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“GRACE AND TRUTH”

The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17).

Back over the years I have had the opportunity to hold meetings in a variety of churches in numerous states. I have had discussions with pastors (and others) on a range of biblical subjects. One of those subjects will be considered in this article.

As Christians, how much of the Old Testament should be brought over into the New? While, on one hand, we don't throw away the Old Testament, it seems clear that *everything* in the Old does not apply now—or at least not in the same way. So how, or where, do we draw the line? These are fair and sincere questions.

A pastor once told me an incident involving a couple in his church who had their first child, a baby girl. After several weeks passed, neither mother nor baby had been in any of the services. The pastor asked the grandmother, “When are we going to see little Susie in church?”

The grandmother, somewhat agitated, exclaimed: “Why Pastor Paul! My daughter has not fulfilled *the days of her purification!*” She was referring to Leviticus 12:1-5 that says a woman, after giving birth to a baby girl, is not to come into the sanctuary for **eighty** days!

It is recorded that even **Mary**, the mother of Jesus, kept this law. “Now when *the days of her purification* according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought [the baby Jesus] to Jerusalem to...the temple” (Luke 2:22-39).

So, who had it right—the pastor or the grandma of the newborn granddaughter? The answer will follow.

According to the law of Moses, certain things caused people to be “unclean”—childbirth, skin diseases, bodily discharges, contact with a corpse or dead animal.

One day while pulling some leaves out of a drainage pipe in my backyard, I happened to touch a dead **mouse**. According to the law of Moses, this caused me to be unclean until evening (sundown): “Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening.” Had I dropped that mouse, anything it landed on—“any item of wood or clothing or skin or sack”—would have also been “unclean until evening.” But more drastic: If even just a “part” of the carcass dropped on a cooking stove, it must be disassembled and discarded (Lev. 11:29-35).

I am not aware of anyone who believes this law applies today.

In primitive times, many people lived in tents—even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Heb. 11:9; Gen. 24:67). But to make a present-day application, let's suppose a family is on a camping trip and during the night the father dies in a **tent**.

“This is the **law** when a man dies in a tent: *All* who come into the tent and *all* who are in the tent shall be *unclean* seven days” (Num. 19:14).



MOUNT SAN JACINTO RISES MAJESTICALLY FROM DOWNTOWN PALM SPRINGS TO AN ELEVATION OF 10,834 FEET.

The law of Moses provided a remedy: Take some water, mix in ashes from a red heifer [a young female cow] that has been burned, sprinkle this on the tent and on any who are unclean from being in the tent. “But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the congregation” (Num. 19:20).

Does *anyone* believe any of this applies today?

In the law of Moses, there was a complicated procedure whereby a leper could be pronounced “clean” and return to society. It required two birds. One bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water. The other bird, the living bird, was dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed, after which it was set free.

The priest then sprinkled some of the blood *seven* times on the leper. “On the *seventh* day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows—all his hair he shall shave off...wash his clothes and wash his body.” On the *eighth* day the priest killed a lamb and put some of the blood on the tip of the leper's **right ear**, on the **thumb** of his **right** hand, and on the **big toe** of his **right** foot. This procedure was then repeated using oil (Lev. 14:1-32). Needless to say, no priest, pastor, or dermatologist uses this procedure today when dealing with skin diseases!

On one occasion, Aaron and Miriam spoke critically of their brother Moses because “he had married an *Ethiopian* woman.” Then “suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow.” What happened to Aaron, if anything, is not explained. He did ask Moses for forgiveness for what they had foolishly spoken. So Moses cried out to the LORD: “Please heal her, O God, I pray!”

Nevertheless, believing that “if her father had but **spit** in her face, she would be shamed seven days,” she was shamed by being shut out of the camp for seven days (Num. 12:1-15).

Numerous times Jesus reached out and *touch*ed people—including those the law of Moses considered “unclean.” When He healed a leper, He *touch*ed him (Matt. 8:3). When a widow's young son was raised from the dead, Jesus *touch*ed the coffin (Luke 7:14). Touching like this, strictly speaking, was contrary to the law of Moses (Lev. 5:3; Num. 19:16, etc.). Other verses tell about people who dared to reach out and touch Jesus:

“Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years... *touch*ed the border of His garment. And immediately the flow of blood stopped...she came *trembling*; and declared...the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed” (Luke 8:43-47).

