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Law of Moses Completed in Christ

"But certain members of the Pharisees' party who had become believers objected, insisting that the pagans should be circumcised and instructed to keep the Law of Moses."

Acts 15:5

Jesus' revelation that the writings of the Law and the Prophets were symbolic (they were all pointing to Jesus) put Him in direct conflict with those who held that the teachings of the Old Testament were absolute and needed to be accepted literally and followed exactly as they were written.

Because obsession with these rules was so pervasive and so compelling (even among early Christians), reforming the ritual of the Old Testament became one of the earliest priorities of God and the Church.

When the Apostles gathered in Jerusalem to decide this matter, there was much disagreement among them as to how much of the Torah should be retained and how much discarded.

Moved by the Holy Spirit, Peter stood up before the assembly and argued, "

God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of the pagans by giving them the same Holy Spirit he gave to us. It would only provoke God's anger now, if we were to impose on them the very burden of the Law that neither we nor our ancestors were strong enough to support. Remember, we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 15:8-11).

This statement silenced the discord.

In one of the most momentous decisions in the history of the Christian Church, the Jerusalem assembly separated the Church from the rules and regulations of the Old Testament, decreeing:

"It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from fornication. Avoid these, and you will do what is right." (Acts 15:29).

With this decree, the Apostles in Jerusalem severed the Church from its bondage to the rules of the Torah and the Talmud so that Christians could live their lives in the mercy and justice of Jesus without having to struggle with the voluminous decrees of the Law of Moses.

When this meeting ended, only the template of the Torah and the symbolism it advertised remained in place. The Laws and rituals of the Old Testament were all completed in Christ. They were superseded in their entirety by faith: the commandments of the Gospel and the directives of a 'new' Testament which had begun to be penned around the four Gospels and the letters of Paul.

Their ability to grant that freedom was guaranteed by Jesus, Himself, when He issued these words to His apostles:

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: Whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven." (Mt.16:19).

The importance of what happened that day in Jerusalem cannot be overstated. The religious freedom of the entire Christian Church occurred instantly the moment those council directives were approved. Their decree, now itself bound under the power of "the keys of the kingdom" as scripture, can never be overturned.

"scripture cannot be rejected". (Jn.10:35).

The entire Apostolic body attended that Jerusalem Council, the first in Church history. All twelve of Christ's Apostles, Paul, Silas, Barnabus and all the elders of the new Jerusalem Church were in attendance, the great and the small. Those who were of the Phariseic party and had converted to Jesus argued that the Laws of Moses should be incorporated into the rules of Christian doctrine.

There was a long discussion on the matter (Acts 15:6-7). When all the members of the gathered assembly had presented their views on the subject, and after Peter had made his own statement, James, the head of the Jerusalem church arose and said:

"My brothers, listen to me. Simeon has described how God first arranged to enlist a people for his name out of the pagans. This is entirely in harmony with the words of the prophets...I rule then, that instead of making things more difficult for the pagans who turn to God, we send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from anything polluted by idols, from fornication, and from the meat of strangled animals..." (Acts 15:13-20).

This directive, immediately approved by all, allowed the Church to build itself only in the directives of Christ.

A question continues to be asked: how can this decision freeing Christians from the Law compare with Christ's statement in Matthew 5:17-20, stating that Jesus did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets and that anyone who breaks even the least of those commandments or teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in heaven?

"Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt.5:17-19).

Jesus is speaking in this passage about the Law of Moses and its transition into the Law of God. That transition considers them to be two parts of the same Law. Moses authored a reflection of the Law which was fulfilled in its entirety by Jesus Christ when He brought the true Law of God down from heaven. The Law of God is the Gospel Jesus taught, and that is the Law referenced here - i.e., the Gospel, the Law of God that completed everything Moses foresaw .

We are ordered in Mt. 5:19 to keep all the commandments of Jesus Christ, down to the very smallest detail, and teach others to do the same.

Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. We can see that completion in every aspect of Christianity. The Old Testament forms the template upon which the religion of Jesus Christ has been built. The entire architecture of the Church is built on this Mosaic

template. That alone proves the template's fulfillment. So does the fact that Jesus made such extensive efforts to fulfill every prophecy written about Him in the Old Testament.

