

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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It's My Party and I'll Cry If I Want To

Rick Sparks

Satan secured the scepter of government in the earth from Adam by right of conquest. He has organized the present world system on his own cosmic principles: pride, ambition, selfishness, force, greed, and pleasure. The world system—scientific, cultured, and elegant—is dominated by satanic principles, and beneath its deceptive veneer is a seething cauldron of ambition and commercial rivalries. It is antagonistic toward God—whatever cloak civilization and man's religiousness may cast over it. Satan and his elaborately organized hierarchy of evil are often the invisible agents and the real motivating power and intelligence behind the dictators, kings, presidents, and governors, who are the visible rulers. Armed force and periodic wars, with wholesale murder and violence, are its indispensable concomitants.

Satan is the prince of this world, the god of this world, and the prince of the power of the air. He holds sway over the fallen spirits, who concurred in his primal rebellion. These spirits made an irrevocable choice to follow Satan instead of remaining loyal to their Creator. They have become irretrievably confirmed in wickedness and irreparably abandoned to delusion. They are in full sympathy with their prince. They render him willing service in their varied ranks in his highly organized empire of evil. The princelings under him have their own specific responsibilities. Their initial decision has forever wedded them to his deceptive program and to his inevitable doom.

In no realm is their activity more significant than in the sphere of human government. Without divine revelation, we cannot see beyond flesh and blood to the world rulers of this present darkness and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. But there are demons behind the idols of man. God is permitting Satan, under certain restrictions, to work out his unholy ambition in the folly of a creature opposing his Creator. The saved part of humanity, which has been delivered from the power of darkness, is not under satanic direction (unless it yields), but rather through the Spirit of God is the salt of the earth, hindering its untimely dissolution.

When Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them for a price, he said that this authority was given to him and that he gave it to whomever he chose. He said if you worship me, all shall be thine. The Lord did not deny that Satan was in charge of the world's kingdoms. Man had yielded to the devil, and the world passed under his mastery. Yet the power he exercises in directing the governments of this world is by divine permission. The Devil's activity is circumscribed within certain divinely set limits. The precise extent of these boundaries is not revealed. We do know that a demon was powerful enough to hinder Daniel's prayer for three weeks. Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities, for there

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is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Satan is not omnipotent, like Christ. Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Just as the Amorites were destroyed when their iniquity was full, so Satan's world rule will be destroyed, at the zenith of its wickedness, at the second appearance of Christ. There will be no lasting peace until the Prince of Peace comes to destroy the Satanic system and cast its leader into the lake of fire. Until then, Satan's world system presents a perpetual peril to the child of God. Nothing short of the whole armor of God will avail.

We children of God are disturbed by the anti-Christian, morally debauched culture we live in. Politics has no power

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to bring about the spiritual transformation our society needs. Looking to human means to reform society is futile. God never intended us to be at ease with our culture. Forcing people to adopt biblical standards of morality effects only superficial change. The real issue is sin. The need is for rebirth in Christ. When the people of the world face the judgment of God, their "traditional Christian values" won't matter at all. Only whether they responded to Jesus with faith and obedience will matter. Pursuing outward change at the expense of inward transformation is nearsighted.

Our world has no solutions for its deepening fractures. God's word alone holds the answers. Let us believers think, speak, and behave biblically, grounded in the truth. Let us be stable, confident, and joyful in the faith. Hearts can be turned toward God, but only through the power of God's word, one person at a time. We have the only means to bring genuine, lasting change—the gospel of Christ. Our God is our God, and our president is our president. Know the difference.

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How to Use the Law

Tad Morris

Teaching in higher education for ten years taught me that you cannot assume people will do what's obviously right, and they will not admit to understanding what is obviously wrong. When people are left without marked boundaries to exercise their own free will, they will defy their own conscience, ignore any sense of right and wrong, hurt themselves, and hurt other people. A written code must exist to define right and wrong behaviors and define the consequences for those behaviors. The Mosaic Law was given for this very reason, to define sin and the consequences of sin. **Romans 3:19-20**:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The Mosaic Law is useful to us, even as Christians, if we use it in the right way. This was Paul's message in **1 Timothy 1:8**: "*But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully...*"

Indeed, the Old Law should be used by Christians. The

apostle Paul said in **Romans 10:14**, "*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*" Things written before (the Old Testament) should be studied. It should be understood. We should learn from it. If you're reading the New Testament, you're actually reading the Old Testament, too. Almost every book of the New Testament includes quotes and allusions to the Old Testament. When you quote the New Law, you're often quoted the Old Law, too. This point is simple and self-evident, but the difficulty is in the details. How exactly should the Old Testament be used for Christian people living under the New Testament? In what specific ways should we apply principles and practices from the Mosaic Law to the Christian Law?

The Mosaic Law – and the entire Old Testament – should be used to understand the outcome of sin. We see an example of Paul doing this very thing in **1 Corinthians 10:6, 11**:

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted... Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Christians are admonished by the example of these disobedient Jews.

The Mosaic Law should also be used to increase our understanding of the New Testament. For example, the book of Hebrews makes the point that Jesus Christ is a better priest and better mediator, having confirmed a better covenant established on better promises. We understand the superiority of the New Covenant only when we understand the Old Covenant. The Mosaic Law also informs how we understand Christian doctrines, such as baptism. Christian baptism is compared to events in the Old Testament, like the flood (**1 Peter 3:20-21**), the crossing of the Red Sea (**1 Corinthians 10:2**), and even circumcision (**Colossians 2:11-12**). The Mosaic Law is also used as a pattern for how we handle church finances (**1 Corinthians 9:8-10**).