According to the law of Moses, a woman in this condition was “unclean” and anything she touched became unclean. This would have included **Jesus!** It is all spelled out in Leviticus 15:25-30. No wonder she was *trembling!* But Jesus did not rebuke her.

According to the law of Moses, even when a woman's flow of blood stopped, “she shall number to herself seven days, and after

that she shall be clean” (verse 28). Jesus said nothing about this. He wished her well and told her to “go in peace”!

While Jesus was still speaking to the woman, word came that the twelve-year-old daughter of Jarius had died. Jesus then went to the house, “took her *by the hand*,” and her life was restored! (Luke 8:49-55). In so doing, Jesus bypassed the law of Moses about touching a dead person.

In the law of Moses, if a **Nazarite** touched a dead body, he would be “unclean.” Samson, a Nazarite, is well-known for his long hair which was not to be shaved off (Judges 16:18-20). What is not as well-known is that, according to the law of Moses, a Naz- arite was commanded to *shave off his hair* if he touched a dead body—even if it was “his father or his mother, his brother or his sister, when they die...he shall **shave** his head.” In the process, he was to bring birds, a lamb, and a ram, to be sacrificed by the priest, also unleavened bread, grain and drink offerings. The **hair** he had shaved off was then placed in “the fire under the sacrifice.” It is all spelled out in Numbers 6:5-21.

A careful reader will notice that the law of Moses was not *as strict* about a **priest** touching a dead body—if it was “his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his *brother*.” But what about a *sister*? Touching her body was allowed, but *only* if she had no husband and was a **virgin** when she died! (Lev. 21:1-4).

“When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” (Gal. 4:4, 5). It was *transition* time. A new era was being ushered in. John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. John could baptize in water, but Jesus would baptize with the **Holy Spirit**.

Occasionally I have met people who suppose *only* the words of Jesus (the **red** letters in some Bibles) provide the basis for Christian doctrine. But, as strange as it may sound, Jesus Himself did not teach this! Jesus said to his apostles: “I still have **many** things to say to you, but *you cannot bear them now*. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, HE will guide you into all truth...and HE will tell you things to come” (John 16:12, 13).

After the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, one of those truths had to do with *Gentiles* coming into the Church—that they were no longer to be considered “unclean.”

In a vision Peter saw a sheet descending from heaven contain- ing all kinds of animals, birds, and creeping things. A voice said, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” With his Jewish background, this was difficult. He had never eaten anything “unclean.” But a voice spoke: “Do not call anything impure that **God** has made clean”! (Acts 10:11-17).

Upon his arrival at the house of Cornelius (where many Gen- tiles had gathered), Peter said to them: “You are well aware that it is **against our law** for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But **God** has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean” (Acts 10:28 NIV). Consequently, Peter preached to them, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word, causing them to speak in tongues and magnify God (Acts 10:44-48).

But the leaders at Jerusalem, being still locked into the law of Moses, were upset and harshly rebuked Peter: “You went into the house of *uncircumcised* men and *ate* with them”! (Acts 11:3). This, in their minds, was a *major* transgression!

Over the years, multitudes have eaten with all kinds of people. Whether the men they ate with were *circumcised* or not, never crossed their minds!

Fortunately, after Peter explained what happened, the Jerusa- lem leaders glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (Acts 11:18). It was becoming clear, as Peter later said, “God...acknowledged them...and made *no distinction* between us and them, purifying their hearts **by faith**” (Acts 15:9). They were no longer considered “unclean.”

This “**no distinction**” truth—a definite departure from the law of Moses—was revolutionary! It was a “mystery which had been *hidden* from ages and from generations,” but was now “revealed to the saints” (Col. 1:26).

Gentiles were previously “without Christ, being **aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel and **strangers** from the covenants of promise, having no hope...But *now* in Christ Jesus...are brought **near** by the blood of Christ. For He...has made both ONE, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having *abol- ished*...the law of commandments contained in ordinances...”

“For through Him we **both** [Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, [Gentiles] are **no longer** strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens...members of the household of God...a holy temple in the Lord...a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”! (Eph. 2:11-22).

