

The Law and the Christian

Recently, there has been an increase in reports of interest in Jesus Christ, especially among Gen Z males. Gen Z refers to people born approximately 1997-2012¹.

Here are a couple of excerpts from some articles:

“ [Franklin] Graham noted that "millions of people are talking about" the Gospel around the world in the wake of Kirk's assassination. In what has been dubbed "the Charlie effect," reports have emerged of a surge in church attendance during the weekend after Kirk's murder.²”

The next excerpt is from an article on the Barna Group website.

“Barna Group is a Christian research organization that provides data and insights on the trends affecting faith, culture and ministry today. Explore their articles, reports, podcasts, courses and services to help you lead by faith in an ever-changing world.³”

“At a time when organized religion in America faces scrutiny and skepticism, a new Barna study as part of the *State of the Church 2025* initiative shows a groundswell of commitment to Jesus over the last four years.

“According to Barna’s latest data, 66 percent of all U.S. adults say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus that is still important in their life today. That marks a 12-percentage-point increase since 2021, when commitment levels reached their lowest in more than three decades of Barna tracking.

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Z

2 <https://www.christianpost.com/news/franklin-graham-says-kirk-assassination-backfired.html>

3 <https://www.barna.com/> I didn't find this on the actual website. It came up in the search window.

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“This shift is not only statistically significant—it may be the clearest indication of meaningful spiritual renewal in the United States.” Commitment to Jesus was lowest in 2021 and 2022, when it bottomed out at 54 percent. Since then, the research shows a steady, year-over-year increase in the key indicator.⁴

That is great! But...what happens now? Will new believers be told to “Do good?” Doing good from the human sin nature may seem productive. But from a spiritual perspective it is not. Getting high on emotion may seem spiritual. But spiritual growth comes by faith dependence on the Holy Spirit combined with Bible answers.

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

So when the emotional high is drowned in contemporary culture, what then?

L. S. Chafer spoke on the spiritual life. What he said is perhaps the most important point in today’s lesson. How does one live the Christian life? L. S. Chafer contrasted living by one’s own efforts and living by means of faith dependence on the Holy Spirit.

“It’s altogether a different plan of living that is brought into play, here. I don’t know whether I’ve been able to even begin to make this impression clear to you or not. But it’s a very important thing for you to know that

4 <https://www.barna.com/research/belief-in-jesus-rises/>

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your daily life is to be a life based on the principle of faith exactly as your salvation is on a principle of faith. Now you speak to an unsaved person, you say “have faith in God, put your trust in Christ.” Do you know what you’re talking about? Do you know what you’re asking them to do? I have confidence in the fact that the Spirit is in you and is there to do these things. And then you live every moment of every day in that confidence. You’re resigned, perhaps, definitely resign in the early morning. You see I can’t live the life that is before me today. I haven’t the resources myself. There is no use for me to try or struggle. I turned the whole thing over definitely to the One who has power to do it who is in me. Then things will be different. You’re going on then on a principal of faith. The same principal by which you were saved in the first place. But, it is an astonishing thing that people claim to be saved, and yet don’t know anything about the principle of faith. They are shocked and surprised when they are told that they must live by faith. The just must live by faith. Go on living every day by faith. Therefore it is a plan, a principle of living. The change from self-sufficiency to depending upon the Holy Spirit is a comprehensive one. Yet, at no time even when believers are fully enabled, does the Spirit work outside of the functions of human will nor is he conscious of the experience of another of one’s own self acting and determining. I think you see what I mean. I hope you do.⁵”

Philippians 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation (i.e. phase 2 salvation, sanctification) with fear and trembling;

5 This is a transcript I made of a portion of an mp3 file from a recording of L.S. Chafer teaching at Dallas Seminary on the spiritual life. The internet location has bounced around the internet for years. The latest location I found them on is: http://bartimaeus.us/audio_index.html

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Philippians 2:13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

This is the answer to the question about living the Christian life. It is by faith dependence on the Holy Spirit. But it is a minute by minute decision and walk.

