

## Does the New Testament say Jesus considered the law of Moses to be 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.

Jesus said that he didn't come to do away with these laws but to make them more severe (Matthew 5:17). He said that to sum up the law was to advocate the great commandment of loving God with all your power and ultimately, while loving your neighbour. You love your neighbour for God so that it is really God you love. This being so it follows that each part of the Law is equally important and each act must be done with the right inner disposition so merely external obedience is useless.

Yet Christians claim that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John repudiate the Law, punishment laws, ceremony laws and so on and all.

The Gospel of Matthew says that Jesus said he didn't come to do away with the Law but to perfect it and make it better so we can consider the matter closed.

Some scholars and Christians say that Jesus was only saying that about the Jews. If you had Jewish blood in you, you had to keep the Law or Torah. Karen Armstrong claims that the apostle Paul never suggested at all that the Jews should just ignore this Jewish Law (page 62, *The Bible, The Biography*, Karen Armstrong, Atlantic Books, London, 2007). She writes in her book that Paul valued Judaism and the covenant it had with God that makes Jews to be the sons of God. And she says also that the Judaizers or Jewish Christians Paul was condemning so viciously and vigorously in his letters were those who wished for Gentiles to be circumcised and therefore made Jews and accordingly be required to keep the whole Law perfectly.

Even if she is right, it follows that the Church and Christian nations should enable and encourage Jews and Jews who believe in Christ to obey the bloodier parts of the Law, including the parts where God demands that sinners such as adulterers should be cruelly put to death by stoning. She would say that non-Jewish believers in Christ being allowed to ignore the Law does not mean that the Law is to be disobeyed but only that the Law does not apply to them. Their being allowed to disobey it doesn't mean it was abolished. A law can only be abolished for you if it applies to you and has authority over you in the first place.

So anyway Jesus did not do away with the Law at all. That much is certain. If the Law is bad or draconian, we need a Jesus who says so not one who says it is right and who says it needs fulfilment for fulfilment rules out just dropping rules or cherry-picking the law. What if Jesus did away with the stoning laws? Ceasing to put the rules into practice does not mean that they are being rejected. Jesus is saying they are so holy that they have been fulfilled so we may not practice them. Even if that is not very coherent the intention is still to say the laws are in fact good and right.

Let us go on.

All agree that Jesus Christ sought to restore the spirit of the law, in other words its real meaning. They think that Jesus was of the opinion that the Jews were taking many of its rules out of context and making them harder than they were meant to be. See how this works in relation say to the killing of homosexuals by stoning. Even if you can't kill them this way you have to wish you can and could purge them from your midst. There is no way spirit of the law talk can get around that. The law is still dangerous.

· “Luke 9:51-56 has Jesus condemning James and John for wanting fire to come down from Heaven to consume those who rejected their preaching. Jesus snapped that they did not know what kind of men they were and what kind of spirit or personality was in them for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.”

Jesus simply meant that killing everybody that did that would mean that there would be nobody left to follow him. James and John wanted God to do the murdering while the Law says people are to do it for God so this section has nothing at all to do with the Law. They reminded Jesus that Elijah had murdered people by miraculously summoning fire from Heaven. Jesus would not have condemned this miracle. He would also believed that this was not murder for God willed it and would

have been angry at his disciples for wanting God to kill without caring if it was God's will or not under the circumstances.

· “Jesus forbade self-defence which the Law allowed when he said that whoever will protect his life will lose it (Mark 8:35).”

There are other ways to interpret this verse. It is very vague. It may refer to the man who protects his life as being more valuable than God – who uses forbidden methods of preserving his life. It does not mean that we should get ourselves killed for he instructed his disciples to run away from persecution and to do what is right for themselves for God's sake (Matthew 10:23).

· “Jesus said the edict condoning divorce (Deuteronomy 24:14) was wrong so he did repeal some of the rules of the Law so he must have been opposed to the cruel ones too.”

