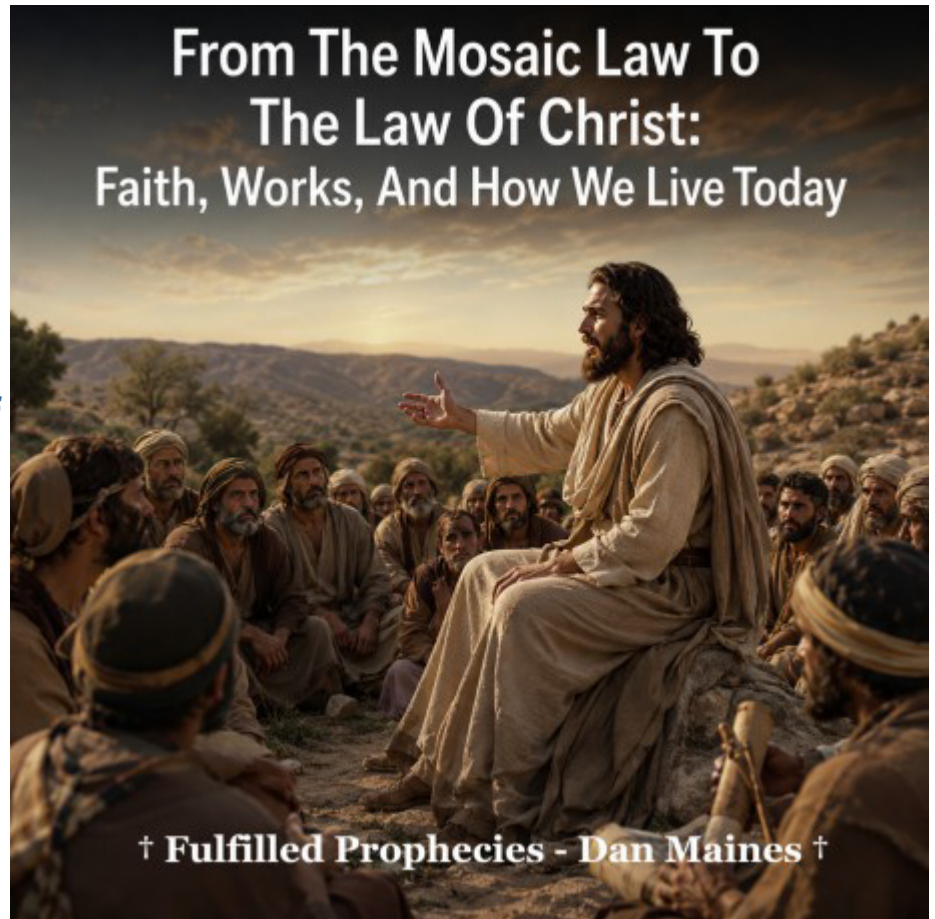


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From The Mosaic Law To The Law Of Christ: Faith, Works, And How We Live Today



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† The Bible presents a covenantal transition from the Mosaic covenant, given specifically to Israel at Sinai, to the New Covenant established through Jesus Christ.

† This transition wasn't from obedience to disobedience, or from law to lawlessness. It was a transition from the Mosaic covenant and its commandments to life under Christ and the law of Christ.

† The Mosaic system contained sacrifices, circumcision, food regulations, feast days, Sabbaths, priesthood regulations, and other covenant requirements that identified Israel under the Old Covenant.

† Christ fulfilled that covenantal system. We aren't under Moses today. We belong to Christ and live under the New Covenant.

† This distinction is extremely important when preaching the gospel. Salvation isn't earned by accumulating enough good works. We are saved through faith, and genuine biblical faith produces obedience.

† Abraham demonstrates this perfectly. Abraham believed God, and his faith was counted to him as righteousness. His later actions demonstrated the reality of the faith he already possessed.

† James 2 doesn't teach salvation by works. James teaches that genuine faith doesn't remain alone and inactive. Living faith acts.

† The fulfillment of the Old Covenant age also helps us understand how believers live after the coming of Christ was completed. We aren't waiting for the Mosaic age to disappear. We live in the established New Covenant kingdom of Christ.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord: I will put My law within them and write it on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

† Jeremiah didn't predict a repaired version of the Sinai covenant. He predicted a new covenant that would be different from the covenant made when Israel came out of Egypt.

† The contrast is covenant with covenant. The Mosaic covenant wasn't intended to remain God's permanent covenantal

arrangement.

† Jesus established the promised New Covenant through His blood, bringing God's people into the covenant Jeremiah anticipated (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6-13).

Galatians 3:17-19

What I am saying is this: the Law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. Why the Law then? It was added on account of the violations, having been ordered through angels at the hand of a mediator, until the Seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

† Paul tells us that the Mosaic Law came after God's promise to Abraham. The promise wasn't based upon Israel earning the inheritance through the Law.

† Paul also gives the Mosaic Law a limited covenantal purpose. It was added because of transgressions until the promised Seed came.

