

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 29, Christians and the OT Law Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Theology, Session 29, Christians and the OT Law, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture explores the relationship between Christians and the Old Testament Law. He discusses James' emphasis on works and obedience in contrast to Paul's focus on faith, arguing they are not contradictory, as both believed obedience inevitably results from true faith. The lecture posits that differences in their writings stem from addressing different pastoral situations: Paul confronting Judaizers requiring adherence to Mosaic Law for Gentiles, and James addressing those claiming faith without charitable deeds. Mathewson examines 1 John and Revelation, asserting that transformed lives and obedience to God's commands are evidence of genuine faith. He concludes by exploring the role of the Mosaic Law in the New Testament, suggesting it's fulfilled in Jesus Christ and guides believers when viewed through the lens of Christ's teachings and the Holy Spirit.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, NT Theology, Session 29 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → NT Introduction → NT Theology).



**Mathewson_NTThe
ology_Session29.mp**

3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Theology, Session 29, Christians and the OT Law

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on "Christians and the Old Testament Law," along with relevant quotes:

Briefing Document: Christians and the Old Testament Law

Main Themes:

- **The Relationship Between Faith and Works:** Mathewson addresses the apparent tension between James' emphasis on works and Paul's emphasis on faith. He argues that there is no conflict between faith and works in the New Testament, but instead, *true* saving faith inevitably produces good works. He says, "Faith that does not produce good works and faith that is not accompanied by good works are, by definition, not true saving faith."
- **Understanding James and Paul in Context:** He highlights the different pastoral situations that James and Paul addressed. Paul was confronting Judaizers who insisted on adherence to the Mosaic Law for Gentile Christians, while James was addressing those who claimed faith but showed no practical compassion or charity. He states, "So, it seems to me that part of understanding the difference between James and Paul is to understand the different situations that they address pastorally."
- **The Role of the Old Testament Law in the New Covenant:** Mathewson explores the complex question of how the Mosaic Law applies to Christians. He emphasizes that the law must be understood through the lens of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Fulfillment in Christ:** Jesus's life, ministry, and teaching are the goals of the law and prophets. The law does not pass away, but finds its validity and enduring value in light of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **James' Perspective:** James emphasizes the practical outworking of faith, highlighting the necessity of good works and obedience. James 2:24 states, "a person is justified or considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone."

- **Paul's Perspective:** Paul emphasizes justification by faith in Jesus Christ, not by works of the law (Galatians 2:16). He addresses the specific issue of Judaizers requiring Gentile Christians to submit to the Mosaic Law.
- **Reconciling James and Paul:** Mathewson argues that both Paul and James agree that true saving faith inevitably leads to a transformed life and good works. He suggests that the differences in emphasis are due to the different pastoral situations they addressed.
- **1 John's Emphasis on Obedience:** The book of 1 John emphasizes that knowing God is demonstrated by obedience to His commands (1 John 2:3-6). "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands."
- **Revelation's View of God's People:** Revelation portrays God's people as those who overcome, keep God's commands, and are clothed with the righteous deeds of God's people (Revelation 12:17, 19:8). "Those who keep God's commands, and hold fast their testimony about Jesus."
- **Jesus Fulfills the Law:** Jesus fulfills the law not just by keeping it perfectly but by *being* what the law pointed to (Matthew 5:17-20). He brings it to completion.
- **Paul's View of the End of the Old Covenant Era:** Paul argues that the era of the Old Covenant and the Mosaic Law has ended with the coming of Christ (Galatians 3 & 4). He uses metaphors like "guardian" to describe the temporary function of the law. "Before the coming of faith, we were held in custody under the law...Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the guardian."
- **Christians are No Longer Under the Law:** In Romans 6:14, Paul says, "For sin will no longer be your master, because you are no longer under the law but under grace." Mathewson interprets this as referring to two different eras, not two different ways of living.
- **Colossians and the Shadow of the Law:** Paul, in Colossians 2:16-17, describes Old Testament practices like religious festivals, new moon celebrations, and Sabbath days as "a shadow of things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."
- **The Law Requires Obedience:** Paul emphasizes that the law operates on the principle of obedience, and those who rely on the works of the law are under a curse because no one can keep it perfectly (Galatians 3:10).

- **The "New Perspective" on Paul and the Law:** Mathewson notes the "new perspective" which emphasizes that Paul critiqued the law because it excluded Gentiles. While acknowledging some truth in this, he argues that it's only part of the story. Paul also critiques the law because the new age of salvation has arrived and because no one can keep it perfectly.
- **The Law Applies Through the Lens of Christ:** The law applies to God's people only in light of how it has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- **The Law of Christ:** Christians are obligated to the "law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2), which includes Jesus' examples, teachings, and how He brings the Old Testament law to fulfillment.
- **Old Testament Law as Moral Guidance:** The Mosaic law still functions as a guide to instruct God's people as to God's character and what He requires.
- **Intention of the Law:** Understanding the intention of the law helps to understand the requirements to Christians.

