

## Does the Apostle Paul treat the law of Moses as abrogated?

The Old Testament starts off with five books that it calls the Torah meaning the Law of Moses. Christians claim that the moral directives of that law still stand but we don't need to keep the non-moral rules about feasts and stoning people to death. They say God revealed the Law and as Jesus came to save us he fulfilled the law and made it obsolete.

The New Testament never says that the horrifying punishment laws of the Torah, and the other rules laid down by God through Moses have been done away. Those who dispute this must be answered.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 refers to God refreshing the covenant with a new one but this new one is not an altered one. It is just one that reaffirms the laws in the Torah and makes a fresh start in getting them obeyed and requiring that obedience. The New Testament depends on Bible prophecy so it has to accept that doctrine. Jesus referred to this covenant when he gave the cup to his disciples saying it was the new covenant in his blood which is the main reason why Christian communion ceremonies are invalid and unJesus for they disobey the Mosaic covenant. Jesus said that anybody who waters down the rules of the law will be downgraded in his kingdom.

The reason people think there was an abrogation of the law is mainly down to St Paul.

### PAUL KNEW NOTHING OF AN ABROGATION

Paul is reputed to have said that Christians don't have to observe the Law of Moses, over and over again. He never said anything of the kind.

Christians claim, "Paul said that justification could not be gained by keeping the Law but only by faith without keeping it (Romans 3:20,28). Faith is opposition to the Law. The Law is abolished." Yes he said that but he also said that faith does not abrogate the Law but upholds and fulfils it (Romans 3:31). Faith must then enable you to keep the Law but the Law has to be kept in force before faith can do that or try to.

Paul said that the Law was given to show both Jew and Gentile why we need a saviour and that we are sinners. It cannot do that unless it stays valid forever. Otherwise people could do evil things and say God has changed his mind about these things being bad.

Paul stated that the only reason the Law failed to justify was because its command about faith and trust in God was ignored which meant it was not being kept right. He did say that anybody who kept the Law as it should be kept would be justified and right with God (Romans 2:13) for God promised that they would be. When Paul declared law keeping useless he meant superficial law keeping. That is, external actions with no love or sincerity or faith in them. Competent Christians accept this (see page 167, Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible). Just as a person who does not care about you merits nothing by serving you so you merit nothing before God if you serve him with a similar attitude. So the argument is wrong. Since the Law could not save because people would not obey its law of faith it follows that by asking us to keep this law of trust and confidence and by saying that the Law has not been abrogated by faith that Paul wants us to keep the whole Law.

The Protestants say that Paul preached salvation by faith without good works in the sense that you can be sinful and still be smuggled into Heaven even though you should not be there. God pretends that you are holy though you are not for Jesus obeyed God and earned Heaven for you and atoned your sins. If their interpretation is right it does not confute the notion of the Law still being in force but means that Jesus has compensated for our failures to follow it. So the law is in force.

Some say salvation by faith alone does abrogate the Law for the Law prescribes punishments and this doctrine says that you are free from the penalty of the Law. This penalty is the separation from God due to sin not the other punishments. We know this for even the New Testament says that God will punish his sons to keep them right. In the Law, God never said that he would not forgive those who were stoned to death. Perhaps they pay for their sin by their death and that's the matter ended. But all God said was that he forgives all who repent.

Others say that if you are saved by faith alone then you don't need to obey the Law so it cannot exist anymore. But the Bible says that if you are saved you will be inclined to obey. What is right is always essential. Paul says that we are saved by faith alone because we will not obey the Law fully and it is the only way we can be made righteous in the sight of the Law. For him, the two were perfectly compatible for Law forces you to obey but faith makes you keen to obey. The rules may no longer rules when you obey them willingly but they are still being said to be right.

The Catholics say that Paul just meant that when you turn away from your sins and are forgiven because of your faith you are saved by faith alone but only as long as you stay pure from sin that divides you from God. This does not contradict the Law which taught the same thing by preaching that God forgives.

· Christians argue that “St Paul taught that the laws of Israel are over for he pronounced the Jewish Law a thing of the past and that there is no Law now (Ephesians 2:15; Galatians 2:15-21). He proclaimed Christ to be the end of the Law (Romans 10:4). In Ephesians 2:14,15 he stated that Christ cancelled the Law with its commandments for Christians.”

A law is something you are forced to obey. Paul was just saying that the Law of Moses though a law is not a law in the sense that one has to be forced to keep it any longer. He thought that people had to try and force themselves to keep it with little help from God so that they would realise that they couldn't do it and depend on his mercy and on faith. Now that was all over and anyone who obeys God will do it because they want to and enjoy it and have God assisting them in this task.