† Christ is that promised Seed (Galatians 3:16). The Law served its appointed purpose, but it couldn't replace or cancel God's earlier promise to Abraham.

Galatians 3:23-25

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, being confined for the faith that was destined to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

† The Mosaic Law functioned as a tutor leading Israel toward Christ. A tutor has a purpose, but that purpose isn't permanent.

† Paul couldn't say that believers are no longer under the tutor if Christians were still covenantally obligated to remain under the Mosaic Law.

† Our justification isn't based upon keeping the Mosaic code. Our standing before God is found in Christ through faith

(Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16).

Romans 7:4-6

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also were put to death in regard to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were brought to light by the Law, were at work in the parts of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

† Paul doesn't describe Christians as remaining married covenantally to Moses while also belonging to Christ. Through Christ they died to their former covenantal relationship to the Law.

† Notice that freedom from the Mosaic Law doesn't eliminate faithful living. Paul immediately speaks about bringing forth fruit for God.

† New Covenant obedience comes from belonging to Christ. We serve God in the newness brought through Christ rather than returning to the Old Covenant system.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

† Christians aren't lawless because they aren't under the Mosaic covenant. Paul specifically identifies the law of Christ.

† The law of Christ centers our lives upon Christ and expresses itself through love, mercy, service, holiness, and bearing one another's burdens (John 13:34-35; Romans 13:8-10).

† The question for Christians isn't whether an action conforms us to national Israel under Sinai. The question is whether our lives demonstrate faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:20-21

To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews; to those who are under the Law, I became as one under the Law,

though not being under the Law myself, so that I might gain those who are under the Law; to those who are without the Law, I became as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law.

† Paul makes the distinction unmistakable. He says he wasn't under the Law, yet he immediately explains that he wasn't without God's moral authority.

† Paul describes himself as being under law to Christ. Freedom from Moses wasn't permission to live however he wanted.

† This is the New Covenant balance. We aren't under the Mosaic covenant, but we belong completely to Jesus Christ and are called to live according to His will.

Romans 4:1-5

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about; but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, the wages are not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

† Abraham is one of Scripture's clearest demonstrations that righteousness before God isn't a paycheck earned through human performance.

† Abraham believed God, and his faith was counted as righteousness. Paul deliberately contrasts receiving righteousness through faith with earning wages through works.

† This doesn't mean Abraham's faith produced no obedience. It means his obedience flowed from faith rather than purchasing righteousness from God.

James 2:14-18

What use is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of

you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? In the same way, faith also, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

† James isn't teaching that we purchase salvation through good deeds. He's confronting a profession of faith that produces absolutely nothing.

† Notice his wording. Someone says he has faith. James challenges whether that claimed faith is genuine when there's no evidence of it in the person's life.

† Works don't replace faith. Works reveal faith. A living faith naturally becomes visible through what a person does.

James 2:21-24

Was our father Abraham not justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

† James takes us directly to Abraham. Abraham's offering of Isaac occurred after Abraham had already believed God and had already been counted righteous by faith (Genesis 15:6; Genesis 22:1-18).

† James says Abraham's faith was working with his works. He doesn't separate genuine faith from obedience, and he doesn't turn obedience into a system for earning salvation.

† Abraham's actions brought his faith to maturity and demonstrated the reality of what he believed. This is faith followed by works because genuine faith acts.

† Paul addresses people who might trust their works as the basis of righteousness. James addresses people who might claim to have faith while producing no evidence of it. The two

apostles aren't contradicting one another.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

† These verses put grace, faith, and works in their proper order. Salvation is by grace through faith, not something we earn through works.

† Yet Paul doesn't stop with verse 9. Those saved by grace are created in Christ Jesus for good works.

† We aren't saved by good works, but we're saved for a life that produces good works. Grace doesn't eliminate obedience, it puts obedience in its proper place.

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.

† Hebrews was written during the first-century covenantal transition. The Old Covenant had been made obsolete through Christ, yet its visible temple order was still standing when Hebrews described it as nearing disappearance.

† This explains why the New Testament contains transition language. Christ had established the New Covenant, while the old temple-centered world was approaching its final judgment.

† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 publicly and historically removed the remaining center of the Mosaic covenantal order (Matthew 24:1-3, 34; Luke 21:20-22).

Hebrews 9:8-10

The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the

worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food, drink, and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

† The Old Covenant regulations had an appointed endpoint. Hebrews calls them regulations imposed until the time of reformation.

† That reformation wasn't the restoration of Moses. It was the establishment and completion of the better covenant centered entirely in Christ.

† The first-century believers lived through that transition. We don't. We live after the Old Covenant age reached its end and the New Covenant order was fully established.

Hebrews 10:37

For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay.

† The coming described to the original Hebrew Christians wasn't presented as something thousands of years away. They were told it would occur in a very little while.

† This coming belongs to the first-century completion of the covenantal transition that dominates the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 8:13; 9:8-10).