Through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, Paul recognized that there could not be two laws. One belonged to the Guardian (Moses). It was meant to be a caretaker of the people until the true law of God arrived to take its rightful place. He also realized that there is no place for the guardian once the true Father had taken His place. The Law of Moses had to pass away. Only the Law of God through Christ was eternal and would never pass away. As scripture teaches, no one can go into the sanctuary as long as the outer tent remains standing. It had to come down.

"By this, the Holy Spirit is showing that no one has the right to go into the sanctuary as long as the outer tent remains standing; it is a symbol for this present time. None of the gifts and sacrifices offered under these regulations can possibly bring any worshiper to perfection in his inner self; they are rules about the outward life, connected with foods and drinks and washing at various times, intended to be in force only until it should be time to reform them." (Heb. 9:8-10)

It was clear to everyone that no one could be saved in the Law of Moses. No one could survive his Law. Any slip in the Law at any time meant death. No one could stumble in even the smallest of its myriad regulations and live. Moreover, the Mosaic sacrifices were imperfect and for this reason unable to meet the stringent specifications of their own law. A perfect unblemished sacrifice for sin was essential to fulfill the precise language of the Mosaic Law.

That is why everybody in the Old Testament died. Moses could save no one. His Law was good, outlining sin in detail, but certain death to humanity. That is why Paul told the Jewish leaders the following about their Law:

"If you can teach the ignorant and instruct the unlearned because your Law embodies all knowledge and truth, then why not teach yourself as well as the others? You preach against stealing, yet you steal; you forbid adultery, yet you commit adultery; you despise idols, yet you rob their temples. By boasting about the Law and then disobeying it, you bring God into contempt." (Rom. 2:20-24).

The Law was unable to do anything about a sinner but condemn him to death. God had carried out this very sentence on His own Son in order to cancel the Law's ability to condemn those who accepted Christ's death as their own in His name through baptism and

conversion into His Gospel (the true Law of God). There could be no higher or more perfect sacrifice than Jesus, the Son of God.

Paul expressed our rescue in these terms:

"Before faith came, we were allowed no freedom by the Law; we were being looked after till faith was revealed. The Law was to be our guardian until the Christ came and we could be justified by faith. Now that that time has come we are no longer under that guardian, and you are, all of you, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal.3:23-26)

"When law came, it was to multiply the opportunities of falling, but however great the number of sins committed, grace was even greater; and so, just as sin reigned wherever there was death, so grace will reign to bring eternal life thanks to the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 5:20-21).

"Through the Law I am dead to the Law, so that now I can live for God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now, not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me." (Gal.2:19).

Jesus Christ died on the cross to replace the Law of Moses with grace.

"...we acknowledge that what makes a man righteous is not obedience to the Law, but faith in Jesus Christ." (Gal.2:16).

"But if you do look to the Law to make you justified, then you have separated yourselves from Christ, and have fallen from grace." (Gal.5:4)

It is this same freedom from the Law of the Old Testament that was verified and codified at the Jerusalem Council meeting by Peter, Paul and the rest of Christ's Apostles without dissent. Faith (the Word we proclaim) is the Law of God, the true Law of heaven and earth that brings grace in place of the Law for all who are baptised in His name.

"The word, that is the faith we proclaim, is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart. If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips

you are saved. (Rom.10:8-11)

"He has overridden the Law, and cancelled every record of the debt that we had to pay; he has done away with it by nailing it to the cross; and so he got rid of the Sovereignities and the Powers, and paraded them in public, behind him in his triumphal procession." (Col. 2:14-15).

Because Jesus overrode the Law, Christians are able to stumble in Christ and not die because they are protected from failure by God's Grace which protects those who are faithful to Him.

"Does it follow that we should remain in sin so as to let grace have greater scope? Of course not. We are dead to sin. so how can we continue to live in it? (Rom.6:1-2)

"That is why you must not let sin reign in your mortal bodies or command your obedience to bodily passions, why you must not let any part of your body turn into an unholy weapon fighting on the side of sin; you should, instead offer yourselves to God, and consider yourselves dead men brought back to life; you should make every part of your body into a weapon fighting on the side of God; and then sin will no longer dominate your life, since you are living by grace and not by law." (Rom.6:12-14).

