

Applying the OT to our Lives

S3 What Not to Apply to NT Believers

© Rev. Ron Jones, DMin 2023

Scripture quotations are from the ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version), ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved."

Introduction:

We are in the third week of our study answering the question

How Do We Apply the OT to Our Lives?

We are looking at four major points:

S1 Abrahamic Covenant and OT & NT Believers

S2 Mosaic Covenant and Israel in the OT

S3 What Not to Apply to NT Believers

S4 What to Apply to NT Believers

This morning we come to our third point:

S3 What Not to Apply to NT Believers

Review:

In the last two weeks, we have been studying the theological basis for applying the Old Testament to Our Lives.

Understanding that salvation by grace through faith by means of Christ's death has always been the way of salvation and understanding the two covenants God gave in the Old Testament helps us to see what applies to us and what does not.

Let's turn to Romans 15:4.

Romans 15:4

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

The OT is written for us as Christians not just the NT. But not in the same way as the NT.

The OT has many statements that simply do not apply to us and many statements that do and we need to know which is which if we are to be encouraged by the Scriptures as Paul says and God desires.

To understand the Old Testament, we need to understand how God has chosen to work out His plan of redemption through two major covenants, the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant. The first session we looked at the Abrahamic Covenant, the second session we looked at the Mosaic Covenant.

The Pre-Abrahamic Promise of Redemption

In Genesis 3:15, God made a promise when He said,

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

God promised that He would send a Redeemer to redeem His fallen creatures and restore God’s kingdom on the earth. This was the first step in God’s plan of Redemption, the Pre-Abrahamic Promise of redemption.

Then in Genesis 12:1-3 detailed in Genesis 15, 17, and 22, God made a covenant with Abraham and promised that His descendant would become a great nation in a great land and would provide the blessing of redemption for all who believe.

That is the Abrahamic Covenant – It had three provisions.

Great Land

Great Nation

Salvation through Abraham’s descendant, the Redeemer

That covenant was

Permanent

Unconditional

Accepted by Faith

It is not completed.

It will be fulfilled and completed because of Christ’s death in the future millennial and eternal kingdoms.

The Abrahamic Covenant shows that God had chosen Abraham’s descendants to become a nation in the land of Canaan which was Israel and that Israel would birth the Redeemer in the world.

Then God raised up Moses to bring the Hebrews out of Egypt and to establish them as the nation of Israel. In order to do this, God gave them the Mosaic Covenant.

Exodus 19:5-6

*v. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;
v.6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'*

The people of Israel had arrived at Mount Sinai where God had brought them and wanted to covenant with them. Then God spoke to them establishing the Mosaic Covenant.

The nation of Israel would be a kingdom of priests [earthly mediators between God and the pagan nations] and a holy nation [nation set apart for God's purposes].

The Mosaic Covenant called the Israelites to become a righteous nation so God could use them to help fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant and be a spiritual light to the world showing the truth and glory of Yahweh, the blessing of righteousness, the true Scriptures revealing God, birth the Redeemer, and provide the apostles and first church of the Redeemer.

The Mosaic Covenant had two major purposes, a spiritual one and an administrative one.

The spiritual purpose was to be a spiritual light to the nations, to show them the nature of sin and its judgment and point them to their need for the coming Redeemer.

Let's turn to Galatians 3:19

Galatians 3:19

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions...

That means:

It was added to manifest and judge sin.

The Law defines sin and defines the punishment of sin.

v.19b until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

v.20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

It would exist until the "offspring" the offspring of Abraham, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ came.

v. 21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

The Mosaic Covenant was not for salvation. We already looked at this so it is not contrary to the "promises" which is the Abrahamic Covenant.

v.22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

v. 23 Now before faith [in Christ] came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith [in Christ] would be revealed.

People were imprisoned under sin before the Law came, but when the Law came and defined sin and judgment, then the imprisonment was judicially manifested to the whole world.

Again, people had faith in the coming Redeemer before Christ came, but when Christ came faith in the Redeemer who was Jesus Christ was revealed to the world and from then on, faith in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, defined salvation. It was no longer faith in an unidentified Redeemer.

When the Mosaic Covenant came, sin and judgment was clearly defined.

When Jesus came, the Redeemer and salvation by faith in Him was clearly defined. Before, then it existed but was not clearly defined.

v.24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

So, because the Law defined sin and judgment, it functioned as a moral tutor (the meaning of guardian) to show us our sin and point us to the coming Redeemer.

v.25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

Now that faith has come we are no longer under a guardian. There is no need for the Mosaic Covenant for Christians.

So, the spiritual purpose was to be a spiritual light to the nations, to show them the nature of sin and its judgment and point them to their need for the coming Redeemer. It is important to know this because it explains that we can see God's moral standards in the OT and we need to follow them as we will see.

The Mosaic Covenant also had an administrative purpose.

It was to govern Israel.

Deuteronomy 28:1-3

God needed to establish a righteous nation that would know how to conduct itself. So, in the Mosaic Covenant, there are three kinds of laws.

1. Moral Laws (Ten Commandments/Other Mosaic Commandments)
2. Civil and Criminal Laws
3. Ceremonial Laws to govern Israel

We talked about this last time.

There are God's moral laws which are codified in the Ten Commandments and in other commandments He gives in the Mosaic Covenant.

There are God's civil and criminal laws which are given in Leviticus and other parts of the Torah. These laws contain specific civil and criminal laws and their penalties to keep justice and righteousness in the nation.