His teaching does not eliminate the laws of the Old Testament for Christians. Far from this he said that the Law was all about love. He was saying it was love to keep the capital laws. God cannot change these rules without ceasing to be love. He did not even declare the ritual laws of the Old Testament to be abrogated for instead of that, according to the Christian interpretation – which I question - they were fulfilled by Christ for us so that we have no need to keep them. That would be saying that they are abolished only in the sense that they are not binding on us but strictly speaking they are not abolished. They cannot be abolished when Jesus has to keep them for us to make up for our failure to keep them.

How could the Ephesians verse that supposedly says the commandments of the Law are cancelled for Christians forbid the commandments of the Law when Paul said that the Law was love and that Christians must love? The Law forbade pre-marital sex, adultery, stealing and laying and so do Christ and the apostles. It means that the Law must be kept but that it is no longer law.

· Christians argue, “God asserted that the faith isn't spread by violence (2 Corinthians 10:4) while the Law advocates the forced conversion of heretics in the form of ‘Convert and stay converted or die!’ He told us to be at peace with all. These things prove that the capital laws are things of the past.”

The Law never said that forcing a person to believe and obey was any good. It commanded the love of God which is voluntary. Force can be used to only indirectly effect sincere conversions and this was the sort of compulsion the Law desired. We successfully force our children to believe in Geography.

God rejection of violence as being good evangelism is saying that intimidation cannot make people faithful or believe. But force can spread the faith in certain ways and circumstances so more probably it forbids force that puts people off. The command to be at peace with all is not taken literally by any Christian for they aren't at peace with certain sinners. They forbid some forms of peace when they hamper greater peace. Christians would say the Law could not be annulled by this verse for the Law never advocated conversion by force. It does in some ways but it never demands that say pagans must be converted at the point of a sword.

Christians argue, “The New Testament does away with the morality of the Law to keep the Sabbath proving that the Mosaic morality is nonsense. Moreover, the penalty for Sabbath-breaking was death by stoning. The Sabbath is abolished so the death penalty got the same fate. We need a Sabbath day. The rule that we must keep the Sabbath is a moral law. The NT revoked so much of the morality of the Law of Moses. The ceremonial laws were done away too even though it was immoral to keep these for they were signs of gratitude to God. This means that the ethical laws are abolished.”

It is surmised that since the New Testament commands cheerful free and uncoerced giving to the Church (1 Corinthians 16:2; 1 Corinthians 9:7) that the Old Testament law of tithing was done away. But that law applied to the Jewish priesthood and the Church was a different set-up. The early Christians in Jerusalem did continue paying tithes to Judaism.

It is argued that “God says that the Law that the Christian follows is written not on paper but in the heart. Written Law cuts one off from God but the one in the heart gives life. (See 2 Corinthians 3:3-11). Nobody can assert that the Law of Moses is everlasting after reading this for this means that the written Law is no more. In verse 11, Paul says that the Law has passed away”.

The law of the land can be written in my conscience and in my heart though it is down on paper too. Its being in me does not mean that I have abolished it for myself. But I have abolished it in the sense that I like following it so it is no longer a law, a law is what compels. I have the Holy Spirit to tell me how to follow it and so I don't need the written law.

· “Paul said that vengeance was God's job not ours (Romans 12:19). The Law commands vengeance so Paul is making it plain that it is abrogated.”

Just before that Paul told his people to avoid vengeance as far as possible not absolutely. He said that God set up governments to avenge crime. Moreover, if vengeance is God's job we will still have to do it for him. Even the Law restricted vengeance for you can't have a society if all take revenge all the time. Paul was quoting an Old Testament Psalm when he said that vengeance was God's job and the Psalms all upheld and were under the authority of the Law. Paul means that vengeance is God's business except where the Law says otherwise so by implication we are to get involved too as avengers but only where the Law says. He knew his readers should be smart enough to see that he did not mean to be taken too literally.

Paul stated that through avengers and an avenging government God takes vengeance. The verse is no help in showing the old laws are gone.

· “Romans 15 condemns judgment which the Law allows”.

It condemns judging those who are merely following their conscience (v 3,4). Paul allowed judgment in the case of a man living with his stepmother.

· “In 1 Corinthians 9:20, Paul said that he acts towards the Jews as if he were under the Law like them though he is not. The Jews therefore had to obey it and he had not. The Law is cancelled.”

He just means that the Jews obey under compulsion and he does not so in that sense he is not under the Law. This not saying that the Law is wrong or wrong now. Also, Jesus obeyed the Law for us so we are counted law-keepers if we become true Christians and we must keep the Law not to gain salvation like the Jews did but in thanksgiving for salvation. The Law is compulsory for us but it is not compulsory in the sense that it is required for getting into Heaven.