He could have disagreed with the Law on divorce while accepting the nefarious decrees as well. We have to accept what he never explicitly rejected to be on the safe side.

It is not true that Jesus said the edict was wrong. The edict only tolerated divorce and did not command it. Therefore there was no way out of it but to condone divorce so the law was right in the circumstances.

Jesus said that Genesis forbade divorce so the divorce law was only made because God knew if it wasn't the people would fall away from him. Thus, he was not changing the Old Testament law at all but only declaring that the divorce law was only temporary. It was right under the circumstances.

But a better suggestion is as follows. Jesus was asked by the Jews about divorce in relation to remarriage. Jesus said that this kind of divorce was wrong. The Law only allowed divorce but said nothing about allowing remarriage so there is no disagreement. Jesus said that Moses wrote the commandment allowing divorce out of the stubbornness of the people. He does not say that Moses was forced to allow the evil of divorce. You could say that somebody had to write a law forbidding murder because of the stubbornness of the people. That doesn't imply that murder is only to be forbidden when the people are bad.

· “According to our blessed Lord, the Law and the Prophets were in force until the coming of John the Baptist for the good news is being proclaimed now (Luke 16:16).”

Whatever sense Jesus intended in this, he is not stating that the Law and the Prophets have lost their value and significance for he must have approved of much in them at the very least. He said they were inspired by God so he approved of all they taught. He probably meant that the writings had served their purpose which according to him, was preparing for his gospel. If he did not then he said that they were bad news and had to be done away for the good news which he would not have said for it was blasphemous and destroyed his own claim to be the Saviour for he needed those writings to justify his claims.

A law is something that is forced on you. Jesus might have meant that the Law must still be kept but is no longer a law for the coercive element has been taken away. God makes keeping the Law a pleasure in which case it is a blessing and a liberty not a law.

The best explanation for what Jesus said was that until John came there was no divine revelation for John was a prophet of God. All there was until John came was the Law and the Prophets. If you wanted to hear the word of God that was all you had.

· “Luke 21:20-21 has Jesus telling his followers to abandon their country and flee when they see it surrounded by armies.”

This is supposed to do away with the rule that the Jews must defend their country. God commanded many holy wars. Jesus said that they will know then that the end is nigh. When the end is nigh what is the point of fighting? And why would they fight when they were not soldiers? I get really sick of some of the arguments that biased Christians come up with.

· “Jesus didn't campaign for the execution of anyone who laughed at his gospel so the Law for the murder of apostates is abolished. Paul did not tell the Corinthians to murder the man who committed incest though that was a capital crime under the Law. Paul forgave the people who committed capital crimes like homosexuality and adultery instead of asking them to submit to execution”.

The silence of the gospels does not prove that Jesus did not.

If Jesus refused to have those who mocked his gospel slaughtered then it was because if he killed everybody who did that he would bring in no converts at all for there would be nobody left to preach to. The Torah laid down that only initiated

believers who abnegated the faith were to be destroyed. No one was given the right to kill those who scoff at the gospel in ignorance.

The early Jesus People were subject to enough hatred without killing people. They had to live in peace for the greater good which was the propagation of the gospel. When it was safe to do so some sinners might have been urged to commit suicide in a horrible and brutal manner to satisfy the Law.

The early Jesus People had no facility for eradicating them.

The way the man was described by Paul as being handed over to Satan for the destruction of his body would suggest that the man was put on death row or that Christians were trying to kill him by their prayers.

## ACTS DOES NOT TEACH ABOLITION DOCTRINE

If the Law were abolished we would expect to read about it in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. This book claims to report the developments and adjusting of the disciples of Christ. And we don't.

The Law said that the Lord dwelt on the Ark of the Covenant so he could dwell in Temples made with human hands. In Acts we read that God does not do this (7:48; 17:24). Some say that this proves that the Law is abolished. If that is so then God who once dwelt in the Temple does so no more. But this would be a contradiction and not an abolition. The Bible teaches that God is always the same and that he dwells everywhere. If he is not in the Temple like he is everywhere then he is not God. He is forcing the Jews to think that he is in the Temple where he promised to live and he is not there at all.