“*Everyone* [Jew or Gentile] who believes in Him is made right in God’s sight—something **the law of Moses could never do**” (Acts 13:38, 39 NKJV).

“In Christ Jesus...there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is nei- ther slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are *all* ONE in Christ” (Gal. 3:36-29).

This wording is clear and conclusive!

At the time of Jesus, Jewish people were prone to brag about their *fleshly* descent from Abraham: “**We** have Abraham as our father” (Matt. 3:9; cf. John 8:37). But a true relationship with Abra- ham, as Paul wrote, is not based on the **flesh**, but on FAITH. “Abraham *believed* God, and it was accounted to him for right- eousness. Therefore...only those who are of FAITH are sons of Abraham” (Gal. 3:6-9).

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the FLESH profits nothing” (John 6:64). True believers are those “who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the FLESH” (Phil. 3:3). “If you are led by the **Spirit**, you are not under the law” (Gal. 5:18).

Among the Christians in Galatia, there were some who be- lieved they must still keep the law of Moses. In countering this, Paul asked them: “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the **law**, or by the hearing of **faith**?...Having begun in the **Spirit**, are you now being made per- fect by the **flesh**?...He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the **law**, or by the hearing of **faith**?” (Gal. 3:1-5).

In the *Old Testament*, tracking fleshly descent had served a purpose. Genealogical records were headed somewhere—to CHRIST! (Matt. 1:1-16). Once He came into the world, the genea- logical goal had been reached. That being accomplished, there was a moving away from superiority based on fleshly descent.

In the law of Moses, Araon’s son, then his son, and his son, would serve in succession as priests. When Jesus chose 12 men to be spiritual leaders (Matt. 10:1-4), there is no indication that their sons would automatically be their successors. If a son of Peter or John became a gospel preacher, or their sons, this would be

because of a *spiritual* calling—not because of *fleshly* descent. Christians were not to “give heed to fables and endless **genealogies**, which cause disputes” (1 Tim. 1:4).

At the time of Nehemiah, when the names of some of the priests were not found in genealogical records, they were excluded from the priesthood (Neh. 7:64). We note that their talents, abilities, or effectiveness played no part. Their ejection was based solely on *fleshly* descent.

There was a serious problem with this fleshly succession law. Some were *unfit*—morally and otherwise—for the office. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, for example, were “the priests of the LORD.” *But* they “knew not the LORD”! (1 Sam. 1:3, 12). They were “seducing the young women who assisted at the entrance of the Tabernacle” (1 Sam. 2:22 NLT, etc.).

Eli’s sons were killed in the conflict with the Philistines who captured the Ark. “Their widows made no lamentation” for them (Psa. 78:64). And for those Philistine raiders of the Ark, the LORD smote them “in the hinder parts” with hemorrhoids (verse 66; 1 Sam. 5:6).

In the *New Testament*, **Jesus** is the High Priest of our profession (Heb. 3:1). But if only a fleshly descendant of Aaron could be a priest, Jesus Himself would be **disqualified from being a priest!** He was not in the line of Aaron (Heb. 7:11).

“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a **change** of the law...our Lord arose from *Judah*, of which tribe **Moses** spoke *nothing* concerning priesthood”! (Heb. 7:12-14).

This *unmistakably* shows “change” had come and the fleshly elements of the law of Moses no longer applied. Back under that law, if a man tried to be a priest who was not descended from Aaron, he was to be “put to **death**”! (Num 3:10, 38).

According to the law of Moses, even a “descendant” of Aaron could not serve in the priesthood if he had a physical defect:

“...a man blind or lame, or with a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch” (Lev. 21:17-20).

Must these physical restrictions be brought over into the New? Certainly not!

As I write just now, some fine pastors I have known come to mind. Two were blind in one eye; another could not hear properly without hearing aids; one, as a result of a car accident long before, preached from a wheelchair; another had polio as a boy and walked with a limp; another, having pastored the same church many years, needed help to the platform and pulpit, but once there was an effective gospel preacher.

In the *New Testament*, it is not *physical* flaws that disqualify one for ministry; it is *spiritual* flaws. Christian leaders are to be honest, gentle, sober, of good behavior, not greedy for money, not quarrelsome, etc. (1 Tim. 3:1-13, etc.). Paul wrote to the young preacher Timothy: “Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness” (1 Tim. 6:11).