"You must live your whole life according to the Christ you have received - Jesus the Lord; you must be rooted in him and built on him and held firm by the faith you have been taught, and full of thanksgiving." (Col. 2:6-7).

It was essential that the guardian law of Moses be separated from God's Law brought by Jesus Christ. As Paul's letters show, various Jewish Christians of his time were trying to retain the Mosaic laws and raise them up as legalities that competed with the freedoms of grace: not only circumcision, but saturday sabbaths, distinctions between pagans and Jews, temple rituals, rules of retaliation and graven images, idols, distinctions between male and female, hair and clothing styles; distinctions between foods, Hebrew and Greek language; jewelry, words and scores of other regulations either documented in the Torah or contained in the traditions of the Talmud.

The cut had to be 100%. There could be no middle ground. Arbitration on which rules constituted a saved Christian could only lead to division, separating Jews from Greeks and

pagans and bringing chaos to the religion.

Thus we can see in Paul's teaching that Christ's exhortation in Matthew 5:17-19 is divided into two parts. The first applies to Jesus' completion of the Law and the Prophets - bringing to pass all that the Mosaic Law promised. The second applies, not to the Mosaic copy of the Law, but to what it pointed to - the Law of God (the commandments of the Gospel) brought down from heaven by Jesus Christ.

In fact, Moses, himself, bears witness to this transition (from the old to new). He wrote that God told him this about Jesus Christ:

"I will raise up a prophet like yourself for them from their own brothers; I will put my words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him. The man who does not listen to my words that he speaks in my name, shall be held answerable to me for it." (Dt. 18:18-19).

This command is clear. It is Jesus' words everyone must listen to.

"Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven." (Mt.5:19).

In other words, according to Moses, God's entire Law is in Jesus Christ.

"I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:32-51)

Paul confirmed all this when he dismissed the Law of Moses, cancelling every record of our debt to it. Though he dismissed the Law of Moses from the Law of God, Paul suffered no penalty for his action (i.e., he is not the least in the kingdom of God; in fact, Paul is one of the highest figures in the Christian Church). The Holy Spirit has backed his action. Thus there can be no question that Paul had divine authority to take us out of the Law.

That authority can be seen confirmed in the history of the Church.

Today, the Christian era is almost over. We are already in the "third day", the day of Christ's return. The Church is now almost 2000 years old. That means all the things we are discussing here are virtually past-tense at this point. Those 2000-years clearly show that Paul's doctrine, later agreed upon by the Apostles at Jerusalem in Acts 15, was immediately embraced by the Church, codified in scripture, and reaffirmed by succeeding Church leaders throughout the Church's reign on earth. The outer tent was torn down completely, and not rebuilt.

Christian history shows that after the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-29), only Christ remained in God's salvation picture. The Hebrew Law thereafter was not used to bind rules on the developing Christian community. From that point on, grace ruled alone and the Old Testament's messages served the people of God almost solely as prophecy and historical reference (bringing understanding through contrast).

With the exception of the Ten Commandments (written by the hand of God, and reaffirmed by Jesus) the laws governing the Old Testament as far as Christians were concerned were replaced or transfigured in their entirety by the commandments of Jesus Christ and the guidelines of the New Testament. Even the Ten Commandments were transitioned! (Mat. 5:20-48)

The holy days were also changed. Where is Passover? Where is Weeks? Where is Hannukah? All these and the others were changed to Christ in the very earliest days of the Church. Each part of the Torah of Moses has been elevated and restructured in Christ in accordance with its true meaning to God. In fact, the entire legal structure of the Torah served the Christian Church as the template for the Law of God brought by Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament remained, but it was there in the way the Book of Hebrews announced it to be - a law surpassed and slowly passing away. A document brimming with prophecies, some still to be revealed.

Salvation and eternal life apply only to those who follow Christ. Jesus gave His life on the cross as the perfect sacrifice according to the Law, able to remove forever the mark of the beast, Satan's stain on our soul. Everyone on earth, not yet baptised in Christ, carries this mark. It can only be removed by faith in Jesus through baptism in His name in heartfelt repentance.