One answer to this reasoning is that God only promised to dwell on the Ark of the Covenant and so when the Ark was placed in the holy of holies, a special chamber in the Temple, God was in the temple. His special presence was in the Temple though he was everywhere else too. The Ark had been lost to the Temple for centuries indicating that God was in the Temple no more except in the normal way. It was true when Paul said what he said that God was not in the Temple for the Ark was absent. This solution avoids the notion of a change of Law.

Perhaps Paul, by saying that God does not live in human Temples has the idea of a God who is confined to one place at a time in mind and he is repudiating it.

· “There is no record in the Book of Acts or anywhere in the New Testament about Christians carrying out the Mosaic Law. It does not say they are binding therefore they are not.”

All that means is that they haven't said. It does not mean that they didn't see them as binding.

They might not have carried out the badder laws for they may not have been able to. They were a persecuted and detested sect.

And finally Acts does say that they adhered to the Law.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was arraigned before the outraged Jews for allegedly saying that Jesus will change the institutions and commandments of Moses' Law (Acts 6:14). Christians zoom in on Stephen's not defending himself against this accusation. They argue that it demonstrates that it was true. But Stephen answered them. Acts says that his long speech was his answer. And that speech attests to God giving Moses the Law and establishing circumcision and to the Temple being sacred. These two facts prove that Stephen was accused in the wrong. Stephen may not have said that straight out that he was convinced of the current force of the Law. If anybody asks me, “Do you believe in the Law as an authority?” And I say, “Moses got it from God and I believe in God” I am obviously implying that I do believe in it. I am not saying no. I am saying, “Yes, I am not going to dispute what God reveals”. Stephen, following the Lord Jesus, taught that the Law must still be obeyed. Luke, the author of Acts, fully approved of Stephen's doctrine because he praised his for being full of grace and gifted with miraculous powers (Acts 6:8,10). He stated that Stephen's teaching was inspired by the Holy Spirit (6:10) meaning that Stephen was a prophet, and true prophets cannot err in religious matters.

Acts 16 has the apostle Paul putting up with a spirit medium for days before he exorcises her. This alleged to infer that he approved of her antics indicating the abolition of the Law which forbade witchcraft and spiritualism. But maybe Paul had been praying to God to take away the spirit without anything happening all along. When God told him that prayer was to be answered Paul turned on the Spirit and expelled it. If he was then the episode does not tell us anything about the status of the Law in his sight.

Acts says that Jesus saved sinners with his blood, that is, by dying on the cross. That implies that it is wrong to sacrifice animals for sins or does it? It does not for a man who pays his fine can pay a superfluous one for some benevolent reason.

And if animal sacrifice is now unnecessary not wrong.

The Christians according to Acts lived a communistic way of life. They shared all things together. There is a different way presupposed in the Torah. This does not prove the Torah is not for Christians because the Torah only commands what is to be done in a non-communistic society and neither allows or forbids communism. The family unite which the Torah upheld was like a communist society. The way was cleared for the emergence of a Church that considered itself to be a family and behaved as one.

Finally, Jesus and Christianity cannot be severed from the violent laws and overtone of the Old Testament. Jesus' warning that sinners go to Gehenna to be eaten by worms and punished by he who can destroy body and soul there and his warning that he would send them there is actually overall worse than the savage Old Testament laws about stoning all put together. An abrogation does not end that link for it is not admitting the laws and teachings are evil. It is repudiation that we need. And the laws being applied a different way is not an abrogation - the idea is that Jesus will punish himself and has taken care of some of the laws for us.

The Law of Moses: Is It Valid Today?