Under the law of Moses, food that was designated for the priests was not to be shared with others. But there were a few exceptions: “If the priest *buys* a person with his money, he may eat it...If the priest’s daughter is married to an outsider, she may not eat [of her father’s food]. But if the priest’s daughter is a widow

or divorced, *and has no child*...she may eat her father’s food” (Lev. 22:11-13). This raises an obvious question: Why would being the mother of a child disqualify her from food?

In the New Testament, there are no restrictive rules like these for ministers of the gospel and their families.

According to the law of Moses, a **eunuch** (a male who has been castrated) was not allowed in the congregation of the LORD (Deut. 23:1). *But* Isaiah envisioned a time when this restriction would be lifted: “Thus says the LORD to the eunuchs...who choose what pleases me...even to them I will give in My house ...a place and an everlasting name” (Isa. 56:3-5).

It had been prophesied that young Israelite males would “be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (Isa. 39:7). Among those who were forced to serve as **eunuchs** were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan. 1:3, 7). They were certainly not rejected by God, but were blessed by Him, even in Babylon!

Philip “preached Christ” to the Ethiopian **eunuch** who believed and was baptized (Acts 8:27-39). There was no hesitation on the part of Philip to do so, even though the man was a eunuch! Philip was obviously not locked in to the law of Moses.

It was also written in the law of Moses that “one of illegitimate birth shall not enter the congregation of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the congregation of the LORD” (Deut. 23:2 NKJV).

Imagine a church board today informing a prospective member: “We have checked ancestry records and see that 200 years ago your great, great, great grandfather was born out of wedlock. This *disqualifies you* from being a member of our congregation.”

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of the LORD...or his descendants...*forever*, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt” (Deut. 23:3, 4). Later, it seems this law had been forgotten. But upon reading what Moses had written, at the time of Nehemiah, any who were Ammonites or Moabites were put out of the congregation (Neh. 13:1-3).

Today the gospel has gone forth to the nations. People are saved—by GRACE, *not* RACE—and congregations now declare that **everyone** is welcome!

Religious reforms during the reign of Asa were *very* strict: “*Whoever* would not seek the LORD God of Israel was to be **put to death**, whether small or great, whether man or woman” (2 Chron. 15:13).

Let’s compare this with a Christian evangelistic meeting today. Christ is preached. Men and women who receive Him as their Savior may be invited to come forward. There, personal workers will share scriptures and pray with them. But imagine having **death squads** standing by to kill all the men and women who do *not* accept Christ!

According to the law of Moses, if a couple had a son who would not obey them, they shall “take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city” and say: “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.” Then “the men of his city shall *stone him to death with stones*”! (Deut. 21:18-21). To require parents (especially a mother) to do this to their son, is difficult to imagine (cf. Isa. 49:15; 1 Kings 3:26; 2 Sam. 21:8-10; Luke 11:11-13).

Under the law of Moses, some were to be punished more severely than by stoning—they were to be *burned with fire!*

“If a man marries a woman **and** her mother...they shall be burned with **fire**, *both he and they*” (Lev. 20:14; cf. Gen. 38:24).

And,

“If a *priest’s* daughter defiles herself by promiscuity...she must be **burned** to death” (Lev. 21:9 CSB).

I have known of cases in which young daughters (and sons) of Christian ministers have rebelled and pursued immoral lifestyles. But many, in time, came back to the Lord and went on to live fruitful lives. Fortunately, they had not been burned to death! Those whose sins are “many,” when forgiven, often have a greater love for God than others (Luke 7:47).

In the law of Moses, the penalty for a certain transgression required cutting off a **woman’s hand**. “...you shall *cut off her hand*; your eye shall not *pity* her” (Deut. 25:12).

If this were brought over as a commandment for Christians, who would do it? Would the church deacons force her arm and hand onto a tree stump while the pastor, showing no pity, chops off her hand with an ax?

According to the law of Moses, if someone was killed accidentally, there were six “**cities of refuge**” to which the slayer could flee (Josh. 20:7, 8). This provided legal protection, but he was required to remain there “*until* the death of the one who was High Priest in those days.” He could then “return to his own city and his own house...from which he fled” (Josh. 20:6; Num. 35:25).

