

Does the Law of Moses Apply to Me?

Summarizing the Five Main Views on the Law and the Christian*

Should you, as a Christian, tithe? Work on Saturday? Charge interest to Jews? Eat meat and drink milk in the same meal? The Pentateuch addresses these, but believers debate whether the law applies to believers today. This chart summarizes five views on this crucial issue.

	Theonomic Greg Bahnsen	Reformed Willem VanGemen	Weightier Issues Walter C. Kaiser	Modified Lutheran Douglas J. Moo	Dispensational Wayne G. Strickland
What is the Law?	Same definition as the views 3-5	God's oral or written instructions since creation	The whole Mosaic law given in the Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy) but also amplified in the rest of the Old Testament		
Who is the Law for?	The Elect (Israel = Church)	All mankind (Israel = Church)	Believers (Israel and Church)	Believers (Israel and Church)	Israel only (Israel ≠ Church)
Which parts of the Law apply today? • "Moral law"? (i.e., Decalogue or 10 Commandments)	All moral laws apply to people of God only in every age; therefore, all elect persons since creation should observe either the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday, before Christ) or "Christian Sabbath," (Sunday, after Christ)	All moral laws apply to believers and unbelievers of every age (e.g., all persons—including unbelieving Gentiles since creation—should observe the Sabbath or "Christian Sabbath," being Sunday)	All moral laws that stem from God's character: • 10 Commandments • Leviticus 18–19 (sex) (i.e., Sabbath is required since Israel's nationhood and prohibited sexual practices still apply)	As with dispensationalists, the Mosaic law is abolished in its entirety; however, its moral content provides good guidelines for Christian living, though Christ holds the final say through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in believers today; Sabbath obedience is not consistently applied (?)	God's "moral law" before Moses is now called the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) and governs believers through the Spirit's new covenant indwelling; The Law does not easily divide into "parts" and is done away with in its entirety (Rom. 7:1-6; 1 Cor. 9:19-21; Heb. 8:13), including the Sabbath (Col. 2:16-17)
• Civil laws? (i.e., judicial law)	All apply (e.g., laws today should require death for adultery)	Some apply (e.g., still tithe and don't charge believers interest)	Judicial <i>principles</i> (not laws) apply since moral laws underlie all judicial and ceremonial laws	Only principles apply now as the Mosaic law was given only to Israel	None apply as these regulated Israel alone (but principles such as love and compassion still apply)
• Ceremonial laws?	All five views agree that ceremonial aspects such as the sacrificial system and Jewish priesthood are now fulfilled in Jesus Christ				
What is the relationship of the Abrahamic Covenant to Mosaic Covenant?	Both are God's "covenant of grace." They consist of the same substance of God's saving relationship which makes the MC still apply today	MC was added to the AC; both still apply though they are similar in substance but different in form and purpose	MC was given specifically to Israel but its moral principles are still relevant to all believers under the AC	Like dispensationalists, MC was conditional but AC was not; MC as a temporary framework prescribed terms of obedience for Israel in Law period	MC regulated Israel's life so she could experience the blessings of the AC, but MC is no longer operative as it is fulfilled in Christ

* This chart summarizes Stanley N. Gundry, ed. *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), where each author presents his view and responds to the other four views. Generally speaking, views 1-2 are similar as both are Reformed (stressing continuity between the NT and OT), and these stand against views 3-5, which are alike in stressing discontinuity. In my opinion, the dispensational view has the most to commend, as the law in the NT is never broken into parts, and this view clearly distinguishes Israel from the church. Further, it is inconsistent to change the Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday but not apply the OT penalties for Sabbath-breaking today (i.e., death by stoning; cf. Exod. 31:14-15; 35:2).

Does the Law of Moses Apply to Me? (2 of 2)
Evaluating the Five Main Views on the Law and the Christian

	Theonomic Greg Bahnsen	Reformed Willem VanGeren	Weightier Issues Walter C. Kaiser	Modified Lutheran Douglas J. Moo	Dispensational Wayne G. Strickland
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity between the OT and NT upheld • Desires ethics to relate to all of life • Sees positive aspects of the law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity between the OT and NT upheld • Notes Mosaic law's foreshadowing of Christ • Sees a convicting role of the law today for unbelievers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical support for some law aspects (i.e., moral) being weightier than others (Matt. 23:23) • Holiness Code of Leviticus 18–19 stem from nature of God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts for new covenant emphases under the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) • Says OT laws repeated in the NT are applicable • Applies law principles today 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical in that Mosaic law began at Sinai and ended with Christ's death as a temporary custodian or tutor (Gal. 3:19, 24-25) • Clearly distinguishes between Israel and church • Advocates continued guidance in law of Christ
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dividing law as moral, civil & ceremonial not biblically supported • Misguided to apply godly commands to unregenerate man • All "law" need not be Mosaic (natural law and law of Christ also exist) • The NT never applies the OT to civil matters • Law condemned man (2 Cor. 3:9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dividing law as moral, civil & ceremonial not biblically supported • Use of "law" in differing ways inconsistent & confusing • Requiring Sabbath for today contradicts NT (Col. 2:16-17) • Unclear if moral law became law of Christ • Merges Israel and church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dividing law as moral, civil & ceremonial not biblically supported • Arbitrary to pick and choose which parts of the law are required • Choice of Decalogue and Lev. 18–19 too narrow for moral law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to teach the indivisibility of the law while upholding its moral content • Too extreme to claim that the law has absolutely no purpose today • Fails to see the gospel in the OT by demarcating Law and Gospel into distinct, discontinuous eras 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguishing law's revelatory aspects (eternal, revealing God's nature) from regulatory (temporary, ruled Israel) makes distinctions within an inseparable code— if the OT law is essentially a unity, then why divide it into two parts? • The law is not nullified but actually upheld by faith (Rom. 3:31)

Spectrum on Degree of Applicability*



* Adapted from Lee Hwee Chin, "The Applicability of the Law Today," unpublished research paper for the course "Old Testament Survey," Singapore: Singapore Bible College, 2001), 1.