While the Old Law and New Law were established by the same God and have many of the same basic requirements, they are not the same covenant. The New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant. It is not just an appendix to the Old Covenant. It is not just a revised and expanded version of the Old Covenant. We serve God according to the indwelling of the Spirit, not by letter of the law. The Old Testament was fulfilled and finished through Christ. This point is made several times throughout the New Testament, including **Romans 7:6**, "*But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and*

not in the oldness of the letter.”

For this reason, we must be aware of some very specific traps and pitfalls. The Old Testament is not a means of justification or righteousness. In other words, observing the Old Law is not inherently righteous or inherently good. Observing the Old Law is not a path to justification. This is Paul's essential point in **Galatians 2:16**:

...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Observing the ceremonial requirements of the law does not make us righteous in the eyes of God. Participation in circumcision, sacrifices, and sabbaths does not take away our sins. There are no special privileges or blessings that come with observing Jewish customs from the Law.

A Christian should use the Old Testament but don't overuse it. Use the Old Testament to understand and verify New Testament doctrines, but not as the basis of New Testament doctrines. Use the Old Testament to see examples of faithfulness, but not as a means of justification.

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Times of Refreshing

Wade Stanley

The book of Joshua ends with the death of Eleazar, son of Aaron. Phinehas, his son, succeeded him as high priest. Phinehas is best known for decisively ending God's punishment of Israel for their unfaithfulness with the Moabites. God praised Phinehas:

Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites, when he manifested such zeal for my sake among them, so that I did not consume the Israelites in my zeal. Therefore, announce: "I am going to give to him my covenant of peace. So it will be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of a permanent priesthood, because he has been zealous for his God, and has made atonement for the Israelites" (Numbers 25:11-13).

So, upon the death of Joshua, a zealous high priest, Phinehas, ministered at the Tabernacle.

Strangely, the priesthood and the Tabernacle nearly vanished from the narrative for several centuries. The book of Judges begins with Israel seeking God's guidance in how to

conquer their land. Eighteen chapters later, the first — and only — priest mentioned in Judges appears: Micah hired a Levite as the priest of his idolatrous shrine. The house of God plays a prominent role in the judgment of Benjamin in Judges 20. Shiloh — the location of the Tabernacle — is mentioned at the end of the book of Judges (e.g. **21:19-21**). Though it can be challenging to pin down exact dates in the book of Judges, it appears **Judges 19-21** transpired in the middle of the era. These relatively few references to the priesthood and Tabernacle imply that both became less valuable to a large segment of Israelites.

The story of Samuel begins at the Tabernacle, where his father and mother faithfully visit year after year. Hannah dedicates her son to the service of God, and Eli, the high priest, raises Samuel at the Tabernacle. Unfortunately, Eli does not measure up to his forefather, Phinehas. Eli's sons — one of whom is named Phinehas — corrupt the priesthood to the degree that Israelites no longer want to worship God at the Tabernacle. Eli allows Israel to use the Ark of the Covenant as a religious relic in their war with the Philistines. The Philistines captured the Ark, killed Hophni and Phinehas, and presumably destroyed Shiloh in an unrecorded battle later (see **Jeremiah 7:12**). Eli dies with his house in ruins, and the priesthood revoked from his descendants. The house of Phinehas the Zealous meets an ignoble end with Phinehas the Corrupt.

In response to a faithful woman's prayer, God provided a prophet to initiate reforms to the priesthood and Tabernacle. What took centuries to unravel, Samuel slowly rebuilt. With the Tabernacle separated from the Ark of the Covenant, Samuel led the people in sacrifice and worship at various high places. God directed Samuel to anoint David, whose love for the house of God inspired him to continue Samuel's reforms. Solomon followed his father's divinely inspired plans and built a permanent home for God in Jerusalem. God worked through faithful men to restore His house and priesthood to their proper place.

As the rest of the historical account of the monarchy teaches, every few generations, additional restorations were needed. Jehoash repaired the temple that had fallen into disrepair. Hezekiah and Josiah led full restorations of the nation in their reigns, purging the land of idolatry and inclining their hearts to the Law of the Lord. At the direction of Cyrus, king of Persia, Zerubbabel and Joshua built a second temple to replace the one destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

It is never too late to restore the house of God.

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Please check your expiration date!

Glory to God!

The **Prince Road Church of Christ** is happy to announce **Jaiden Loyd** was baptized into Christ on October 2.

The church in **Excelsior Springs, MO** was overjoyed when **Faye Ross** was baptized for the remission of her sins on October 20.

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May God bless you as you seek to know, and do, His perfect will!

Special Meetings

Please encourage our young people to attend the winter rallies held in the Kansas City area.

The flyer for the annual **Youth Rally** hosted by the **Gregory Boulevard Church of Christ** in **Raytown, MO**, can be found at the QR link to the right.



For more information about the **College Rally** hosted by the **Lone Jack Church of Christ**, please navigate to the church's website using the QR code to the left.



2024 Meetings

- December 26-28.... Youth Rally, Gregory Blvd. Raytown, MO
- December 26-28.....College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

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