God had given Moses full authority to bind the Law on the Hebrew tribes, and, because no one could keep the Law he bound, it doomed every Hebrew citizen subject to it. Yet, the Law's condemnation went far deeper than the Hebrew tribes, because it condemns all

mankind to death through the apostasy of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:12-19).

This means that everyone on earth not yet baptised, whether in the Law or out of the Law, remains intractably subject to the Law which condemns to death everyone who continues to carry the stain Satan placed on our souls through Adam or Eve (i.e., "original sin").

Before the Law came, no one could be held accountable for sin (Rom. 7:8-13). Moses changed that. His Law bound the whole world in sin.

As Paul said, the Law "is meant to silence everyone and to lay the whole world open to God's judgment; and this is because no one can be justified in the sight of God by keeping the Law..." (Romans 3:19-20).

Since most people on earth have never been baptised, the Law remains very powerfully alive today, and fully binding on the human race. Those who refuse to acknowledge Christ's offer of redemption forfeit their chance to escape Satan's grasp and achieve eternal life. Obeying the Law cannot change that condemnation. Only baptism into Jesus can separate anyone from the law of sin and death.

Why would God make a law that leads to death?

To destroy Satan and the sin he brought to the creation. The Law applies to everyone on earth and in the Abyss and beyond. The Law is not only about the first death, it is about the second death, the destruction of evil itself in the spiritual world. It guarantees the death of Satan, and all who follow him: the Beast and the False Prophet included.

Only in Christ can we escape this sentence. Only Christ leads to eternal life. He was the perfect sacrifice that has power to take death's sentence off our souls. His commandments lead to eternal life.

Again, Moses bears witness to this, saying of the Messiah to come which he prophesied:

"But he, is he not something precious to me, sealed inside my treasury?

Vengeance is mine, and requital for the time when they make a false step. For it is close, the day of their ruin; their doom comes at speed. (For the Lord will see his people righted, he will take pity on his servants.) For he will see to it that their power fails, that, serf or freeman, not one remains.

Where are their gods? he will ask then, the rock where they thought to take refuge, who ate the fat of their sacrifices and

drank the wine of their libations? Let these arise and help you!
See now that I, I am He, and beside me there is no other god.

It is I who deal death and life; when I have struck it is I who heal (and none can deliver from my hand).

Yes, I lift up my hand to heaven, and I say: As surely as I live forever, when I have whetted my flashing sword I will take up the cause of Right, I will give my foes as good again. I will repay those who hate me. "

"Heavens, rejoice with him, let the sons of God pay him homage! Nations, rejoice with his people, let God's envoys tell of his power! For he will avenge the blood of his servants, he will give his foes as good again, he will repay those who hate him and purify the land of his people."

"When Moses had finished reciting these words to all Israel, he said to them, "Take all these words to heart; I call them to witness against you today. You must order your children to keep and observe all the words of this Law. It is no idle thing you will be doing, for the Law is your life, and by its means you will live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess." (Dt. 32:36-47).

The Messiah, Jesus Christ, brought an entire new covenant. The old covenant of Moses no longer applies to those who have joined themselves through faith and baptism to God's new covenant, for it has completed the old covenant and fulfilled it. Those so joined to Jesus have died to their flesh in this world to put on a new body in Christ's eternal kingdom in heaven (Heb. 9:15-28).

"See, the days are coming - it is God who speaks- when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, so I had to show them who was master (Jer.31:31-32).

"No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel when those days arrive: Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people." (Jer.31:33).

The first covenant is gone and it will not return. Not ever! The Old Testament itself has decreed that. It has been replaced by a new covenant, one that comes to us in the Christ that God sent - the same Messiah the Hebrew and Jewish people waited for with such anticipation for so many centuries.

"By speaking of a new covenant, God implies that the first one is already old. Now anything old only gets more antiquated until in the end it disappears". (Heb.8:13).

This is why the Apostles made clear in Jerusalem the supremacy of Jesus over the old covenant. The Old Testament with all of its rules and laws will pass away but Christ's words will never pass away. His Gospel is eternal. It is the one everlasting Law of God. There can be no other.

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**"I Tell You Most Solemnly,
Whoever Keeps My Word Will Never See Death"**

John 8:51