things in Christ as a revelation of his divine mystery. Christians do not need to look at anything or anyone other than Christ as a rule of life.

Keeping fulfillment through Christ at the forefront while interpreting the Law keeps us safe from interpretive errors. The words of Vern Poythress are very helpful, “Jesus does not assert merely a static continuation of the force of the law, but rather a dynamic advance- in fact, the definitive fulfillment. What was temporary and shadowy in the form of the Old Testament

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<sup>46</sup> Richard Winston. “Christ the End of the Law: The Interpretation of Romans 10:4,” *PRJ* 7 (June 2015): 18–41.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

law is superseded, now that God's glory and kingly power are being manifested in the very person of Jesus and in his ministry."<sup>48</sup> This dynamic fulfillment of the law by Christ is not only through confirming to the predictive prophecies of the Pentateuch but also through typological fulfillment.

## Overview of the Chapters

### Chapter 2: A Review of Historical Approaches to the Application of the Law

The second chapter reviews various biblical-theological approaches on the application of the law of Moses for Christians highlighting the strengths and limitations of these approaches.<sup>49</sup> The first three views are Theonomic Reformed View, Classic Covenantal View, and Progressive Covenantal View which present a spectrum of continuity between the covenants. The next two are Classic Dispensationalism and Progressive Dispensationalism which present the spectrum of discontinuity between the covenants. Then come two views which are the Lutheran View and Modified Lutheran View, which give more emphasis to discontinuity between the covenants. A Progressive Moral Wisdom Model, The Promotion of Holiness View, the Redemptive-Movement Model, and the Paradigmatic View are some other views that do not directly interact with above mentioned theological systems but independently propose their preferred approaches to the application of the law of Moses for Christians.<sup>50</sup> The New Perspective on Paul is an

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<sup>48</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1995), 265.

<sup>49</sup> The reference here is to the legislation of the Sinai Covenant.

<sup>50</sup> For a detailed comparison of these views, see Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas, eds., *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022); Benjamin L. Merkle, *Continuity to Discontinuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020), Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), Gary T. Meadors, ed. *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), and Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

altogether different theological system that needs to be addressed because of the way it sees the significance of obedience to the law, although it does not directly provide any approach to the application of the law of Moses for Christians.

These approaches differ from each other in various aspects, especially on the continuity or discontinuity between the Old and the New Testament, the relationship between the covenants or dispensations in the Scripture, Israel, and the church distinction, literal or symbolic hermeneutic and the kingdom of God in eschatological terms.

### Chapter 3: The Law of Moses for the Old Covenant Community

The third chapter discusses in detail the nature of the law, its purpose, and the canonical context of the law of Moses. Interpretation of the law in its immediate context of the Pentateuch and the broader context of the Holy Scriptures enables the readers to understand the application of the law and its relevance for Christians. God saved his people with a mighty hand from the bondage of Egyptian slavery and brought them into the Promised Land. This mighty act of redemption sets the framework in which the law was given to Israelites. Thus, the understanding of the significance of the laws for Israelites can be ascertained in the broader narrative of the Pentateuch. Furthermore, many law texts from the ancient Near East have been discovered which are parallel to the Old Testament laws. Egyptian, Sumerian, and Akkadian sources have exposed the laws which have many similarities in form and purpose with the laws of Israel. Although the biblical laws are distinct in many respects, there is much to learn from the study of these parallel laws of ancient Near East to better understand the nature and purposes of the biblical laws.

### Chapter 4: The Law of Moses and Jesus Christ

The fourth chapter elaborates on the progression of the covenant from creation to Christ and see how the law of Moses finds its *τέλος* (*telos*) in Christ. A detailed discussion on the

following five major covenants in the Scriptures is done: (1) The Creation Covenant, (2) The Abrahamic Covenant, (3) The Sinai Covenant, (4) The Davidic Covenant, and (5) The New Covenant. The law was given to Israelites along with the Sinai Covenant. However, the establishment of a New Covenant was foretold in Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 31:31–37, and Ezekiel 37:22–28. This New Covenant was established by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:23–25). This makes New Testament believers different from Israelites which reflects that the application of the law is not the same for the church as it was with Israel.

Paul says, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (Romans 10:4). This verse is interpreted in various ways by the proponents of different perspectives on the applicability of Mosaic Law for the church. This wide range of meanings derived from Christ’s fulfillment ranges from the abolishment of the law to fulfillment of the law to the perfect obedience of the law as described in Romans 6–7, 9–11; 1 Corinthians 9: 19–23; Galatians 3:15–21, and Hebrews 8:5–13. The Hebrew Scriptures as whole castes a clear and full vision of Jesus Christ through various Messianic types and predictive prophecies as discussed in this chapter.

#### Chapter 5: The Law of Moses for the New Covenant Community

The fifth chapter explores the relations between the law of Mose and Christins and uses a Christological lens to construct hermeneutical principles for the application of the law of Moses for the Christians. The concept of the Law of Christ provides an important context that influences the interpretation of the Old Testament laws for the church is. Here love is kept at the center of obedience (John 13:34; Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:13–14). The fulfillment of the Old and the New Testament is seen in following this commandment. However, being under the law of Christ means that a Christian is by no means under the law of Moses (1 Cor 9:20–21). As an

affirmation to the usefulness of the law of Moses, the fifth chapter presents the following four hermeneutical principles for the application of the law for Christians. These are hermeneutical principles of transformation, ending maintenance, and extension:

### **Transformation of the Commandments**

The commandment about the Sabbath is stated in Deuteronomy 5:12 as a part of the Ten Commandments. The purpose of the Sabbath was to rest and spend time with God in worship and devotion. However, that rest was a shadow of the true and eternal rest that believers will have in Christ. Thus, Christians are not under Sabbath keeping (Rom 14:5; Col 2:16) but Christ's fulfillment transforms this commandment so that Christians look forward to eternal rest as a full realization of Sabbath and have designated the Lord's Day as a day of worship and devotion.

### **Ending of the Commandments**

The commandments about food are described in Leviticus 20:25 –26. Israelites were required to observe the distinction between clean and unclean animals and were commanded to restrict their diet to clean animals. The purpose of this commandment was to set Israel apart from other nations. In Christ, God has called the other nations to be part of the Church, and the Israel-gentile distinction has been abolished. So, this command is ended for Christians as stated by Jesus in plain words in Mark 7:19 as well as by Paul's statement in Colossians 2:16.

### **Maintenance of the Commandments**

The commandment to respect the parents is also part of the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:16) which is repeated in Ephesians 6:2 in the affirmative. This commandment is profound in its theological significance. Thus, we see that this commandment is maintained for Christians in the Law of Christ without any change. There is no change in the responsibilities and benefits of the



parent-child relationship in the Mosaic Law and the Law of Christ, thus this commandment is maintained.

### **Extension of the Commandments**

The commandment regarding parapet building is stated in Deuteronomy 22:8. Here the Spirit of the commandment is to protect the life of neighbor as a reflection of love for neighbor. Christ's fulfillment makes this commandment extended to involve the care of all aspects of a neighbor's life. Paul says, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Cor 16:14). Thus, in the law of love, we not only see the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law but also an extension of the commandments having love as their foundational principle.

### **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This hermeneutical and exegetical exploration depicts that the Mosaic Law is applied to Christians through the grid of fulfillment in Christ which involves recalibration of each of its commandments around Christ without making Christians subject to it. It maintains the usefulness of the Mosaic Law for Christians in their life in the context of the New Covenant established through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The hermeneutical principles of transformation, ending, maintenance, and extension aid in the development of the Christological application of the Mosaic Law for Christians as outlined by this study.

## Chapter 2: A Review of Historical Approaches to the Application of the Law

This chapter reviews various biblical-theological approaches on the application of the law of Moses for Christians highlighting the strengths and limitations of these approaches.<sup>1</sup> The first three views are Theonomic Reformed View, Classic Covenantal View, and Progressive Covenantal View which present a spectrum of continuity between the covenants. The next two are Classic Dispensationalism and Progressive Dispensationalism which present the spectrum of discontinuity between the covenants. Then come two views which are the Lutheran View and Modified Lutheran View, which give more emphasis to discontinuity between the covenants. A Progressive Moral Wisdom Model, The Promotion of Holiness View, the Redemptive-Movement Model, and the Paradigmatic View are some other views not directly interacting with above mentioned theological systems but independently propose their preferred approaches to the application of the law of Moses for Christians.<sup>2</sup> The New Perspective on Paul is an altogether different theological system that needs to be addressed because of the way it sees the significance of obedience to the law, although it does not directly provide any approach to the application of the law of Moses for Christians.

These approaches differ from each other in various aspects, especially on the continuity or discontinuity between the Old and the New Testament, the relationship between the covenants

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<sup>1</sup> The reference here is to the legislation of the Sinai Covenant also termed as the old covenant.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed comparison of these views, see Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas, eds., *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022); Benjamin L. Merkle, *Continuity to Discontinuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020), Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), Gary T. Meadors, ed. *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), and Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

or dispensations in the Scripture, Israel, and the church distinction, literal or symbolic hermeneutic and the kingdom of God in eschatological terms. However, all the nuances of these views are not elaborated or evaluated here because this review emphasizes their distinctive interpretation of the law of Moses for Christians. Following is a brief description of these approaches with respect to their stance on the application of the law of Moses for Christians:

### **Theonomic Reformed View**

This view aims at transforming all fields of life with the principles of God's law as revealed in the Holy Scriptures by using peaceful means. It assumes extreme continuity between the Old and the New Covenant. Rousas J. Rushdoony, Greg L. Bahnsen, and Gary North are three of the key advocates of this view. Greg Bahnsen coined the term *theonomy* meaning God's law. Another name for this view is Christian Reconstructionism.

This view considers all commandments of the law of Moses to be applicable to everyone in every age. Greg Bahnsen affirms, "The general continuity that we presume with respect to the moral standards of the Old Testament applies equally to the matters of socio-political ethics as it does to personal, family, or ecclesiastical ethics."<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Rushdoony denied any distinction between civil law and moral law. He contends, "Every aspect of the Old Testament law still stands, except those aspects of the ceremonial and priestly law specifically fulfilled by the coming of Christ, and those laws specifically re-interpreted in the New Testament."<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:17–20 is often presented as a key support for the application of the law without any setting aside. Rushdoony considers no distinction between the law of Moses and the law of Christ and

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<sup>3</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Theonomic Reformed Approach to Law and Gospel," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 142.

<sup>4</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Valle Cito: Ross House Books, 1991), 553.

sees it as the source of sanctification for the believers.<sup>5</sup> Greg Bahnsen also considers the law of God as the source of sanctification and contends that it is the responsibility of the civil government to enforce the civil principles of the Law of Moses.<sup>6</sup> Romans 13:4 is used to support this view, as here the governing authorities are considered to behave as the servants of God.

This view has several noteworthy strengths: (1) It acknowledges the universal character of the God's law as it reflects the will of God; (2) It rejects the secular/spiritual distinction and the desire to apply the law of Moses in all fields of life including politics; (3) It shows strong commitment to sola scriptura of the Reformation as the guiding standard for the legislations in the society<sup>7</sup> and (4) It addresses the issues pertaining to social justice as a correlation of faith and obedience.

This view has several significant weaknesses: (1) It is dependent on an errant interpretation of Paul's phrase "the lawful use of the law"—which this view incorrectly takes as a critique on the second temple Pharisaic use of the law. It was not Paul's point in that passage at all (1 Tim 1:8). Rather Paul was emphasizing the temporary role of the law as he states in the next verse, "That the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners" (1 Tim 1:9). Therefore, the incorrect understanding of the Pauline phrase fails to justify the New Testament teaching that the law of Moses is not binding for the new covenant believers. It is a sort of reintroduction of the law to the gospel which was the error made by Judaizers (Gal 5:1–5). This was an issue reflected in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

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<sup>5</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*. Vol.1 (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1973), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, 3rd ed. (Nacogdoches: Covenant Media Press, 2002), 36.

<sup>7</sup> Although all forms of the Reformed movements hold to sola Scriptura, the Theonomists apply this in all spheres of life without much regard to natural revelation or the presence of common grace in humanity for social order and productivity.

(2) It is too reliant on Westminster Confessional categories of the law into moral, ceremonial, and civil laws. However, this classification was not held by Moses when he communicated the law to Israel. (3) This view hopes that the authorities of the world will be able to grow in appreciation of the law as revealed in the Scripture which seems contrary to the overall teachings of the Bible regarding end times. (4) An internal incoherence in this view is its affirmation of the tripartite division on the one hand and then blurring the distinction between the moral and civil laws on the other hand. (5) It contends about the validity of the penal sanctions of the law of Moses which were given for the theocracy of Israel. Schreiner concludes about this view in writing, “It does not perceive the differences between Israel and the church and thus tries to make modern nation-states into theocratic entities.”<sup>8</sup> So, this view has not gained much adherence in the Reformed circles as compared to the Classic Covenantal View.

### **Classic Covenantal View**

The classic covenantal view is primarily based upon the teachings of John Calvin and the later Reformers, especially Johann Bullinger (1504 –1575), Johannes Wollebius (1586 –1629), Johannes Cocceius (1603 –1669), and Herman Witsius (1636 –1708). Richard Gaffin Jr., Cornelis Venema, John Frame, Brandon Crowe and Michael Horton are the key modern proponents of this view. The relationship between the law and the gospel is seen considering the relationship between the covenants. According to classic covenant theology, “Scripture’s main themes find their biblical-theological, even systematic coherence, in the idea of covenant.”<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 226.

<sup>9</sup> Cornelis P. Venema, *Christ and Covenant Theology: Essays on Election, Republication, and the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017), xxi.

covenant of work is seen in contrast to the covenant of grace in the development of this theological system.

At one level, this view contends for a clear distinction between the law and the gospel as affirmed by Calvin, “Moses is opposed to Christ: and then we must consider what the law contains, as separate from the gospel.”<sup>10</sup> However, for the classic covenant theologians, this opposition is only due to man’s enmity with God after the fall. Richard Gaffin Jr. contends,

But with the gospel and in Christ, united to him by faith, the law is no longer my enemy but my friend. Why? Because *God* is no longer my enemy but my friend, and the law, *his* will, the law in its moral core, as reflective of his character and of concerns eternally inherent in his own person and so what pleases him, is now my friendly guide for life in fellowship with God.<sup>11</sup>

It implies that all of the law has not been replaced by the gospel as the moral part of the law is seen as an expression of the unchanging character of God. Brandon Crowe notes, “The need to obey God’s moral law continues in the new covenant.”<sup>12</sup> John Murray contends that commandments of the law of Moses must be meticulously observed by Christians.<sup>13</sup> It is because the gospel empowers the believers through the work of the Holy Spirit to live according to the will of God as revealed through the moral law. Michael Horton notes, “The Sinai covenant is a unique administration of the covenant of grace in that it offers a parenthetical-typological system

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<sup>10</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries upon the Acts of Apostles; Commentaries upon the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 387.

<sup>11</sup> Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation*, Oakhill School of Theology Series (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2006), 103.

<sup>12</sup> Brandon D. Crowe, *The Path of Faith: A Biblical Theology of Law and Covenant*, Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2021), 123.

<sup>13</sup> John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 154.

for the church's adolescence."<sup>14</sup> So this system has a strong emphasis on the continuity of the Sinai covenant with the new covenant inaugurated through Jesus Christ.

The three uses of the law are stated by Michael Horton: First, the civil use which affirms that the law restrain criminal behavior. Second, the pedagogical use which affirms the law shows us our depravity and points to Christ as our savior. Third, the normative use which affirms that the law provides norms for the Christian life.<sup>15</sup> The law is still considered as a means that enables us to become perfect in righteousness following the example of Jesus Christ. Tripartite division of the law of Moses is assumed by this position as affirmed in the Westminster confession of Faith.<sup>16</sup> However, only the moral law is considered binding for Christians in developing a wholeness of life.<sup>17</sup> The civil and ceremonial law is not considered binding. Meredith Kline writes, "The form of government appointment in the old covenant is not the community policy for the church of the new covenant, its ritual legislation is not a directory for the church's cultic practice."<sup>18</sup> It is because Kline sees two layers in the economy of the Old Covenant. He writes, "The works principle in the Mosaic order was confined to the typological sphere of the provisional earthly kingdom which was superimposed as a secondary overlay on the foundational

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<sup>14</sup> Michael S. Horton, "A Covenant Theology Response," in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*, ed. Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 197.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 180–82.

<sup>16</sup> A detailed critique of the tripartite division of the law will be presented in the next chapter of this study.

<sup>17</sup> William A. Vangemeren, "The Classic Reformed Approach to Law and Gospel," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 58.

<sup>18</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 99.

stratum.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Classic Covenantal view has a high dependence on the presence of the works principle in the creation covenant in Genesis 1–2.

This view has several noteworthy strengths: (1) This view beautifully explains the unity and continuity between the Old and the New Testament; (2) It safeguards the Christians against the threat of antinomianism by encouraging them to fulfill the moral commandments of the law of Moses with the power of grace of Jesus Christ; (3) It sees the moral commandments of the law of Moses as a reflection of eternal and unchanging moral character of God, not as some sort of arbitrary rules.

This view has several prominent weaknesses: (1) This view stands or falls with the three-fold classification of the law of Moses. There is no strong warrant of this threefold division of the law, thus this weakness proves fatal for the viability of this view. Furthermore, “Divine Command Theory” is ignored by this view which sees all laws as moral laws as commanded by God. Similarly, it is not always possible to clearly distinguish between the so-called civil and ceremonial laws. So, all laws are moral by nature which contain socio-cultic laws which further comprise of some socio-ethical laws. (2) It invites Christians to come under the moral aspect of the law of Moses instead of the Law of Christ. (3) It does injustice to the discontinuity between the Old and the New Testament which is well emphasized by the Gospels and the Epistles.

### **Progressive Covenantal View**

The Progressive Covenantal View emphasizes the progressive nature of the covenants as God gradually disclosed his plan of Redemption through the history. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen

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<sup>19</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 321.



J. Wellum are the founders of this view.<sup>20</sup> They developed this as a mediating view between the classic Covenantal and Dispensational view.<sup>21</sup> The Progressive Covenantalism adopts the canonical approach to develop biblical theology with a Christological focus which has been adopted in this study as well.<sup>22</sup> The New Testament's interpretation of the law is considered definitive as it tells how the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ.<sup>23</sup>

The Progressive Covenantalism rejects the tripartite division of the law of Moses.<sup>24</sup> This view acknowledges the usefulness of the law as the part of Scripture but denies that the Christians are under the law of Moses by any means.<sup>25</sup> This view endeavors to apply the law of Moses to Christians considering the fulfilment in Christ. Gentry and Wellum note, "We determine what is morally binding on us today by appealing to the entirety of Scripture viewed through the lens of the new covenant."<sup>26</sup> New Testament repetition is not necessary to see the application of the law of Moses for Christians.<sup>27</sup> Rather, whether repeated or not in the New

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<sup>20</sup> Dan Liroy coined this term. See Dan Liroy, *Progressive Covenantalism as an Integrating Motif of Scripture*, *Conspectus* 1 (2006): 81–107.

<sup>21</sup> A similar but distinct view called the new covenant theology has also been developed. See, Gary D. Long, *Biblical Law and Ethics: Absolute and Covenantal: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Mathew 5:17–20*, rev. ed. (Booksurge Publishing, 2009) and A. Blake White, *The Law of Christ: A Theological Proposal* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2010). However, this study does not review it here because this approach to the law of Moses for Christians is the same as that of the progressive covenantal view. However, subsequent chapters of this study will interact with the works of the new covenant theologians.

<sup>22</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 20018), 126.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen J. Wellum, "Progressive Covenantalism," in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*, ed. Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 77.

<sup>24</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 785–88.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 784.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 788.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 791.

Testament, no commandment of the law is directly applied to Christians without first interpreting it in the canonical context.

This view has several noteworthy strengths: (1) This view has Christological emphasis which is the overall emphasis of Scripture; (2) Another strength of this view is its justice to both continuity and discontinuity by offering the alternative concept of progression; (3) The third strength of this view is its confession of the usefulness of that the law of Moses to Christians today through the lens of Christ.

A potential weakness of this view is that it seems a bit complex as it endeavors to see each commandment of the law of Moses individually and interpret it according to the lens of Christ. However, for many interpreters, this complexity is necessarily there as the relationship between the law and the gospel is complex, and an honest effort of interpreting data of Scripture about the law of Moses for Christians causes that complexity.

### **Classic Dispensational View**

This view sees the law of Moses as antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and considers it abolished for Christians. This distinguishes the Mosaic Law from God's moral law based on his character. John Nelson Darby (1800–1882), James Hall Brookes (1830–1897), and Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921) are the key developers of the classic dispensational view. John Fienberg, Wayne Strickland, and Mark Snoeberger are key contemporary defenders of this position. Scofield defines a dispensation as, "A period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God."<sup>28</sup> Scofield's definition of a dispensation is foundational to the development of Dispensationalism.

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<sup>28</sup> C.I. Scofield, ed. *Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), 5.

The law and grace are two different dispensations among the list of the seven dispensations according to Scofield's classification.<sup>29</sup> The Mosaic Law was only applicable for the dispensation of Israel which is no longer present for Christians. It affirms the revelatory function of the Law but rejects its regulatory function for the dispensation of the Church. Wayne Strickland contends, "The Mosaic law naturally ended when God suspended his program with Israel (Rom. 9–11) and inaugurated his program with the church. God's moral law in and of itself does not change, but its specific application and structure in the Mosaic code ended with the repeated violations of the Mosaic covenant and the beginning of the church dispensation."<sup>30</sup> However, Christ's fulfilment of the law brings the blessings of the law keeping to Christians.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, as the law is part of Scripture, some sort of secondary application is attributed to it which means some principles can be applied to the present age. Lewis S. Chafer notes, "The Scriptures are 'profitable' because they are pregnant with moral and spiritual values; this is true even when they exert only the influence of a secondary application."<sup>32</sup> One remarkable application of this secondary application is that even the sermon on the mount falls into this category as it was not in the dispensation of Grace.

This view has several noteworthy strengths: (1) It acknowledges the discontinuity between the New and the Old Testament (2) This view is based upon biblical terminology as the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>30</sup> Wayne G. Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensational View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*. ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 276–77.

<sup>31</sup> Mark A. Snoeberger, "Traditional Dispensationalism," in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*, eds. Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 171.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* Vol. 1. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1957), 116, emphasis original.

New Testament does indeed use the word “dispensation” Greek οἰκονομίαν (*oikonomian*) in Eph 1:10; (3) It presents the law of Christ as a new law reflecting the goodness of God and (4) It considers the law as a unity.

This view has several significant weaknesses: (1) It rejects any continuity between the new and the old covenant; (2) It fails to offer any usefulness in understanding the law of Moses in the conduct of Christians and (3) It considers church as a parenthesis in God’s plan which is not taught by the New Testament. The New Testament authors repeatedly use the Greek word πληρώ (*plero*) meaning “to fulfill.” Likewise, Paul explicitly states that the Gospel was promised “in the law and the prophets,” and that that gentile inclusion in the family of God along with Jewish believers is a mystery hidden in ages past (Rom 3:19–28 and Eph 3:1–6).

### **Progressive Dispensational View**

The Dispensation view got further development especially through the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary.<sup>33</sup> However, a more progressive approach has been developed through the works of Darrell Bock, Craig Blaising, and Robert Saucy. These scholars have endeavored to present a middle ground between Classic Dispensationalism and Classic Covenantalism. Robert Saucy writes, “A Study of Scripture discloses greater unity between the church and Israel than traditional dispensationalists allow but does not eradicate all distinctions for Israel as non-dispensationalists generally contend.”<sup>34</sup> Saucy’s statement well captures the nature of this view as some continuity from the Old Testament to the New Testament is asserted.

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<sup>33</sup> The work of Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, and Dwight Pentecost is classified in the camp of Revised Dispensationalism by some scholars; See Benjamin L. Merkle, *Continuity to Discontinuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 53–77. However, this study has not included this as its approach to the law is the same as that of Classic Dispensationalism.

<sup>34</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 143.

This view affirms the usefulness of the law of Moses as it was never intended for the salvation of its followers. God gave the law to the people of Israel after their redemption from Egypt, so the believers of the new covenant can also apply this after their redemption through the work of Christ.<sup>35</sup> However, this view only upholds the moral part of the law for Christians and considers the ceremonial part non applicable as it served only as type and shadow of Christ.<sup>36</sup> Darrell Bock affirms, “The call to love God and love one’s neighbor is still encased in what the Ten Commandments expressed.”<sup>37</sup> It means that the application of law according to this view is more in alignment with Classic Covenantal View. Furthermore, in contrast to Classic Dispensational view, this view considers the sermon on mount applicable to Christians as well while acknowledging some of its extreme examples that give principles by which one is guided to live, not as the absolute commands.<sup>38</sup>

The key strength of this view is its effort to find a middle ground in terms of continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. However, this view has several prominent weaknesses: (1) It accepts the tripartite division of the law which was not taught by Moses; (2) It relies on a “two-covenant” view of the Bible which is not warranted in the teachings of the Bible and (3) It still maintains that a land grant promise to Israel will be in effect in the future. The problem here is that the land was always a type of Eden, and Eden was always intended to be extended to the

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<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Barker, “The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 302.

<sup>36</sup> David K. Lowery, “Christ, the End of the Law,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church*, 240–47.

<sup>37</sup> Darrell L. Bock, “Progressive Dispensationalism,” in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*, ed. Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 141.

<sup>38</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 18.

whole earth (Ps 2).<sup>39</sup> This is born out in how the New Testament authors cite Psalm 2 and the extension of the land promise to the whole earth, and the fact that they never repeat any promises to ethnic Israel for the land.<sup>40</sup> The promise to rule over all the nations is stated for Christ in Rev 12:5, “She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne.” The same promise to rule the nations is extended to all believers in Rev 2:26–27, “The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.”

### **The Lutheran View**

The traditional Lutheran view emphasizes the discontinuity between the new and the old covenants. Benjamin Merkle notes, “For Luther, the law and the gospel were contrary ideas in the sense that they have contrary functions.”<sup>41</sup> Luther considered the gospel as antithetical to the law of Moses.<sup>42</sup> This distinction is central to Lutheran theology. The fifth article of the Formula of Concord states, “We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between the law and the Gospel is to be maintained in the church with great diligence.”<sup>43</sup> However, the Lutheran View

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<sup>39</sup> See Munther Isaac, *From Land to Lands, from Eden to the Renewed Earth: A Christ-Centered Biblical Theology of the Promised Land* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Publishing, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> Willem S. Prinslo, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Psalms* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Benjamin L. Merkle, *Continuity to Discontinuity: A Survey of Dispensational & Covenantal Theologies* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 202.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther, “How Christians Should Regard the Law of Moses,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 162.

<sup>43</sup> F. Bente, ed. *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), FC Epitome V, (II).1, 503.

affirms the usefulness of the law in maintaining the external discipline and showing the depravity of humanity to follow God's law. Furthermore, it gives high regard to the Ten Commandments as significant guide for Christians. However, it considers other parts of the law irrelevant to the Christians.

The key strength of this view is that it endeavors to rule out any possibility of legalism in the Christian life. Another strength of this view is its justification for the discontinuity between the old and new covenants as emphasized in the New Testament. The key weakness of this view is its failure to appreciate the continuity between the covenants which is the theme of the Scriptures through the progressive nature of the covenants.

### **The Modified Lutheran View**

The modified Lutheran position also balances its emphasis on the discontinuity between the Old and the New Testaments with accepting a sort of continuity as well by highlighting the perspective of redemptive-historical unity of the Testaments. Douglas J. Moo is considered the key advocate of this view.

This Modified Lutheran View affirms the distinction of the law of Moses and the law of Christ while giving priority to the law of Christ and builds a framework for the application of the Law of Moses for Christians through the lens of Christ.<sup>44</sup> The law of Moses is no longer considered the guide or judge of the conduct of Christians. However, the Law of Christ replaces the Mosaic Law. Love is at the center of the Law of Christ as a guide for the conduct of Christians. Douglas Moo writes, "On the basis of Jesus' teaching, it does not seem that any

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<sup>44</sup> It is noteworthy that the application of the law of Moses for Christians according to this is almost identical to that of the progressive covenantal view and the view of new covenant theology. Therefore, the later part of this study will interact with these views much more. Douglas Moo himself considers his approach on the law like that of the new covenant theology. See Douglas J. Moo, forward to *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* by Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), xiii.

Mosaic commandment can be assumed to be directly applicable to the believer. Jesus' authority as the law's fulfiller stands even over the decalogue, as his claim of lordship over the Sabbath shows.”<sup>45</sup> So the law is not applied to Christians without first applying to Jesus and seeing its fulfilment in him.

This view has several noteworthy strengths: (1) It keeps Christ as the center of interpretation of the Scripture; (2) It emphasizes the fulfillment hermeneutic. It relies on Matt 5:17–19—Jesus does not abolish it but instead fulfills it, and thus brings the many statutes to their intended completion. (3) It tends to correctly interpret the passages that seem critical about the law, and passages that appear to speak well of it; (4) It does justice to the biblical passages regarding discontinuity as well as continuity between the New and the Old Testament; (5) It also admits that the law of Moses is the revelation of the character of God and is applied to Christians today through the lens of Christ.

Its complexity to see each commandment of the law of Moses individually and interpret it according to the lens of Christ can be attributed in terms of weakness. However, this complexity is an honest acknowledgment of the complex relationship between the law and the gospel.

### **A Progressive Moral Wisdom Model**

A Progressive Moral Wisdom Model is proposed by Roy Gane after doing a detailed analysis of various approaches to interpreting the law for the church. He writes, “A holistic progressive moral wisdom (PMW) approach is relevant for gaining wisdom for salvation from any biblical passage, but here we are focusing on OT law. When the object of inquiry is a

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<sup>45</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law.” *JSNT* 6, (1984): 3–49, 20.



particular law, it is necessary to begin by analyzing the function of this instruction, which reveals the value that it represents.”<sup>46</sup>

This approach gives importance to each law and endeavors to draw significant lessons by exegeting the law in its original context. He builds his model on the claim of the Scripture that all scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching and enables the believers to gain progressive training in wisdom to attain moral maturity and positive empowerment.<sup>47</sup> This model sees a believer moving from lower level of capability of growing in maturity to a higher level gradually.

