

Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL

Whither the Law?

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding
the glory of the Lord, are being trans-
formed into the same image from one
degree of glory to another. For this
comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18

IWINCE WHENEVER I HEAR OF A CHURCH where only the New Testament is preached. It may be true that few churches today follow the radical and tragic path set by the second-century heretic Marcion of Sinope, who

held to many errant views, but he is primarily known for his belief that the Old Testament Scriptures were not authoritative for a Christian. He denied that the God of the Old Testament was the same God presented in the New Testament. For Marcion, Jesus was the Son of the God of the New Testament but not the Son of the deity described in the Hebrew Scriptures. The deities of the Old and New Testaments were, from Marcion's perspective, literally two different gods. Marcion did not deny the existence of the god of the Old Testament (what he referred to as a Demiurge). He simply classified this god as a secondary deity, one that was inferior to the supreme God revealed in Jesus.

(from <https://www.gotquestions.org/marcionism.html>)

Yet even without churches and their pastors adopting that perverse doctrine, there are more than a few that denigrate the Old Testament by acts of omission, tacit implications of irrelevancy, and by

ignoring the countless textual connections and prophecies between the Old and the New—such as the unavoidable fact that from Genesis One on, the Old Testament is replete with references to Christ Jesus, Son of God.

The traditional starting point for this detachment for Christians is the Mosaic Law, which many Christians claim has no relevancy to their *new* covenant lives. But we insult our God by thinking that the new covenant in Christ nullifies the Mosaic Covenant, as if the Godhead concluded among its Members, *Well, that didn't work. Let's try something else.* At the same time, we call Him a liar, even as we cheat and condemn ourselves, if we still today hold strictly to the dictates of the Mosaic Covenant, essentially trying to buy our way into heaven by our obedience.

No, the two work together; both are essential, which is why Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17). And Paul would write, “What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never

be! Rather, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law. For I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Romans 7:7).

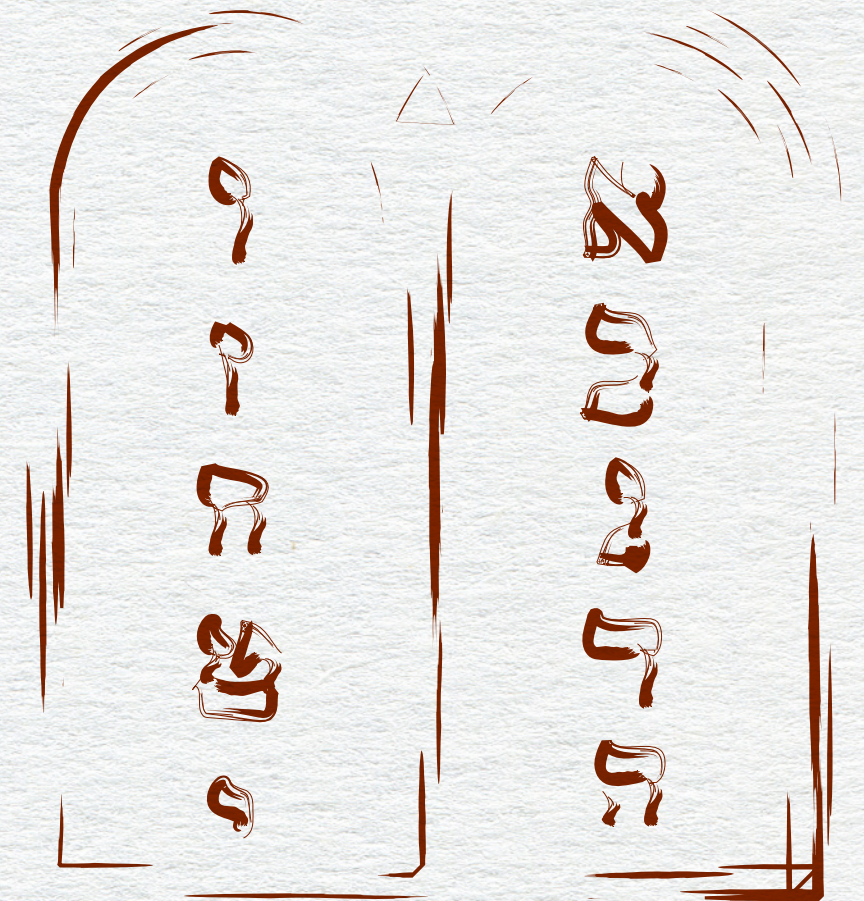
Without the Law, we would all be doomed. Remove the Pentateuch and the Prophets from your Bible, and you may as well remove the New Testament, leaving you a thin tome containing only a small subset of Hebrew poetry.

Without the Law we would not know what behavior pleases God.

Now Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. So now then, if you will indeed listen to My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

Exodus 19:3–6

In that covenantal Law were prescribed the righteous behaviors that please God. Since God never changes, but remains what He has always been, these behaviors still please Him. It is true that in Jesus the Messiah there is no longer a need for blood sacrifice; He has fulfilled that requirement once for all time. Yet God is still pleased when we do not cheat and lie, commit adultery, take His name in vain, or worship false gods.



Without the Law we would not know what God considers sin.

Why the Law then? It was added because of [or for the sake of defining] trespasses, having been ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Galatians 3:19

Without the Law it would not be established that sin must be atoned for by the shedding of blood.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.”

Leviticus 17:11

And in the same way, both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:21–22

Without that requirement, Jesus would not have died for our sins.

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might bring you to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

1 Peter 3:18

Without His sacrifice, we all would be condemned to an eternity in the lake of fire.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sits upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. Then I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them, and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11–15

In other words, without the Law and the Prophets, we would know nothing of God; He would have kept all that a secret, leaving us to be utterly ignorant of our sin, yet perishing in it.

Thus the Law, in establishing the critical context for atonement and redemption, expresses the deep love of God for His Creation almost as much as the sacrifice of His Son.

The glory of the ministry of the Mosaic Covenant remains; it is still there. But with the advent of the new covenant, the old covenant's glory has been overwhelmed by the glory of the ministry of Christ Jesus. He fulfills the old by answering all its demands in Himself—and that truth is glorious beyond all comprehension. ♦



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