† Christ's coming in judgment brought the Old Covenant age to its final historical conclusion. We aren't living between two covenants today. We live after that transition.

Historical References

† Josephus, writing about the Jewish war and Jerusalem's destruction, describes the catastrophic fall of the city, the burning of the temple, and the collapse of the religious center that had dominated Jewish national life. His account provides important historical background for understanding the first-century judgment.

† Tacitus, in Histories Book 5, records the Roman siege of Jerusalem and provides Roman historical testimony concerning the conflict that brought Jerusalem's temple-centered order to destruction.

† Eusebius, in Ecclesiastical History Book 3, records the early Christian tradition that believers in Jerusalem departed before the city's destruction. His account shows how later Christians understood the catastrophe as deeply connected with Jesus' warnings concerning Jerusalem.

† These historical writers don't establish biblical doctrine. Scripture does. Their value is that they provide historical testimony concerning the first-century events surrounding Jerusalem and the temple's destruction.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't preach Moses as the covenant under which people must place themselves. We preach Jesus Christ.

† We don't tell people they can earn salvation by becoming good enough. The gospel begins with God's grace and calls people to faith in Christ.

† We also don't preach an empty faith that changes nothing. Biblical faith lives, acts, loves, serves, forgives, gives, and obeys.

† This is especially important in street ministry. Feeding someone, helping someone, showing compassion, and serving someone can't purchase salvation, but those actions can demonstrate the living faith of a person who belongs to Christ.

† Abraham didn't perform works so God would owe him righteousness. Abraham believed God, and because he believed God, he acted upon what he believed.

† That's the relationship between faith and works that James emphasizes. Faith is the root, works are the fruit. The fruit doesn't create the root, but a living root produces fruit.

† We aren't trying to rebuild the Mosaic covenant. We aren't waiting for the Old Covenant age to end. We aren't waiting for Christ to complete the covenantal transition.

† We live in the New Covenant reality Christ established. Our lives should therefore demonstrate faith working through love (Galatians 5:6).

† The message we carry into the world is Christ, not Moses, grace rather than human merit, living faith rather than empty

profession, and good works as the fruit of belonging to Jesus.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Are Christians under the Mosaic Law today?

A: No. Paul says believers are no longer under the tutor and describes himself as under law to Christ rather than under the Mosaic Law (Galatians 3:23-25; 1 Corinthians 9:20-21).

Q: Does being free from the Mosaic Law mean Christians have no law or standard for living?

A: No. Paul specifically speaks of the law of Christ. Christians belong to Christ and are called to love, holiness, obedience, mercy, and service (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21).

Q: Does James 2 teach that we're saved by earning righteousness through works?

A: No. James attacks dead, empty faith. His point is that genuine faith becomes visible through action. Paul explains that Abraham was counted righteous through faith, while James explains how Abraham's later obedience demonstrated and matured that faith (Romans 4:1-5; James 2:14-24).

Q: Why does James say Abraham was justified by works?

A: Because Abraham's actions demonstrated the reality of his faith. James specifically says faith was working with Abraham's works and that faith was brought to maturity through those works (James 2:21-24).

Q: Which came first with Abraham, faith or the work of offering Isaac?

A: Faith came first. Abraham believed God and was counted righteous before the event involving Isaac. His later obedience demonstrated the faith he already possessed (Genesis 15:6; Genesis 22:1-18; Romans 4:1-5; James 2:21-24).

Q: What's wrong with a works-based faith?

A: If someone believes good works earn righteousness as

though God owes salvation as payment, grace has been replaced by human merit. Paul says salvation is God's gift and isn't the result of works so that nobody can boast (Romans 4:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-10).

Q: If salvation isn't by works, why should Christians do good works?

A: Because good works are the fruit of a life created in Christ. We don't work to purchase salvation. We do good because we belong to Christ and genuine faith expresses itself in the way we live (Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-18).

Q: What did Christ's coming change concerning the Old and New Covenants?

A: The New Covenant had already been established through Christ, while the first-century church lived during the final transition out of the Old Covenant age. Hebrews said the old system was near its disappearance and that Christ's coming was approaching in a very little while. Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 brought that Old Covenant temple-centered age to its historical conclusion (Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8-10; Hebrews 10:37; Matthew 24:1-3, 34).

Q: How should we preach this message today?

A: Preach Christ. Tell people salvation can't be purchased through human works, but don't offer them an empty profession of faith either. Call people to genuine faith in Christ, a faith that becomes visible through love, obedience, mercy, and good works (Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-24; Galatians 6:2).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Jeremiah 31:31-33; Galatians 3:17-19, 23-25; Galatians 6:2; Romans 7:4-6; Romans 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 9:20-21; James

2:14-18, 21-24; Ephesians 2:8-10; Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 9:8-10; Hebrews 10:37

† Historical writers: Josephus, The Wars of the Jews; Tacitus, Histories Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History Book 3

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