Gane suggests following major steps in this model: Analyze the law by Itself, analyze the law within the system of Old Testament laws, further analyze the law within the context of its ancient life situation, analyze the law within the process of redemption and relate findings regarding the function of the law to modern life.<sup>48</sup>

The major strength of Gane’s model is a deep analysis of each law before reaching to its application for Christians today. However, this view has two major weaknesses: (1) It does not emphasize the canonical context and fulfilment through Christ for the application of the law of Moses for Christians;<sup>49</sup> (2) It really does seem like the “laws” are legal precepts not just sapiential principles. Without denying the sapiential aspect, we can still acknowledge that a prescriptive decree is binding unless otherwise stated.

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<sup>46</sup> Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 201.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>49</sup> Gane would challenge this proposed weakness as he suggests analyzing the law within the process of redemption. However, my contention is that unless giving a central role to the redemptive process, a legitimate application for the new covenant believer cannot be attained. This central role is not given to the redemptive process in Gane’s work.

### Promotion of Holiness View

This view elevates the moral dimension of the Mosaic Law above the ceremonial and civil dimensions and considers it as the guidance of God for the promotion of holiness in Christians today.<sup>50</sup> Walter C. Kaiser's promise theology is considered as the key foundation for this view.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, this view promotes ranking within the parts of the law by categorizing weightier and lighter commandments of law.<sup>52</sup> While commenting about Walter Kaiser's view, Virkler and Ayayo comments, "In some ways his model may be viewed as a middle between dispensational and covenantal theology."<sup>53</sup> This approach is also known as the Principlizing model. It involves discovering the principles behind the laws of the Old Testament which transcend culture and the old covenant and finds the application for the contemporary church in the contemporary circumstances.<sup>54</sup> Walter C. Kaiser suggests a "Ladder of Abstraction" to explain his method in which "the interpreter moves up the Ladder in a continuous way from bottom rung of the detailed specificity found in the Old Testament particular law, the way up the rungs to the high point of a generally observed principle or paradigm that undergirds what is commanded in the text."<sup>55</sup> Thus the truth embedded in the principle takes precedent over the statement of the commands according to this approach. Sprinkle elaborates on this approach as

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<sup>50</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Law as God's Gracious Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness", in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 190.

<sup>51</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "God's Promise Plan and His Gracious Law." *JETS* 33 (1990): 289–302.

<sup>52</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Law as God's Gracious Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness", 194–95.

<sup>53</sup> Henry A. Virkler and Karelynn Gerber Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 135.

<sup>54</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "A Principlizing Model," in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*. ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 24.

<sup>55</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Really Matters: A Call for Believers to Read the Bible of Jesus and the Early Church* (Silverton: Lampion House Publishing, 2022), 62.

he writes, “We ask the question, ‘What principle led God through the writer to say this under those circumstances?’ Once the principle is derived, then we can apply that same principle to analogous situations today.”<sup>56</sup> The principles derived through this approach fall mainly in the category of moral principles. It is because of the emphasis on continuity in this view which depends on the division of the moral category of the law of Moses.

This view has several noteworthy strengths: (1) This view depicts a desire to promote holiness in believers through obedience; (2) It presents of the law as God’s gracious provision for the sanctification of believers; (3) It endeavors to strike a balance between the continuity emphasis of the views founded on the covenant theology and the discontinuity emphasis of the views founded on dispensational theology.

This view has three substantial weaknesses: (1) The first and the fatal weakness of this view is its dependence on the threefold division within the law of Moses which is unwarranted in Scripture; (2) The second weakness of this view is its misinterpreting of the teaching of Christ regarding the heavy and lighter commandments of God as a reason to divide the law whereas it in fact is not dividing but unifying the law; (3) The third weakness of this view is its failure to do justice to the New Testament references that teach that Christians are not under the law of Moses (1 Cor 9:20–21, Gal 3:24–25).

### **Redemptive Movement Model**

William J. Webb developed a Redemptive-Movement model for the identification of the significance of the Old Testament laws for Christians.<sup>57</sup> He contends that this approach can be

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<sup>56</sup> Joe M. Sprinkle, *Biblical Law and Its Relevance a Christian Understanding and Ethical Application for Today of the Mosaic Regulations* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2006), 21.

<sup>57</sup> William J. Webb, “A Redemptive-Movement Model,” in *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*. ed. Gary T. Meadors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 221.

adopted by dispensationalists or covenantal theologians without changing their stance on the continuity-discontinuity debate.<sup>58</sup> He emphasized that only some laws of the Old Testament are applicable to Christians.<sup>59</sup> He contends the guiding principle for selecting the laws which are applicable today for Christians is not the ancient Near Eastern context but the context of Scripture itself.<sup>60</sup> He encourages the believers to determine the spirit behind the laws rather than merely following the words of the laws.<sup>61</sup> He puts the laws in broader perspective of salvation history and contends the ultimate ethical principles are beyond the texts of the Scripture.

This view has several noteworthy strengths: (1) It depicts inclusiveness to dispensational and covenantal theologians to utilize its model for some of the laws (2) It depicts commitment to understand the cultural context of the commandments of the law to reach at the spirit of the commandments; (3) It emphasizes on the micronarrative of Scripture in understanding the commandments of the law.

This view has two major weaknesses: (1) It does not bring Christ's fulfillment of the commands into consideration in their application; (2) It heavily relies on the understanding of ANE culture to analyze the commandments, which is not always possible.

### **Paradigmatic View**

Two diverse Paradigmatic Approaches have been developed by Waldemar Janzen and Christopher J. H. Wright for the application of Old Testament laws. Janzen adopts the approach of developing a comprehensive understanding of the various genres of the Old Testament laws

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>59</sup> William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 16.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>61</sup> Webb, "A Redemptive-Movement Model", 220.

and develop a grid of ethical living which guides in the application of the Old Testament laws for Christians.<sup>62</sup> Janzen rejects the approach to limit the ethical requirements of God to commandments or principles derived from the commandments and argues that the stories of Scripture also function as law to put forward the ethical requirements of God.<sup>63</sup> Thus the values promoted by the Old Testament laws should be interpreted in context of the narratives of the Old Testament and employed by the Christians for wholistic spiritual formation. It brings the law to the status of secondary genre in terms of a source of ethical living.<sup>64</sup>

Christopher J.H. Wright agrees with the approach of Janzen and supplements it with the emphasis on developing a paradigm by treating the Old Testament laws in ancient Israelite context.<sup>65</sup> He highlights the key values and concepts of Israelite worldview which include monotheism, justice, and covenant to develop the paradigm. He rejects the notion of the moral law as a textually isolated entity and proposes the notion of moral motivation in every category of law.<sup>66</sup> He contends for preserving the objective of the law while changing the context for its application.<sup>67</sup>

J. Daniel Hays proposes a very similar interpretive approach called Principlism and describes five steps to follow in applying the Mosaic Law to today's believers.<sup>68</sup> These steps are

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<sup>62</sup> Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 7.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>65</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 72.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>68</sup> J. Daniel Hays, "Applying the Old Testament Law Today," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:629 (2001): 21–35, 30.

as follows: (1) Identify what the particular law meant to the initial audience; (2) Determine the difference between the initial audience and the believers today; (3) Develop universal principles from the text; (4) Correlate the principle with New Testament teaching; (5) Apply the modified universal principle to life today.<sup>69</sup> Although the name of this approach is like Walter Kaiser's Principlizing model, J. Daniel Hays himself acknowledges that his approach is similar to Wright's approach.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, unlike Walter Kaiser, J. Daniel Hays rejects the tripartite division of the law.<sup>71</sup>

The key strength of this view is emphasis on the usefulness of narrative parts of the Old Testament in Christian obedience. The major weakness of this view is that it fails to appreciate the application of the law considering Christ's fulfilment of the law.

### **The New Perspective on Paul's View**

The New Perspective on Paul is not a uniform theological position but has diversity in it. The key proponents of this view are E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, and N.T. Wright, whose views differ from each other significantly. The key distinctives of the New Perspective include our understanding of Second Temple Judaism, the works of the law, and the covenantal nomism. According to this view, Paul was not addressing legalism as it was not the problem of his era, and the works of the law were not a means to earn God's favor but were identity markers for the Jews.<sup>72</sup> N.T. Wright does critique Sanders' view on this. He admits, on several occasions, that

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 32–33.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 30, fn 13.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>72</sup> E.P. Sanders, *Paul, The Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 78.

the Jews were legalistic, but that this was not the concern Paul was addressing, or at least apart from the contact of an Abrahamic pedigree which the Jew already had.

The New Perspective emphasizes that obedience to the law is not essential for entering the covenantal relationship but is required to stay in that covenantal relationship with God. In this sense, the law is considered applicable to Christians because it is a means for them to stay in the community of faith. Failure to obey the law leads to the condemnation of a Christian to hell.<sup>73</sup> N.T. Wright contends that the justification in the final judgment before God will depend upon one's faith in Christ as well as the life lived in obedience to God.<sup>74</sup>

However, the New Perspective does not equate a life of obedience to God with following all the commandments of the law of Moses. Rather, it is obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the genuineness of humanity. N. T. Wright notes, "Torah thus appears to play a role, within Paul's retelling of the story of Israel, as a 'helper' within Israel's original vocation."<sup>75</sup> However, this helper role was limited to the nation of Israel and does not extend to the believers in the new covenant community. According to N.T. Wright, the commandments of the law of Moses were for the first stage of God's plan and Jesus has inaugurated the final stage of God's plan, so these commandments are not relevant for Christians now.<sup>76</sup>

The New Perspective does not offer appreciable guidelines for the application of the law of Moses for Christians. So, this view does not have a significant contribution to a discussion on

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>74</sup> N.T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 129.

<sup>75</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God: Book 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 506.

<sup>76</sup> N.T. Wright, "Answers from Prof. N.T. Wright," in *Teaching the Bible: An e-newsletter for public school teachers by Society of Biblical Literature*.

the Christological application of the law of Moses for Christians. The major weakness of the New Perspective is that it does not stand with a sound exegesis of Paul's Letter to Romans.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter presents a review of various biblical-theological approaches on the application of the law of Moses for Christians highlighting the strengths and 1 of these approaches. The first three views are Theonomic Reformed View, Classic Covenantal View, and Progressive Covenantal View which present a spectrum of continuity between the covenants. The next two are Classic Dispensationalism and Progressive Dispensationalism which present the spectrum of discontinuity between the covenants. Then come two views which are the Lutheran View and Modified Lutheran View, which give more emphasis to discontinuity between the covenants. A Progressive Moral Wisdom Model, The Promotion of Holiness View, the Redemptive-Movement Model, and the Paradigmatic View are some other views that do not directly interact with above mentioned theological systems but independently propose their preferred approaches to the application of the law of Moses for Christians. The New Perspective on Paul has been also addressed because of the way it sees the significance of obedience to the law.

The next chapter discusses in detail the nature of the law, its purpose, and the canonical context of the law of Moses. Interpretation of the law in its immediate context of the Pentateuch and the broader context of the Holy Scriptures enables the readers to understand the application of the law and its relevance for Christians. God saved his people with a mighty hand from the bondage of Egyptian slavery and brought them into the Promised Land. This mighty act of redemption sets the framework in which the law was given to Israelites. Thus, the understanding of the significance of the laws for Israelites can be ascertained in the broader narrative of the



Pentateuch. Furthermore, many law texts from the ancient Near East have been discovered which are parallel to the Old Testament laws. Egyptian, Sumerian, and Akkadian sources have exposed the laws which have many similarities in form and purpose with the laws of Israel. Although the biblical laws are distinct in many respects, there is much to learn from the study of these parallel laws of ancient Near East to better understand the nature and purposes of the biblical law.

### Chapter 3: The Law of Moses for the Old Covenant Community

This chapter explores the meaning, nature, and function of the law of Moses for the old covenant community. The relevant texts from all parts of the Scripture are brought into the discussion to arrive at the canonical interpretation of the law of Moses for Israel. It is because the metanarrative of Scripture, especially the progression of the covenants, provides an essential framework for understanding the application of the law of Moses for the people of God at any stage of redemptive history.

#### Meaning of the Law

The Hebrew word for the law in the Old Testament is תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) which has many connotations. The complexity of establishing the referent of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) in each context is well captured by Peter Enns's acknowledgment, "Not every mention of תּוֹרָה means the same thing. Hence, when תּוֹרָה is used without further specification, it is often difficult to say with certainty precisely what the content of this תּוֹרָה is."<sup>1</sup> The following discussion depicts this complexity of the meaning of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*):

#### תּוֹרָה as Instruction

The basic meaning of the Hebrew word תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) is instruction.<sup>2</sup> It is a feminine noun derived from the verb יָרָה (*yārâ*) which means to instruct, to teach, to shoot like an arrow, or to

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Enns, "Law of God," in *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. 4, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 896.

<sup>2</sup> William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 388. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown–Driver–Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1909), 435–36.

point out. In its general meaning, it refers to the instruction given by parents to children or by teachers to students. In his translation and commentary on the book of Proverbs, Michael Fox contends that in the Proverbs, the word תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) means instruction, usually parental.<sup>3</sup> So, it is considered as a source of wisdom and understanding for living a good life.

However, more specifically in the Hebrew Bible, it refers to instructions of God given to his people through his prophets. Drew Maust notes, “In almost 70% of occurrences, תּוֹרָה refers to the collection, or summary, of YHWH’s instructions for how Israel should conduct itself in order to honor him within the context of his covenant.”<sup>4</sup> After teaching תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) to the people of Israel at Moab, Moses exhorts them, “Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’” (Deut 4:6). Thus, תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) should not be seen as a list of laws to restrict the actions of people but divine instruction and guide to the behavior of people for a blessed life in the promised land.

#### תּוֹרָה as the Stipulations of the Covenant

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the meaning of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) cannot be understood by considering it as an isolated concept. Jason DeRouchie notes, “God gave his law in the framework of covenant relationship, with the various statutes and judgements supplying the stipulations of the covenant.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) denotes the stipulations of the covenant of God with people of Israel at Sinai.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 18B of Anchor Yale Bible (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 841.

<sup>4</sup> Drew Maust, “תּוֹרָה-Torah,” in *Key Terms of the Old Testament*, eds. Dick Kroneman and Paul McLarren, 5th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2021), 1–28, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Jason Shane DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017), 51.

However, these covenant stipulations are not to be equated with law codes to be used in actual court cases. John Walton notes “As covenant stipulations, they are normative-normative not as law but as indications of how order is to be established in this covenant between suzerain and vassal.”<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that the Israelites never considered תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) as normative to other nations as they were outside that covenant relationship with God. It was only revealed to Israel and was heard, understood, and kept in the context of the covenant relationship between God and Israel.

The Sinai Covenant (Exod 20 –24) is called the book of the covenant by Moses (Exod 27:7). Simply defined, “Covenant is a formal agreement involving two or more parties.”<sup>7</sup> Scholars have well established the similarities between the Sinai covenant and Hittite suzerain-vassal treaties with the acknowledgement of some distinctives of the covenant between God and Israel.<sup>8</sup> The Sinai covenant follows the suzerain-vassal treaty form as having (1) Preamble where God introduces himself (Exod 20:1), (2) Historical Prologue describing event of exodus (Ex 20:2), (3) Stipulations of the covenant (Exod 20:3–23: to 23:33), and Document Clause (Exod 24).

During the Second Temple period, although the wisdom and instructional aspect of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) became prominent, it was still considered closely associated with covenant. In her study of the concept of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) in 4 Ezra, Lydia Gore-Jones notes, “Torah is equated with the

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<sup>6</sup> Walton, John H. 2019. “Understanding Torah: Ancient Legal Text, Covenant Stipulation, and Christian Scripture,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 29 (1): 1–18,12. doi:10.5325/bullbiblrese.29.1.0001.

<sup>7</sup> Gary N. Knoppers, “Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?” *JAOS* 116 (1996): 696.

<sup>8</sup> K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003), 286–287.

covenant.”<sup>9</sup> So, the stipulations of the Sinai covenant cannot be separated from the respective covenant for application.

### תּוֹרָה as Pentateuch and Scripture

The Hebrew word תּוֹרָה (*Tôrâh*) also means the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. (Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Matt 5:17; Luke 24:44; Rom 3:21; Gal 3:10; 1 Cor 9:9).<sup>10</sup> However, the meaning of תּוֹרָה (*Tôrâh*) extends beyond Pentateuch and sometimes refers the full canon of Hebrew Scripture.<sup>11</sup> Willis J. Beecher points out, “In five places in the New Testament, including nearly a dozen instances in all, non-pentateuchal passages are cited as written in the law (John 10:34; 15:2; 12:34; Rom 3:10–19; 1 Cor 14:21). Proverbs, Isaiah in two places, and several psalms are thus cited. In these citations the term ‘law’ is clearly used to denote a wider body of literature than the Pentateuch, evidently the Old Testament”<sup>12</sup> So, the sensitivity to the context is required to understand the meaning of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) in Scripture.

### תּוֹרָה not as Legislation

The Hebrew word תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) when translated as law should not be considered as legislation. Peter Vogt notes, “Whereas the word law is usually associated with the actions of legislatures and brings to mind ideas of crime, punishment, courtrooms, and litigation.”<sup>13</sup> This association is due to our contemporary understanding of the concept of law. However, this

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<sup>9</sup> Gore-Jones, Torah as Wisdom in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, *JSD*, 52:3 (2021): 388–416, 403.

<sup>10</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. I* ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 29.

<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that תּוֹרָה is transliterated as *Tôrâh*, not as *tôrâ* when used to denote the Pentateuch or the complete canon of the Hebrew Scriptures.

<sup>12</sup> Willis J. Beecher, “Torah: A Word-Study in the Old Testament,” *JBL* 24.1 (1905), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Peter T. Vogt, *Interpreting the Pentateuch: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 1.

concept of law is foreign to the ANE context in which the Hebrew Scriptures were composed. Therefore, when interpreted in its ANE Context, legal collections of the Old Testament were not always legislative in nature.<sup>14</sup> John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton present three convincing arguments against using תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) as legislation: (1) It is not a comprehensive collection, (2) It is not normative basis for judicial decision, and (3) It is embedded literarily at several levels.<sup>15</sup> They further note, “In fact, there is no Hebrew word for “law” (= legislation), and now it can be seen that the reason for this is that the ancient societies were not legislative societies.”<sup>16</sup> Thus תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) should not be considered as a system of binding law codes in the society.

Another key argument that the stipulations of the covenant were not binding in our contemporary legal sense can be derived from the attitude that Israelites had towards תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*). It was never considered as consisting of burdensome laws but a source of delight in the Lord of the covenant (Lev 18:5; Deut 4:1, 40; 6:1–3; 28:1–14; Ps 1:1–3; Ps 119).

#### תּוֹרָה as νόμος in the Septuagint and the New Testament

The Hebrew word תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) is translated by the Greek word νόμος (*nomos*) in the Septuagint and the New Testament. Grant Osborne writes,

The translation of *tôrâ* by *nomos*, “law,” in the LXX and the New Testament (Mt 5:17 – 18; Lk 16:31), shows that the regulations were quickly thought of as legal stipulations and binding requirements by the Jewish people. As such the term law can refer to the 600 plus regulations either as a group (“laws”) or individually, to Deuteronomy as “the Book of the Law” (Josh 1:8), to a particular section or aspect of the *Tôrâh* (e.g., the Decalogue

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<sup>14</sup> Michael LeFebvre, *Collections, Codes, and Torah: The Re-characterization of Israel's Written Law*, LHBOTS 451 (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 31.

<sup>15</sup> John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *The Lost World of The Torah: Law as Covenant and Wisdom in Ancient Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 37–39.

<sup>16</sup> Walton and Walton, *The Lost World of Torah*, 40.

or “the law of the Nazirites” [Num 6:13]), or to the whole Jewish religious system (Rom 7:1; 1 Cor 9:20).<sup>17</sup>

During the Second Temple period, the meaning of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) as legislation become dominant because of the translation of the word as law by LXX. Henning Reventlow identifies the key issue,

The translation of the word *tôrâh* (Hebrew: instruction, teaching) with the Greek term *nomos*, ‘law,’ clearly points to an understanding of the interpretation of the Torah in the context of the synagogue, which was then understood as a book of the law that comprises a collection of prescriptions that are to regulate the entire life of a Jew. This understanding was offered as an analogy to the Hellenistic understanding of juridical law and also was partially influenced by it.<sup>18</sup>

It depicts that the translation of LXX was influenced by the Hellenistic culture and further promoted the Hellenistic understanding of the law. Thus, the law in the Old and New Testaments is primarily understood as a genre referring to the commandments of God given through Moses (Ezra 3:2; 7:6; 1 Cor 9:9). It contains commandments that covered almost all the aspects of life in Israel and were the norm for their behavior before God and the world. Roy Gane notes that the meaning of the law involves a sense of regulations to which people are held accountable.<sup>19</sup> This accountability is in the covenantal context between God and Israel.

Douglas Moo notes, “More than 90 percent of the occurrences of *nomos* in Paul refer to the Mosaic law.”<sup>20</sup> Besides the law of Moses, Paul can use νόμος (*nomos*) to refer to the Pentateuch in Gal 4:21. It is evident that Paul’s use of the term νόμος is influenced by the LXX.

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<sup>17</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 186.

<sup>18</sup> Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation Vol. 1: From Old Testament to Origin*. Trans. Leo G. Perdue (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 26.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters: The Gift of the New Realm in Christ*, BTNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 424.

Joshua Greever concludes, “Hence, as a translation of תּוֹרָה the term νόμος in the LXX and Paul should be understood to refer to the legislation of the Sinai covenant. It was not simply legislation, but legislation within a covenantal framework.”<sup>21</sup> It depicts that the history of translation of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) by the Greek word νόμος (*nomos*) is significant for understanding its subsequent use in Christian theology.

### Words Closely Associated with תּוֹרָה

Hebrew Scripture uses some other words closely associated with תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*). These terms are עדוּת (*‘ēdūt*) meaning testimonies, פְּקוּדִים (*piqqudim*) meaning precepts, חֻקִּים (*khuqqim*; *khuqqot*) meaning statutes, מִצְוֹת (*miṣwôt*) meaning commandments, מִשְׁפָּטִים (*mišpāṭîm*) meaning judgment, דְּבַר (*debar*) meaning word, אִמְרָה (*imrah*) meaning utterance, and דְּרָכִים (*darakim*) meaning ways. Most of these terms are employed in the book of Deuteronomy and Psalm 119 and depict the richness and complexity of the concept of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*).

### Word Combinations of תּוֹרָה

Hebrew Scripture uses some other words closely associated with תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*). In order of frequency, the most commonly occurring word combinations are וְרַתְּ תּוֹרָתְךָ (“your תּוֹרָה,” x31), תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה (“תּוֹרָה of Moses,” 14x), סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה (“document/book of תּוֹרָה,” x14), and תּוֹרַת אֱלֹהִים (“תּוֹרָה of God,” 7x).<sup>22</sup> This study utilizes תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה as a phrase most of the time due to its clarity and common use in biblical and extra biblical literature.

### Concluding Remarks on Meaning of תּוֹרָה

The most basic and primary meaning of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) is instruction in general. However, more specifically it refers to instructions of God to Israel through Moses. It may refer to the

<sup>21</sup> Joshua M Greever, “Paul and the Tripartite View of the Law of Moses,” *SBJT* 26:1 (2022): 46–66, 48.

<sup>22</sup> Drew Maust, “תּוֹרָה·Torah,” 12.



Pentateuch or even the Old Testament as a written record of instruction of God for his people through his prophets. Mostly, these instructions are seen as stipulations of the Sinai covenant. These instructions are not seen as legal codes like our modern understanding of laws. The present study uses תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) to mean instruction or commandments of God through Moses but retains using the English phrase “the law of Moses” due to its common use in English.

### **Nature of the Law**

Robert Cole notes, “Torah occurs at major junctures of the Hebrew canon following the Pentateuch: Jos 1 at the head of Prophets, Isa 1 opening the Latter Prophets, and Ps. 1 opening the Writings,”<sup>23</sup> It hints that the final canonical shape of Hebrew Scripture considers תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) at the center of the life of the people of God in the covenantal relationship and all three major divisions of the Hebrew Bible in the final canonical form points out this fact. The following attributes and characteristics of the law depict the nature of the law:

#### **It is Part of God’s Special Revelation**

The law of Moses is part of God’s special revelation in contrast to the natural law. The natural law is present in the order of the created world (Rom 1:21) and in human conscience (Rom 2:15) as contended by Paul. It is available for all people of all times at all places in the world. However, it is not available in written form and man’s ability to understand it has been affected negatively due to the fall. However, the law of Moses is part of God’s special revelation to mankind which was written by Moses at a specific time in history in a special covenantal context. This textual preservation of the law of Moses makes it available and useful for today’s Christians. Apostle Paul acknowledges that fact in Romans 15:4, “For whatever was written in

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<sup>23</sup> Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1—2: Gateway to the Psalter*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 60, fn56.

former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

### It Demands Works

The law was given to Israel to be kept and done. Moses wrote, “Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’” (Deut 4:6). Moses emphasizes this fact in many other references in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 5:1; 6:1–3, 16–18, 24–25; 7:11–12; 8:1, 6, 11). So, by implication, failure to do or keep the law means displeasure to God and breaking the covenant. The New Testament uses this concept to define sin as John writes, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). So, either by omission or commission, a failure to keep or do what the law has commanded is sin and a threat to bring a person under God’s judgment. Douglas Moo notes, “The Mosaic law, by its nature, demands work.”<sup>24</sup> So, it cannot be a source of salvation and for this reason it is presented in contrast to faith. Paul discusses this contrast in Galatians 3 and concludes, “But the law is not of faith” (Gal 3:12). Thus, the law and faith contrast is due to the nature of the law.

### It is Not Exhaustive

It was not exhaustive in the sense of having specific instructions and guidelines on all the possible situations in life. The same was true for other law systems of the societies of ANE. This fact was well acknowledged by the interpreters of the Scripture as noted by John Walton and Harvey Walton, “One can already see this inclination in the way that Jewish interpreters in the Second Temple period began extrapolating lines from the Torah to provide regulations for

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<sup>24</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfilment of the Law of Moses,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*. ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 333.

particular situations that the Torah itself did not anticipate or address.”<sup>25</sup> This inclination was developed because of the supposition that תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) was meant to deal all situations of life being a law code which was contrary to the original purpose of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) being instruction of God for his people in the covenantal context.

### It is Temporal

Many Scripture passages suggest that the law is everlasting (Ps 119:151,160). However, this simply means long duration. Jeremiah talks about God’s plan to make a new covenant with Israel (Jer 31:31). The newness of this covenant means that the previous covenant will be called old in comparison to this covenant. The old covenant referred to in the book of Jeremiah is the Sinai covenant which was already being broken by the people (Jer 11:10 and 34:18). In context, Jeremiah is clearly referring to a “new covenant” as a “renewed covenant.” That is, it is an extension of the Old but brought to its intended completion.

Therefore, God reveals his plan to make it absolute which depicts the temporal nature of the Sinai covenant. The author of Hebrews notes, “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13). He further links this change in priesthood and change in the law as he writes, “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well” (Heb 7:12). So, the law of Moses needs also to be changed after the change of the covenant which depicts the temporal nature of the law of Moses and Sinai covenant.

### It is Good, Holy, and Just

Paul writes, “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12). It is holy because it is the word of God who is holy, just, and good. The law depicts the

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<sup>25</sup> Walton and Walton, *The Lost World of The Torah*, 38.

goodness of the character of God for the people of God. Daniel Block notes, “Moses declared that the Lord gave Israel the Law for her own good—not to be a burden or a noose around their necks but as an incredible benefit.”<sup>26</sup> It was considered as a gift to be enjoyed for its goodness, holiness, and justice. The psalmist prays to God to open his eyes so he may see the wonderful nature of the law of the Lord (Ps 119: 18) and keep praising the law in multiple ways by considering it as great gift from God.

### It is Weak

Despite being good, holy, and just, the law was not able to achieve that for which it was not designed. The New Testament presents that as a weakness, although this weakness is not inherent to the law but due to the fallen human condition. Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:3 –4, “Although the law is God’s guidance and gracious instruction, it is powerless to do what only God can do through his Holy Spirit.” Saint Augustine acknowledges this weakness of the law as he writes, “The letter of the law, which teaches that we should not sin, kills, if the life-giving Spirit is not present.” This was the point established by Paul in 2 Cor 3:6 when he said, “For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”<sup>27</sup> So, when left alone to solve the depraved human condition, the law is weak.

The author of Hebrews writes, “For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness” (Heb 7:18). Here the weakness and uselessness of the law is communicated in context of its failure to arrange a perfect solution to save the people from

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<sup>26</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 97.

<sup>27</sup> Saint Augustine, “The Spirit and the Letter,” in *Answer to the Pelagians: The Works of St. Augustine* 1/23, trans. Ronald J. Teske (New York: New City, 1997), 154.

their sins. Richard Averbeck notes, “There are certain things no law can do, even God’s law.”<sup>28</sup>

With its own power, God’s law given thorough Moses in the context of the Sinai covenant is unable to bring transformation of the human heart. This weakness of the law is a reason for it being set aside in hope of the inauguration of a new covenant through coming of Jesus Christ.

### It is Bound with Sinai Covenant

Many contemporary covenant theologians hold that the whole of the Mosaic law was an integral part of the Sinai covenant. The support for that view is commonly found in analogies drawn between the Sinai covenant and ancient Near Eastern treaty documents. An essential part of the ancient treaty formula was a section of stipulations prescribed for expressing loyalty to the treaty agreements. These stipulations are taken as proof of the role of laws in keeping the Sinai covenant.