Quotes:

- "a person is justified or considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone." (James 2:24)
- "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands." (1 John 2:3)
- "Those who keep God's commands, and hold fast their testimony about Jesus." (Revelation 12:17)
- "Before the coming of faith, we were held in custody under the law...Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the guardian." (Galatians 3:23-25)
- "For sin will no longer be your master, because you are no longer under the law but under grace." (Romans 6:14)
- "a shadow of things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ." (Colossians 2:17)

I hope this briefing document is helpful!

4. Study Guide: Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 29, Christians and the OT Law

Christians and the Old Testament Law: A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Dr. Mathewson, what is James's primary emphasis, and how does it differ from Paul's?
2. What specific situation is Paul addressing in Galatians and Romans regarding the Mosaic law?
3. What specific situation is James addressing in his epistle regarding faith and works?
4. What does 1 John say about the relationship between knowing God and obeying His commands?
5. How are God's people identified in the book of Revelation, specifically in relation to the Roman Empire?
6. According to Dr. Mathewson, what role did the Mosaic law play in the lives of God's people?
7. How does Jesus fulfill the law, as explained in Matthew 5:17-20, according to Dr. Mathewson?
8. What does Paul argue in Galatians 3 and 4 regarding the temporary role of the law?
9. What does Paul mean when he says in Romans 6:14 that Christians are "no longer under the law, but under grace"?
10. According to Dr. Mathewson, what is one way to approach the Mosaic law in light of the New Testament?

Quiz Answer Key

1. James primarily emphasizes the need for good works and obedience as practical outcomes of faith, whereas Paul focuses on more detailed theological development and reflection. In essence, James is more concerned with the practical application of faith, while Paul delves into the theological underpinnings.

2. Paul addresses the situation where Gentile Christians are being pressured by Judaizers to submit to the Mosaic law, including circumcision, Sabbath observance, and food laws, as a requirement for being considered true followers of God. Paul argues against this, asserting that justification comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not through works of the law.
3. James addresses a situation where people claim to have faith but fail to show compassion and meet the physical needs of those in dire circumstances. He criticizes a faith that is merely verbal assent without accompanying actions, especially deeds of charity towards the poor and marginalized.
4. 1 John states that knowing God is demonstrated by keeping His commands. Those who claim to know Him but do not obey His commandments are considered liars, and the truth is not in them, but those who live in Him must live as Jesus did.
5. God's people are identified as those who overcome by refusing to compromise with the idolatrous Roman rule and the world, and keep God's commands. They are also characterized by righteous deeds and faithfulness to their testimony about Jesus.
6. According to Dr. Mathewson, the Mosaic law should be understood in light of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. While it no longer holds binding authority as part of the Old Covenant, it still applies to God's people when seen and interpreted through the lens of Jesus Christ.
7. Jesus fulfills the law not just by keeping it perfectly but primarily because He is what the law pointed to, and His own teaching is the goal of the law and prophets. He brings it to completion through His life, ministry, and teaching, showing its enduring validity in light of His fulfillment.
8. Paul argues that the law played a temporary role as a guardian or pedagogue until the coming of Christ. He emphasizes that with the arrival of Jesus, the new age of salvation has dawned, and believers are no longer under the authority of the Mosaic law.
9. When Paul says Christians are "no longer under the law, but under grace," he is not suggesting that they are free from all moral obligations. Instead, he is contrasting the era of the Old Covenant under Moses with the new era of salvation inaugurated by Jesus Christ, where believers are justified by grace through faith.

10. One way to approach the Mosaic law is to ask what the true intention of a specific law seems to be and consider how that intention can be carried out in light of Jesus Christ. It involves understanding the underlying principles and applying them in practical ways relevant to contemporary life.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the perspectives of James and Paul on faith and works. How do their differing contexts and emphases contribute to a more complete understanding of Christian living?
2. Explain how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament law, according to the lecture. Discuss the implications of this fulfillment for Christians today.
3. Discuss the role of obedience in the Christian life, drawing on the perspectives of James, 1 John, and Revelation. How do these New Testament books emphasize the importance of practical obedience as evidence of true faith?
4. How does Paul argue for the end of the Mosaic law's binding authority in Galatians and Romans? What are the key arguments he employs, and what are the implications for Christians regarding their relationship to the law?
5. According to the lecture, how should Christians approach the Old Testament law today? Discuss the principles for interpreting and applying the law, and provide examples of how this might be done in practice.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Justification:** Being declared righteous or considered righteous in God's sight.
- **Judaizers:** Jewish Christians who insisted that Gentile converts to Christianity had to follow Mosaic law, including circumcision, to be saved.
- **Mosaic Law:** The law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, comprising the commandments and regulations in the Old Testament.
- **New Covenant:** The agreement established by God through Jesus Christ, based on grace and faith, promising forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- **Old Covenant:** The agreement between God and the Israelites at Mount Sinai, based on obedience to the Mosaic law.
- **Fulfillment:** The completion or realization of a prophecy, promise, or law, especially as it relates to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.
- **Law of Christ:** A term used by Paul to refer to the ethical teachings and example of Jesus Christ, which guide Christian conduct and behavior.
- **New Perspective on Paul:** A scholarly view that emphasizes the social and identity-marker aspects of the law in Paul's letters, rather than primarily focusing on legalistic attempts at salvation.
- **Shadow (in Colossians):** A metaphor used to describe the temporary and incomplete nature of the Old Testament laws and practices, which pointed to the greater reality found in Jesus Christ.
- **Works of the Law:** Actions performed in obedience to the Mosaic law, often contrasted with faith as a means of obtaining righteousness before God.