[www.ark\\_of\\_salvation.org/Jewish\\_law.htm](http://www.ark_of_salvation.org/Jewish_law.htm)

The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ by Arnold Fruchtenbaum

[www.ariel.org/ff00006c.html](http://www.ariel.org/ff00006c.html)

Is Old Testament Law for New Testament Christians

[www.souldevice.org/writings\\_law\\_gospel.html](http://www.souldevice.org/writings_law_gospel.html)

This Christian site accepts that the New Testament did not run the Law of Moses out of town but accepted it. It argues that Matthew 5 has Jesus stating that he has no intention of doing away with the Law of Moses and what he does with it is he gives out a stricter interpretation of it. But strangely it argues then that Jesus did discontinue some parts of the Law. 1 Samuel 15:22,23/Isaiah 1:11-17/Jeremiah 7:21-23/Proverbs 21:3/Matthew 9:13/23:23 are said to make no sense unless the law can be given three distinctions which are Moral, Ceremonial and Civil. Not once however in these verses does God even hint that the Moral laws and the Civil laws and the Ceremonial laws are to be treated as three units. What they are is three different kinds of law in one law based on love. The first two cannot be changed because of the link with morality but the latter can if it is only temporary and states that clearly. You can't change what love is. The law plainly commands and practices hatred so God is assuming that we need to hate in order to love properly so that is how a law of love can encourage and foster hatred.

Christians, assuming that they are to have any distinctions at all, are to have just Moral and Ceremonial law. The Christians make the distinctions for they hold that the moral law of God is unchangeable while the civil and ceremonial law of God is changeable. But when there is no evidence that moral and civil are not the same they can only hope for the abolition of the Ceremonial law. They simply have to hold that it is right to slay homosexuals and other sinners Moses wanted dead in the name of God.

A case for holding that Paul believed that the law that could not save was a legalistic interpretation of the Law and not the law itself as it actually was is dismissed. Paul never hinted that he meant only the interpretation of the law was dangerous for salvation not the Law itself. Paul's word for the Law backs this dismissal up.

Then the site suggests the correctness of the shocking statement of the theologian Geisler that all God's laws must be in accord with God's nature but need not be necessitated by that nature and so they can be changed. In other words, God can forbid you to pay taxes to the temple so that the poor may be given the money and then he could change that law. But that does not explain how he could command the stoning of certain sinners. Any law he makes, changeable or unchangeable is designed to bring about the best. So if the Israelites were better rid of these sinners so were we. If the temple can do without money it can at other times so the law would have to be reinstated. There is a sense then in which all his laws are permanent. They are permanent but if other permanent laws become more important than them they are just put to the background and not done away until they can be put back to the foreground again. Not one of the laws in the Torah are claimed to be changeable or even look like that kind of law. They are all different from the one about paying money to charity instead of the temple. God in the Law said you could murder a burglar who breaks into your house at night with impunity. Now is that a law that isn't necessitated by God's nature? It does no good at all. It clearly indicates that God does not accept the view that he has any laws that his nature does not require him to make but which he makes anyway. It is unnecessary and it is against the nature of a good God. Geisler is wrong.

The Law claims to be right. In other words, we are meant to see that it is right even if we don't believe in God. God told the Hebrews that other nations would consider them to be the wisest nation on earth because of their Law (Deuteronomy 4:6,8).

At least Geisler would admit that stoning people to death is not necessarily incompatible with God. He would say that if God doesn't allow it now, he still wants us to have the mindset that we would do it if he asked. We want to do it but it is because he asks us not to that we don't. The fanaticism is still there.

Ephesians 2:20 says the Church is built on the teaching of the apostles and the prophets. The prophets certainly include the prophets of the Old Testament. The letters of Paul use the Old Testament a lot so that is hardly surprising. What is for sure that the morals of the Old Testament teach the Church. That is one reason for the New Testament doctrine that God is the same yesterday and today.

The New Testament does not treat itself as the Bible in the sense that it repeatedly cites and invokes the Old Testament as scripture and as the picture of what God is like. It is like how it is not interested if it is scripture even if it is. Its Bible is the Old Testament.