The Prophets preached on the significance of keeping the law in context of covenant relationship between God and his people. They considered failure to keep the covenant stipulation as breaking the covenant. Hosea laments on the condition of Israel, “They have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law” (Hos 8:1). The Psalmist also captures this association of the covenant and the law as he writes, “They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law” (Ps 78:1). The author of Kings describes the same condition as he writes, “Because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened nor obeyed” (2 Kgs 18:22).

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<sup>28</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of Church: Reading the Torah in Light of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 17.

### It is a Unified Whole

The law of Moses has been classified in many ways. The most common classification is seen in covenant theology where the law is divided into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories.<sup>29</sup> Phillip Ross notes, “Not uniquely Eastern or Western; Roman Catholic or Protestant; conservative or liberal; Patristic or Puritan; Thomist, Calvinist, or anything else; the threefold division of the law is catholic doctrine.”<sup>30</sup> This division is assumed normative and biblical within the majority of the Reformed circles. Historically, this division is traced back to Tertullian.<sup>31</sup> Luther and Calvin also approved this division and their application of the law depended heavily upon this categorization.

John Frame, a renowned reformed theologian, considers this division good and useful but admits, “When we get into details, these designations are not as sharp or as helpful as we might like.”<sup>32</sup> Vern Poythress contends for a slightly modified categorization and divides the laws into two types by fusing the ceremonial and civil divisions.<sup>33</sup> However, the major reason to reject this division is that it is unwarranted in the Scripture.<sup>34</sup> Moses does not label the laws in the Pentateuch as moral, ceremonial, or civil.<sup>35</sup> The New Testament also does not follow this

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<sup>29</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, 19.2–4.

<sup>30</sup> Phillip S. Ross, *From the Finder of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Richard N. Longnecker, “Three Ways of Understanding Relations between the Testaments: Historically and Today,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis for His 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne with Otto Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 24. 31n.9.

<sup>32</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2008), 214.

<sup>33</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1995), 106.

<sup>34</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of Church: Reading the Torah in Light of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 17.

<sup>35</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 214.

division and views the law as a unit reaching to its τέλος (*telos*) in Christ.<sup>36</sup> The compliance to one commandment of law is considered as submission to the whole law (Gal 5:3) and, failing to keep one point is equated with becoming guilty of all of the law (Jas 2:10–11). Joshua Greever focuses his analysis on the Pauline Corpse and concludes, “The tripartite view of the law of Moses cannot explain adequately Paul’s negative and positive statements concerning the law. Negatively, Paul taught that Christ had brought the entire law of Moses to an end, not just certain parts or aspects of it. Positively, he also reappropriated the entire law of Moses—not just the moral law—as illustrative of the wisdom and righteousness of God.”<sup>37</sup> It depicts that the law of Moses is a unified whole.

David Dorsey’s remarks aptly conclude this discussion, “The scheme of a tripartite division is unknown both in the Bible and in early rabbinic literature. Its formulation appears rather to be traceable to modern Christian theology.”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, it is wise to reject the tripartite division of the law and the law of Moses should be considered as a unity.

Another popular way of classification is to categorize laws into apodictic laws and casuistic laws.<sup>39</sup> Apodictic laws are considered absolute principles without exceptions whereas casuistic laws are conditional principles that depend upon specific situations. This way is also of limited use. A practical way to identify some categories in the law is to see weightier and lighter commandments in the law as discussed by Jesus Christ (Matt 23:23). However, Jesus Christ’s

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<sup>36</sup> D.A. Carson, “The Tripartite Division of the Law: A Review of Philip Ross, *From the Finger of God*,” in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis; Essays in Honor of G.K. Beale*, eds. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 228.

<sup>37</sup> Greever, *Paul and the Tripartite View of the Law of Moses*, 61.

<sup>38</sup> David A. Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise.” *JETS* 34 (1991): 321–34.

<sup>39</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of Church: Reading the Torah in Light of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 97–99.

emphasis is on doing the weightier matters without neglecting the lighter ones which again affirm a sort of inherent unity in the law.

It has a τέλος

Paul writes in Romans 10:4, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Richard Winston gives a detailed analysis of the following possible interpretations of the verse in the context of the application of the Law to Christians: (1) Christ abolishes the law; (2) The messianic age ends the age of the law; (3) The law has ended as a way to righteousness; (4) Christ ends the ceremonial law; (5) Christ prophetically fulfills the law; (7) Christ obeys the law; (8) Christ ends the exclusivity of the law; (9) Christ is the true meaning of the law; (10) Christ ends and culminates the Law; (11) Christ is the purpose of the law; (12) Christ ends using the law to establish righteousness.<sup>40</sup> He evaluates all these interpretations and concludes, “While many try to impress God by their works of obedience, God insists that men and women seek right standing with Him by faith in His Son. Christ ends the pursuit of righteousness by works and gives rest to those who seek Him.”<sup>41</sup> Paul’s context seems to demand this interpretation because the human pursuit of self-righteousness is inadequate to please God.

Keeping fulfillment through Christ at the forefront while interpreting the Law keeps us safe from interpretive errors. The words of Vern Poythress are very helpful, “Jesus does not assert merely a static continuation of the force of the law, but rather a dynamic advance— in fact, the definitive fulfillment. What was temporary and shadowy in the form of the Old Testament law is superseded, now that God’s glory and kingly power are being manifested in the very

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<sup>40</sup> Richard Winston, “Christ the End of the Law: The Interpretation of Romans 10:4,” *PRJ* 7 (June 2015): 18–41.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.



person of Jesus and in his ministry.”<sup>42</sup> So, when seen in the light of Christ who is its τέλος (*telos*), it is possible to understand the nature and function of the law vividly.

### Functions of the Law

Understanding the meaning and nature of the law aids in knowing the functions, purposes, or uses of the law. Augustine was the first one to use to phrase *utilitas legis* (*usefulness of the law*).<sup>43</sup> The medieval interpreters talked about three or four uses of the law. Primarily building upon the previous works, John Calvin explained the three uses of the law which subsequently became popular in the Reformed circles by the name of “the threefold use of the law.”<sup>44</sup> Traditionally, the threefold use of the law includes *usus politicus*, *usus pedagogicus*, and *usus didacticus*.<sup>45</sup> In this categorization, the use of the law is seen in restraining sin, convicting of sin, and as a rule of conduct respectively. This study approaches the functions of the law differently but refers to the insights of the threefold use at some relevant points. Following is the discussion on the uses or the functions of the law.

### Revelation of God’s Character and Human Condition

The righteous demands of the law were in right accord with the righteous character of God as written in Leviticus 19:2, “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’” God’s giving of the law to Israel was an invitation to them to know their God and be like him. It was in fact a call to restore the

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<sup>42</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, 265.

<sup>43</sup> Saint Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Letters* (156–210) (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2004), 312–313.

<sup>44</sup> John Calvin, *The Institute of the Christian Religion: Calvin’s Own Essentials’ Edition*. trans. Robert White (Edinburg: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 171–76.

<sup>45</sup> Edward A. Engelbrecht, “Luther’s Threefold Use of the Law,” *CTQ* 75 (2011): 135–150.

image of God in humanity which had been broken in the fall. The cultural context of Israel confirms this reality. This purpose of the law of Moses parallels with the Laws of Hammurabi which also served to reveal the character of the divine lawgiver.<sup>46</sup> So, the instructions given to Israelites revealed who their God was, and it was related to another dimension of this revelation which was about their human condition. There was threat of judgment for those who failed to follow the law of Moses.<sup>47</sup> As that failure was inevitable, the law's function to reveal God's character was closely knitted with the revelation of the human condition which was the reason of the disobedience.

Paul writes in Romans 3:20, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." It depicts that law brings the revelation of human condition. The law functions to make humans conscious about their sinfulness. In other words, the law is not the reason for their sinfulness, but the law informs them that they are very sinful. However, the first part of the verse highlights the limit of the law that it cannot be the source of making a person righteous before God. It means the law provides the diagnosis but cannot provide the remedy of the human condition. But even in providing the diagnosis, the law does a great service to humanity. It confirms the condemned status of humanity before God. Mark Seifrid asserts, "The law establishes God's just charge against humanity in the public square."<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the law works to bring humanity under conviction of sin and of their failure to meet the demands of the law. Luther considered it as the key purpose of the law, "As long as a

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<sup>46</sup> John H. Walton, *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1994), 65.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Zimmerli, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study of the Meaning of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 51.

<sup>48</sup> Mark A. Seifrid. "Natural Revelation and the Purpose of the Law in Romans." *TynBul* 49 (1998): 115–29, 128.

person is not a murderer, adulterer, thief, he would swear that he is righteous. How is God going to humble such a person except by Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of God's wrath to bring down the proud and shameless hypocrites."<sup>49</sup> Calvin uses the illustration of a mirror to elaborate this function of the law. He writes, "Accordingly the Law is like a mirror in which we contemplate first our weakness, then the evil which results from it, and finally the curse which is a combination of the two."<sup>50</sup> So, by providing the diagnosis, the law acts as a tutor that leads to Christ and righteousness provided through him. Paul writes in Galatians 3:24, "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian." The Greek word here for guardian is *παιδαγωγὸς* (*pedagogicus*) which conveys the concept of a slave in Roman society who was held responsible for education of a child until he attains maturity.<sup>51</sup> The *παιδαγωγὸς* (*pedagogicus*) served the role to ensure instruction of the child, not like a teacher but like a babysitter.<sup>52</sup> The way law ensured the instruction of Israel and finally pointed the nation to the remedy of human condition through the typology of sacrificial system. Paul tells that in addition to the revelatory purpose of the law, it also helps to identifies the human condition apart from the grace of God which now has been revealed through Christ. As the purpose of the law is inseparable from its relationship with Christ, so its interpretation for Christians must be governed by the person and the work of Christ.

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<sup>49</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (1535), quoted in Alistair Begg, *Pathway to Freedom: How God's Laws Guide Our Lives* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 37.

<sup>50</sup> John Calvin, *Institute of Christian Religion*, 172.

<sup>51</sup> Frederick W. Danker and Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 163.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Longenecker, "The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19–4:7," *JETS* 25 (1982): 53–61.

### Promise of Life and Deliverance of Death

The purpose of the law can be seen from two inter-related perspectives which are the promise to life but the deliverance of death because of human condition.<sup>53</sup> Both perspectives are well summarized by Paul as he writes, “The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom 7:10). The first perspective focuses on the divinely intended purpose of the law as a promise of life for those who keep it, and the second perspective focuses on the revelation of human sinfulness and hopelessness as law puts all to death so the need of Christ may be realized. Jewish interpreters were able to identify the first perspective but missed the second one. Thomas Schreiner writes, “The typical Jewish view was that the law was given to bring about life. In Judaism there was the proverb, ‘The more Tôrâh the more life’ (M. Aboth 2:7). This was the standard Jewish view, which is confirmed by a number of texts (Sir. 17:11; 45:5; Bar. 3:9; 4:1; Pss. Sol. 14:2; 2 Esd. 14:30; 2 Bar. 38:2).”<sup>54</sup> This perspective has been primarily developed through the interpretation of the promises made by God through Moses.

Leviticus 18:5 is key text that gives the promise of life through keeping the law, “You shall keep my statutes and my judgments which, if a man does them, he will live by them.” In clear and simple terms, this text asserts that the reward of life is there for those who do obedience to the commandments of the law. Some theologians contend that the life referenced here in this text is eternal life.<sup>55</sup> However, most of the theologians contend that the life referenced here in this text is not eternal life, rather it as a life filled with blessings in the

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<sup>53</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010) 81–82.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>55</sup> Preston Sprinkle surveys the literature of the Second Temple period and contends for this position. For details, see Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and Paul*, WUNT 2/241 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1–130

promised land.<sup>56</sup> This interpretation is most likely because the opposite to this promise of life is presented as exile from the land in Leviticus 18:25, 28. Furthermore, Moses reiterates this promise of life by closely associating it with taking possession in the promised land. “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you” (Deut 4:1). However, taking possession of the land was only the first step of the obedience to claim the benefit of this promise. J. Gary Miller Notes, “Enjoyment of life with Yahweh in the land (as fulfillment of the covenant promise) is an open ended and dynamic reality. For this to be realized, Israel must continue to obey; this is the only way to enjoy long life with Yahweh in the land promised to the fathers.”<sup>57</sup>

Many others understand the life as a hypothetical offer under the Sinai covenant which would only be attained after the inauguration of the new covenant.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, it is evident that no one was able to keep the law and there was provision of sacrifices within the law pointing towards the ultimate and permanent sacrifice of Christ. It means that life was there but in anticipation of Christ’s sacrifice.

It is noteworthy that the law promises life but doesn’t deliver on that promise apart from the Spirit’s work in grace. The law also promises death for transgression but does deliver on that promise for those who do not receive the Spirit’s work in grace.

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<sup>56</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971): 28.

<sup>57</sup> J. Gary Miller, *Now Choose Life: Theology and ethics in Deuteronomy*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 62.

<sup>58</sup> Alva J. McClain, *Law and Grace* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), 17. Also see Roger T. Beckwith, “The Unity and Diversity of God’s Covenants,” *TynBul* 38 (1987), 112.

### Prophetic Function

As the law has its τέλος (*telos*) in Christ, so it serves a prophetic function by pointing to Christ. It gives testimony of Christ through various possible ways. D. A. Carson notes, “The law has a prophetic function, a witness function, it pointed in the right direction; it bore witness to the righteousness that is now being revealed.”<sup>59</sup> The New Testament explicitly discusses this prophetic function of the law as a witness to Christ and an eschatological age inaugurated through the new covenant. Brian Rosner notes, “In Romans, Paul regularly cites the law as a prophecy of the gospel in tandem with the prophets.”<sup>60</sup> He quotes six references where Paul presents law in its prophetic capacity (Rom 4:6–8; 9:25–29; 10:11–15; 10:18, 20–21; 11:8–10, and 15).<sup>61</sup> It is noteworthy that Paul’s approach to see the prophetic function of the law is not limited to see תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) not only as the covenant stipulations but all parts of the Pentateuch.

John Sailhamer also emphasizes this distinction between the stipulations of the covenant in the Pentateuch and narratives aimed to communicate the central message of Pentateuch as he writes, “The Pentateuch (OT) was written to Israel when they were under the Sinai covenant, but its purpose was to teach them the new covenant, not the old covenant. The author of the Pentateuch understood this well. That is why he, like the apostle Paul, illustrates the nature of faith with stories from the life of Abraham (Gen 26:5) rather than of Moses (Num 20:12).”<sup>62</sup> So,

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<sup>59</sup> D.A. Carson, “Atonement in Romans 3:21–26,” in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole*, eds. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 123.

<sup>60</sup> Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*. NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 157.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>62</sup> John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 556.

the prophetic function of the law of Moses plays a significant role in portraying the messianic vision of the Pentateuch.

### A Source of Wisdom

Moses writes in Deuteronomy 4:6, “Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’” This text plainly teaches that the law of Moses is a source of wisdom for the people of God. Those who will live according to this wisdom will be a light to the nations and will be known as wise people among the surrounding nations. Similarly, the psalmist claims that the law is a tool of God to make simple people wise (Ps 19:7) and those who depend upon it as a source of their wisdom are wiser than their enemies and even teachers and aged people (Ps 119:98–100).

Brian Rosner notes, The Psalms in general show an approach to the law that does not primarily view the law as commandments, but rather as promise and teaching to be explored, internalized and applied to all of life’s ups and downs.”<sup>63</sup> It means God had made his wisdom available to his people in the covenantal context through his law. Oliver O’Donovan writes, “Wisdom, with its cool observational detachment and its inherent restriction to the educated, was made available in the form of law.”<sup>64</sup> It was considered a real success and achievement as depicted by a document called Beatitudes discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, “Blessed is the man who has attained wisdom, and walks in the law of the Most High (4Q525 Fr.2).”<sup>65</sup> Thus,

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<sup>63</sup> Rosner, *Paul and the Law*, 173–74.

<sup>64</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986), 190.

<sup>65</sup> *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, Translated with an Introduction by Geza Vermes, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition (London, Penguin Books, 2011), 455.

the people of Israel were supposed to grow in understanding and wisdom through learning and doing the law of Moses.

Paul further develops this concept and after reflecting upon various events, themes, and commandments of the law, admits that these things had been written for our instruction (1 Cor 10: 1–11). As the people of Israel were living through these things, God was making them as examples so the people of God in the new covenant learn wisdom from them.

#### The Distinct Purposes of the Law at Distinct Stages of Israel's History

The function of the law can be explored from another dimension that involves seeing its distinct purposes at different stages of redemptive history for the generations of Israel in the wilderness, in the Promised Land, and in the Exile. The law was given through Moses to the generation in the wilderness that was redeemed by God from the slavery of Egypt (Exodus 19:11–19). Those people never took the law as a source of their redemption. Furthermore, some commandments of the laws were beyond the possibility of obedience as they were meant to be obeyed after entering the Promised Land.

Full obedience to the Law was expected from the generations in the Promised Land. Israel was unique in the human history as it was a nation ruled by God and set apart from the nations. However, as part of the Abrahamic covenant, Israel was also supposed to serve as light to the nations and ultimately acting for their blessings. Therefore, many stipulations were to set them apart from other nations. These stipulations included circumcision and food laws. Many stipulations were to help them solve the day-to-day problems in social life and to regulate them as a society governed by God. Similarly, many stipulations were to make them exemplary in the world like the regulations regarding slaves and foreigners. Christopher Wright notes, “The law was given to Israel to enable Israel to live as a model, as a light to the nations, such that, in the



prophetic vision, the law would ‘go forth’ to the nations, or the nations would ‘come up’ to learn it from the Lord through Israel.”<sup>66</sup> Thus the obedience to the law was supposed to make Israel an instrument through which God wanted to bring all the nations to him so they may partake in the covenant made with Abraham. However, Israel failed in to become this instrument of God.

The failure of Israel resulted in several judgments of the Lord reaching the culmination when Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians, and they were deported from the Promised Land. According to Deuteronomy 30:6, it is noteworthy that Moses had hinted about the prospect of full obedience only after the beginning of the New Covenant with its power of transformation. God invites Israel to obey his law and as a result, God gives a promise of gathering them from all the people where they were scattered during exile. Foretelling of this promise was found in Deuteronomy 30:1–3.

### Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has endeavored to grasp the meaning, nature, and functions of the law for Israel in its canonical context highlighting the usefulness and limitations of the law of Moses. The primary focus has been to understand the significance of the law for Israelites as people of God in the old covenant with some hints at its Christological application.

The Hebrew word for the law in the Old Testament is תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) which has many connotations. The basic meaning of the Hebrew word תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) is instruction. More specifically in the Hebrew Bible, it refers to instructions of God given to his people through his prophets. תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) denotes the stipulations of the covenant of God with people of Israel at Sinai. It was only revealed to Israel and was heard, understood, and kept in the context of the covenant

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<sup>66</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 320.

relationship between God and Israel. However, these covenant stipulations are not to be equated with law codes to be used in actual court cases. The Hebrew word תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) is translated by the Greek word νόμος (*nomos*) in the Septuagint and the New Testament.

The law of Moses is part of God's special revelation in contrast to the natural law. The law was given to Israel to be kept and done. It was not exhaustive in the sense of having specific instructions and guidelines on all the possible situations in life. Paul writes, "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12). It is holy because it is the word of God who is holy, just, and good. The law depicts the goodness of the character of God for the people of God. Despite being good, holy, and just, the law was not able to achieve that for which it was not designed. The New Testament presents that as a weakness, although this weakness is not inherent to the law but due to the fallen human condition. Moses does not label the laws in the Pentateuch as moral, ceremonial, or civil.

Revelation of God's Character and Human Condition was one key function of the law of Moses. Therefore, the law works to bring humanity under the conviction of sin and of their failure to meet the demands of the law. The function of the law can also be seen from two inter-related perspectives which are the promise to life but the deliverance of death because of human condition. As the law has its τέλος (*telos*) in Christ, so it serves a prophetic function by pointing to Christ. It gives testimony of Christ through various possible ways. Furthermore, the law of Moses is a source of wisdom for the people of God. Thus, the people of Israel were supposed to grow in understanding and wisdom through learning and doing the law of Moses.

The next chapter explores the relationship between the old and the new covenant and fulfillment of the law of Moses in Christ. These two elements will aid to develop a Christological

lens to see the law which will be utilized to construct the application of the law of Moses for Christians in the subsequent chapter.

## Chapter 4: The Law of Moses and Christ

In the previous chapter, the meaning, nature, and purpose of the law of Moses were discussed in detail. This chapter explores the relationship between the old and the new covenant and demonstrates how Jesus Christ is the τέλος (*telos*) of the whole Hebrew Scriptures. These two elements will aid to develop a Christological lens to see the application of the law for the members of the new covenant community in the subsequent chapter.

### The Progression of the Covenants in Scriptures

Moses gave the law to Israelites along with the Sinai Covenant. However, The Sinai covenant is not the only covenant made by God with his people. Theologians have identified five major covenants recorded in Scripture: (1) The Creation Covenant, (2) The Abrahamic Covenant, (3) The Sinai Covenant, (4) The Davidic Covenant, and (5) The New Covenant.<sup>1</sup> Understanding the relationship between these covenants is crucial to develop the rubric for interpreting the law of Moses for Christians.

#### The Creation Covenant

The Hebrew word for covenant is בְּרִית (*berith*) which occurs 286 times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>2</sup> Its first appearance in the Scriptures in Genesis 6:18. This has led many to believe that the first covenant made by God with creation is the Noahic covenant. According to Richard Averbeck, “This verse most likely refers to the covenant commitment that God made with Noah

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<sup>1</sup> There are many other covenants in Scripture as well. For example, God’s covenant with Levites (Num 18:19) and the covenant of Joshua to Israel that they will keep the Sinai covenant (Joshua 24:21–26).

<sup>2</sup> Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 36.

to preserve him through the flood because of his righteousness amid that tragically corrupt generation.”<sup>3</sup> However, some scholars contend that this verse refers to the covenant made by God with creation in Genesis 9:1–17.<sup>4</sup> Still others claim that this verse does not refer to establishment of a new covenant with Noah, but a renewal of the covenant made with Adam. The scholars affirming this retrospective claim see the initial covenant made with Adam as the covenant of works before the fall, and covenant made with Adam after the fall as the covenant of grace.

Most of the classic covenant theologians fall into this camp as they identify two covenants with Adam in the first three chapters of the book of Genesis.<sup>5</sup> They claim that the first covenant made with Adam was the pre-fall covenant termed as covenant of works, law, nature, or life. Michael Horton explains the common meaning communicated through these four terms, “The first covenant was a commandment of life based on law (‘Do this and you shall live; disobey and you will surely die’).”<sup>6</sup> However, Adam failed to keep that covenant. Prophet Hosea refers to this covenant along with Adam’s failure to keep it as he writes, “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant” (Hosea 6:7).

According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon

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<sup>3</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of Church: Reading the Torah in Light of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 31.

<sup>4</sup> Scott W. Hahn and Paul R. Williamson hold to this view. See Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2009), 95. Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose*. NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 40.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Berkoff, Herman Bavinck, Charles Hodge, John Murray, Meredith G. Kline, O Palmer Robertson, William A. Vangemeren, Cornelis P. Venema, John M. Frame, Brandon D. Crowe, Wayne Grudem, and Michael Horton are among these Classic Covenant theologians holding this view. The standard confessional documents affirming this position are the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Confession.

<sup>6</sup> Michael S. Horton, “Classical Covenantalism,” in *Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*, ed. Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 53.

condition of perfect and personal obedience.”<sup>7</sup> This covenant was prior to fall and before the expression of God’s grace for the humanity. After the fall, God made a covenant of grace with Adam through the announcement of *protoeuangelion* in Genesis 3:15.<sup>8</sup>

I affirm that the covenant made with Noah is indeed a renewal of the covenant made with Adam based on the following three arguments.<sup>9</sup> First, a careful reading of Genesis 9:1–17 finds many intertextual connections of this passage with Genesis 1:28 which states, “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” These connections involve universal and creational emphasis in terms of thematic connection and blessings of being fruitful and multiplication in terms of common vocabulary.<sup>10</sup> God commands humanity to have domain over all forms of creation in Gen 1:28 and the same universal emphasis is repeated in Gen 9:2 with a promise to make to all created beings fearful of humanity. The common vocabulary includes bless, fruitful, multiply, fill, and subdue (compare 1:28 especially with 9:1,7). “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,’ (Gen 9:1). “And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.” (Gen 9:7).

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<sup>7</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith, 7.2.

<sup>8</sup> See John D. Currid, Adam and the Beginning of the Covenant of Grace,” in *Covenant Theology: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Guy Prentiss Waters, J. Nicholas Reid, and John R. Muether (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 99–109.

<sup>9</sup> Meredith Kline identifies some parallels between the accounts of the Creation and the Exodus in terms of covenant to contend that God established his covenant with creation. See Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 13–34.

<sup>10</sup> For a book length treatment of these connections, see Andrew J. Schmutzer, *Be Fruitful and Multiply: A Crux Thematic Repetition in Genesis 1–11* (Eugene, OR: Wips & Stock, 2009). Furthermore, Bruce K. Waltke notes seven phrases of creation renewal in the flood narrative which follows the pattern of the seven days of Gen 1. See Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 128–29.

Second, it is noteworthy that the Hebrew word used here is הַקִּים בְּרִית (*hā-qîm berith*) which is not the normal expression for initiating a covenant.<sup>11</sup> The characteristic and standard expression for initiating a covenant is כָּרַת בְּרִית (*karath berith*).<sup>12</sup> Third, Man's creation in the image of God means that he is presented as servant-king and obedient-son which depicts a covenant relationship between God and man.<sup>13</sup> As every covenant has a sign of covenant, man in the image of God is a sign of the creation covenant.

It is noteworthy that the pre-fall covenant with Adam is rejected because of the noteworthy absence of the traditional covenantal structure of ANE covenants such as Royal Grants, Suzerain-Vassal, or Loyalty Oaths in Genesis 1–3. I acknowledge that it is difficult to prove that the traditional covenantal structure is present in Genesis 1–3 narrative. However, the essential parts of this structure are present as noted by Wayne Grudem, “A clear definition of the parties involved, a legally binding set of provisions that stipulates the conditions of their relationship, the promise of blessings for obedience and conditions for obtaining blessings.”<sup>14</sup> To add into these parts is the presence of the image of God in man as the sign of the covenant. Furthermore, Brandon D. Crowe notes, “The best reading of Genesis 1–3, in the context of all of

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<sup>11</sup> William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology*, rev. ed. (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013), 12–20.

<sup>12</sup> E. J. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: A New Edition in English Including the God of the Maccabees*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 20018), 236–238.

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 648.

Scripture, is that God enters into a covenant with Adam.”<sup>15</sup> This includes the pre-fall covenant of works and the post fall covenant of grace.

As it is evident from the fall, this covenant of works was broken by Adam. All humanity has broken the Adamic Covenant being members of it before coming to Christ. Jesus Christ, being the last Adam, fulfills this covenant by his active obedience and by being the true image of God even in this fallen world in his incarnate state. Paul presents Adam and Jesus as covenantal representatives (Rom 5:12–21). The obligations of the covenant of works have been met in Christ.<sup>16</sup> He restores the original purpose of the creation of the man and the whole universe as a recovery of God’s reign through man.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Jesus fulfills the *protoeuangelion* of Genesis 3:15, thus fulfilling the covenant of grace established with Adam.

#### The Abrahamic Covenant

God had created humanity to have a personal relationship with them, but the fall had separated God and humanity. God took the initiative to set a plan of redemption which involved making a covenant with Abraham (Gen 12, 15, 17, and 22). This covenant was indeed a covenant to bless all nations through him (Gen 12:1–3), to make him a great nation with a multitude of offspring (Gen 15:1–5 and 17:4), and to give the land to his offspring (Gen 12:7). It is noteworthy that all the components of God’s covenant with Abraham were somehow linked with his offspring which can have four connotations: (1) Natural physical offspring such as Ishamel, Isaac, and the sons of Keturah; (2) Natural but special physical offspring in Isaac; (3) Promised

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<sup>15</sup> Brandon D. Crowe, *The Path of Faith: A Biblical Theology of Covenant and Law* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 11. It is noteworthy that this affirmation is in alignment with the canonical method of the Bible Interpretation which has been adopted in this study.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 218.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce Riley Ashford and Craig G. Bartholomew, *The Doctrine of Creation: A Constructive Kuyperian Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 285.



offspring who was Christ as explained by Paul in Galatians 3:16, and (4) Spiritual offspring who includes those who have faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 9:1–5 and 11:1–25).

The significance of this lies in understanding the covenant with Abraham was centered on the promise with his offspring who ultimately becomes the fulfilment of Abrahamic covenant.<sup>18</sup> However, the initial fulfilment of God's promise with Abraham was seen through his natural but special physical offspring Isaac and subsequently Jacob's children processing the promised land under the leadership of Moses. Therefore, the Sinai covenant is at an important stage of fulfilment of the promise with Abraham.

As contended by Paul in Gal 3:16, Jesus Christ brings the true fulfilment of this covenant through being the promised offspring who brings all nations under the blessings of Abraham through faith. An intertextual study of זרע (zar. 'āh) starting from Gen 3:15 to all other instances in the Pentateuch by Moses confirms this contention of Paul that Christ is זרע (zar. 'āh) of Abraham who is the center of this promise.<sup>19</sup> This theme further becomes prominent when Abraham is called as the father of the nations. Jason DeRouchie notes, "The kind of expansion is suggested in Gen 22:17b–18 where we are told that the unique, male deliverer will not only bless 'all the nations of the earth' but will also possess 'the gate of his enemies,' claiming once-enemy territory, his kingdom expanding to fill the earth (cf. Gen 24:60)."<sup>20</sup> A fulfilment and renewal of the promises with Abraham is seen in next sections of the Hebrew Scripture especially through the fulfilment of the land promise through Israel, promise of the Davidic king in 2 Sam 7:12–17

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<sup>18</sup> C. John Collins, "Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete was Paul?" *TynBul* 54 (2003): 75–86.