5. FAQs on Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Session 29, Christians and the OT Law, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Christians and the Old Testament Law: An FAQ

What is the central tension between James and Paul regarding faith and works?

James emphasizes that faith without works is dead and cannot save, asserting that a person is justified by what they do and not by faith alone (James 2:14-26). Paul, particularly in Galatians, argues that justification comes through faith in Jesus Christ and not by works of the law (Galatians 2:16). While these statements may seem contradictory, the lecture suggests they address different pastoral situations and are ultimately not in conflict. Paul believed that works were the inevitable result of faith (Ephesians 2:8-10), and James emphasizes that faith without action is not genuine saving faith.

How do the different pastoral situations addressed by James and Paul help to resolve the apparent conflict between them?

Paul's letters, especially Galatians and Romans, address situations where Judaizers were insisting that Gentile Christians adhere to the Mosaic Law (e.g., circumcision, Sabbath observance, food laws) as proof of their belonging to God's people. Paul argues against this, emphasizing that justification comes through faith in Christ alone. James, on the other hand, is dealing with a situation where people claim to have faith but fail to show compassion and act on behalf of those in need. He criticizes a faith that is merely intellectual assent without practical expression through good deeds.

What does it mean that Jesus fulfills the law in Matthew 5:17-20?

Jesus fulfills the law not merely by perfectly keeping it, but by being the goal and the reality to which the law pointed. His life, ministry, and teachings are the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the law itself. Jesus' teaching, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, demonstrates how he brings the law to completion. The law continues to have validity, but it must be understood and interpreted in light of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

According to Paul, what is the role of the Mosaic Law in the lives of Christians?

Paul argues that the era of the Old Covenant and its associated Mosaic Law has come to an end with the coming of Christ. In Galatians 3 and 4, he contends that the law played a temporary role as a guardian or tutor until the arrival of Christ, after which it is no longer binding. He is clear that the law played a temporary role until the coming of the promise in Jesus Christ, and in this way has played out its role in salvation history. Christians have experienced the New Covenant and have received the Holy Spirit not by adhering to the Mosaic law, but by believing in the Gospel (Galatians 3:2-5). While the law is no longer a binding authority, it still speaks to God's people through the lens of its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

How does Colossians 2:16-17 contribute to understanding Paul's view of the Law?

In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul addresses false teachers who were emphasizing adherence to Old Testament practices like food laws, festivals, new moon celebrations, and Sabbaths. Paul states that these things are "a shadow of things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ." This reinforces the idea that the Mosaic Law served as a temporary foreshadowing of the greater reality found in Jesus Christ. Christians should not feel judged or disqualified for not observing these practices because they are no longer binding, having been fulfilled in Christ.

Does Paul believe Christians are free from all law?

No, Paul does not suggest that Christians are free from all law or obligations. Rather, he argues that Christians are no longer "under the law" of Moses, but "under grace" (Romans 6:14). He emphasizes the "law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2), which entails living by the Spirit, following Jesus' teachings, and fulfilling the moral intentions of the Old Testament Law as they are brought to completion in Christ.

How should Christians approach and interpret the Old Testament Law today?

The Mosaic Law still applies to God's people, but only through the lens of how it has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The ethical or moral teaching found within it should be taken into account and incorporated into the law of Christ. Christians can seek to understand the true intention of a particular law and then determine how to fulfill that intention in light of the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. For example, the intention behind the law to harvest up to the edge of the field, leaving some of the harvest for the poor, is that the poor were to be fed. Instead of harvesting up to the edge of the field, we can provide food, shelter and clothing for the poor in our own communities.

How does living by the Spirit relate to fulfilling the Law, according to Paul?

Paul argues that living life under the guidance of the New Covenant Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of the law. When Christians live according to the Spirit, they fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. The Holy Spirit empowers believers to live out the love, justice, and righteousness that the law ultimately pointed toward (Romans 8:4). The intention is not to put ourselves back under slavery to the law, but to live under the guidance and power of the New Covenant Holy Spirit.