With this arrangement, no doubt that man would hope and pray the High Priest would *soon* DIE, so he could return to his home and family! Imagine the timing of a law today being based on when the Pope (or any other well-known religious leader) dies!

According to the law of Moses, there was a procedure to be followed when there was an unsolved **murder**. The leaders of the town closest to where the dead body was found, were to take a young heifer [female cow] to a valley with flowing water and cut off her head. “And all the elders of that city...shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded.” As part of the ceremony, they would call for priests to take part, while confessing they were innocent of the bloodshed (Deut. 21:1-9).

Does **anyone** follow this law today? Unsolved murders today are solved through forensic evidence, DNA, fingerprints, dental records, etc. No police department is set up to cut off heifer heads.

To those Christians today who suppose they must keep the law of Moses, consider this:

It is the annual Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 23:27). A knock is heard on the door of a church. The pastor opens the door (cf. Lev. 16:7). One of his members is waiting there with two goats. Following instructions in the book of Leviticus, the pastor kills one goat as a “sin offering” (Lev. 16:5). He then lays his hands on the head of the other goat, confesses the sins of the people, “putting them on the head of the goat” (Lev. 16:21). He then allows *this* goat to escape (a “scapegoat”) to carry away the sins into an uninhabited land (Lev. 16:10).

This is not an effective way to deal with sins! Even the Jewish people no longer do it. “For the law having a **shadow** of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can NEVER with those sacrifices...make the comers thereunto perfect...For it is NOT POSSIBLE that the blood of bulls and of *goats* could take away sins” (Heb. 10:1-4; cf. 1 John 3:5).

Thousands of bulls and goats could be sacrificed, but the **one** sacrifice that “takes away sins” is Jesus Christ Himself. “ONE

sacrifice for sins *forever*” and by that “ONE offering He has perfected *forever* those” who trust in Him (Heb. 10:12-14). “Christ was offered ONCE to bear sins” (Heb. 9:28). “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). “We have redemption through *His* blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7). “*Whoever* [Jew or Gentile] believes in **Him**, receives remission of sins” and is “set free from sin” (Acts 10:43; Rom. 6:22).

“For such a High Priest...does not need *daily*, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices...for this He did ONCE for all when He offered up **Himself**.” Under Moses, priests died, and could no longer minister. But Christ, “because He continues **forever**, has an **unchangeable** priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God *through Him*, since He ever lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:23-27).

“Neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12).

Jesus was asked, “What is the great commandment in the Law?” He cited two Old Testament passages—one about LOVE for God (the greatest) and the other about LOVE for neighbor. The first was from Deuteronomy 6:5 and the second from Leviticus 19:18. Neither quote was from the Ten Commandments. “On these *two* commandments,” He said, “hang ALL the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:36-40). Jesus emphasized love over law.

If a person reads the *Old* Testament book of **Leviticus**, he could form a certain conclusion. But if he reads the *New* Testament book of **Hebrews**, he will come to a very different conclusion! The New is in the Old CONTAINED; **but** the Old is in the New EXPLAINED—not *the other way around*.

So, turning to the book of **Hebrews**, we read that the *old* temporary covenant became obsolete and vanished away. The *new*, everlasting covenant, brought about BETTER things:

“The law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is...a BETTER hope, through which we draw near to God” (Heb. 7:19). “...a BETTER covenant...BETTER promises” (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). “...a BETTER sacrifice...[Christ] Himself” (Heb. 9:23, 26). “...a BETTER and an enduring possession...a heavenly country” (Heb. 10:34; 11:16). “God...provided something BETTER for us” (Heb. 11:40). “[We] have come...to Jesus the Mediator of the *new* covenant, and to...BETTER things” (Heb. 12:22-24).

The law of Moses had its time and place. We don’t throw away the Old Testament. It provides background, history, prophecy, types, and shadows, leading up to Christ and “better things”!

Finally, going back to the opening paragraphs of this article: Did God require the mother of newborn baby Susie to stay home from church for 80 days? NO.

“The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”!

The foregoing study has answered some questions—and probably raised others! *To be continued....* —RW April, 2026

Additional printed copies of this article “GRACE AND TRUTH” will be sent free upon request.

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