<sup>19</sup> Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 83–87.

<sup>20</sup> Jason S. DeRouchie, "Counting the Starts with Abraham and the Prophets: New Covenant Ecclesiology in OT Perspective," *JETS* 58 (2015): 461.

and the promise of the new covenant in Jer 31:31–34. However, the Abrahamic covenant finds its ultimate fulfilment in Christ as it will be shown that this anticipates a Messianic deliverer.<sup>21</sup>

### The Sinai Covenant

As noted in the previous chapter, Torah denotes the stipulations of the covenant of God with people of Israel at Sinai. The Sinai Covenant (Exod 19–24) is called the book of the covenant by Moses (Exod 27:7). Paul House notes, “There is no way to describe adequately the canonical implications of Exodus 19–24. Everyone from Moses (Deut 5:6–21), to Jeremiah (Jer 7:1–15), to Jesus (Mt 5–7), to Peter (1 Pet 2:9), and every other biblical writer who has anything to say about covenant, morality and relationship to God reflects directly or indirectly on this passage.”<sup>22</sup> It is because this covenant is a significant step in the story of redemption and prepares the ground for the subsequent covenants.

Some of the theologians in classic covenantalism consider the Sinai Covenant as the republication of the covenant of works.<sup>23</sup> It makes this covenant conditional, and the covenant stipulations associated with this covenant as binding to those who are under this covenant. However, it seems impossible to say that the alleged creation covenant is not also a covenant of grace that entails works through the issuing of moral laws. Therefore, many others in the same

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<sup>21</sup> For detailed discussion of the fulfilment of Abrahamic covenant in the new covenant through Christ, see Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1985), 59–93.

<sup>22</sup> Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 117.

<sup>23</sup> John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Vol. 6 (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1855), 71–75. Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenant Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 323. Bryan D. Estelle, Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1–14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered,” in *The Law is not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in Mosaic Covenant*. eds. Bryan D. Estelle, J.V. Fesko and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2009), 132.

camp reject the republication thesis and contend that the grace is present in Sinai Covenant, so it should not be equated with the covenant of works only.<sup>24</sup>

The Sinai covenant was established in redemptive context after God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. This covenant made the nation of Israel a treasured procession, a kingdom of priests, and holy nation (Exod 19:10–11). This was a means by which God set Israel as light to the nations to depict his glory. Even before the establishment of the Sinai covenant, God called Israel his son (Exod 4:22). Through making of the covenant, God invited Israel to be God's obedient son and servant king. It depicts that, in purpose, the Sinai covenant was fully embedded in the covenant of creation and the Abrahamic covenant.

God added תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) as stipulations of the covenant with people of Israel because of the fallen nature of humanity. God was much concerned with it because it will lead the people of Israel to break the covenant as God warned Moses in Deut 31:16, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them." So, the law was a sort of God's wise blessing to preserve the nation (Deut 32:47 and Ps 119:9).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 220. Cornelis P. Venema, *Christ and Covenant Theology: Essays on Election, Republication, and the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017), 143. Richard P. Belcher Jr., *The Fulfillment of the Promises of God: An Explanation of Covenant Theology* (Mentor: Ross-shire, 2020), 92–93.

<sup>25</sup> The composition of Torah by Moses is often debated in critical scholarship. For a survey of this debate, see Thomas Romer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2007). Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 389–526. Richard H. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 127–28.

Most of the biblical scholars and theologians consider the covenant at Moab only as the renewal of the Sinai covenant, not an initiation of a new covenant.<sup>26</sup> However, some others think that God made a new covenant with Israel at Moab.<sup>27</sup> A few goes even further and claim that the covenant at Moab in fact refers to the new covenant as promised in Jeremiah.<sup>28</sup> The Sinai covenant was preparatory of Christ. By fulfilling its prophetic and typological purposes, the Sinai covenant itself finds its ultimate fulfilment in Christ. The key argument of this contention has been developed in the previous chapter in discussion on the purpose of the law.

### The Davidic Covenant

When David becomes the God ordained king of Israel, a covenant is established with David by God in 2 Sam 7:12–17:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,<sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

David was chosen by God despite being the youngest in the family (1 Sam 16). God was pleased to make a covenant with David to make his dynasty last forever (2 Sam 7:12). The focus of this

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<sup>26</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of Church*, 48. Also see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 397–442. I hold to this position based upon the intertextual connections between Exodus and Deuteronomy and the contention that although the standard vocabulary for initiation of a covenant in the Hebrew is *כרת ברית* (*karath berith*), sometimes is used for renewal of the already established covenant. It is like saying let us make a new covenant that we will remain faithful to the previous covenant.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Greengus, “Covenant and Treaty in the Hebrew Bible and in Ancient Near East,” in *Ancient Israel’s History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*, eds. Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 91–126.

<sup>28</sup> John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 399.

covenant was the son of David, and some promises of this covenant were only regarding the natural son of David like the discipline offered by God to him in case of him doing inequity. Mario Melendez writes, “The direct implication of the Davidic covenant can be found in the life and reign of Solomon. However, his reign does not perfectly fulfill the covenant, for the covenant, has eternal language.”<sup>29</sup> An emphasis on obedience is there in the Davidic Covenant which links it to Sinai covenant. Moreover, this obedience was centered on the law of Moses as the king was supposed to rule in accord with the law (Deut 17:18–20). As the natural Israel failed to do the covenant stipulations of Sinai, so does the natural son of David fail in keeping the commands of God. The eternal promise embedded in this covenant cannot be fulfilled through the natural son in its entirety. Gentry and Wellum points out, “A canonical reading indicates that the Davidic king is inheriting the role of both Adam as the son of God and Israel as son of God according to the instructions of Deuteronomy.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, this was a future promise of everlasting dynasty. Psalm 2 expands this original covenant in Samuel to include not merely the land but the “nations” and the whole “earth.” While also narrowing the covenant from a line to a definite Davide who will embody YHWH’s ruling righteousness among the nations. Jesus Christ brings the ultimate fulfilment of Davidic covenant through being servant king whose kingdom will last forever. This permanent nature of Davidic covenant is renewed in the new covenant through Christ in Jeremiah 33:14–26. Jesus Christ is the true servant of the Lord and the Son of David.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> M. C. Mario Melendez, “The Davidic Covenant as an Interpretational Key.” *JBTM* 18, 1 (2021): 41–61, 59.

<sup>30</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 20018), 455.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel I. Block, “My Servant David: Ancient Israel’s Vision of the Messiah,” in *Israel’s Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Corroll R. (Grand Rapids: Backer, 2011), 17–56.

The prophecies of Isaiah develop this messianic hope at great length in the Servant of YHWH section which includes the four servant songs found in Isaiah 42:1–9; Isaiah 49:1–13; Isaiah 50:4–11; and Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and further prophecies in subsequent chapters especially Isaiah 61:1–11. In Luke 4:17–21, Jesus is presented as the messenger and prophet promised in Isaiah 61:1–11 which implies the servant of the Lord section of Isaiah (Isa 52:1–58:14). Mark Strauss notes, “The clear implication is that as the messianic herald, Jesus not only announces, but also brings to fulfillment God’s eschatological salvation.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Luke’s readers are expected to connect Jesus’ liberating vocation to both the Isaianic Jubilee, the end of exile, and its older prototype, the exodus.

#### The Promise of the New Covenant

The Prophets of the Old Testament came to remind the people, reprove them, and renew the covenants.<sup>33</sup> Their primary audience was the nation of Israel. They reminded the nation about the covenants of God. They reproved the nation for breaking the Sinai covenant. They renewed the covenants through the promise of the new covenants. A study of the promise of the new covenant is significant as it presents the nature and functions of the new covenant in contrast to the Sinai covenant. The key texts where the New Covenant is promised are as follows:

#### **Isaiah 55:1–5**

The text of Isaiah 55:1–5 is very significant in terms of introducing the promise of the new covenant in the Old Testament. A detailed exposition of this text with a focus to identify the promise of the new covenant is as follows:

Come, everyone who thirsts,

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Strauss, *Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1995), 221.

<sup>33</sup> Brandon D. Crowe, *The Path of Faith*, 78.

come to the waters;  
 and he who has no money,  
 come, buy and eat!  
 Come, buy wine and milk  
 without money and without price.  
 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
 Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,  
 and delight yourselves in rich food.  
 Incline your ear, and come to me;  
 hear, that your soul may live;  
 and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
 my steadfast, sure love for David.  
 Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
 a leader and commander for the peoples.  
 Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,  
 and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,  
 because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,  
 for he has glorified you.

Gary Smith notes, “An initial cluster of twelve imperative or jussive verbs communicates a strong sense of encouragement and urgency in 55:1–3.”<sup>34</sup> The beginning and the ending of this text hints about the inclusion of Gentiles into the family of God’s people. The call of the new covenant is universal in scope. It predicts the inclusion of the people into the nation of God which were not previously part of it. Moreover, the word “the peoples” in some contexts, especially when expressed in the form of עַמֵּי הָאֶרֶץ (*am ha’ eretz*) refers to the peoples of other nations (1 Kgs 9:21, 1 Chr 5:25, Neh 9:24). The literary context of the passage also favors this interpretation. Peter Miscall comments about Isaiah 55, “The chapter is inclusive. Israel is addressed only in v. 5; otherwise, the people who come to the Lord come from both the nations and Israel.”<sup>35</sup> So, the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God in the New Testament fulfills

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<sup>34</sup> Gary Smith V, *Isaiah 40–66: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 53.

<sup>35</sup> Peter D. Miscall, *Isaiah*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 154.

this promise. Likewise, Isaiah 61 promises that the nations will come in gladness and rejoicing over all that God has done after making a new covenant with Israel. This promise finds its fulfilment when the Gentiles come to Christ through the preaching of the Apostles. Alan Thompson notes that the Luke's model of inclusion of Gentiles follows the model of the prophecies of Isaiah.<sup>36</sup> The Apostle Paul reminds the significance of this inclusion of Gentiles into Israel to the church at Ephesus (Eph 2:11–12).

The promise of the new covenant will fulfill the real needs of the people. Isaiah uses the metaphor of food items to convince the people that they are spending their resources on things that cannot give satisfaction. Bread is a metaphor for spiritual satisfaction and life in the Bible (Isa 30:20, John 6: 48– 51, 1 Cor 11:25– 26). God invites the people to get food from him as a gift not with their money. John Oswalt notes, “In 55:1– 5 the invitation is expressed in the strongest terms to those who have no resources in themselves”<sup>37</sup> So, the new covenant is an expression of God's grace, and its blessings cannot be earned. God's righteousness will be the reason for the blessings of God's people in the new covenant as explained by Paul in Romans 3:21–26.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Jesus alludes to this prophecy in his call as written in John 7:37, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me.”

The new covenant will be an everlasting covenant. So, by contrast, the old covenant was not everlasting. It relates to the Davidic covenant. God's love for David and his commitment to fulfill his promise of everlasting kingdom is associated with the new covenant. Alec Motyer connects this prophecy with the previous prophecies of Isaiah and considers it as “the worldwide

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<sup>36</sup> See Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*, NSBT 27 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 118.

<sup>37</sup> John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah: NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 511.

<sup>38</sup> A detailed exegesis of this text is provided in the subsequent section within the same chapter.



consequences of the Servant's work."<sup>39</sup> Thus, the coming of the Messiah from the house of David brings the fulfilment of the Davidic covenant in the new covenant through Christ.

### **Jeremiah 31:31–34 and 32:36–41**

The following two prophecies of Jeremiah are the classic examples of the texts where standard covenant formula appears.<sup>40</sup>

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant [*berith*] with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:31–34)

Now therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence': Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul (Jer 32:36–41).

The above two texts are the parallel texts in the book of Jeremiah communicating the nature and functions of the new covenant. Jeremiah 31:31 is the only place in the Old Testament where the

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<sup>39</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah, TOTC* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 387.

<sup>40</sup> That is the standard covenant formula right there in Jeremiah 31: 33. "And I will be their God, and they shall be my people (וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהָיְיָ לִי לְעָם)." This covenant formula shows up in very significant places both conceptually and directly in the New Testament. It also appears in Jeremiah 32:38 as well.

term “new covenant” is employed.<sup>41</sup> J. Jeffery Tyler writes, “The promise of God’s new covenant, written on human hearts, is among the most decisive and magnetic passages for Christians in all of Scripture. Here connection and disconnection between Old and New Testaments, law and gospel, letter and spirit, outer religion and inner faith are spelled out in a few verses.”<sup>42</sup> It is the most significant passage on the new covenant in the Old Testament and is cited by the New Testament authors multiple times (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8, 9:15, 10:16 12:24). Walter Brueggemann notes, “The dramatic movement of Jeremiah (more so than anywhere else in the Old Testament) readily becomes the *Friday–Sunday dramatic narrative of the church*.”<sup>43</sup> The promise made by Jeremiah is seen as a present reality by the New Testament authors. Therefore, the New Testament authors build the old and new covenant contrast considering fulfilment of Jeremiah’s promises in Christ.

The emphasis of Jeremiah 31:31–34 is on both the continuity and the discontinuity between the new covenant and the old covenant. Tremper Longman notes, “Khadashah (‘new’) can also be translated and understood as ‘renewed,’ reminding us that the new covenant has continuity with the old covenant.”<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the novelty of the new covenant as the only focus of the promise, but it’s extension into new dimensions of the believer’s life is emphasized as well. In terms of the continuity, both covenants concern the law. But the old covenant concerns the stone tablets, while the new covenant concerns the law written on “tablets of the heart.” But

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<sup>41</sup> The other texts about the same covenant in the Old Testament refer it as the everlasting covenant or the covenant of peace.

<sup>42</sup> *Jeremiah, Lamentations: Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, ed. J. Jeffery Tyler (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 301.

<sup>43</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), 192, emphasis original.

<sup>44</sup> Tremper Longman III. *Jeremiah, Lamentations: Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 336.

it's still the "law" as it were. Likewise, it is noteworthy that the problem is that each generation fails to instruct succeeding generations to "know the LORD" which is why they "Did not know the LORD" (Judg 2:10). But now with the Spirit present in the heart, they shall all "know the LORD" (Hos 2:20; Heb 8:11). So, there does seem to be continuity between the covenants.

There is also some sort of discontinuity between the old and the new covenant. The new covenant is not the same as the old one, so its nature and functions are different from the old covenant. Palmer Robertson notes, "This concept of newness implies a break with the past. God shall act to redeem his people in a way unfamiliar to them. Jeremiah emphasizes the newness of the new covenant by distinguishing his expectations of a new covenant experience for Israel from the experience of the nation formerly."<sup>45</sup> The old covenant was broken by the people, whereas the new covenant will not be broken by the community of this covenant. The sign of the old covenant was circumcision of the body, but the new covenant will be associated with the circumcision of the heart as commanded by God in Jeremiah 4:4. The Apostle Paul develops the theme of circumcision of the heart as the work done in the Holy Spirit through regeneration in Romans 2. He concludes in Romans 2:29, "But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter." The author of Hebrews cites Jeremiah 31:31–34 to connect this promise with the Messiah in Hebrews 8:8–12 with a special focus on contrast of the new covenant with the old one.

The surface reading of Jeremiah 31: 31–34 and 32: 36–41 suggests that God will establish the new covenant with the people of Judah and Israel. However, the New Testament as communicated in Romans 11:13–24 by Paul, suggests that after being grafted into Israel metaphorically, the gentiles are also partakers of the blessings of the promises of God with

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<sup>45</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 280.

Israel.<sup>46</sup> Paul writes, “But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree” (Rom 11:17). Thus, the community of the new covenant is spiritual Israel consisting of ethnic Jews and gentiles who have accepted Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Jesus took the last supper with his disciples which means the community of the new covenant are the followers of Christ as is written in Luke 22:19–20, “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”

Jeremiah further communicates that the implications of this covenant will not be like the implications of old covenant. The law of God will be put into the hearts of the people of the new covenant. The Apostle Paul notes about the new covenant people in Romans 5:5, “And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” The love in the hearts of the believers is due to the giving of the Holy Spirit to them. It means the regeneration of the believers is the major transformation that happens in the believers of the new covenant. It means the instructions of God will be internalized in them. Here the instruction does not refer to the law of Moses because this law was associated with the old covenant. The new covenant cannot have the community under the law of the old covenant.<sup>47</sup> So, this claim that the law of Moses will be written in the hearts of the new covenant believers seems very weak and Paul’s discussion in Galatians rules out this possibility

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<sup>46</sup> Jeremiah 30:10 might be a good corollary here. “Jacob” takes on new significance in Jeremiah and to a greater degree in Isaiah. There is a contrast between the old Jacob who failed, and the new Jacob who succeeds as YHWH’s servant. Because of this connection, Matthew begins his gospel with a typological note that “out of Egypt I called my Son” and the original Exodus context of that is Jacob.

<sup>47</sup> More on the in the section on the law of Christ in the next chapter.

entirely. He writes, “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.” (Gal 5:1–2). Paul’s argument here stands on the logic that faith in Christ has set the believers free from the bondage of the law which was the yoke of slavery. Douglas Moo notes, “All this makes it likely that “freedom” refers to “freedom from the law’s binding authority.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, they are not supposed to obey the commandments of the law of Moses like circumcision. Furthermore, Paul writes, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16–17). Thus, to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit contrasts with living under the bondage of the law. It can be correlated with Romans 7–8 also. Paul contrasts someone who is “in the flesh” and a “slave to the law” and under “the yoke of slavery” (Rom 7:14) but who loves the law and longs to obey it. By contrast, the believer in Romans 8 is no longer condemned by nor a slave to the law, is not “in the flesh” but is “in the Spirit” and is made more than a conqueror in Christ (Rom 8:1, 29).

The people of the new covenant will not be requiring external commandments like a list of rules as the final guide to their behavior. Rather, the Holy Spirit indwelling in them will be their ultimate guide. So, the effect of the fall will be reversed. The fall was caused by the desire to have knowledge of good and evil without God’s Spirit working inside. In other words, it was the result of the human desire to have moral autonomy.<sup>49</sup>

The new covenant community will be comprised of the people having an intimate relationship with God. They will know their God without any intermediaries. Furthermore, it suggests that all the people in the new covenant community will have a saving knowledge of

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<sup>48</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians BECNT*. (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2013), 320.

<sup>49</sup> For detail defense of view presented here, see W. Malcolm Clark, “A Legal Background to the Yahwist’s Use of ‘Good and Evil’ in Genesis 2–3,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 266–78.

God. They will be the forgiven people. As noted by Peter Lee, “The Lord can only do so because of the once–for–all sacrifice of the messianic Priest-King.”<sup>50</sup> No doubt, forgiveness was there in the old covenant as well. However, that forgiveness was temporary and symbolic as the author of Hebrews acknowledges (Heb 10:4–10). The forgiveness offered in the new covenant is real and permanent. Bradley Green attributes this permanent forgiveness of the sins as rooted in the better nature of the new covenant.<sup>51</sup> Ultimately it is due to the better mediator of the new covenant who is Jesus Christ.

The promise of unity of heart and unity of way in the life of the new covenant is very significant. The New Testament presents the Church as one body which is fulfillment of the promise of this unity (Eph 4: 4–10 and 1 Cor 12:12). They will fear God forever because like the law of God, the fear of God will also be internalized in them (Jer 32:40). The fear of the Lord is a healthy, glorious fear which is why the word “fear” is often paired with “trembling” of (Ps 2:11, Mark 5:33, Eph 6:5). Lindsay Wilson writes, “It does not imply being terrified by, or living in dread of, God. Rather, it has a range of meanings that center on respecting God as God and treating him as he deserves.”<sup>52</sup> That word in other contexts does mean “dread” or “terror” which is what God threatens his enemies with. However, in a Scriptural context it means “a wondrous trembling” which is an appropriate acknowledgment of the awesome and fierce power of God. So, it involves overwhelming respect, awe, and right attitude towards God in a covenant

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<sup>50</sup> Peter Y. Lee, “Jeremiah,” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*. ed. Miles V. Van Pelt (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 296.

<sup>51</sup> Bradley G. Green, *Covenant and Commandment: Works, obedience and faithfulness in the Christian life*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 46.

<sup>52</sup> Lindsay Wilson, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 61. For more details, also see Zoltán Schwáb, “Is Fear of the Lord the Source of Wisdom or Vice Versa?” *Vetus Testamentum* 63, (4) 2013: 652–662.

relationship which results in life of knowledge and wisdom. Daniel Castelo writes, “In the fulfillment of God's promises to the patriarchs, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were to continue to fear God as part of their observance of the everlasting covenant (Jer 32:39–40; Luke 1:50).”<sup>53</sup> It means that the fear of the Lord continues from the old covenant to the new covenant being part of the everlasting component of the everlasting covenant. God will continue to do good for them. They will not turn away from God.

### **Ezekiel 36:22–28**

The following text of Ezekiel repeats and complements the information about the new covenant by other Hebrew prophets with the presence of the standard covenantal formula:<sup>54</sup>

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

God himself is presented as the initiator of this covenant and he does that for the sake of his name. The standard covenant formula is seen in this text as well with an emphasis on the renewal of the people for making them a pure community. God's people had failed to keep the Sinai covenant and profaned the name of God through their inequities. Hebrew word for profane is חלל־תם (*hil-lal-tem*) which means making polluted sexually, ritually or ceremonially. It may

<sup>53</sup> Daniel Castelo, “The Fear of the Lord as Theological Method.” *JTI* 2 (1) 2008: 147–60, 153.

<sup>54</sup> See verse 28, “And you shall be my people, and I will be your God (וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהָפָה יְהוָה לִי לֵאֱמֹן).”

involve violation of the honor or making something imperfect.<sup>55</sup> But in this bleak situation, C. Hassell Bullock notes, “Just as Yahweh had acted for the sake of His own Name in past historical eras, the restoration would be another such episode.”<sup>56</sup> So, there will be a continuity in the actions of God for his people.

The metaphor of washing with water is employed by Ezekiel to communicate the concept of cleansing. The Hebrew word used for clean here is טָהוֹרִים (ṭə-hō-w-rîm) which means ceremonially clean, physically pure, and ethically pure.<sup>57</sup> Ezekiel states that the clean water will make the people clean (Ezk 36:25). Ralph Alexander notes, “Sprinkling with clean water” illustrates cleansing through divine forgiveness by blood (cf. Ex 12:22; Lev 14:4–7; Ps 51:7; 1Co 6:11).<sup>58</sup> Thus, water is used metaphorically to represent blood which will actually make the people clean.

However, this cleansing will be spiritual not physical because this will happen only because God will give a new heart and a new spirit to the people of the new covenant community. John Taylor notes, “The heart includes the mind and the will, as well as the emotions; it is in fact the seat of the personality, the inmost nature of man. The spirit is the impulse which drives the man and regulates his desires, his thoughts and his conduct.”<sup>59</sup> So, the change of the heart and the spirit will be a regeneration of the core of the human person. There

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<sup>55</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown–Driver–Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1909), 320.

<sup>56</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Prophetic Books*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 301.

<sup>57</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 373.

<sup>58</sup> Ralph H. Alexander, *Ezekiel: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2017), 255.

<sup>59</sup> John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 226.



seems a correlation with the creation account of Genesis and the giving of this “new spirit” in place of or to renew the old רוח (*ruach*). Thus, the change will be internal in the new covenant, in contrast to the external change in the old covenant. The obedience of the people of God to the instruction of God will be due to this internal transformation which is due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believers (Ezk 36:27). Paul states the fulfilment of this promise of indwelling of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor 6:16, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.” In his letter to Timothy, Paul again talks about this privilege of the believer as he writes, “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”

#### The Inauguration of the New Covenant in Christ

The coming of Christ inaugurates the new covenant. The New Testaments texts describing this covenant presents it in the backdrop of the prophetic promises and the failure of Israel to keep the Sinai covenant. Jesus himself acknowledged that his coming has inaugurated this covenant saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20). The Lord’s Supper is presented as the meal of this covenant (Matt 26:28, Mark 14:24 and 1 Cor 11:20–33). It vividly portrays that the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is central to the establishment of this covenant. As the forgiveness of the sins was promised in this covenant (Jer 31:34), the shedding of the blood of Jesus fulfilled that promise.

The author of the Hebrews gives a detailed comparison of the old and new covenant and concludes that the new covenant is better than the old on following six reasons (1) Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses (Heb 3:3), (2) Christ provides the entrance to God’s Sabbath rest (Heb 4:1), (3) Christ is a sure hope of better promises (Heb 6:18–19), (4) Christ is a better high priest (Heb 7), (5) Christ is a better tabernacle (Heb 9:11), and (6) Christ is a better sacrifice

of the covenant that is once for all. However, this superiority of the new covenant is not due to some inherent weakness of the Sinai covenant. Peter Lee note, “Hebrews 8 provides an inspired commentary on the relationship between the old and new covenant. Notice that in Hebrews 8:8, the author of the book of Hebrews says that God find fault in ‘them’, referring to the members of the old covenant; he does not say that God found fault in ‘it’ (i.e., the old covenant).”<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, the inauguration of the new covenant by no means negate the divine origin, goodness and usefulness of the Sinai covenant for a specific time period in the historical redemptive plan of God, and in some specific ways for the people of God in all the times. The Apostle Paul affirms the goodness of the law he writes, “So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12).

Nevertheless, all the above contentions prove beyond doubt that the new covenant is a better covenant than the old one because of Jesus Christ. The author of the Hebrews reiterates this fact as he writes in Heb 8:6, “But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.” Paul in Romans 3:21–26 explains the gospel of Jesus Christ as a true fulfilment of the promise of the new covenant made through the prophetic texts examined above.

### **Romans 3:21–26**

An in-depth exegesis of this text is warranted as Leon Morris considers it as “the most important single paragraph ever written.”<sup>61</sup>

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in

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<sup>60</sup> Peter Y. Lee, “Jeremiah,” 295 fn.

<sup>61</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 173.

Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The first two words of the passage in Greek are *Nyni de* (Νυνὶ δὲ) that show that the point that Paul will make in this paragraph will contrast with the previous discussion section (Rom 3:9–20). The point made by Paul in Romans 3:9–20 was that no one is righteous before God and even law was not able to provide justification for those who did the works of the law. In addition to the contrast of the situation, a contrast of time is also suggested by these two opening words. Now the time is different. Something has happened now which has changed the situation about the status of the people before God. That something is the manifestation of the righteousness of God. In Greek text, *χωρὶς νόμου* (*chōris nomou*) appears before *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* (*dikaïosynē theou*) but the ESV translates *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* (*dikaïosynē theou*) before translating *χωρὶς νόμου* (*chōris nomou*). In contrast, most of the popular translations like NIV, NASB, ASV and HCSB follow the Greek phrase order in translation. The ESV's choice better follows the argument of Paul and places the main clause before the subordinate clauses.

Paul asserts in Romans 3:21, “the righteousness of God has been manifested” which is the main clause of this paragraph and controls the meanings of all the subsequent clauses. The term “righteousness of God” is not easy to understand and has been interpreted in various ways by different interpreters. It is used four times in this passage in verses 21, 25 and 26. Paul uses this phrase first time in this letter in 1:17 where he considers the gospel as the source of the revelation of the righteousness of God. Douglas Moo describes the traditional Reformed understanding of this phrase, “We are presuming that ‘righteousness of God,’ which refers in vv. 21–22 to justifying act of God, refers in vv.25–26 to the ‘integrity’ of God, his always acting in

complete accordance with his own moral character.”<sup>62</sup> The two dependent clauses in v.21 add information about the main clause of this sentence. In doing so, these clauses build the logic of contrast with the preceding discussion and add qualification that this was not possible to be attained by the works of the law but was foretold by the Law and the Prophets. The law was not a means for the manifestation of the righteousness of God. However, the law and the later parts of the Scripture act as witness by foretelling it in the past in various ways from various dimensions.

Paul contends that the righteousness of God is available for all in the form of an acceptable moral standard making us acceptable in his court. It is the fulfilment of the prophetic promise about the universal scope of the new covenant. The word used for all in v.22 is *πάντας* (*pantas*) which is inflected form of *πάς* (*pas*), an adjective. It is again used in v.23 as inflected form *πάντες* (*pantes*). Generally, this word communicates the idea of universalism because this righteousness is universally available. However, particularism is also present in the text as Paul is using this to include only those Jews and Gentiles who have believed in Christ. Johnston Williams concludes,

Paul's main idea in Rom 3:23 is that all believers, regardless of whether they enjoy the supposed privileges of Jewish heritage, once stood before God prior to salvation in the same position of condemnation. All believers were on equal footing before God, and Jewish Christians did not enjoy a particular advantage.<sup>63</sup>

The condemnation is universal for the humanity and righteousness of God is available universally but only to those who believe in Jesus Christ. Thus, the availability of the righteousness of God does not depend upon any merit, status, or qualification on the part of Jews

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<sup>62</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 219.