This week, we look at the usefulness of the Mosaic Law for the Christian. As Christians we may not look at the Mosaic Law as embodied in the Torah⁶ in a positive light. Yet, Paul says it is perfect.

Too many people misunderstand the purpose of the Law. It was not meant to provide salvation. It's purpose was multi-faceted. Here are some points on the purpose of the Law from a previous lesson I taught. I copied the points from the GotQuestions.org website.

⁶ The Torah is the Jewish term for what Christians call the Pentateuch.

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We need to understand the purpose of the Law. Gotquestions.org has a nice summary⁷:

“The Mosaic Law was given specifically to the nation of Israel (Exodus 19; Leviticus 26:46; Romans 9:4). It was made up of three parts: the Ten Commandments, the ordinances, and the worship system, which included the priesthood, the tabernacle, the offerings, and the festivals (Exodus 20—40; Leviticus 1—7; 23). The purpose of the Mosaic Law was to accomplish the following:

- (1) “Reveal the holy character of the eternal God to the nation of Israel (Leviticus 19:2; 20:7–8).
- (2) “Set apart the nation of Israel as distinct from all the other nations (Exodus 19:5).
- (3) “Reveal the sinfulness of man (cf. Galatians 3:19). Although the Law was good and holy (Romans 7:12), it did not provide salvation for the nation of Israel. “No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin” (Romans 3:20; cf. Acts 13:38–39).
- (4) “Provide forgiveness through the sacrifice/offerings (Leviticus 1—7) for the people who had faith in the Lord in the nation of Israel.
- (5) “Provide a way of worship for the community of faith through the yearly feasts (Leviticus 23).
- (6) “Provide God’s direction for the physical and spiritual health of the nation (Exodus 21—23; Deuteronomy 6:4–19; Psalm 119:97–104).
- (7) “Reveal to humanity that no one can keep the Law but everyone falls short of God’s standard of holiness. That realization causes us to rely on God’s mercy and grace. When Christ came, He fulfilled the Law and with His death paid the penalty for our breaking it (Galatians 3:24; Romans 10:4). By faith in Him, the believer has the very righteousness of Christ imputed to him.”

⁷ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Mosaic-Law.html>

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The Reformation had to deal with the value and applicability of the Old Testament to Christian experience. Since the Old Testament was given to and addressed to sons of Israel, early reformers struggled to identify the place of the Old Testament in their theology. Here are some quotes from Gerald Bray's book *Biblical Interpretation: Past & Present*.

The reformers developed Covenant theology which saw history as a series of covenants made between God and man.

“Covenant theology gave the church a way of reading the Old Testament as a Christian book without lapsing into allegory, and it soon became the accepted framework for almost all Protestant biblical interpretation.⁸”

“Within Christian theology itself, the emergence of covenant theology led to a reappropriation of the Old Testament, which now became the historical record of the church before Christ. The Old Testament enjoyed a revival among Christians seldom seen before or since. Theologians spoke quite happily of the ‘Jewish church’ and looked upon the law as still valid, in some sense, for Christians.⁹”

“Even today, it is still widespread among the conservative elements in Protestantism, and as a way of reading the Old Testament as a Christian book it has never been adequately superseded.

“The strong Old Testament bias of covenant theology quickly led to the belief that Protestant states were in some sense heirs of ancient Israel.¹⁰”

Much of what follows duplicates some of those points. The difference lies in the presentation and inclusion of Bible passages.

The Mosaic Law, the Torah, the Pentateuch, provided a history of man including his fall and need for salvation (Genesis). It provided a shadow

8 G Bray (2009). *Biblical Interpretation : past & present*. Nottingham: Ivp Academic. Page 167.

9 G Bray (2009). *Biblical Interpretation : past & present*. Nottingham: Ivp Academic. Page 207.

10 G Bray (2009). *Biblical Interpretation : past & present*. Nottingham: Ivp Academic. Page 207.

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Christology (Leviticus) which is explained in the book of Hebrews and other places in the New Testament. It identifies the sons of Israel as God's chosen people (throughout the Torah). The book of Deuteronomy is a covenant or contract between God and the sons of Israel. It includes promises to Israel that are yet to be fulfilled. Most importantly for the Christian, without the Torah, there would be no New Testament.