That a Christian can still obey the law shows that the rules are still regarded as correct and sacred. The Christian has to hold that the laws God gave endorsing the murder of rape victims are holy and good.

· “Paul declared that he acts as one without Law when he is among people who have no law (1 Corinthians 9:21). He was opposed to hypocrisy so he is saying that the Law of the Jews is abolished.”

He says in this verse that he follows the Law of Christ. To be without the Law means that you are not forced by the Law to obey it so that it is not a real Law for you.

· “Paul claimed that the righteousness he got from the Law was rubbish compared to his being saved by Jesus (Philippians 3:6,7). God must have dropped the Law when he wrote like this.”

Since Paul said that nobody could keep much of the Law unless they were saved by faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-10) he did not mean righteousness in the sight of God here but righteousness in the sight of man which according to the standard of the Law was not true righteousness for all fall short (Romans 9:31). He is not criticising the Law. He is saying that the Christian is able to fulfil the Law by obeying the Law and that Jesus has obeyed the Law for you to make up for the defects so that you stand before God as a perfect law-keeper. When a person is saved Jesus has kept the Law for them so they are credited as law-keepers and now they must keep the Law not to gain salvation but in gratitude for salvation.

· “Christians do not have to observe the Law of Moses. It is written that Jesus ‘wiped away the handwriting of the note (bond) with its legal decrees and demands which was in force and stood against us (hostile to us). This [note with its regulations, decrees, and demands] He set aside and cleared completely out of our way by nailing it to [His] cross’ (Colossians 2:14). Jesus destroyed or repealed the laws that were against us.”

The verse is about the decrees that condemned us.

It only says that Jesus forgave sins when he died on the cross by dying on the cross. Forgiving sins against the Law is not doing away with the Law but saying the Law is right. How could the Law be done away when Jesus saw it as being so important that he had to suffer and die for every transgression against it? When Jesus atoned for sins against the Law by his death that should show the Law is still in force for you can't forgive breaking a law when the law is repealed.

· “Paul complained that certain people were preaching that the Law was to be followed by Christians (1 Timothy 1:6-8) proving that he believed them to be in error.”

He said they were abusing the Law. He said that unlike them he recognised that the Law was given for bad people not good people. If the Law were given for good people as the heretics said then they thought that unless good people keep it they will not be saved which is intolerable blasphemy and bigotry.

· “God has revoked the Torah in Hebrews 8:13.”

This verse says that God has done away with the Old Covenant and replaced it with a new one. The Covenant was that God would be the God of the people if they were true to him. They would not be his people so he made a New Covenant under Christ. The Law is not the Covenant. You just have to obey the Law to be in the Covenant. However, the only thing new about the New Covenant is that it is a repeat of the Old. The contract was the same, “Be my people and I will be your God”. The first contract was broken by the people for they did not obey the Law through faith and use Jesus to keep it for them and the second is the exact same contract except that this time we have and are aware that through trust and faith and the obedience of Jesus in our place to make up for our sins against the Law we will be reconciled with God. The substitutionary obedience of Jesus means that though we should obey the Law we don't have to when it comes to acquiring salvation though we have to obey it to be moral for Jesus has obeyed it for us and was valuable enough to God to ensure that God would be satisfied with his obedience as much as that of many people.

The New Testament says that since the Jews turned their backs on the saviour that God rejected them and applied the promises he made to Israel to its continuation – not successor for Jesus came to fulfil Judaism and to add to it and not to destroy it! These promises concerned ownership of the Promised Land and loads of material and spiritual blessings. They were conditional upon obedience to the Law. So when the Church was promised the blessings of the Law pertaining to its status as the continuation of Israel the people of God and warned about the dangers of disobedience and the punishments it could bring it follows that the Law was still to be obeyed by the Church. See Those Incredible Christians, page 54 and Matthew 11:43.

Conclusion: The notion that many have that we are free to regard the law of Moses as immoral in places for Jesus came to fix things and bring in more humane principles is nonsense. Jesus's law is that you regard the Law of Moses as right. The evidence is that that means you regard it not just as right in principle but in practice as well and must resume stoning people to death in accordance with the rules God laid down.

The New Testament is clear that the Holy Spirit came around the time of Christ and is extremely powerful and this according to some is the prime reason the Church needs only spiritual weapons against evil. This is the prime reason Christianity argues that it is unnecessary to stone people to death any more. Evil does not need to be violently removed like a cancer but dealt with by the power of the Spirit. Notably Gleason Archer promotes that kind of argument in his apologetics. So it is not that killing people or stoning them to death is wrong. It just obsolete. That means the Christian who does not stone is no better than the religious fanatic who looks for the right to stone or who lifts the rocks.