<sup>63</sup> J. William Johnston, "Which 'All' Sinned? Rom 3:23–24 Reconsidered." *Novum Testamentum* 53 (2011): 153–64, 164.

as it is only through faith. It is a gift given to all who believe in Jesus Christ as emphasized by the Hebrew prophets in their promises of the new covenant. As discussed earlier in the section of the promise of the new covenant, the texts of Isaiah and Ezekeil contend that the blessings of the promise of the new covenant are freely given, not earned by performances. Isaiah writes, “Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price (Isa 55:1) and Ezekiel write, “Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name (Ezek 36:22). Thus, the believer does not perform any meritorious work, as the faith is presented as antithesis to work in this passage as it related to the work of Christ only. This availability for the believers has been made possible through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The word redemption can be best explained in the context of the Old Testament which God delivered his people from the slavery of Egypt.<sup>64</sup>

In the final section of this passage, Paul presents as the means of the manifestation of the righteousness of God. It is the presentation of Jesus Christ as propitiation by his blood. The Greek word translated as propitiation is ἱλαστήριον (*hilastērion*). Some suggest that it should be translated as expiation which conveys the meaning of wiping away of sin. No doubt, this element is present in ἱλαστήριον, but it also has meaning of satisfying the wrath of God. In Romans 3:25, the Greek word ἱλαστήριον (*hilastērion*) is used for Christ directly. However, the blood of Christ is used with connection to “ἱλαστήριον”. Thus, the blood of Christ takes the judgement of God,

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<sup>64</sup> I am not defending Wright’s historic thesis that Paul is here dealing with a “New Exodus.”. Rather I am simply using the redemption of Israel from physical slavery as foreshadowing the redemption of humanity from the bondage of sin. For further details, see James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Exodus Motif in Biblical Theology,” in *The Law, The Prophets, and the Writings: Studies in Evangelical Old Testament Hermeneutics in Honor of Duane A. Garrett*, eds. Andrew M. King, William R. Osborne, and Joshua M. Philpot (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2021).

appease his justice and cover the sinners from the death. The word propitiation extends the meaning from not merely covering the sin but also satisfaction of God's just wrath.<sup>65</sup>

Paul repeats the word faith again in v. 25 as this propitiation is received by the believers only through faith. The repetition of this word suggests that for Paul it is significant to emphasize the importance of faith in contrast to works as he starts building his argument in the preceding discussion. Andrew Naselli writes, "God presented Jesus as a propitiation in order to demonstrate that he is righteous even in declaring that sinful believers are righteousness."<sup>66</sup> Thus we see that the sacrifice of Christ is the means through which God was able to remain truthful to his moral character of righteousness even when he justified the sinners who have believed in Christ. This justification is due to the righteousness that has been manifested now. Paul again uses the word now to highlight the current situation and the time which has come due to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

#### The Relationship Between the Old and the New Covenant through Jesus Christ

Richard Averbeck notes, "The way the Mosaic law applies in the church and the Christian life, therefore, depends largely on the nature of the relationship between and the shifts from the Mosaic covenant to the new covenant."<sup>67</sup> The following two discussions narrated by Luke and Mark respectively depict the relationship between the old and the new covenant that

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<sup>65</sup> The concepts of expiation and propitiation are symbiotic. Expiation is the removal of an impediment to a relationship. Expiatory sacrifices are deeply embedded in Jewish practice. Propitiation is the assuaging of a deity's wrath by presenting a proper expiatory offering. For further details, see William Lane Craig, *The Atonement and Death of Christ: An Exegetical, Historical, and Philosophical Exploration* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020).

<sup>66</sup> Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017), 157.

<sup>67</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church*, 72.

highlights the elements of continuity and discontinuity between these covenants and the guides about the application of the law of Moses in the life of Christians:

### **Luke 18:18–22**

Jesus's encounter with the rich young ruler as narrated by Luke in 18:18–22 depicts the relationship between the old and the new covenant from a very different angle.

And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Jesus affirms the law of Moses and encourages the rich young ruler to follow the commandments of the Law of Moses as source of eternal life. McKenny presents two versions of the interpretation on this encounter which were proposed by Aquinas and Calvin.<sup>68</sup> Thomas Aquinas' version says that Jesus was contending that salvation was beyond the keeping of Old Testament law. Calvin's version contends that Jesus was in fact pointing out that the man had failed to keep the law. McKenny contends for Calvin's version with a minor revision as he writes, "The biblical moral law as revealed natural law in the form of moral principles indicated by the Ten Commandments and fully identifiable in their trajectories."<sup>69</sup> This line of argument by McKenny suggests that the Reformed view of the law and the gospel is the ideal interpretation, but the exegesis of this text does not lead to that conclusion.

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<sup>68</sup> Gerald P. McKenny, "The Rich Young Ruler and Christian Ethics: A Proposal." *JSCE* 40 (2020): 59–76, 59–66.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

It seems more likely that Jesus is affirming the continuity of his ministry with the ministry of Moses as he was an Israelite. According to Kostenberger and Patterson, “To be sure, the law was originally designed for Israel. Yet the realization that its theological and moral principles are embedded in the new covenant puts the applicability of the law into proper perspective.”<sup>70</sup> However, as discussion progresses, Jesus identified something lacking in him despite his claim to observe the commandments of the law. Jesus calls him to give all his wealth to the poor and become his disciple. A right question to ask here is that what is the relationship between obeying the law and becoming disciple of Christ? It seems logical that the law must point towards Jesus above all other affections and the one really understands and obeys the law ultimately comes to Jesus and must follow his commandments. Furthermore, the story reveals that perfect compliance to the externals of the law still does nothing to set humanity free from the idolatry of the heart. Jesus revealed that in fact he had not even obeyed the first commandment, for his true God was his opulent wealth, which he could not part with.

### **Mark 2:18–22**

Jesus talks about the coming of kingdom of God through the inauguration of the new covenant through his ministry as recorded by Mark,

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, “Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins. (Mark 2:18–22)

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<sup>70</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 166.



In response to a question about fasting put forth by people, Jesus uses the illustrations of sewing a piece of unshrunk cloth in old garment and putting new wine in old wineskins (Mark 2:18–22). The basic presupposition behind this question was people’s expectation that the ministry of Jesus should be like the ministry of John the Baptist and Pharisees. So, the issue of fasting was a mere surface issue. Fasting was likely done in waiting for the Messiah to come. Alan Cole points out, “Fasting is, in the Bible, a sign of disaster, or penitence or mourning, or voluntary abasement of spirit.”<sup>71</sup> Jesus is essentially saying, “The Messiah has come, now it’s time to celebrate his arrival.” Therefore, the discussion here does not remain limited about fasting, but Jesus shifts it about the coming of kingdom of God through the inauguration of the new covenant through his ministry.

Jesus sees himself not just like any of the other Old Testament prophets. He uses the title of bridegroom for himself which was reserved only for God by the Old Testament prophets (Isa 61:10; 62:5). The distinction between the old and new cloths and wineskins is often interpreted as favoring the antithesis between the law of Moses and the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as the antithesis between the old and the new Covenant. Mark Strauss contends, “Unlike the OT prophets, he is not calling Israel to covenant renewal or to greater submission to the Torah. Rather, he is here to fulfill the Torah and to bring it to its consummation in the kingdom of God. The old covenant is giving way to the new (Jer 31), and the age of promise to the age of fulfillment — the kingdom of God.”<sup>72</sup> As the contexts of these illustrations were of Jesus being the bridegroom for the disciples, Mark sees life and ministry of Jesus as the foundation of this antithesis. The main thrust of the argument of Jesus here is very insightful. Jesus’ ministry is not

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<sup>71</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Mark, TNTC* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 127.

<sup>72</sup> Mark L. Strauss, *Mark: ZECNT* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 141

a mere continuation of the ministry of the Old Testament prophets. He had not just come to repair their work. Rather, his ministry is indeed a commencement of something new which is radically different from the old as well. David E. Garland writes, “He has not come to patch up an old system that does not match the revolutionary rule of God. He is not simply a reformer of the old, but one who will transform it. There can be no concessions, no accommodations, and no compromises with the old.”<sup>73</sup> So, a sort of incompatibility is emphasized between the two covenants and the messengers of these covenants which has significant implications for the lifestyle of the followers of these covenants.

However, it does not mean there is only an antithesis between the law and the gospel with their corresponding covenants. Rather, this illustration only provides a denial of co-existence of the old and the new systems. In Jesus’ parable of the wicked Vineyard Tenants (Luke 20), he portrays himself as the last in a long line of prophetic messengers sent to “settle accounts” with Israel as represented by the managers. As the final prophet and Son, Jesus is killed with all the rest. Therefore, it can rightly be said that the new covenant is being built on the foundation of the old one, although a sort of consummative replacement is there as well. Now the new covenant is at the forefront of living a life pleasing to God. Thus, the new era has begun where every commandment must be seen through the grid of person and work of Jesus Christ.

### **Jesus Christ is the τέλος of the Hebrew Scriptures**

Jesus Christ is not only the τέλος (*telos*) of the law of Moses but also the τέλος (*telos*) of the whole Hebrew Scriptures. Paul writes in Romans 10:4, “For Christ is the end [τέλος] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Starting from the big picture of the Hebrew

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<sup>73</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark, NIVAC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 88.

Scriptures, the following discussion see how everything in the law of Moses finds its τέλος (*telos*) in Christ.

Jesus is God incarnate. Graeme Goldsworthy writes, “Jesus Christ is the interpretative key to every fact in the universe and, of course, the Bible is one such fact. He is thus the hermeneutic principle that applies first to the Bible as the ground for understanding, and also to the whole of reality.”<sup>74</sup> He alone gives the ultimate meaning to every fact in the universe. He is the creator and the creation.<sup>75</sup> He reveals who God is and he depicts in the best way the expectation of God from the humanity to be image bearer of the divine glory. God’s special revelation contained in the Hebrew Scriptures is no exception to this rule. There is no other unifying principle to be employed to read the Old Testament as a single book despite its immense diversity of literature.

The diversity of the Old Testament is depicted by a variety of themes and genres communicated by various authors from various perspectives. There is history, there is theology, there is law, there is prophecy, and there is wisdom in this book. However, there is an organic unity that can be traced at levels. A fuller vision of the Messiah emerges as this theological and historical unity of the Old Testament is seen as a metanarrative. The phrase *redemptive history* is employed to depict this theologically rich historical metanarrative of the Scriptures.<sup>76</sup> Jeremy

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<sup>74</sup> Graeme L. Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutic: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 48. Also see Graeme L. Goldsworthy, “Biblical Theology as the Heartbeat of Effective Ministry,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 284.

<sup>75</sup> Jesus is not creator and creation in the pantheistic sense. In the person of Christ, the divine and human natures are united but distinct. He is the creator of the universe in his divine nature, and he is a creation because of taking human nature in his incarnation.

<sup>76</sup> For more details, see Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Redemptive-Historical View,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, eds., Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 89–110. Also see Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 56–88.

Treat writes, “*Biblical theology is faith seeking understanding of the redemptive-historical and literary unity of the Bible in its own terms, concepts, and contexts.*”<sup>77</sup> This definition of the Biblical theology sees Scripture as metanarrative in which the Old Testament plays a significant part.

The biblical theologians have employed the terms of *Christotelic*, *Christocentric*, *Christological* or *Christoconic* to depict the Messianic vision of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is *Christotelic* in the sense that it sees Christ as the goal of its content and message as depicted in the redemptive history. Stephen Motyer notes, “Some basic features of the Old Testament ‘story’ become prophetic in the light of Christ—that is, they are discovered to have a forward-looking predictive function in the light of Christ.”<sup>78</sup> Thus the inauguration of the eschaton by coming of Christ is a significant event in this forward movement of the redemptive history.

The Old Testament is said to be *Christocentric* as Christ is the theological center of all the major themes and parts of the Old Testament. All the major themes, persons and things in the Old Testament relate to some aspect of attributes and deeds of Christ.<sup>79</sup> However, some press this point too far as noted by G. Ernest Wright who contends that the work of Christ cannot be separated from the work of the Father and the Holy Spirit.<sup>80</sup> So, Christ-centeredness of the

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<sup>77</sup> Jeremy R. Treat, *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 35, emphasis original.

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Motyer, “Old Testament in the New Testament,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 583.

<sup>79</sup> Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scripture* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007), 234–235.

<sup>80</sup> G. Ernest Wright gives critical evaluation of the *Christomonism* teachings of J.S. Bach, Carl Barth, and Rudolf Bultmann. See G. Earnest Wright, *The Old Testament and Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

Scriptures cannot be considered as *Christomonism* which is seeing the person and work of Christ in isolation from the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Similarly, the Old Testament is called as *Christological* book as only Christ provides the logic to interpret and develop a comprehensive understanding of the Old Testament. There is no other unifying logical principle in the Old Testament except its preparation and progression towards the coming of Christ. The ultimate significance of the teachings in the Sinai covenant can only be seen through Christ as they point towards him.<sup>81</sup> Still another way is to see the Old Testament as *Christoconic*, which means that character qualities of Christ are presented by the Scripture that are to be understood and applied by the reader.<sup>82</sup>

The Hebrew Scriptures as a whole cast a clear and full vision of Jesus Christ through various Messianic types and predictive prophecies. This *Christotelic* approach of the Old Testament is well pronounced in the Mosaic Writings. Kevin Chen contends that this Messianic vision of the Pentateuch is the central message of the theology of Moses as communicated through Messianic predictive prophecies and many other passages that foreshadow the person and the work of Christ.<sup>83</sup>

### The Types of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures

The Old Testament foreshadows the life of Christ through extensive use of typology. The Greek terms are τύπος (*typos*) in 1 Cor 10:6 and Rom 5:14, and τυπικῶς (*typikos*) in 1 Cor 10:11, both words meaning “form or pattern” denoting the archetype, the precursor to the antitype.

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<sup>81</sup> D.A. Carson, *Matthew and Mark, vol 9. The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 171–80.

<sup>82</sup> Nicholas G. Piotrowski, *In All the Scriptures: The Three Contexts of Biblical Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 155.

<sup>83</sup> Kevin S. Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 288.

These types are typically identified in the following broad categories: (1) Archetypal Fulfillments (Rom. 5:14), (2) Analogical Fulfillments (1 Cor. 10:11), (3) Paradigmatic Fulfillments (1 Cor. 15:3–4), (4) Institutional Fulfillments (Heb. 9:24).

Grant Osborne and Walter C. Kaiser Jr. seem to think that all types are prospective.<sup>84</sup> It means that the types are deliberate predictions intended by the authors. Darrell Bock and Douglas Moo contend that they are only retrospective.<sup>85</sup> According to this contention, the types are not intended by the initial authors to be used as deliberate predictions but were later identified after the fact by the other authors. G.K. Beale provides a comprehensive definition of typology as follows: “The study of analogical correspondences among revealed truths about persons, events, institutions, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature and are escalated in their meaning.”<sup>86</sup> Beale does a good job at establishing terminological control proposing 5 criteria for establishing a type: (1) analogical correspondence, (2) historicity, (3) pointing forwardness, (4) escalation and (5) retrospective *sensus plenior* (consummation). A proper type necessarily escalates and terminates in the person of Christ. Thus, it can be stated that a proper type must be historically situated in its original context, naturally anticipating its own fulfillment, escalating and terminating in a final, eschatological antitype. All of this

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<sup>84</sup> Grant R. Osborne, “Type, Typology” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3rd ed, eds. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 1645–1647. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament,” in *Three views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, eds. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 45–89.

<sup>85</sup> Darrell L. Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament’s Legitimate, Accurate and Multifaceted Use of the Old,” in *Three views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, eds. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 105–51. Douglas J. Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 188–90.

<sup>86</sup> G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 14.

provides the reader with a clear *sensus plenior*, or retrospective realization of the type's fulfillment.

It is significant to note that all major persons, events, and institutions of the Old Testament find their culmination in the life of Christ. Brent Parker notes, "All OT types have a *Christotelic* emphasis as they are qualified by their relationship to Jesus."<sup>87</sup> However, it must be kept in mind that types are not Christ himself in some mystical sense but only bear witness to Christ in some aspect of his person and work.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Sacrificial System as the Type of Christ in the Mosaic Writings**

The third book of Moses, called Leviticus, was written with the purpose to outline a basic system that highlight the need to remain in constant fellowship of LORD with the presence of five offerings that people can offer whenever that fellowship was broken due to sin (Lev 1:3–7:34). Timothy Keller notes, "The entire sacrificial and temple system is really pointing to him; we know this because the book of Hebrews tells us so."<sup>89</sup> This system was given to the people to understand the seriousness of sin and holiness of God that demands punishment for the reconciliation. The offerings of the sacrificial system served to depict the place where love of God made provision for the justice of God to be observed and keeping the relationship in place. But they were short term and needed to be repeated again and again. The following is a brief description of the offerings and their fulfillment in Christ:

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<sup>87</sup> Brent E. Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern: A Theological Critique of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 71.

<sup>88</sup> For a book-length treatment of Christ's typological fulfillments, see James M. Hamilton Jr., *Typology — Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022).

<sup>89</sup> Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2015) 44.

The Burnt Offering was fully burnt in the presence of the LORD. Leviticus 1:9 states, “And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering.” Thus, it was a very costly sacrifice. It points towards Christ in two ways. Firstly, Christ is the ultimate sacrifice who gave himself in full submission to God. Secondly, Christ was precious Son of God who was sacrificed to restore the broken relationship of the people with God.

The Grain Offering highlights God’s favorable acceptance due to the fine quality of grain offered. Levitus 2:5 states, “And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil.” It draws our attention to the sinless life of Christ. God was well pleased with His sinless life.

The Peace Offering emphasizes the fellowship between God and His people through the Holy Meal. Leviticus 3:5 states, “It is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.” Jesus restored that fellowship through the offering of His body as the communion meal.

The Sin Offering was for the atonement of the committed sins. The sin erects a wall between the holiness of God and the man. David Baker points out, “The rectification or reconciliation (‘at-one-ment’) was what the priest did through his deeds, most specifically his manipulation of the blood.”<sup>90</sup> Leviticus 4:5 states, “And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it into the tent of meeting.” Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the cross is the ultimate sin offering that has brought redemption for us because Jesus did his deed with his blood. The author of Hebrews writes, “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb 10:12). So the there was no more sin offering was required after this single sacrifice of Jesus. Humanity’s broken relation with God

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<sup>90</sup> David W. Barker, “Leviticus,” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary Vol. 2: Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*. Philip W. Comfort. ed. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 36.



has been restored through Christ and the believers of the new covenant community are made able to come in His presence with confidence.

The Guilt Offering brings our attention to give a compensation or substitution for wrongdoing. Leviticus 5:18 states, “He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven.” It is a reflection the substitutionary atonement of Christ. We sinned against God deserved death penalty as the punishment. God substituted Himself at our place and took that death penalty on Himself.

### **The Persons as the Type of Christ in the Mosaic Writings**

Starting from Adam, Moses writes about some persons who serve who as the type of Christ. Stephen Wellum contends, “‘Adam’ and ‘other Adams’ are associated with the covenants of creation, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David. In these covenant heads, Adam’s role continues, and each one anticipates Christ, who by his obedience secures our redemption.”<sup>91</sup> The following discussion depicts that Adam, Noah, Moses, and Melchizedek are significant persons in the Mosaic writings who are seen the types of Jesus Christ:

Adam is a type of Christ who was created to be the federal head of humanity (Gen 1). His disobedience brought all humanity under the bondage of sin (Gen 3). Paul notes in Romans 5:14, “Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.” Jesus came to reverse this as he became the second Adam and his obedience brought freedom for the bondage of sin. Paul

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<sup>91</sup> Stephen J. Wellum, “Thinking About Typology,” *SBTS* 21 (2017): 5–9, 8. Wellum’s theory here is particularly tied to the notion of “covenant” which he claims is what makes Typology possible. He lists the criteria, which have the following four points: (1) Typology is historically situated which helps in distinguishing it from allegory; (2) Typology is prophetic and thus predictive not as direct prediction but as patterns and models; (3) Typology involves escalation—the lesser type moves to the greater in an escalating fulfillment; (4) Covenantal Progression—the type is developed through a covenantal framework from Old to New.

further writes, “For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). Another significant typological connection between Adam and Jesus can be seen the role of reflecting God. Peter J. Link, Jr., and Matthew Y. Emerson write, “God creates and makes Adam in God’s image and likeness (צלם דמות Gen 1:26–27; 5:3) as the forerunner for all men. The new Adam will be a man who will more fully reflect God’s image.”<sup>92</sup> The author of Hebrews sees Jesus fulfilling this purpose as he writes, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Heb 1:3). Thus, Jesus Christ fulfills the role of reflecting God in a better way than the first Adam.

Noah is a type of Christ as many lives were saved from the judgement of the flood because of his righteousness (Gen 6–8). Jesus served the purpose of saving humanity as noted by Mathew, “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). However, unlike Noah, the salvation that has been brought by Jesus is for the eternal life.

Moses is a type of Christ as being a great prophet, redeemer, and law giver (Exod 12–29). Moses states the promise of God for Israel in Deuteronomy 18:15, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen.” Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of this promise as confirmed by Peter as he speaks in Solom’s portico after healing a lame beggar (Acts 3:20–23). As Moses led the people out of the slavery from Egypt, Jesus led the people out of the slavery of sin and death as the author of Hebrews notes, “And deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Heb 2:15). In the same way, like Moses, Jesus is also associated with giving of commandments (John 13:14;15:12) and the law (Gal 6:2). Matthew quite literally begins Jesus’

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<sup>92</sup> Peter J. Link, Jr., and Matthew Y. Emerson, “Searching for the Second Adam: Typological Connections between Adam, Joseph, Mordecai, and Daniel.” *SBTS* 2 (2017): 123–144, 128.

ministry on the Mount delivering a new Torah to the people. Jesus presumes to have authority to reinterpret or enforce the Mosaic Law.

The author of Hebrews compares Jesus with Moses (Heb 3:1–6) to present Jesus as better Moses. The emphasis on discontinuity between the old and the new covenant is prominent in Hebrews 3, but it is also noteworthy that the author of Hebrews is building his theology of the new covenant on the foundation of the old covenant as depicted through his approach of working on the parallel between Jesus and Moses. Mary Rose D'Angelo notes, “Christ's superiority to Moses aims not at disqualifying the latter as a servant within God's house, but rather at enhancing the honor of the former as Son over God's house (Heb 3:5).”<sup>93</sup> Thus the function of superiority is of one covenant head over the other is to acknowledge the coexistence the continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. Therefore, it is a planned obsolescence through fulfillment not annulment.

Melchizedek is a type of Christ being a king as well as priest of God (Gen 14:18). He was a man not an angelic being or pre-incarnate Christ.<sup>94</sup> Adrian Giorgiov writes, “Hebrews presents Jesus Christ as a royal high priest, in line with the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah 6:13.”<sup>95</sup> According to Zechariah 6:13, “It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the

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<sup>93</sup> Mary Rose D'Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), 68.

<sup>94</sup> Bryan Murphy, “Priest According to the Order of Melchizedek.” *MSJ* 33 (2) (2022): 297–304.303. Murphy gives the following arguments: “He is not identified as God in Genesis 14. He does not receive worship from Abram. He even states, “blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand”—as opposed to speaking as God to Abram (compare Gen 18:17, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do...”). These points from Genesis 14 alone are convincing. Beyond this, it should also be added that the promise in Psalm 110:4 is that “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” So, it is not that “you were Him and are still in that role”; rather, it is that “you are appointed to a role like his.” P. 303, fn. 9.

<sup>95</sup> Adrian Giorgiov, “Melchizedek, the Priest Who Derived His Pattern from the Preexistent Christ.” *Perichoresis* 21 (1) 2023: 67–79, 69.

counsel of peace shall be between them both.” The author of Hebrews alludes to this prophesy in 8:1–2, “Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.” The typological connection is predicted between Melchizedek and Jesus by David in Psalm 110:4, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”<sup>96</sup> So, the fulfilment of this typological pattern by Christ is predicted in the Old Testament and reflected in the New Testament.

### **The Objects as the Type of Christ in the Mosaic Writings**

The Passover Lamb, the Bronze Serpent, and the Rock are three key living and nonliving objects presented as types of Christ in Mosaic writings:

The Passover Lamb is the type of Christ who depicts God’s provision of redemption to his people of God (Exod 12). The Passover Lamb is explicitly not sacrificial as no altar or priest was involved in the Passover feast. However, it is explicitly propitiatory, as it causes God’s wrath to pass over Jewish households. Christopher J. H. Wright concludes, “A substitutionary element seems clearly implied by the narrative, the ritual, and the explanation twice given.”<sup>97</sup> Moreover, John the Baptist’s affirmation augments the typological connection when he said about Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Thus, the fulfillment of this redemptive typology is established by John in his testimony about of Jesus.

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<sup>96</sup> The typological connections can be seen in many other figures in the Mosaic writings and rest of the Scriptures as noted by John Calvin as he writes, “He [Christ] is Isaac, the beloved Son of the Father who was offered as a sacrifice, but nevertheless did not succumb to the power of death. He is Jacob the watchful shepherd, who has such great care for the sheep which he guards. He is the good and compassionate brother Joseph, who in his glory was not ashamed to acknowledge his brothers, however lowly and abject their condition.” John Calvin, *Calvin: Commentaries*, trans. and ed. Joseph Haroutunian (London: S.C.M. Press, 1958), 68.

<sup>97</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *Exodus, SGBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 240.

The Bronze Serpent is a type of Christ as looking on him in faith results in life (Num 21). This typology is often depicted in art especially in Victorian Age.<sup>98</sup> In his discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus refers to story of Numbers 21 and says, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14–15). Joel R. Beeke contends, “Jesus presents himself as the true Bronze Serpent who must be lifted up and looked on for us to truly live.”<sup>99</sup> The emphasis on faith in salvation is noteworthy here as well emphasized by John in 3:15 and Paul in Ephesians 2:8.

The Rock from which Israel drank water in the wilderness is the type of Christ. There are two events when Israel drank water from the Rock. The first event occurs at the begging of their wilderness journey (Exod 17:1–17) and the second event occurs forty years later near the end of their wilderness journey (Num 20:2–13). Paul refers to these events and writes, “For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4). Paul was not saying that that Rock was literally Christ. David Garland contends, “He is not thinking of a material rock following them, or a movable well, but of the divine source of the water that journeyed with them. He understands the replenishing rock in a spiritual sense, not a physical sense.”<sup>100</sup> Paul establishes this typological connection based upon the evidence that God is called as the Rock in the Old Testament (Deut 32:4, 31; Ps 18:2; 2 Sam 22:2), and Jesus is called as the Rock in the New Testament (Luke 20:17; Rom 9:33; 1 Peter 2:8,). Furthermore, Jesus is

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<sup>98</sup> George P. Landow, *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in Victorian Literature, Art, and Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

<sup>99</sup> Joel R. Beeke, “Look and Live: Christ as the True Bronze Serpent,” in *Bible and Theology: TGC*, December 13, 2020.

<sup>100</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: BECNT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) ,324. Also see Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

presented as the source of living water in John 4:10–14 which means the connection is spiritual not physical.

### The Predictive Prophecies of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures

The Messianic vision of the Old Testament through the predictive prophecies is so comprehensive that a life story of Christ can be read through it.<sup>101</sup> The first prophetic promise about Jesus Christ is stated in Gen 3:14–15. Tremper Longman III and Raymond Dillard see the fulfilment of this prediction in Christ as they write, “There is an ancient anticipation of Christ the deliverer here may be supported by the allusion to this curse in Romans 16:20 and by the fact that the entire New Testament witnesses to Christ’s defeat of Satan on the cross.”<sup>102</sup> The Apostle Paul further tells about Jesus’s reign as he puts all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor 15:25).

The Old Testament predicts Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10), will be born from a virgin (Isa 7:14) in the city of Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). Mathew’s Gospel narrative depicts these fulfilments (Matt 1:2, 1:23, 2:1). Two significant prophecies regarding the early life and ministry of Messiah involve his calling from Egypt by the Father (Hos 11:1), and commencement of his ministry in Galilee (Isa 9:1–2). Mathew depicts the fulfilments of these prophecies by direct citation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:14–15, and Isa 9:1–2 in Matt 4:12–17.

The portrait of ministry of Jesus is predicted as he is anticipated as a source of healing and miracles (Isa 35:5–6) and teaching in parables (Ps 78:1–2). Jesus is depicted to teach in parables in Matthew 13 and Luke 8. Along with the other Gospels, Mark presents Jesus as a

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<sup>101</sup> For a detailed treatment, see *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, eds. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

<sup>102</sup> Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 61.

healer doing several miracles, “He healed many who were sick or oppressed by demons” (Mark 1:34).<sup>103</sup> The other Gospels also reiterate this fulfilment in their narratives.

The final week of his life was very well predicted, beginning with his entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zech 9:9). Matthew records its fulfilment in Matthew 21:1–2. Then the prophecy about the deception of Messiah by his close friend (Ps 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zech 11:12) is depicted as fulfilled in Matthew 21:47–50 and 27:3. The affliction and death of Jesus among wicked to bear the sins of God’s people in silence like a sheep and his burial in a grave of a rich man was predicted in Isaiah 53. It is noteworthy that ten out of the twelve verses of Isaiah 53 are directly quoted by the New Testament authors as they see it fulfilled in Christ through his atoning death and resurrection (Matt 8:14–17; John 12:37–41; Luke 22:36–38; Acts 8:32–35; Rom 10:16–17; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 2:19–25).

The resurrection and ascension of the Messiah were also predicted in the Old Testament. The Psalmist wrote that he will not be abandoned in grave (Ps 16:10), will be exalted at the right hand of God, and all his enemies will be submitted under his feet (Ps 110:1). Peter in his sermon at Pentecost claim that Jesus had fulfilled these prophecies through his resurrection (Acts 2:31) and ascension (Acts 2:34–36). Thus, we see the fulfilments of these Messianic prophecies in the life Jesus Christ as narrated in the New Testament.

#### The New Testament Testimony about the Hebrew Scriptures

The *Christotelic* nature of the Hebrew Scriptures is acknowledged and affirmed by Jesus Christ and his apostles in the New Testament. Paul writes in Romans 10:4, “For Christ is the end [τέλος] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Jesus Christ made a bold claim

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<sup>103</sup> Matt 12:15, 19:2; Mark 3:10, 6:55; Luke 4:40, 6:18; John 6:2, 4:50. For further details see Alvin Lloyd Maragh, "The Healing Ministry of Jesus as Recorded in the Synoptic Gospels" (2006). Loma Linda University Electronic Theses, Dissertations & Projects. 457.

that the Old Testament was about him as he invites the Jewish leaders to search the Old Testament to find Jesus there (John 5:39–46). All major divisions of the Old Testament contained many things about Christ (Luke 24:44). Heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 are called witnesses of the glory of Christ who hoped in him (Heb 12:1–2).