The (Mosaic) Law as embodied in the Torah answers questions. Let us look at various aspects of the Torah.

1. The Torah answers humanity's questions.

A. Where did we come from? God created mankind starting with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 1-3.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God created everything out of nothing. Scientists approach this concept in the "Big Bang Theory."

B. What is our purpose? God created mankind (Adam) and gave him a purpose.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

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Ever since Darwin proposed his theory, scientists are convinced that mankind evolved from animals and was not created.

C. What happens when we die? At the point of salvation God imputes His righteousness and His life to the believer. Everlasting life is the result.

It is interesting to note that people throughout history and throughout the world have understood there to be a God. As a result, they understand that there is a life after death. The kind of life is often misunderstood. Only the Bible understands that everlasting life is the result of faith in Christ. Those who reject Jesus Christ as savior will suffer the second death and reside in the Lake of Fire for the rest of eternity.

2. The Torah identifies the need for salvation.

A. Man is sinful. Genesis 2-3

Genesis 3:8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:9 Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

Genesis 3:10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

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Genesis 3:11 And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

B. God provides salvation. In the Old Testament this salvation is the promise. Genesis 3.

Genesis 3:14 The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life;

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Genesis 3:15 is sometimes labeled the protoevangelium or first gospel. This part of the curse was addressed to the Serpent, not the man nor the woman.

C. Salvation was by faith in God’s promise. Genesis 15

Genesis 15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 6:9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.

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3. The Torah narrates pre-history. It also confirms the sinfulness of man.

Genesis 6:5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 6:6 The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

Genesis 6:7 The Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”

Genesis 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

A. The beginning of mankind is narrated in the book of Genesis.

B. The Torah maps out the genetic groups starting with the sons of Noah. Genesis chapter 10.

C. As a result of the Tower of Babel, God assigned different languages based upon the genetic groupings. Genesis chapter 11.

4. The Torah introduces the Angelic Conflict in Genesis 3

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed,

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has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”

5. The Torah includes a moral code. Christians point to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:2-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21). The Ten Commandments were given to Israel and not to the church. While that is true, they are in one form or another repeated in various epistles in the New Testament. The Sabbath is not for the Christians. The Christian parallel is the command to not forsake the gathering of yourselves. You can work on Saturday's since you are not under the Mosaic Law.

Hebrews 10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

6. The Torah introduces the three divine institutions: free will, marriage and family.

Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Genesis 2:16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

Genesis 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will

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surely die.” (Man had free will to obey God or disobey Him)

Genesis 2:24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Marriage here is termed “joined.” This is a powerful word used also in the relationship between Israel and God.

The narratives of Genesis 10-11 indicates God did not want mankind concentrated in one place. He gave them different languages and spread them throughout the world.

Genesis 11:8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

Genesis 11:9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

7. The Torah identifies the uniqueness of Israel. Exodus 19:5

Exodus 19:5 Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;

Deuteronomy 7:6 For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has

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chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 7:7 “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

Deuteronomy 7:8 but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 14:2 For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

8. Law as Tutor

“The Law was a “tutor” until the child reached maturity (bar mitzvah). So the Law was temporary until maturity came in which it did with Christ.¹¹”

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

¹¹ <https://deanbibleministries.org/dbmfiles/slides/2010-Romans-075b.pdf>

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Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

9. Law as not achievable

Romans 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

Romans 8:4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

10. Jesus fulfilled the Law.

Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

Matthew 5:18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

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Passages:

Acts 15

“The “Jerusalem Council”: the Law was a “yoke” on the neck, which even the Jews could not bear. Gentiles were not asked to be circumcised, or follow the Law, but to abstain from flesh with blood.¹²”

¹² <https://deanbibleministries.org/dbmfiles/slides/2010-Romans-075b.pdf>