Jesus Christ is the one who connects the Old Testament with the New Testament. John Calvin identifies this unity of the testaments without ignoring the discontinuity between the new and the old covenant.<sup>104</sup> The Old Testament captures the shadow of Christ; the New Testament paints the reality of Christ. The Old Testament is the anticipation of Christ; the New Testament is the realization of Christ. The Old Testament is the promise of the coming of Christ; the New Testament is the fulfilment of that promise. The Old Testament is preparatory and predictive of Christ, the New Testament is reflective of Christ.<sup>105</sup>

Jesus not only unites the two testaments but also depicts the culmination of redemptive history in the New Testament from its inauguration in the Old Testament. He is the seed of Women (Gen 3:15) who crushed the head of the serpent (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 15:25), he is the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18) who is the source of blessings for all the nations of the world (Gal 3:14–16). He is the seed of David (2 Sam 7:11–12) who will reign on the throne of David forever (Luke 1:32–33). He is the mediator of a better covenant that will remain forever (Heb 9:15), and he is the second Adam who brought life for his people (Rom 5:12–15; 1 Cor 15:45).

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<sup>104</sup> John Calvin, *The Institute of the Christian Religion: Calvin's Own Essentials' Edition*. trans. Robert White (Edinburg: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 429–462.

<sup>105</sup> For a detailed discussion on the relationship between the Testaments, see Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). Also see D.L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1991).



### Jesus Christ is Hermeneutical Principle of *Christotelic* Hebrew Scriptures

The above discussion depicts that Jesus Christ is the τέλος (*telos*) of the Hebrew Scriptures. So, their meaning and significance cannot be understood without seeing them in the light of Jesus Christ. The person and work of Christ provide an interpretative framework to the redemptive history of the Hebrew Scriptures as well as connect the various themes and genres to give a unified message. Craig Bartholomew writes,

Indeed, the great joy of the Spirit is to use Scripture to open us up to the reality of the Lord Christ. If, as I like to think of it, Scripture is that field in which is hid the pearl of great price, then healthy biblical interpretation that keeps on excavating this pearl is vital not just for the life of the church but also for the life of the world. Thus, there is indeed much at stake in biblical interpretation.<sup>106</sup>

The implication becomes significant when interpretation of a theme touches the centrality of Christ's person and work and threatens to replace this position in the life of Christians. Paul perceived that threat in the churches of Galatia and contented to present a comprehensive case for the Christ's centrality in the context of the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ.

The Scripture keeps Christ at the center as a guiding principle for interpreting the law of Moses along with other Scriptures. Jesus said to the Jews, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me," (John 5:39). Jesus's claim was centered on the contention that the promise of eternal life in the Scripture is only for those who can see Jesus in the Scriptures. Colin Kruse writes, "These verses stand as a warning to all who make the study of the Scriptures an end in itself and fail to relate to the one about whom the Scriptures testify."<sup>107</sup> So, if *Christotelic* nature of the Scriptures is ignored, there is no benefit in reading the Scriptures.

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<sup>106</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 5.

<sup>107</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *John*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 160–61.

Luke narrates the event when Jesus enabled his disciples to interpret the Scriptures with an emphasis on their *Christotelic* nature (Luke 22:13–27). Luke writes, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27). Darrell Bock notes, “Though this passage only gives a general reference to the promises in the Law and the Prophets, the specific texts in view have been noted throughout Luke.”<sup>108</sup> The above sections have discussed many of these specific texts in details.

Jesus presents him as the fulfilment of the law as he said, ““Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them (Matt 5:17). Grant Osborne notes, “The meaning of ‘destroy/abolish’ (cf. also v. 17a) and ‘fulfill’ must be taken together, for they are antithetical. The key is the meaning of πληρώω, which has as its root meaning to ‘fill to the full.’”<sup>109</sup> The antithetical nature of abolish and fulfill shows the emphasis on discontinuity but the way these terms are related to teach other acknowledges the continuity. In his exegesis of this verse, D.A. Carson observes that Jesus Christ is presenting himself as the eschatological goal of the Old Testament, and its ultimate interpreter.<sup>110</sup> So, the forward movement of redemptive history is there in Jesus’s fulfilment of the Scriptures.

The above three texts emphasize the *Christotelic* nature of the Scriptures which must be read in the light of fulfilment through Christ. Thus, the application of the law like all parts of the Scriptures for Christian requires the lens of Christ. Christ is the center of the historical redemptive story of the Scripture. It was in right accord with the plan of God to unite all things in Christ as a revelation of his divine mystery. Christians do not need to look anything or anyone

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<sup>108</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 116.

<sup>109</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew: ZECNT* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 187.

<sup>110</sup> D.A. Carson, *Matthew and Mark, EBC*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 177.

other than Christ as a rule of life. Keeping Christ at the center while interpreting the law keeps them safe from interpretive errors. The words of Vern Poythress are very helpful,

Jesus does not assert merely a static continuation of the force of the law, but rather a dynamic advance— in fact, the definitive fulfillment. What was temporary and shadowy in the form of the Old Testament law is superseded, now that God’s glory and kingly power are being manifested in the very person of Jesus and in his ministry.<sup>111</sup>

Therefore, everything in the Scriptures is to be interpreted considering fulfilment through Christ as depicted through the witness of the New Testament.

Jesus Christ is the Hermeneutical Principle of *Christotelic* Law of Moses

God is the source of the law. The law reflects the character of God and reveal the will of God. However, God gave the law in a cultural context as well as in a covenantal context. So, the law can be changed or modified depending upon the change in covenant and culture. Therefore, the law cannot serve as a higher principle than the life of Christ. In the words of Robert Barron, “Jesus cannot be measured by a criterion outside of himself or viewed from a perspective higher than himself.”<sup>112</sup> So he is the hermeneutical principle for the application of the law. Mark 1:40–45 and 5:24–27 illustrate this through two events in the life of Christ.

### **Mark 1:40–45**

Mark narrates the story of Jesus’ healing of a leper among the many of his healing miracles to introduce his readers with Jesus Christ who serving others with power and compassion.

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to

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<sup>111</sup> Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1995), 265.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Barron, “The Epistemic Priority of Jesus Christ,” in *All Things Hold Together in Christ: A Conversation on Faith, Science, and Virtue*, eds. James K.A. Smith and Michael L. Gulker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 229.

him, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter (Mark 1:40–45).

Touching a leper was prohibited in the law of Moses (Lev 13:45–46). But Jesus touches him and remains clean. Thus, Mark is affirming some sort of discontinuity between the law of Moses and their New Testament status here in the life of Christ. At the same time, Mark presents Jesus encouraging the leper to follow the law of Moses so he may be rehabilitated to the community. Thus, here we encounter both continuity and discontinuity depicted by Mark through narration of this pericope.

It seems that the application of the law to Jesus is different because he is not charged of breaking the law even after touching the leper. But for the leper, advice is to follow the command of the law. It should not be limited in relation to following the law but also in relation with advantage of the leper, being socially accepted after the testimony of the priest.

This indicates that the focus of the event is not Jesus’s affirmation about following of the command but the expression of his compassion for the leper which led to his healing. Robert Stein notes, “In the original setting of the incident and in light of 2:15–17, 18–22, 23–28; 3:1–6; 7:1–23, Jesus appears to be less concerned with demonstrating that he keeps the law than in helping the healed leper reenter society.”<sup>113</sup> Love and compassion takes precedence here over the law in context of life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Thus, the interpretation centers on person of Christ in this passage, not on the law as commanded by Moses.

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<sup>113</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Mark: BECNT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 108.

### Mark 5:24–27

Mark narrates two healing stories with a significant teaching on the laws regarding purity rituals in 5:24–27:

And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, <sup>26</sup> and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment.

Jesus is presented as above the law of Moses as he does not become unclean by touching of the unclean persons (Lev 15:25–28) but rather makes that person clean. Similarly, Jesus touches the dead body of Jairus daughter and does not become unclean in contrast of the commandment of the law of Moses as described in Leviticus 22:24. Jesus was not breaking the Mosaic Law in this incidence. David A. DeSilva asserts, “Mark suggests that the Pharisees understood Jesus in this way, he does not suggest that Jesus was in fact unconcerned about Purity. Rather, Jesus is very much interested in remaining ‘holy to the Lord God’ and teaching holiness to others.”<sup>114</sup> So, Jesus is by no means neglecting the demands of purity as per Mosaic Law. He is considered as the one who is greater than the purity laws. His cleansing power is much more intense when compared with the power of impurity or darkness to spread. David Garland notes these interesting similarities between these two stories, “Jesus has the power to overcome the defilement of ceremonial uncleanness (bleeding and death) and to reverse it. The Jewish laws concerning impurity sought to prevent it from infringing on the realm of God’s holiness. Jesus’ ministry shows that God’s holiness is unaffected by human impurity.”<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, he is

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<sup>114</sup> David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 227.

<sup>115</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark*, 241.

giving a new definition to the concept of purity to his redeemed people. This standard was to be followed by the church.

It is noteworthy that the immediate outcome of the actions of Jesus affirms his authority to redefine purity. The unclean woman is healed, and Jairus' daughter is raised. These two miracles are vindications of Jesus' performing of actions contrary to usual demand of the Law from human beings. Jesus is the righteous, holy, and perfect Son of God who continues to perform his work as he defines the ways of his work. This is an unambiguous presentation that now the law of Moses must be interpreted through the hermeneutic of Jesus Christ. Bradley Green notes, "Any understanding of the works, obedience and faithfulness in the new covenant must link them to the atoning work of Christ."<sup>116</sup> The Christians are now set free from the burden to see their obedience to the law as the means of their justification.<sup>117</sup>

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Chapter chapter communicated that most theologians have identified five major covenants recorded in Scripture: (1) The Creation Covenant, (2) The Abrahamic Covenant, (3) The Sinai Covenant, (4) The Davidic Covenant, and (5) The New Covenant. The new covenant was foretold in Isaiah 55:1–5; Jeremiah 31:31–34, 32:36–41; and Ezekiel 36:22–28. This New Covenant was established by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:23–25). This makes the New Testament believers different from Israelites which reflects that the application of the law is not the same for the church as it was with Israel.

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<sup>116</sup> Bradley G. Green, *Covenant and Commandment*, 76.

<sup>117</sup> However, it does not mean that the works, obedience, and faithfulness are irrelevant concepts for Christians. The Christians are not antinomians. They have a law, the law of Christ which we will discuss in the next chapter.

The Hebrew Scriptures as whole castes a clear and full vision of Jesus Christ through various Messianic types and predictive prophecies as discussed in this chapter. God has inaugurated a new covenant for the followers of Christ as predicted and promised in the Sinai covenant and other Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, the stipulations of the older covenant are not binding to Christians. The next chapter explores the relationship between the law of Moses and Christians and develops a Christological lens to construct hermeneutical principles for the application of the law of Moses for the Christians.

## Chapter 5: The Law of Moses and the New Covenant Community

The previous chapter has well demonstrated that the progression of the covenant culminates at the new covenant that has been inaugurated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who is *τέλος* (*telos*) of the whole Scripture including the law of Moses. This chapter explores the relationship between the law of Moses and Christians and uses a Christological lens to construct hermeneutical principles for the application of the law of Moses for the Christians.

### The Relationship Between the Law and Christians

The relationship between the law of Moses and Christians is succinctly summarized by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 9:20–21:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

A plain reading of this text yields that the Christians are not under the law of Moses, rather they are under the law of Christ. A detailed exposition of this text is as follows:

Christians are not under the Law of Moses

Paul had a great love for spreading the gospel to all people with whom he interacted including Jews and Gentiles. As noted by Richard Pratt, “In the ancient world, the differences between these two groups could be enormous. Clothing, holidays, eating habits, religious beliefs, family practices, etc. were often very different between Jews and Gentiles.”<sup>1</sup> So, Paul used all possible and legitimate means to win diverse groups of people for the gospel. To win Jews, he

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<sup>1</sup> Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *1 and 2 Corinthians*, HNTC (Broadman & Holman, 2000), 144.



behaved like Jews. David Garland reminds, “Previously, his self-understanding as a Jew was bound up with his obedience to the law (cf. Phil. 3:6); now it is bound up with his relationship to Christ (Phil. 3:7–11).”<sup>2</sup> So, although there had been a radical change in Paul’s self-understanding after coming to Christ, his becoming as a Jew involved following the commandments of the law of Moses. However, this adaptation of Paul was voluntary as in reality he was not bound to follow the law of Moses. He was not under the law. Being under the law was a condition which was not applicable to Paul because of his status in Christ.

Paul uses ὑπὸ νόμον (*hypo nomon*) eleven times in his writings (Rom 6:14–15, 1 Cor 9:20–21, Gal 3:23; 4:4–5, 21; 5:18). In terms of a modern analogy, James Todd III suggests that Paul has been using the phrase “under the law” to mean “under the jurisdiction of the law.”<sup>3</sup> According to Paul, It involves being under the judgment of the law (Rom 2:12), under the wrath and transgression (Rom 4:15), under the dominion of the sin (Rom 6:14), and under the curse of the law (Gal 3:10). Thomas Schreiner interprets this phrase in terms of redemptive-historical plan of God in which the era of law was the era of Mosaic covenant whereas the era of gospel is the era of the new covenant in Christ.<sup>4</sup> In Romans 6:14–15, Paul reiterates the promise of the new covenant which involves living a life with a new heart, not under the dominion of sin.

Being under the law is parallel to living a life ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν (*hypo paidagōgon*) which was for the old covenant era, not for the era of the new covenant inaugurated by the coming of Jesus Christ (Gal 3:24–25). The old covenant believers were bound to follow the commandments of the law that were there to restrain their behavior until they could receive an inner transformation

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<sup>2</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 344.

<sup>3</sup> James M. Todd III, *Sinai and the Saints: Reading Old Covenant Laws for the New Covenant Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 326.

made through the finished work of Christ in the new covenant. Jason Meyer notes, “The old covenant operates in the power of flesh and therefore can only create children of spiritual slavery. The new covenant operates in the power of the promise and the spirit and therefore creates children of spiritual freedom.”<sup>5</sup> The coming of Christ has ended the era of slavery to sin. Christians have died to the law (Gal 2:19) and are released from the law in the newness of the Spirit (Rom 7:6). Jesus Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law through his atoning sacrifice (Gal 3:13). Therefore, they are not living under the condemnation of the law (Rom 8:1).

So, Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 9:20–21 was that although he voluntarily obeyed many stipulations of the Sinai covenant in his love for winning the Jews for Christ, it had not caused him to live a life under the old covenant. Brian Rosner contends, “Paul was not willing to live under the dominion of the law as law-covenant or legal code.”<sup>6</sup> It was temporarily done in some situations by Paul, and it did not change his status in Christ by any means. Why do we see this radically new view of the law in the Pauline writings? David DeSilva offers an insightful answer as he writes,

Paul’s view of the role of the Law is profoundly influenced by his experience of the risen Jesus and the pouring of God’s Holy Spirit. In view of the glorious liberation from the power of sin that came with the Spirit and its ongoing leading and empowerment, Paul comes to a view about the limited role of the Law.<sup>7</sup>

The author of Hebrews eloquently proves the superiority of Jesus in comparison with the mediators of the Mosaic law (Heb 2:2), Moses himself (Heb 2:3), Mosaic Law’s Priesthood (Heb 4: 14–7:28) and Mosaic Covenant (Heb 8:1–13). Thus, the new covenant believers, having seen

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<sup>5</sup> Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 175.

<sup>6</sup> Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the commandments of God*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 59.

<sup>7</sup> David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 626.

the original, are warned not to return to the shadow in the Old Covenant. James links faith with works and discusses the royal law, law of liberty and love as the best expression of this law (James 2:8–12). Here emphasis is on doing God’s will through the obedience that comes through faith in Christ. Paul says, “Jesus is the end of the law” (Rom 10:4). The law of Moses was anticipating Christ as goal and was terminated after the fulfillment in Jesus Christ. All the goodness of the law is affirmed (1 Tim 1:8), its failure to produce desired results due to human condition is acknowledged (Rom 3:20) and the final solution through the grace of Jesus Christ without law is given (Rom 3:21–22).

### Christians are under the Law of Christ

Christians are not under the law of Moses. Paul contrasts being under the law with being under grace. It is synonymous with them under the law of Christ, νόμος Χριστοῦ (*nomos Christou*). The concept of the law of Christ is not a simple one to understand. It is only used twice in the New Testament (Gal 6:2 and 1 Cor 9:20–21). Todd A. Wilson contends that a recent trend has developed among some interpreters that the law of Christ is in fact law of Moses in Pauline theology.<sup>8</sup> Paul Hartog presents some common interpretations of the law of Christ based upon work of Charles Talbert and others,

Summarizing the major alternatives, Charles Talbert explains that the “law of Christ” has been interpreted as (1) Christ’s ethical teachings, (2) the love commandment, (3) Christ’s example of burden-bearing and/or self-sacrificial surrender, (4) the Mosaic Law as determined or transformed and then fulfilled by Christ, (5) Christ’s power within believers enabling the fulfillment of the law, and (6) some combination of the above. Other interpretations of the “the law of Christ” have included the Torah of the New Covenant (or the “Zion Torah”), the eschatological law of the Messiah (or the “messianic

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<sup>8</sup> Todd A. Wilson, “The Law of Christ and the Law of Moses: Reflections on a Recent Trend in Interpretation,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 5 (2006): 123.

law”), the person of Christ himself, and the ‘prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel.’<sup>9</sup>

Paul Hartog himself defines the law of Christ as “the self-giving and burden-bearing ‘love of neighbor’ as taught by Christ, as exemplified by Christ, as empowered by the Spirit of Christ, and as communally observed within the Body of Christ.”<sup>10</sup> He acknowledges that his interpretation is similar to the Modified Lutheran approach as taken by Douglas Moo.<sup>11</sup> Blake White develops a similar theological proposal. He contends that the law of Christ is the law of love, the example of Christ, the teaching of Christ, the teaching of Christ’s apostles, and the whole canon interpreted in the light of Christ.<sup>12</sup> I would like to add into this proposal that the law of Christ is the whole universe interpreted in the light of Christ.

The above discussion leads me to present my definition: The law of Christ represents all norms for a believer which can only be discerned by a new covenant believer through the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the special revelation of God in Scriptures and the general revelation of God in nature and conscience.<sup>13</sup> So, it cannot be limited to a list of rules in the form of legal codes. It is because we are not ministers of letters but of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6). Charles Leiter notes, “Christians do not keep and teach the least

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Hartog, “The Law of Christ in Pauline Theology and New Testament Ethics, *DBSJ* 26 (2021): 81–101.81–82. Also see Charles H. Talbert, “Freedom and Law in Galatians,” *Ex Auditu* 11 (1995): 24; Femi Adeyemi, *The New Covenant Torah in Jeremiah and the Law of Christ in Paul*, *Studies in Biblical Literature* 94 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 16, 18; Richard N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Vancouver: Regent College, 1997), 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 101, fn 139. Also see Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 376–77.

<sup>12</sup> A. Blake White, *The Law of Christ: A Theological Proposal* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2010), 85–125.

<sup>13</sup> This definition is based upon the discussion of the previous chapter in which I established that Christ is the hermeneutical principle of the universe. I am indebted to the works of Graeme Goldsworthy among others to glean these Christological insights.

commandments of the Law and prophets *by codifying a new 'list of rules'* from the (spiritually interpreted) laws of the Old Testament, but *by walking in love by the power of the Spirit.*"<sup>14</sup> In other words, there are no covenant legislations with the new covenant as there were covenant legislation with the old covenant. It means that the new covenant has not brought a new law with itself. Paul Gardner writes, "The phrase 'under Christ's law' could mean a number of things, but it is important to realize that Paul is not saying that there is now a new 'Christian law.' Rather, Paul still concerns himself with the centrality of Christ."<sup>15</sup> So, the key word in the phrase "the law of Christ" is not "the law," rather it is "Christ." All the difference in approaching the covenant legislations has been made through Christ making the new covenant.

Craig Bloomberg's description of this approach is insightful, "To the extent that Jesus has brought a new covenant 'written on the heart,' formerly external statutes have been internalized. To the extent that Jesus brought a new empowerment- the Holy Spirit- the laws have been personalized."<sup>16</sup> We see a strikingly new approach to obedience of law in the life and teaching of Christ. Here love is kept at center in the New Testament as was in the Old Testament. Love commandment is presented as the most significant commandment indicating man's chief obligation. Loving one another is presented as the basic underlying principle in the Mosaic Law and the Christians are commanded to love as a new commandment of the law of Christ (Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:13–14). The love commandment depicts both continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. James Todd III notes, "Although there is some overlap between the

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Leiter, *The Law of Christ* (Hannibal, MO: Granted Ministries Press, 2012), 238, emphasis original.

<sup>15</sup> Paul D. Gardner, 1 Corinthians, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 408.

<sup>16</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 460.

ethical requirements of both laws, the motivation and ability to obey differ significantly.”<sup>17</sup> It is because of the difference is the enablement done through the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart of the believers of the new covenant. The love commandment of the law of Christ is called new because it is given in the context of the new covenant, which highlights the discontinuity. The fulfilment of the law of Moses and all other laws is seen in following this commandment which highlights the continuity between the laws and their respective covenants.

The law of Christ cannot be equated with natural law. It is because the natural law is written on human conscience (Rom 2:14–15), and everyone is under it. However, only Christians are under the law of Christ. So, the unique thing about the law of Christ is that it is not limited to the content of the law but also involves the empowerment embedded in the covenant to fulfill the law. However, there is some content overlap between the natural law and the law of Christ, but they are distinct due to redemptive context of their application.

#### Christians are to Benefit from the Law of Moses

As depicted in above section, Christians are not under the law of Moses because they are not under the Mosaic covenant. Similarly, the law is not their ultimate guide now because the Holy Spirit is their guide now. Martin Luther writes, “We will regard Moses as a teacher, but we will not regard him as our lawgiver.”<sup>18</sup> The law of Moses has found its *τέλος* (*telos*) in Christ and is not directly applicable to the new covenant believers. However, it does not lead to the conclusion that the law is useless and irrelevant for Christians. A non-binding law does not imply

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<sup>17</sup> James M. Todd III, *Sinai and the Saints: Reading Old Covenant Laws for the New Covenant Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 57.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Luther, “How Christians should Regard Moses,” in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy L. Lull, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 139.

a non-beneficial law. It is still a source of instruction for Christians as it is a part of the Scriptures.

Thus, we are to benefit from the law through the fulfillment of Jesus Christ. Paul advises his disciple, “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 complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16–17). Timothy had been using the Old Testament writings since his childhood.<sup>19</sup> However, here is some good evidence that the first Epistle to Timothy was written much later than the other Epistles, this would certainly be shown in Paul’s more developed polity and emphasis on passing leadership on to a next generation of leaders. But Timothy likely had Luke and many of Paul’s earlier works. Because Luke utilizes the other Synoptics heavily, and even refers to various circulating accounts in his prologue, it is likely that Timothy has more than the Old Testament with him now. Robert Wall and Richard Steele note, “The adjectives θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*, ‘God-inspired’) and ὠφέλιμος (*ōphelimos*, ‘useful’) are existential marks that evince the performances of every Scripture as divinely inspired— that is, as indispensable for wisdom-making.”<sup>20</sup> The divine nature of the source of Scripture cannot be ignored by any means. It depicts that the usefulness of the Scriptures is not optional because they are indispensable for wisdom. They are profitable for our training in righteousness. They are the key source that the Holy Spirit uses to make his people super-equipped and mature in

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<sup>19</sup> David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus: Christ-Centered Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2013), 198–99.

<sup>20</sup> Robert W. Wall and Richard B. Steele, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 231.

Christian character.<sup>21</sup> In Romans 15:4 also, Paul says that the Scriptures were written for our instruction.

Douglas Moo rightly acknowledges, “The OT law is not to be abandoned. Indeed, it must continue to be taught (Matt 5:19)—but interpreted and applied in light of its fulfillment by Christ. In other words, it stands no longer as the ultimate standard of conduct for God’s people, but must always be viewed through the lenses of Jesus’ ministry and teaching.”<sup>22</sup> All Scripture is a source of wisdom and guidance for Christians including the law of Moses. However, every part must be interpreted in its canonical context in light of the fulfillment in the new covenant.

So, this study arrives at the conclusion that rather than asking what part of the law of Moses is applicable to Christians, one should be asking how the law of Moses is applicable to Christians. As established in the previous chapter, the answer to this question is intimately related to the way Christ is seen as *τέλος* (*telos*) of the law. The Scripture keeps Christ at the center as a guiding principle for interpreting the law is evident from the plain reading of Luke 24:27 and John 5:39 where the Old Testament is seen pointing towards Christ and bearing witness to Christ.

As noted earlier, Origen rightly emphasized the impossibility of sound application of the law of Moses without interpreting them in the light of Christ as he writes, “We do not regulate our lives like the Jews because we are of opinion that the literal acceptance of the laws is not what conveys the meaning of the legislation. And we maintain that, ‘When Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart’ [2 Cor 3:15]. The meaning of the law of Moses has been concealed from

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<sup>21</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 239.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “The Law of Moses or the Law of Christ,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Fienberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 206.



those who have not welcomed the way which is by Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup> Thus the right interpretation of the law is attained by seeing it through the person and the work of Christ. So, the following section will elaborate on the five hermeneutical principles for the application of the law of Moses for Christians.

### **Hermeneutical Principles for the Application**

It has been discussed in detail that the new covenant is established through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. John Piper notes, “Christ not only provided the ground of the new-covenant promises; he also becomes the goal. Jesus is both ground of our salvation, and the glory we were saved to see and savor and share. He was the price that was paid for our deliverance, and the prize we were destined to enjoy.”<sup>24</sup> So, Christ is not only the commencement of the Scriptures but also is their conclusion. Therefore, the distinctive feature of this study is that it is not applying Scriptures or the law of Moses directly to Christians. Rather the law and the other Scriptures are applied first to Christ and then seeing their application to Christians in the light of fulfilment through Christ.

Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum contend, “We determine what is morally binding on us today appealing to the entirety of Scripture viewed through the lens of the new covenant.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, this study arrives at the conclusion that the Mosaic Law is applied to Christians through the grid of fulfillment in Christ which involves recalibration of each of its commandments around Christ without making Christians subject to it. Jason DeRouchie writes,

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<sup>23</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, 5.60. in Ante Nicene Fathers. Vol 4. trans. Philip Chaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1885), 1003–4.

<sup>24</sup> John Piper, *Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 167.

<sup>25</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 20018), 788.

“And because Jesus fulfills different laws in different ways, we must consider each law on its own in light of Christ’s work.”<sup>26</sup> The following is a discussion on the four hermeneutical principles for the application of the law for Christians. These are hermeneutical principles of transformation, ending maintenance, and extension:

### Transformation of the Commandments

The commandment about the Sabbath is stated in Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12 as a part of the Ten Commandments.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exod 20:8–11)

But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (Deut 5:14–15).

Before the statement in the decalogue, the Sabbath is first mentioned in the narrative of Exodus 16:22–30 about collecting the manna for the six days and resting on the seventh day. However, some people failed to follow the commandment regarding resting on the Sabbath and were rebuked by God (Exod 16:28). Later, the death penalty was added for disobedience of this commandment after the ratification of Sinai covenant (Exod 31:4).

Various astrological, sociological, cultic, and etymological theories have been proposed about the origin of the Sabbath but proven inadequate.<sup>27</sup> Some have even argued that the Sabbath

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<sup>26</sup> Jason Shane DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2017), 348.

<sup>27</sup> Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 133.

was part of an original general revelation to all humankind, still preserved in corrupted form in the various ancient cultures' practices of holy days of all different kinds.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it seems most likely that the Sabbath originated with Israelite community. It was the sign of the Sinai covenant as God says through the Prophet Ezekiel, "Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them" (Ezek 20:12).

The reason of keeping the Sabbath is grounded in God's resting after completion of the creation work in the text of Exodus 20:11, whereas it is grounded in redemption from the slavery in Egypt in Deuteronomy 5:15. However, the implication of the commandment is the provision of rest for the people as clearly stated in both texts. It means that the indispensable element in Sabbath commandment is rest. However, it is physical rest in the Sinai covenant.

The Classical covenantal theology considers Sabbath as moral law because of grounding it in creation and contends that it must be kept.<sup>29</sup> As it is part of decalogue it is seen universally applicable by the proponents of the Classical covenantal theology.<sup>30</sup> The Westminster Confession states about Sabbath, "From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath."<sup>31</sup> So, the affirmation of Sabbath keeping is proposed with noteworthy change of the day, from Saturday to Sunday. However, Sunday is considered primarily a day of worship,

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<sup>28</sup> A study that surveys the parallels of the Sabbath is H. Webster, *Rest Days: The Christian Sunday, the Jewish Sabbath, and Their Historical and Anthropological Prototypes* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

<sup>29</sup> A. W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 1:210.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph A. Pipa, "A Christian Sabbath," in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: Four Views*, ed. C. H. Donato (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 119–23.

<sup>31</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith, 21.7.

not a day of rest. Therefore, the change in the commandment offered by classical covenantalism fails to address the indispensable element of rest. Ferguson writes,

Rather than seeing a continuing validity of the Sabbath, which was changed from Saturday to Sunday, whether legitimately by the apostles in the first century or illegitimately by the church in the second (or by Constantine in the fourth), it is better to see the Sabbath command as a part of the superseded Mosaic institution and the Lord's day as a different type of day, a day of assembly and worship.<sup>32</sup>

So, there is no legitimate reason for this approach of just shifting the day from one to another without keeping the element of rest at the center.

Although not on the grounds of being part of the decalogue or moral law, G.K. Beale contends for Sabbath keeping as he sees it as a part of creation mandate. However, as this study has contended, the only mandate for any commandment is its τέλος (*telos*) in Christ and subsequent application for the new covenant believers.<sup>33</sup> It is noteworthy that creation mandate is considered as a valid argument even by some of the theologians who otherwise claim that their final hermeneutical key is Christ.<sup>34</sup> Charles Hill Suggests,

On any particular issue we will need to put together the relevant sections of Scripture so that we can know what is good in particular cases. The basic creation pattern is the starting-point for this exercise. The Law and the Prophets point to the original shape and purpose of God's good order and highlight the fractures and disorder caused by sin. Finally, the revelation in Christ gives us a glimpse of the completed and perfected order. With minds renewed by the Spirit of God through the work of Christ believers can use

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<sup>32</sup> E. F. Ferguson, "Sabbath: Saturday or Sunday? A Review Article," *ResQ* 23 (1980): 181. Ferguson was reviewing S. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977). S. Bacchiocchi is a Seventh-day Adventist. Also see R. T. Beckwith and W. Stott, *This Is the Day: The Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday* (Greenwood, SC: Attie Press, 1978). Beckwith and Stott contend for the classical covenantal view of the Sabbath.

<sup>33</sup> G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 777–81.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Gentry, Stephan Wellum and Michael Hill are among those scholars as the following citations will depict.

this information to discern what is right and good. Such discernment is the substance of wisdom.<sup>35</sup>

Charles Hill's suggestion is very insightful for the interpretative process. So, if he considers the creation pattern only as a starting point, that may help in the exegetical process like other tools including historical-cultural and literary analysis, then it is legitimate. However, if he brings creation pattern at par with Christological application, then his methodology is not sufficiently Christ-centered as this study has endeavored to be. Similarly, Peter Gentry and Stephan Wellum seem to affirm Charles Hill's emphasis on the creation pattern by citation him and also by writing, "In order to discern God's moral will, we need to begin in creation and then think through how sin has distorted God's order."<sup>36</sup> It seems that contrary to their claims, Gentry and Wellum are not considering new covenant lens as the only hermeneutical key but are depending on the creation mandate as an equally important guiding point.

In favor of considering creation mandate as a hermeneutical key, Jesus's reference to the absence of divorce at the beginning of humanity can be presented as an argument. As a reply to the question of the Pharisees regarding the legitimacy of the divorce, Jesus said, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt 19:8). However, this argument cannot be sustained because the marriage is temporary institution and there will be no marriage between male and female in heaven (Matt 22:30). Moreover, all are not required to marry during the life on the earth (1 Cor 7:6–8). It depicts that the creation mandate is not applicable to everyone in every situation. Therefore, it

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love: An Introduction to Evangelical Ethics* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2002), 78.

<sup>36</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of Covenants*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 20018), 793. Also see *Ibid.*, 794, fn. 78.

cannot serve as a hermeneutical key. Thus, the only hermeneutical key is fulfilment through Christ for all commandments.

There is no clear evidence of Sabbath presented as a creation ordinance in Genesis 2:1–2. H.P. Dressler writes, “The Sabbath is not viewed as a universal ordinance for all mankind but as a specific institution for Israel. As a sign of the covenant, it was to last as long as that covenant.”<sup>37</sup> However, this does not mean that the creation mandate cannot be referred to at all. It must be acknowledged as a helpful tool for interpretation like historical grammatical and literary analysis.

As Christians are not under the law of Moses, so this commandment of Sabbath is not binding for them as covenant legislation of the Sinai. Paul explicitly addressed this issue in his letters to Galatians and Colossians. In Galatians 4:10–11, He said, “You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.” The context of this text is Paul’s defense of the Gospel as a new covenant reality in contrast to the teaching of bringing the Christians under the commandments of the law of Moses. Similarly, in Colossians 2:16–17, he said, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” Paul’s emphasis here was the status of Christians as a community of the new covenant that cannot be condemned on the standards of the old covenant. Douglas Moo notes, “But there is still reason to think that Paul calls into question here Sabbath observance per se. The language and logic of v. 17 suggest that the primary problem with Sabbath observance was a failure to reckon with the ‘fulfillment’ of such institutions in the new

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<sup>37</sup> H. P. Dressler, “The Sabbath in the Old Testament,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 21–43.

era of salvation.”<sup>38</sup> The fulfillment in Christ had brought the Sabbath as its intended goal. The community of the new covenant is not bound to follow the shadows after the revelation of the realities in Jesus Christ.

The author of Hebrews provides an extended discussion of this fulfillment. Hebrews 3:7–4:13 teaches that the Sabbath of the old covenant was the antitype of the new covenant rest in Christ which finds its inauguration in the coming of Christ and will find its consummation in the *eschaton*. It is noteworthy that the “another day” spoken of by God in Hebrews 4:8 does not refer to another Sabbath but to the “today” of Psalm 95:7. It is because the author of Hebrews had quoted Psalm 95:7 in Hebrews 4:7. The study of Psalm 95:7–11 as quoted in Hebrews indicate that rest for which David was interested for the people of God was a spiritual rest, not the physical rest. Thus, the author of Hebrews pictures the transformation of the rest from the physical to spiritual on the foundation of Psalm 95. Thomas Schreiner writes, “The OT Sabbath points forward to the eschatological Sabbath rest, which is now here and which believers will fully enjoy in the heavenly city. Hence, NT writers did not expect or require believers in Jesus Christ to keep the Sabbath.”<sup>39</sup> The rest depicted in the old covenant was a shadow of the true and eternal rest that believers will have in Christ.

Christians are not under Sabbath keeping (Rom 14:5; Col 2:16) but Christ’s fulfillment transforms this commandment so that Christians look forward to eternal rest as a full realization of Sabbath and have designated Lord’s Day as a day of worship and devotion. Craig Bloomberg writes, “We obey the Sabbath commandment of the Decalogue as we spiritually rest in Christ,

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<sup>38</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 222.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, “God-bye and Hello: The Sabbath Command for New Covenant Believer,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course Between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, eds, Stephen J. Wellum, and Brent E. Parker, (B&H Publishing Group, 2016). 159–188, 160.

letting Him bear our heavy burdens, trusting Him for salvation, and committing our lives to Him in service.”<sup>40</sup> This approach encourages the believers to see each commandment of the law, even the decalogue through the lens of Christ and apply accordingly. Being part of decalogue or moral law does not mean it is universally binding for the Christians. Christ is the center of Scripture, not the decalogue. The Massive work edited by D.A. Carson, “*From Sabbath to Lords Day*”, concludes,

This discussion has attempted to respect the discontinuity and the continuity involved in the fulfilment of Sabbath in Christ. The temporary and passing nature of the Mosaic Sabbath with its literal rest has been emphasized and yet its continuing significance when reinterpreted in the light of its fulfilment has been suggested. The way in which Christ transforms the Sabbath law guards against legalism about a particular day, on the one hand, and a lack of concern about relating one’s time to God on other.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, Jesus is the interpretive lens through which the Law regarding Sabbath will be applied to the community of disciples of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the discussion on the transformation of Sabbath from physical rest on the seventh day to the spiritual rest in Christ is an excellent illustration of the balance between continuity and discontinuity between the old and the new covenant. This spiritual rest has been inaugurated with the first coming of Christ and will be consummated after the second coming of Christ with beginning of the eternity.

### Ending of the Commandments

Israelites were required to observe the distinction between clean and unclean animals and were commanded to restrict their diet to clean animals. Leviticus 11 is called *locus classicus* for the Old Testament food laws although some of these instructions also appear in Deuteronomy

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<sup>40</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ,” in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: Four Views*, ed. C. H. Donato (Nashville: B&H , 2011), 256.

<sup>41</sup>D. A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lords Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 397–398.



14.<sup>42</sup> There are many different views about the nature of this distinction between the clean and unclean animals.<sup>43</sup> Jacob Milgrom considers this distinction as a life-death nexus as he considers clean associated with life and unclean associated with death.<sup>44</sup> Mary Douglas suggests that the labeling is a matter of conformity to the respective class of the animals. The clean animals are those who conform to their perceived class whereas the unclean animals are those who are out of order.<sup>45</sup> Jason DeRouchie associates the unclean animals with God-hostility in these animals or sharing the curse of the Serpent pronounced in Genesis 3.<sup>46</sup> However, it is noteworthy that any such rationale is absent in the text of Leviticus 11.

The explicit rationale stated in the text for the dietary regulations was the nature of God being holy and his desire to make his people holy like him (Lev 20:25–26). It is further written, “For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 20:44–45). This commandment contrasts with the statement of God to Noah in Genesis 9: 3–4, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.” It depicts that the purpose of this commandment was to set Israel apart from other nations. It was

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<sup>42</sup> Jordan Rosenblum, *The Jewish Dietary Laws in the Ancient World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 13.

<sup>43</sup> For a survey of the various positions, see John E. Hartly, “Holy and Holiness, Clean and Unclean,” *DOT*: 420–31, 28.

<sup>44</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1001.

<sup>45</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002), 54.

<sup>46</sup> Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 455.

a covenant legislation given to Israel after her redemption from Egypt. It was a sort of identity mark for Israel as a covenant community living among the Gentiles. This commandment along with the other rules associated with purity were understood as divisive, discriminatory, and excluding.<sup>47</sup>

This command is ended for Christians as they are not under the law of Moses and are under the law of Christ. Mark 7:1–23 is a detailed record of a great controversy between Jesus and Pharisees on the issue of purity. Jesus and his disciples are charged with breaking the Law of Moses on account of eating with defiled hands (Exod 30:19; 40:12). Jesus explains the natural process of digestion and rejects the application of the law to himself and his disciples. The clean and unclean distinction is annulled by the teaching of Christ as explained in Mark 7:19. Eike Mueller admits, “Scholars doing exegetical studies and studies on the relationship between Jesus and the law have maintained that the Gospel writer correctly reflects in 7:19 on the meaning of Jesus’ parable (7:15), abrogating the clean/unclean categories of Leviticus 11.”<sup>48</sup> The practice of the early church was right in accord with this comment. “Early Christianity saw the Pharisees’ halakhic meticulousness as a preoccupation with the external alone. This type of opposition also stands behind Mark 6:15.”<sup>49</sup> A noteworthy point here is the distinction between the Mosaic Law and halakhic traditions. On his exegesis of the under-discussion text, Eike Mueller contends that Jesus is not abrogating the Levitical laws regarding clean and unclean food. Rather Jesus is

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Kazen, *Impurity and Purification in Early Judaism and the Jesus Tradition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2021), 24.

<sup>48</sup> Eike Mueller, “Cleansing the Common: A Narrative-Intertextual Study of Mark 7:1–23.” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53 (2015): 374–75, 274.

<sup>49</sup> Lawrence H. Schiffman, 2021, “Jewish Law in the Gospels in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls.” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 51, (November 2021): 226–33, 230.

rejecting the traditions developed by the pharisees on purity issues.<sup>50</sup> He assumes it was not logical for Jesus to negate the food laws and Mark's editorial comment is his apologetic for the Christian practice. I admit that he is rightly pointing out that there was no commandment in the law of Moses regarding hand washing before meals and the reference point for the pharisees was their traditions. However, the contextual interpretation of Mark 7:1–23 reveals that Jesus brought the law of Moses into the discussion and concluded with the abrogation of the food laws for his disciples.

Mark's editorial comment underscores the fact that the law of Christ seems taking a clear precedent over the law of Moses here. It noteworthy that the Greek phrase, καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα (cleansing all foods) in verse 19 is added as a parenthetical comment by Mark. However, the Gospel writer is attributing this decision to Jesus not to himself. Mark Strauss notes, "Though clipped, the participial phrase has Jesus as its subject and so means that Jesus "thus declared all foods clean [= undefiled]." <sup>51</sup> Thus it is rightly rendered by ESV as "(Thus he declared all foods clean.)" Therefore, the context and textual analysis both point towards that legitimacy of this editorial comment to depict the ending of the dietary commandments for Christians as binding.

The hot exchange of arguments between Jesus and Scribes is not merely about rituals, commandments, and traditions. Rather Jesus sees it as a heart issue and commands his disciples to be transformed at heart. External vs internal purity provides a good context for the application of the commandments of the law of Moses for today's believers. Wendy Miller contends, "Rather than religious tradition holding us stiffly in place due to our surface self-protectionism

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<sup>50</sup> Eike Mueller, "Cleansing the Common: A Narrative-Intertextual Study of Mark 7:1–23." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53 (Fall 2015): 374–75.

<sup>51</sup> Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 304.

and hypocritical complacency, tradition allows itself to be transformed by love. The living water of the Spirit becomes our life, flows in and through what we think, say, do, even as we own our inability to save ourselves.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, the real contention was not on the goodness of the commandments but the condition of the human heart which must be addressed first for the believers of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

Paul follows the same stance of Jesus’s declaration of considering all food clean. He writes in Romans 14:9, “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.” Paul’s emphasis here is that the distinction between clean and unclean food that was valid for the old covenant community has been ended for the new covenant. David M. Freidenreich writes, “There must be “no distinction between Jew and Greek” among those who call upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:12), so traditional Jewish foreign food restrictions must be abandoned within the Christ-believing community.”<sup>53</sup> In Christ, God has called the other nations to be the part of Church, and Israel-gentile distinction has been abolished. Now Christians are composed of believers from the Jewish and Gentile background with a new identity. In that community of believers, there is no distinction between the Jews and Gentiles (Rom 10:12–13, Gal 3:28). Peter highlights the new identity of the Christian community. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

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<sup>52</sup> Wendy J. Miller, “Spiritual Formation: Learning to Live in the Heart: Mark 7:1–23.” *Lectionary Homiletics* 11 (2000): 10.

<sup>53</sup> David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

This practice of the church regarding the ending of dietary restrictions of the Old Testament highlighted the discontinuity between the old and the new covenant in the life of the early church. Cristine Cardozo Mindiola writes, “By eating what Jews do not eat, Christianity unhinged from Judaism because from a Jewish-standpoint Christians were the others. They were no longer a part of Judaism.”<sup>54</sup> However, there being parting the way from Judaism was often criticized not only from Jews but also from other Christians of the Jewish background. To guard against this situation, Paul writes in Colossians 2:16–17, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” Jerry L. Sumney writes, “The Colossians must not allow anyone to pass judgment on them in these matters of diet or religious festivals because Jesus’ death has freed them of such judgments.”<sup>55</sup> The logic of Paul was simply that the Christians are not bound to the things which had only a function for the time being in the redemptive history.

Ending of dietary laws does not imply that every Christian should eat everything. Rather it simply means that they are not bound to follow the categories of clean or unclean as depicted by the legislation of the Sinai covenant. However, as a means of free choice, they may abstain from any type of foods they like. It is noteworthy that many believers from Jewish background or Christians from Gentile background living in Islamic societies do not eat unclean food. It may be due to their natural abhorrence to those foods or voluntary decision to not make it an issue of

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<sup>54</sup> Cristine Cardozo Mindiola, “Reception History of Leviticus 11: Dietary Laws in Early Christianity.” *DavarLogos* 18 (2019): 39–60, 59.

<sup>55</sup> Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2008), 150.

identity marker.<sup>56</sup> However, the proponents of the Hebrew Root Movement force their fellows to abstain from the unclean food as a requirement to follow the law of Moses.<sup>57</sup> This is simply the repetition of the false teaching propagated by Judaizers to make Christians subject to the slavery of the law of Moses (Gal 5:1). Paul explicitly argued against this approach in his letter to Galatians and in 1 Timothy 4:3.

#### Maintenance of the Commandments

The commandment to honor the parents is also part of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:12, Deut 5:16) which is repeated in the New Testament (Matt 15:4, 19:19; Mark 7:10, 10:9; Luke 18:20; Eph 6:2) in the affirmative. However, its repetition in the New Testament is not the reason that it is maintained for the new covenant community. Rather seeing the fulfilment of this commandment in Christ and its application for the Christians through the grid of Christ's fulfilment leads to the conclusion that this commandment is maintained for the Christians. However, the Christians do not obey this as a covenant legislation of Sinai but get benefit from it as instruction of Scripture applied in the context of the new covenant. However, its repetition in the New Testament reveals that it is maintained for the Christians.

The commandment is stated in Exodus 20:12, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you." The Hebrew word for

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<sup>56</sup> As a Christian born and raised in Pakistan, I can personally testify to this on behalf of my family and the Christian community living here. I know a very few Christians in Pakistan who can eat pork even during their stay outside the country with other believers who eat in front of them. For a study of the relationship between disgust and purity, see Thomas Kazen, *Impurity and Purification in Early Judaism and the Jesus Tradition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2021), 47–48.

<sup>57</sup> David Rudolph, "Introduction to Messianic Judaism." *Hebrew Studies* 57 (2016): 355–58. Also see David Rudolph and Joel Willitts, eds. *Introduction to Messianic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009).

honor is כָּבֵד (*kab-bêd*) which means be heavy, weighty, burdensome, or honored.<sup>58</sup> It communicates the idea of treating with dignity. The idea is well elaborated in Pentateuch and rest of the Scriptures through mentioning many other related dimensions of God's expectation from the children for their parents. God commands in Leviticus 19:3, "Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father." Reverence for the parents is an element of honor for them and involves being careful in the dealings with them. Moreover, the Scripture commands children to be attentive in listening to their parents, being obedient to their commands and accepting the discipline imparted by them (Deut 21: 18 –21). Another significant commandment regarding parents is that the children are forbidden to strike them, and death penalty is given for committing this offense (Exod 21:12, 15).

It is noteworthy that commandment to honor the parents is not limited to young children. Rather, it is primarily given to adult children as they are responsible for the parents care in their old age. In his study on the concept of honoring parents in the ancient Near East, Charlie Trimm notes "The evidence from these texts shows us that honoring parents usually meant caring physically for one's parents when they were older. In the ancient Near East, nursing homes were not available to care for the elderly and the government did not provide Social Security for the retired."<sup>59</sup> Therefore through this commandment, God ensured the care of the elderly in their homes through the adult children.

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<sup>58</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1906), 457.

<sup>59</sup> Charlie Trimm, "Honor Your Parents: A Command for Adults." *JETS* 60 (June 2017): 247–63, 249. For more on caring parents in the ancient Near East, see Marten Stol and Sven P. Vleeming, eds. *The Care of the Elderly in the Ancient Near East*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

Parents are given this high regard because they are God's ordained means to bring the children into the world. John Ballenger writes, "It is a reminder to us that we are begotten."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, they are a metaphor of God as the ultimate source of the humanity. God is the parent who is honored by his creation. The promise of long life in the promised land is associated with this commandment as stated in Exodus 20:12, and dimension of prosperity is added along with the long life in Deuteronomy 5:16.

Jesus fulfills this commandment as a human as well as the divine Son. As a child of Joseph and Mary, he was submissive to them (Luke 2:51). As a child of God, Jesus honored his heavenly Father by living a life to do his Father's will (John 6:38) and being obedient to his Father in everything he did (Heb 5:8; Luke 22:42). The believers in the new covenant community are enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit to live a life of obedience to their heavenly Father and honor their parents.

Ian Hamilton notes that the motivation behind the honoring the parents was God's relationship with his people as their Lord as holy and his desire to make his people holy as highlighted in Leviticus 19:1–3 "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."<sup>61</sup> So, the commandment to honor the parents was connected with the belief of the people regarding the nature of God and the relationship of the people with God. Similarly, in Ephesians 6:1, the command to obey the parents is presented in the context of being in the Lord. Clinton Arnold notes, "The preposition "in" (ἐν) indicates the sphere of Christian existence. Obedience then is predicated on and motivated by the budding relationship of these children to the Lord. The NLT

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<sup>60</sup> John Ballenger, "Ever beyond: Aiming for God through Family." *Review & Expositor* 113 (November 2016): 534–37. 536.

<sup>61</sup> Ian Hamilton, *Ephesians: Lectio Continua Expository Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 155.



approximates this understanding by translating it, ‘obey your parents because you belong to the Lord.’”<sup>62</sup> So, being a part of the new covenant community makes it possible for the believers to obey this commandment because God has developed an empowering relationship with them.

This commandment is profound in its theological significance. Richard Hess notes, “With its emphasis on honoring parents, who stand in the place of God (note the word ‘honor’ is used regularly of that which is given to God), and on the family relationship, this command hinges the commands to love God and those in second half of the Decalogue concerned with the love of one’s neighbor.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, we see that this commandment is maintained for Christians in the law of Christ without any change. There is no change in the responsibilities and benefits of the parent-child relationship in the law of Moses and the law of Christ, thus this commandment is maintained. However, the promise attached with this commandment is universalized by Paul in Ephesians 6:2 as he writes, “It may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” John Frame notes, “The phrase may be nothing more than a Greek rendering of the Hebrew of Exodus 20:12, referring to Canaan as the Promised Land, But I am inclined to think that Paul here recontextualizes the promise of Exodus 20:12 and applies it to the land promise to Christians- the whole earth.”<sup>64</sup> So, the commandment is maintained in the new covenant with a new promise which expand to all the earth. Now Christians are to honor their parents and the promise of a long life is there for them wherever they are living in the world.

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<sup>62</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 407.

<sup>63</sup> Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 76.

<sup>64</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of Christian Life*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2008), 591.

### Extension of the Commandments

The commandment regarding parapet building is stated in Deuteronomy 22:8, “When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it.” The houses in the ancient Near East had flat roofs to provide increased space for various domestic purposes. Daniel Block notes, “Houses were often two-storey constructions, with the lower floor housing animals and storing food stuffs, and the upper floor serving as the living quarters. Cooled by the breezes, flat roofs provided a third living space that residents could use for a variety of purposes.”<sup>65</sup> A flat roof with a parapet may result in someone falling from the roof. So, building a small protective wall was significant in protecting the family members, neighbors, or relatives from injury or even death.

Life preservation is a major concern behind this commandment. Sanctity of life is well established concept in the Pentateuch. God is the source of life and human life is even more significant because of God’s image. It is the main reason all sorts of bloodshed are prohibited in the Scriptures. God commanded to Noah, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” Therefore, the preservation of the life of other human beings was evidence of reverence of God by a man. It is not limited to avoiding murder as stated in the sixth commandment of the decalogue but also involved taking precautions to save human life. John Frame calls this the doctrine of carefulness and considers it as a bridge between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. He notes that Jesus’s approach was to remove the causes that may lead to the loss of life.<sup>66</sup> In the Sermon on Mount, Jesus forbids to show anger as it may lead to murder (Matt 5:21–26).

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<sup>65</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 369.

<sup>66</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of Christian Life*, 688.

House building is not considered as a personal matter for the owner. It had consequences for the neighbors as well. Eugene Merrill writes, “This again underscores the notion that no Israelite was an island unto himself. What he or she did or did not do had community reverberations.”<sup>67</sup> Here the spirit of the commandment is to protect the life of neighbor as a reflection of love for neighbor. Christ’s fulfillment makes this commandment extended to involve the care of all aspects of a neighbor’s life. Jason DeRouchie acknowledges, “While many climates do not allow for houses with parapets, the teaching of Deuteronomy 22:8 is naturally extended to include building a fence around a pool or raised deck, placing a protective gate above a stairwell where toddlers are present, or shoveling after a snowstorm.”<sup>68</sup> So, in all possible life situations, the concern for human life must be at the forefront. Paul says, “Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Cor 16:14).

The love is presented as a primary guiding principle for a Christian conduct of life in the New Testament. Thus, in the law of love, we not only see fulfilment of the Mosaic law but also extension of the commandments having love as their foundational principle. Charles Leiter writes, “Love is not one commandment among many; love is the commandment. Love is man’s supreme duty. It is at the very center of godly living.”<sup>69</sup> When something is done in godly love, one will be motivated to extend the action of love to every other aspect of care for the neighbor. Therefore, that the fulfillment of the commandments is dependent upon one loving others as Christ has loved us (Matt 22:37–40). The love for neighbor keeps one from causing any un-

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<sup>67</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, “Deuteronomy,” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 601.

<sup>68</sup> Jason Shane DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 444.

<sup>69</sup> Charles Leiter, *The Law of Christ*, 144.

intentional harm to his neighbor. Therefore, Paul rightly says, “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim 1: 5).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Christians are not bound to the Sinai covenant. Therefore, the stipulations of that covenant are not binding to them. They are not under the law of Moses. However, being members of the new covenant community, they are now under the law of Christ. Furthermore, the only possible relationship of Christians with the law of Moses is not only of being under the law or not being under the law. As part of divine Scripture generally and being divine instruction particularly, the law of Moses is useful and applicable to Christians. However, that application is only through the lens of Christ as demonstrated in the discussion above.

This hermeneutical and exegetical exploration depicts that the Mosaic Law is applied to Christians through the grid of fulfillment in Christ which involves recalibration of each of its commandments around Christ without making Christians subject to it. It maintains the usefulness of the Mosaic Law for Christians in their life in the context of the new covenant established through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The hermeneutical principles of transformation, ending, maintenance, and extension aid in the development of the Christological application of the Mosaic Law for Christians as outlined by this study. A detailed exposition of the texts related to Sabbath, food laws, honoring the parents, and parapet building has been done in their canonical context to demonstrate the hermeneutical principles of transformation, ending, maintenance, and extension respectively.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

All Scripture is a source of wisdom and guidance for Christians including the law of Moses. This study has endeavored to present a well-pronounced view of the application of the law of Moses for Christians while affirming Christ's fulfillment and enduring relevance of the law. It has resulted in the formation of a balanced approach called the Christological application of the law which involves a recalibration of each of the commandments of the law of Moses around Christ while avoiding the need for Christians to again become subject to the law. This study has established this contention that Christ's fulfillment does not diminish the usefulness of the law of Moses for Christians. Rather it maintains the goodness and the usefulness of the law of Moses.

This study begins with the statement of the problem regarding the application of the law of Moses for Christians. Then a range of theological systems from discontinuity to continuity have been evaluated for their strengths and weaknesses to present a balanced and hermeneutically warranted position on the application of the Mosaic Law for Christians. Special focus has been placed on understanding the meaning, nature, and function of the law of Moses in the context of the Sinai Covenant. Then a detailed discussion was presented on the progression of the covenants and how all the covenants find their culmination and fulfillment in Christ. This led to the central argument of the study that the law of Moses along with the other parts of the Scriptures finds its *τέλος* (*telos*) in Jesus Christ. Then the function and enduring relevance of the law of Moses for present-day Christian was identified and elaborated in the light of this fulfillment through Christ. This concluding chapter summarizes the key findings of this study

along with highlighting the limitations, the way forward for further studies, and practical application of this study.

### **The Problem**

The first problem that the New Testament church faced was the application of the law of Moses for Christian believers coming from the Gentile nations (Acts 15:5). The first church council meeting at Jerusalem resolved the problem for the time being. However, as the church became predominantly comprised of believers coming from Gentile nations, this problem took another perspective. Now, the Jewish context of the law was ignored in the interpretation and application of the law for Christians. The result was a full or partial rejection of the law as being applicable to Christians. This approach was counter to Paul's affirmation of the usefulness of all Scripture including the law of Moses for Christians (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

### **Hermeneutical Methodology**

This study has employed a canonical-theological method of hermeneutics. This method endeavors to provide a hermeneutical key to interpreting the Scriptures. This method employs “the rule of faith” as a frame of reference for the interpretation of the specific texts of the Scriptures. “The rule of faith” is the teaching of the completed canon. The basic contention of this method is that various parts of the Scripture are interpreted in the light of the whole. So, a sort of hermeneutical circle is developed in which each text is read and interpreted in relation to the other parts as well as the completed canon of Scripture.

Furthermore, this approach sees the redemptive-historical storyline of the scripture in such a way that the beginning is better understood by the end as the key themes developed in the earlier parts of the Scripture are eschatological in nature and these themes reach their culmination in the later parts of the Scripture. This intra-canonical consciousness is considered a

hermeneutical skill that aids in the interpretation of texts that have intertextual connections with some other texts within the canon through linguistic and thematic unity.

The canonical method employed in this study warrants the Christological conclusions by keeping the fulfillment of the law of Moses through Christ at the center for knowing its application for Christians. Although the canonical-theological method appreciates the distinctive voice of each of the Two Testaments, it affirms the unified message communicated by the Scripture in its final form. The forward pointing of the Old Testament to the person and work of Christ is explained by Jesus to the disciples as recorded in Luke 24:27, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Thus, the key texts relevant to the Christological application of the Mosaic Law for Christians were exegeted in their canonical context using tools of linguistic, logical, and historical analysis.

### **The Historical Approaches to the Application of the Law of Moses for Christians**

The issue of applying the law of Moses for Christians has not been resolved. Rather, over the years, more and more distinctive approaches have been developed to see the relevance of the law of Moses for Christians considering the fulfillment through Christ. These approaches differ from each other in various aspects, especially on the continuity or discontinuity between the Old and the New Testament, the relationship between the covenants or dispensations in the Scripture, Israel, and the church distinction, literal or symbolic hermeneutic and the kingdom of God in eschatological terms.

This second chapter gives a review of various biblical-theological approaches on the application of the law of Moses for Christians highlighting the strengths and limitations of these approaches. The first three views are Theonomic Reformed View, Classic Covenantal View, and

Progressive Covenantal View which present a spectrum of continuity between the covenants.

The next two are Classic Dispensationalism and Progressive Dispensationalism which present the spectrum of discontinuity between the covenants. A comparative analysis of these five views reveals that one extreme is the approach of Theonomy which contends for the submission of Christians to the law of Moses at the moral and civic levels. On the other extreme is the approach of classical dispensationalism which considers the law of Moses irrelevant to Christians.

The next two views which were discussed in detail are the Lutheran View and Modified Lutheran View, which give more emphasis to discontinuity between the covenants. A Progressive Moral Wisdom Model, The Promotion of Holiness View, the Redemptive-Movement Model, and the Paradigmatic View are some other views that do not directly interact with above mentioned theological systems but independently propose their preferred approaches to the application of the law of Moses for Christians. The New Perspective on Paul is an altogether different theological system that was addressed because of the way it sees the significance of obedience to the law, although it does not directly provide any approach to the application of the law of Moses for Christians.

The major shortcoming of most of the approaches is the failure to strike a balance in continuity and discontinuity between the testaments and the failure to interpret each law in its own unique context. The Modified Lutheran Position and Progressive Covenantal view seem most successful in doing justice to that balance and encouraging the application of each law through individual interpretation done in the right context.

### **The Law of Moses for the Old Covenant Community**

The third chapter has discussed in detail the nature of the law, its purpose, and the canonical context of the law of Moses. Interpretation of the law in its immediate context of the



Pentateuch and the broader context of the Holy Scriptures enables the readers to understand the application of the law and its relevance for Christians. God saved his people with a mighty hand from the bondage of Egyptian slavery and brought them into the Promised Land. This mighty act of redemption sets the framework in which the law was given to Israelites. Thus, the understanding of the significance of the laws for the Israelites can be ascertained in the broader narrative of the Pentateuch. Furthermore, many law texts from the ancient Near East have been discovered which are parallel to the Old Testament laws. Egyptian, Sumerian, and Akkadian sources have exposed the laws which have many similarities in form and purpose with the laws of Israel. Although the biblical laws are distinct in many respects, there is much to learn from the study of these parallel laws of ancient Near East to better understand the nature and purposes of the biblical laws.

#### Meaning of the Law

The most basic and primary meaning of תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) is instruction in general. However, more specifically it refers to instructions of God to Israel through Moses. It may refer to the Pentateuch or even the Old Testament as a written record of instruction of God for his people through his prophets. Mostly, these instructions are seen as stipulations of the Sinai covenant. These instructions are not seen as legal codes like our modern understanding of laws. The present study has used תּוֹרָה (*tôrâ*) to mean instruction or commandments of God through Moses but retains using the English phrase “the law of Moses” due to its common use in English.

#### Nature of the Law

The law of Moses is part of God’s special revelation in contrast to the natural law. The author of Hebrews notes, “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13). He further

links this change in priesthood and change in the law as he writes, “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well” (Heb 7:12). So, the law of Moses needs also to be changed after the change of the covenant which depicts the temporal nature of the law of Moses and Sinai covenant.

Paul writes, “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12). It is holy because it is the word of God who is holy, just, and good. The law depicts the goodness of the character of God for the people of God. Despite being good, holy, and just, the law was not able to achieve that for which it was not designed. The New Testament presents that as a weakness, although this weakness is not inherent to the law but due to the fallen human condition. Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:3–4, “Although the law is God’s guidance and gracious instruction, it is powerless to do what only God can do through his Holy Spirit.”

The most common classification of the law is seen in covenant theology where the law is divided into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories. However, this study rejected this division because it is unwarranted in the Scriptures. Moses does not label the laws in the Pentateuch as moral, ceremonial, or civil. The New Testament also does not follow this division and views the law as a unit reaching to its τέλος (*telos*) in Christ.

#### Functions of the Law

Revelation of God’s Character and Human Condition was one key function of the law of Moses. Therefore, the law works to bring humanity to conviction of sin and of their failure to meet the demands of the law. Paul writes in Galatians 3:24, “So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.”

The purpose of the law can also be seen from two inter-related perspectives which are the promise of life but the deliverance of death because of human condition. Both perspectives are well summarized by Paul as he writes, “The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom 7:10). The first perspective focuses on the divinely intended purpose of the law as a promise of life for those who keep it, and the second perspective focuses on the revelation of human sinfulness and hopelessness as law puts all to death so the need of Christ may be realized. It is noteworthy that the law promises life but does not deliver on that promise apart from the Spirit’s work in grace. The law also promises death for transgression and deliver that promise for those who do not receive the Spirit’s work in grace.

As the law has its *τέλος* (*telos*) in Christ, so it serves a prophetic function by pointing to Christ. It gives testimony of Christ through various possible ways. The New Testament explicitly discusses this prophetic function of the law as a witness to Christ and an eschatological age inaugurated through the new covenant (Rom 4:6–8; 9:25–29; 10:11–15; 10:18, 20–21; 11:8–10, and 15).

Moses writes in Deuteronomy 4:6, “Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’” This text plainly teaches that the law of Moses is a source of wisdom for the people of God. Those who will live according to this wisdom will be a light to the nations and will be known as wise people among the surrounding nations. Similarly, the psalmist claims that the law is a tool of God to make simple people wise (Ps 19:7) and those who depend upon it as a source of their wisdom are wiser than their enemies and even teachers and aged people (Ps 119:98–100). Thus, the people of

Israel were supposed to grow in understanding and wisdom through learning and doing the law of Moses.

### **The Law of Moses and Christ**

This relationship between the law of Moses and Christ is explored through exploration of the progression of the covenants in the Scripture and demonstrating that Jesus Christ is the *τέλος* (*telos*) of the whole Hebrew Scriptures. These two elements aid to develop a Christological lens to see the application of the law for the members of the new covenant community.

#### **The Progression of the Covenants in Scriptures**

Theologians have identified five major covenants recorded in Scripture: (1) The Creation Covenant, (2) The Abrahamic Covenant, (3) The Sinai Covenant, (4) The Davidic Covenant, and (5) The New Covenant. Understanding the relationship between these covenants is crucial to develop the rubric for interpreting the law of Moses for Christians.

The Prophets of the Old Testament came to remind the people, reprove them, and renew the covenants. Their primary audience was the nation of Israel. They reminded the nation about the covenants of God. They reproved the nation for breaking the Sinai covenant. They renewed the covenants through the promise of the new covenants. A study of the promise of the new covenant is significant as it presents the nature and functions of the new covenant in contrast to the Sinai covenant. The key texts where the New Covenant is promised are Isaiah 55:1–5; Jeremiah 31:31–34, 32:36–41, and Ezekiel 36:22–28.

#### **Isaiah 55:1–5**

The text of Isaiah 55:1–5 is very significant in terms of introducing the promise of the new covenant in the Old Testament. The promise of the new covenant will fulfill the real needs of the people. Isaiah uses the metaphor of food items to convince the people that they are spending their

resources on things that cannot give satisfaction. Bread is a metaphor for spiritual satisfaction and life in the Bible (Isa 30:20, John 6: 48– 51, 1 Cor 11:25– 26). God invites the people to get food from him as a gift not with their money. So, the new covenant is an expression of God’s grace, and its blessings cannot be earned. God’s righteousness will be the reason for the blessings of God’s people in the new covenant as explained by Paul in Rom 3:21–26. Furthermore, Jesus alludes to this prophecy in his call as written in John 7:37, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me.”

The new covenant will be an everlasting covenant. So, by contrast, the old covenant was not everlasting. It relates to the Davidic covenant. Thus, the coming of the Messiah from the house of David brings the fulfilment of the Davidic covenant in the new covenant through Christ.

### **Jeremiah 31:31–34 and 32:36–41**

The two prophecies of Jeremiah 31:31–34 and 32:36–41 are the classic examples of the texts where standard covenant formula appears. The above two texts are the parallel texts in the book of Jeremiah communicating the nature and functions of the new covenant. The emphasis of Jeremiah 31:31–34 is on both the continuity and the discontinuity between the new covenant and the old covenant. In terms of the continuity, both covenants concern the law. But the old covenant concerns the stone tablets, while the new covenant concerns the law written on “tablets of the heart.” But it is still the “law” as it was. Likewise, it is noteworthy that the problem is that each generation fails to instruct succeeding generations to “know the LORD” which is why they “Did not know the LORD” (Judg 2:10). But now with the Spirit present in the heart, they shall all “know the LORD” (Hos 2:20; Heb 8:11). So, there does seem to be continuity between the covenants. There is also some sort of discontinuity between the old and the new covenant. It is not the same as the old one, so its nature and functions are different from the old covenant. The

old covenant was broken by the people, whereas the new covenant will not be broken by the community of this covenant.

The sign of the old covenant was circumcision of the body, but the new covenant will be associated with the circumcision of the heart as commanded by God in Jeremiah 4:4. The Apostle Paul develops the theme of circumcision of the heart as the work done in the Holy Spirit through regeneration in Romans 2. He concludes in Romans 2:29, “But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.” The author of Hebrews cites Jeremiah 31:31–34 to connect this promise with the Messiah in Hebrews 8:8–12 with a special focus on contrast of the new covenant with the old one.

The people of the new covenant will not be requiring external commandments like a list of rules as the final guide to their behavior. Rather, the Holy Spirit indwelling in them will be their ultimate guide. The promise of unity of heart and unity of way in the life of the new covenant is very significant. The New Testament presents the Church as one body which is fulfillment of the promise of this unity (Eph 4: 4–10 and 1 Cor 12:12).

### **Ezekiel 36:22–28**

The text of Ezekiel 36:22–28 repeats and complements the information about the new covenant by other Hebrew prophets with the presence of the standard covenantal formula.

God himself is presented as the initiator of this covenant and he does that for the sake of his name. The standard covenant formula is seen in this text as well with an emphasis on the renewal of the people for making them a pure community. God’s people had failed to keep the Sinai covenant and profaned the name of God through their inequities. So, there will be a continuity in the actions of God for his people. The metaphor of washing with water is employed by Ezekiel to communicate the concept of cleansing. Ezekiel states that the clean water will

make the people clean (Ezk 36:25). The water is used metaphorically to represent blood which will actually make the people clean. Therefore, this cleansing will be spiritual not physical because this will happen only because God will give a new heart and a new spirit to the people of the new covenant community. So, the change of the heart and the spirit will be a regeneration of the core of the human person. Paul states the fulfilment of this promise of indwelling of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:16, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.” In his letter to Timothy, Paul again talks about this privilege of the believer as he writes, “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (2 Tim 1:14).

### **The New Testament’s Testimony on the Progression of the Covenants**

The coming of Christ inaugurates the new covenant. The New Testament texts describing this covenant presents it in the backdrop of the prophetic promises and the failure of Israel to keep the Sinai covenant. Jesus himself acknowledged that his coming has inaugurated this covenant saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20). The Lord’s Supper is presented as the meal of this covenant (Matt 26:28, Mark 14:24 and 1 Cor 11:20–33). It vividly portrays that the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is central to the establishment of this covenant. As the forgiveness of the sins was promised in this covenant (Jer 31:34), the shedding of the blood of Jesus fulfilled that promise.

The author of the Hebrews gives a detailed comparison of the old and new covenant and concludes that the new covenant is better than the old for the following reasons: (1) Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses (Heb 3:3), (2) Christ provides the entrance to God’s Sabbath rest (Heb 4:1), (3) Christ is a sure hope of better promises (Heb 6:18–19), (4) Christ is a better high priest (Heb 7), (5) Christ is a better tabernacle (Heb 9:11), and (6) Christ is a better sacrifice

of the covenant that is once for all. However, this superiority of the new covenant is not due to some inherent weakness of the Sinai covenant. Therefore, the inauguration of the new covenant by no means negates the divine origin, goodness, and usefulness of the Sinai covenant for a specific time period in the historical redemptive plan of God, and in some specific ways for the people of God in all the times. The Apostle Paul affirms the goodness of the law he writes, “So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12).

Nevertheless, all the above contentions prove beyond doubt that the new covenant is a better covenant than the old one because of Jesus Christ. The author of the Hebrews reiterates this fact as he writes in Heb 8:6, “But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.” Paul in Romans 3:21–26 explains the gospel of Jesus Christ as a true fulfilment of the promise of the new covenant made through the prophetic texts examined above.

#### Jesus Christ is the τέλος of the Hebrew Scriptures

Jesus Christ is not only the τέλος (*telos*) of the law of Moses but also the τέλος (*telos*) of the whole Hebrew Scriptures. Paul writes in Romans 10:4, “For Christ is the end [τέλος] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Jesus is God incarnate. He alone gives the ultimate meaning to every fact in the universe. He is the creator and the creation. He reveals the true image of God. He is the hermeneutic principle of the universe. God’s special revelation contained in the Hebrew Scriptures is no exception to this rule. There is no other unifying principle to be employed to read the Old Testament as a single book despite its immense diversity of literature.

The diversity of the Old Testament is depicted by a variety of themes and genres communicated by various authors from various perspectives. There is history, there is theology,



there is law, there is prophecy, and there is wisdom in this book. However, there is an organic unity that can be traced at levels. A fuller vision of the Messiah emerges as this theological and historical unity of the Old Testament is seen as a metanarrative. The phrase *redemptive history* is employed to depict this theologically rich historical metanarrative of the Scriptures.

The Old Testament is said to be *Christocentric* as Christ is the theological center of all the major themes and parts of the Old Testament. All the major themes, persons and things in the Old Testament relate to some aspect of the attributes and deeds of Christ.

### **The Types of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures**

The Old Testament foreshadows the life of Christ through extensive use of typology. The Greek terms are τύπος (*typos*) in 1 Corinthians 10:6 and Romans 5:14, and τυπικῶς (*typikos*) in 1 Corinthians 10:11, both words meaning “form or pattern” denoting the archetype, the precursor to the antitype.

A proper type necessarily escalates and terminates in the person of Christ. Thus, it can be stated that a proper type must be historically situated in its original context, naturally anticipating its own fulfillment, escalating and terminating in a final, eschatological antitype. All of this provides the reader with a clear *sensus plenior*, or retrospective realization of the type’s fulfillment. It is significant to note that all major persons, events, and institutions of the Old Testament find their culmination in the life of Christ.

### **The Sacrificial System as the Type of Christ in the Mosaic Writings**

The third book of Moses, called Leviticus, was written with the purpose to outline a basic system that highlight the need to remain in constant fellowship of LORD with the presence of five offerings that people can offer whenever that fellowship was broken due to sin (Lev 1:3–

7:34). This system was given to the people to understand the seriousness of sin and holiness of God that demands punishment for the reconciliation. The offerings of the sacrificial system served to depict the place where the love of God made provision for the justice of God to be observed and keeping the relationship in place. But they were short term and needed to be repeated again and again.

### **The Persons and Objects as the Type of Christ in the Mosaic Writings**

The Mosaic writings present the following significant persons as the types of Christ: (1) Noah is a type of Christ as many lives were saved from the judgment of the flood because of his righteousness (Gen 6–8). (2) Moses is a type of Christ as he led the redemption of God’s people and gave them law to live a life in covenant with God (Exod 12–29). (3) David is type of Christ who crushed the head of the enemy of God’s people (1 Sam 17) and proved himself the true king and shepherd of God’s people (Ezek 34:23). (4) Melchizedek is a type of Christ being a king as well as priest of God (Gen 14:18; Ps 110:4).

The Mosaic writings present following living and nonliving objects as types of Christ: (1) The Passover lamb is the type of Christ who depicts God’s provision of redemption to his people of God (Exod 12). (2) The Bronze serpent is the type of Christ as looking on him in faith results in life (Num 21). (3) The Rock from which Israel drank water in the wilderness is the type of Christ (Exod 17:1–17; Num 20:2–13).

### **The Predictive Prophecies of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures**

The Messianic vision of the Old Testament through the predictive prophecies is so comprehensive that a life story of Christ can be read through it. The Old Testament predicts Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10), will be born from a virgin (Isa 7:14), will be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2), will commence his ministry in Galilee (Isa 9:1–2), will be a

source of healing and miracles (Isa 35:5–6), will teach in parables (Ps 78:1–2), will be a stumbling block for many (Isa 8:14), will enter into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zech 9:9), will be called from Egypt (Hos 11:1), will be deceived by his close friend (Ps 41:9) for 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12), will die by crucifixion through piercing of hands and feet (Ps 22:16), will be afflicted till death among wicked to bear the sins of God’s people in silence like a sheep and will be buried in a grave of a rich man (Isa 53), will serve as the holy and perfect sacrifice (Exod 12:5; Ps 40:6–8), will not be abandoned in grave (Ps 16:10), will be exalted at the right hand of God and all his enemies will be submitted under his feet (Ps 110:1). Thus, we see the fulfilments of all these Messianic prophecies in the life Jesus Christ as narrated in the New Testament.

#### The New Testament Testimony about the Hebrew Scriptures

The *Christotelic* nature of the Hebrew Scriptures is acknowledged and affirmed by Jesus Christ and his apostles in the New Testament. Paul writes in Romans 10:4, “For Christ is the end [τέλος] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Jesus Christ made a bold claim that the Old Testament was about him as he invites the Jewish leaders to search the Old Testament to find Jesus there (John 5:39–46). All major divisions of the Old Testament contained many things about Christ (Luke 24:44). Heroes of faith mentioned in Heb 11 are called witnesses of the glory of Christ who hoped in him (Heb 12:1–2).

Jesus Christ is the one who connects the Old Testament with the New Testament. The Old Testament captures the shadow of Christ; the New Testament paints the reality of Christ. The Old Testament is the anticipation of Christ; the New Testament is the realization of Christ. The Old Testament is the promise of the coming of Christ; the New is the fulfilment of that promise. The Old Testament is preparatory and predictive of Christ, the New Testament is reflective of Christ.

Jesus not only unites the two Testaments but also depicts the culmination of redemptive history in the New Testament from its inauguration in the Old Testament. He is the seed of the Women (Gen 3:15) who crushed the head of the serpent (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 15:25), he is the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18) who is the source of blessings for all the nations of the world (Gal 3:14–16). He is the seed of David (2 Sam 7:11–12) who will reign on the throne of David forever (Luke 1:32–33). He is the mediator of a better covenant that will remain forever (Heb 9:15), and he is the second Adam who brought life for his people (Rom 5:12–15; 1 Cor 15:45).

#### Jesus Christ is The Hermeneutical Principle of *Christotelic* Hebrew Scriptures

The above discussion depicts that Jesus Christ is the τέλος (*telos*) of the Hebrew Scriptures. So, their meaning and significance cannot be understood without seeing them in the light of Jesus Christ. The person and work of Christ provide an interpretative framework to the redemptive history of the Hebrew Scriptures as well as connect the various themes and genres to give a unified message. The Scripture keeps Christ at the center as a guiding principle for interpreting the law of Moses along with other Scriptures. Jesus said to the Jews, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,” (John 5:39). Jesus’s claim was centered on the contention that the promise of eternal life in the Scripture is only for those who can see Jesus in the Scriptures. So, if the *Christotelic* nature of the Scriptures is ignored, there is no benefit in reading the Scriptures.

The Scripture keeps Christ at the center as a guiding principle for interpreting the law of Moses along with other Scriptures as evident from a simple reading of Luke 24:27 and John 5:39 where the Old Testament is seen pointing towards Christ and bearing witness to Christ. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus presents him as the fulfillment of the law. Therefore, everything in the

Scriptures is to be interpreted considering the fulfillment through Christ as depicted through the witness of the New Testament.

Jesus Christ is the Hermeneutical Principle of *Christotelic* Law of Moses

God is the source of the law. The law reflects the character of God and reveal the will of God. However, God gave the law in a cultural context as well as in a covenantal context. So, the law can be changed or modified depending upon the change in covenant and culture. Therefore, the law cannot serve as a higher principle than the life of Christ. So, he is the hermeneutical principle for the application of the law. Mark 1:40–45 and 5:24–27 illustrate this through two events in the life of Christ.

### **The Law of Moses for the New Covenant Community**

The progression of the covenant culminates at the new covenant that has been inaugurated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who is telos of the whole Scripture including the law of Moses. This chapter five have explored the relations between the law of Mose and Christins and uses a Christological lens to construct hermeneutical principles for the application of the law of Moses for the Christians. The relationship between the law of Moses and Christins is succinctly summarized by Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:20–21:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

A plain reading of this text yields that the Christians are not under the law of Moses, rather they are under the law of Christ.

### Christians are not under the Law of Moses

Paul had a great love for spreading the gospel to all people with whom he interacted including Jews and Gentiles. So, Paul used all possible and legitimate means to win diverse groups of people for the gospel. To win Jews, he behaved like Jews. So, although there had been a radical change in Paul's self-understanding after coming to Christ, his becoming as a Jew involved following the commandments of the law of Moses. However, this adaptation of Paul was voluntary as in reality he was not bound to follow the law of Moses. He was not under the law. Being under the law was a condition which was not applicable to Paul because of his status in Christ.

Paul uses ὑπὸ νόμον (*hypo nomon*) eleven times in his writings (Rom 6:14–15, 1 Cor 9:20–21, Gal 3:23; 4:4–5, 21; 5:18). According to Paul, being under the law involves being under the judgment of the law (Rom 2:12), under the wrath and transgression (Rom 4:15), under the dominion of the sin (Rom 6:14), and under the curse of the law (Gal 3:10). In Rom 6:14–15, Paul reiterates the promise of the new covenant which involves living a life with a new heart, not under the dominion of sin.

Being under the law is parallel to living a life ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν (*hypo paidagōgon*) which was for the old covenant era, not for the era of the new covenant inaugurated by the coming of Jesus Christ (Gal 3:24–25). The coming of Christ has ended the era of the slavery to sin. Christians have been died to the law (Gal 2:19) and released from the law in the newness of the Spirit (Rom 7:6). Jesus Christ has redeemed them from the curse of law through his atoning sacrifice (Gal 3:13). Therefore, they are not living under the condemnation of the law (Rom 8:1). So, Paul's point in 1 Cor 9:20–21 was that although he voluntarily obeyed many stipulations of the Sinai covenant in his love for winning the Jews for Christ, it had not caused him to live a life

under the old covenant. It was temporarily done in some situations by Paul, and it did not change his status in Christ by any means.

The author of Hebrews eloquently proves the superiority of Jesus in comparison with the mediators of the Mosaic law (Hebrews 2:2), Moses himself (Hebrews 2:3), Mosaic Law's Priesthood (Hebrews 4: 14–7:28) and Mosaic Covenant (Hebrews 8:1–13). Thus, the Christians, having seen the original, are warned not to return to the shadow in the Old Covenant. James links faith with works and discusses the royal law, law of liberty and love as the best expression of this law (James 2:8–12). Here emphasis is on doing God's will through the obedience that comes through faith in Christ. Paul says, "Jesus is the end of the law" (Romans 10:4). The law of Moses was anticipating Christ as goal and was terminated after the fulfillment in Jesus Christ. All the goodness of the law is affirmed (1 Timothy 1:8), its failure to produce desired results due to human condition is acknowledged (Romans 3:20) and the final solution through the grace of Jesus Christ without law is given (Romans 3:21 –22).

#### Christians are under the Law of Christ

Christians are not under the law of Moses. Paul contrasts being under the law with being under grace. It is synonymous with them under the law of Christ, νόμος Χριστοῦ (*nomos Christou*). The law of Christ represents all norms for a believer which can only be discerned by a new covenant believer through the guidance of the Holy Spirit from the special revelation of God in Scriptures and the general revelation of God in nature and conscience. So, it cannot be limited to a list of rules in the form of legal codes. It is because we are not ministers of letters but of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6). In other words, there are no covenant legislations with the new covenant as there were covenant legislation with the old covenant. Or in other words, the new covenant has not brought a new law with itself. So, the key word in the phrase

“the law of Christ” is not “the law,” rather it is “Christ.” All the difference in approaching the covenant legislations has been made through Christ making the new covenant.

We see a strikingly new approach to obedience of law in the life and teaching of Christ. Love is kept at center in the New Testament as was in the Old Testament. Loving one another is presented as the basic underlying principle in Mosaic Law and the Christians are commanded to love as a new commandment of the Law of Christ (Rom 13:8 –10; Gal 5:13 –14). Therefore, the love commandment depicts both continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. This is called new because it is given in the context of the new covenant, which highlights the discontinuity. The fulfilment of the law of Moses and all other laws is seen in following this commandment which highlights the continuity between the laws and their respective covenants.

#### Christians are to get Benefit from the Law of Moses

As depicted in above section, Christians are not under the law of Moses because they are not under the Mosaic covenant. The law of Moses has found its *telos* in Christ and is not directly applicable to the believers of the new covenant. However, it does not lead to the conclusion that the law is useless and irrelevant for Christians. A non-binding law does not imply a non-beneficial law. It still a source of instruction for Christians as it is a part of Scriptures.

Paul advised his disciple, “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 complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16–17). Paul is referring to the Old Testament here because these were the sacred writing that Timothy had been using since his childhood. The divine nature of the source of Scripture cannot be ignored by any means. It depicts that the usefulness of the Scriptures is not optional because they are indispensable for wisdom. They are profitable for our training in righteousness. In Romans 15:4 also, Paul says



that the Scriptures were written for our instruction. All Scripture is a source of wisdom and guidance for Christians including the law of Moses. However, every part must be interpreted in its canonical context in light of the fulfilment in the new covenant.

So, this study arrives at the conclusion that rather than asking what part of the law of Moses is applicable to Christians, one should be asking how the law of Moses is applicable to Christians. As established in the previous chapter, the answer to this question is intimately related to the way Christ is seen as *τέλος* (*telos*) of the law. The Scripture keeps Christ at the center as a guiding principle for interpreting the law is evident from the simple reading of Luke 24:27 and John 5:39 where the Old Testament is seen pointing towards Christ and bearing witness to Christ. Thus, the right interpretation of the law is attained by seeing it through the person and the work of Christ. So, the following section elaborates the five hermeneutical principles for application of the law of Moses for Christians.

#### The Hermeneutical Principles for Application

The distinctive feature of this study is that it is not applying Scriptures or the law of Moses directly to Christians. Rather, the law and the other Scriptures are applied first to Christ and then seeing their application to Christians in the light of fulfilment through Christ. So, this study arrives at the conclusion that the Mosaic Law is applied to Christians through the grid of fulfillment in Christ which involves recalibration of each of its commandments around Christ without making Christians subject to it. The following are the four hermeneutical principles for the application of the law for Christians.

#### **Transformation of the Commandments**

The commandment about the Sabbath is stated in Deuteronomy 5:12 as a part of the Ten Commandments. The purpose of the Sabbath was to rest and spend time with God in worship

and devotion. However, that rest was a shadow of the true and eternal rest that believers will have in Christ. Thus, Christians are not under Sabbath keeping (Romans 14:5; Colossians 2:16) but Christ's fulfillment transforms this commandment so that Christians look forward to eternal rest as a full realization of Sabbath and have designated the Lord's Day as a day of worship and devotion.

### **Ending of the Commandments**

The commandments about food are described in Leviticus 20:25 –26. Israelites were required to observe the distinction between clean and unclean animals and were commanded to restrict their diet to clean animals. The purpose of this commandment was to set Israel apart from other nations. In Christ, God has called the other nations to be part of the Church, and the Israel-gentile distinction has been abolished. So, this command is ended for Christians as stated by Jesus in plain words in Mark 7:19 as well as by Paul's statement in Colossians 2:16.

### **Maintenance of the Commandments**

The commandment to respect the parents is also part of the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:16) which is repeated in Ephesians 6:2 in the affirmative. This commandment is profound in its theological significance. Thus, we see that this commandment is maintained for Christians in the Law of Christ without any change. There is no change in the responsibilities and benefits of the parent-child relationship in the Mosaic Law and the Law of Christ, thus this commandment is maintained.

### **Extension of the Commandments**

The commandment regarding parapet building is stated in Deuteronomy 22:8. Here the Spirit of the commandment is to protect the life of neighbor as a reflection of love for neighbor. Christ's fulfillment makes this commandment extended to involve the care of all aspects of a

neighbor's life. Paul says, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14). Thus, in the law of love, we not only see the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law but also an extension of the commandments having love as their foundational principle.

### **Contributions of This Research**

The distinctive feature of this study is that it is not applying the Scriptures or the law of Moses directly to Christians. Rather it applies the Scriptures or the law of Moses first to Christ and then to Christians in the light of fulfillment through Christ. As the law of Moses has commandment dealing with diverse situations in life in the context of the Sinai covenant, so every commandment of the law is applied to Christians in the context of the new covenant. Thus, Christological application is derived and the four hermeneutical principles of transformation, ending, maintenance, and extension are derived.

Another significant feature of this study is emphasis on how the commandments of the law of Moses are applied to Christians rather than asking what commandments are applied. It helps to keep Christ at the center in this process, not the commandments or the obedience to the commandments. For everything is done for Christ, through Christ in the light of Christ. This can have a good impact on the readers to develop a Christological lens to see the law of Moses.

### **Limitations of This Research**

This study involves a complex interaction of hermeneutics, exegesis, and biblical theology on the topic of the Mosaic Law. Therefore, it has several noticeable limitations. (1) Although this study interacts extensively with dispensational and covenantal theological systems, it is not a thorough evaluation of these systems. It only addresses the contentions and issues relevant to the application of the Mosaic Law for Christians; (2) This study interacts with the concept of the law of Christ through a brief discussion emphasizing only on its relationship with

the Mosaic Law; (3) This study presents detailed analysis of only one commandment for each of the four hermeneutical principles for the Christological application.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study invites the readers to embark upon a study on every commandment of the law of Moses to see whether it is transformed, ended, maintained, or extended when applied through the grid of the fulfillment through Christ. It may lead to a comprehensive study of 613 commandments of the law of Moses interpreted through the grid of fulfillment through Christ.

This study also invites the readers to see the commandments stated in the New Testament through Jesus Christ and the Apostles in the light of the life and death of Jesus Christ, not as legalistic requirements of the new covenant. A few examples can be cited here: (1) John narrates the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and records Jesus giving the commandment, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet” (John 13:14). Are we to follow this commandment literally by washing the feet of other believers every Sunday or we are to follow the principle of humility and serving others? (2) Paul writes, “Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven” (1 Cor 11:4–5). So, one may explore the application of this command of Paul for the Christians living in the West where no head covering is used by women.

### **Practical Application**

Christians are justified by faith, not by works. The work of Christ completed on the cross is the source of their justification and growing in maturity to do the will of God. As the law of Moses is among the earliest and clearest revelation of the prescriptive will of God available in written form, a Christian must know what needs to be done with the law. However, what a

Christian should do with the law depends on what Christ has done with the law. This hermeneutical and exegetical exploration depicts that the Mosaic Law is applied to Christians through the grid of fulfillment in Christ which involves recalibration of each of its commandments around Christ.

So, Christians are not made subject to the law of Moses. However, it does not lead to a neglect of the law being part of the Scriptures. Rather, the usefulness of the Mosaic Law for Christians in their life in the context of the New Covenant is established through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, Christians get all the benefits of the wisdom embedded in the law without being under it by any means. It leads to edification of the believers of the new covenant community which ultimately leads to glorification of God through human transformation.

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