There are ceremonial laws which would give to keep the nation of Israel from idolatry, teach them about the need for a Redeemer and help them understand His identity and mission.

This is important because we need to know that God's moral standards reflected in His moral law does apply to us, but the laws God set up for Israel as a nation do not apply to us. We will see examples of these laws in a few minutes as we apply these theological truths.

The Mosaic Covenant has been completed by Jesus Christ.

Let's turn to Matthew 5:17.

Matthew 5:17

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic Law by living out the Law perfectly and by taking the curse of the Law, the judgement on sin on himself and paying its penalty. It did not get abolished or pushed aside. It was completed. This is the Biblical answer to why we no longer follow the Mosaic Covenant.

TRANSITION:

When we as believers approach the Old Testament to interpret it and apply it to our lives, we need to understand this or we will be misapplying the OT to our lives and that is not what God desires for us.

How do we apply the Old Testament to our daily lives as Christians so we can understand what it says about God and his will for us?

There are several principles in accurately applying the OT to our lives today.

This week we will focus on what not to apply to our lives which is our second main point, but we have to begin with the first which is a foundational principle.

S3 What Not to Apply to NT Believers

This morning I want to give you the first two principles in accurately applying the OT to our lives today.

Principle #1: We apply the Old Testament to our lives according to the New Testament.

We always apply the Old Testament based on the New Testament.

We are NT Christians.

Ephesians 2:19-20

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

“The foundation” is a doctrinal foundation. The apostles taught the truth, which founded the church and we are the church. The church is a combination of Jew and Gentile brought together into unity in Christ by the Holy Spirit dwelling in all of us.

The New Testament revelation is founded on the Old Testament revelation, but we understand and apply the Old Testament according to or in agreement with the New Testament.

What we use to interpret the OT is the NT.

The entire OT reflects truth about God and is useful to us, but we are studying their use in revealing God’s will for us NT Christians in our daily lives.

This is a general principle that underlies the rest.

The Question that we should be asking ourselves when we are reading the OT is
Is this principle or truth in the OT repeated in the NT in some form for us to follow?

Example of Principle #1:

Psalm 51

David’s prayer of confession to God for his adultery with Bathsheba. This prayer of confession David prays as an OT believer saved by faith.

In v. 1-10, we see that everything that is said is repeated in the New Testament in some form. But when we get to v.11, things change.

v.11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

David appeals to God not to cast him away from His presence and not to take away the Holy Spirit from him.

Does this reflect New Testament truth? No. but v.11-12 do not because it is not repeated in the NT as reflecting truth for NT believers.

v.11-12 only applies to OT believers because the Holy Spirit did not indwell OT believers the same way he indwelt the church in the NT.

John 14:16-17

*16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,
17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

Before Christ died on the cross and the Holy Spirit came into the church at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit dwelt with believers, but not in them permanently.

What that meant for the OT believer, the Lord does not explain and I am not going to either. But as David implies, whom Jesus says is inspired by the Spirit, that it was possible for David not to experience the Spirit being with him for a time if he kept on sinning. David was still saved, but he was not experiencing the Spirit in his life. As Christians, this is never true of us. If we are sinning, we will experience the convicting of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Paul says that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit with whom we were sealed until the day of redemption. The day of redemption of our physical bodies – the rapture of the church. The Holy Spirit is in us. No amount of sin on our part can push the Holy Spirit out.

So as we read the OT and try to apply it to our lives we need to continually ask the question, “Is this truth or principle in the OT repeated in some form in the NT for us to follow?”

Let’s look at Principle 2

This principle has to do specifically with the Mosaic Covenant.

Principle #2 The OT portions that reflect God’s plan for Israel in the Mosaic Covenant applied to them only.

The OT portions that reflect God’s plan for Israel in the Mosaic Covenant applied to them only.

Key Question in applying to OT to our lives when we approach an OT passage:

“Is this passage talking about Israel in the Mosaic Covenant which does not apply to us?”

There are basically four ways this can be applied.

Four Ways the Scriptures Apply to the Israelites under the Mosaic Covenant and not Christians under the New Covenant:

2.1 OT passages that speak directly about the obligations of the Mosaic Covenant do not apply to Christians

We saw last time that the Mosaic Covenant had three kind of laws, the moral, the civil/criminal, and the ceremonial. These laws do not apply to us as believers. Whenever the OT speaks of these laws and the obligations of the readers to apply them, they do not apply to us.

Let's look at two examples of this, the Sabbath and the Tithe.

The Sabbath Observance

Exodus 20:8-11

Exodus 31:12-15

The Sabbath day was designated by God as a special day of worship for the people of Israel. It was the center of their worship of God and what made them unique from all the other pagan nations around them. Does this apply to Christians? NO.

The Sabbath is part of the Mosaic Law and exists as long as the nation of Israel exists. When Christ came and the nation of Israel rejected the messiah and God turned to the Gentiles and began working through His church, both Jew and Gentiles believing in Christ, the Law did not apply because they were not part of the nation of Israel. At the end times, God will again work through the nation of Israel and the Sabbath will take prominence again because the nation of Israel will take prominence during the millennial reign of Christ.

In fact, Paul mentions the Sabbath

Colossians 2:16-23

False teachers had come into Colossae teaching that faith in Christ and His death to pay the penalty of sin is not enough for salvation and that a person needed to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Covenant along with faith.

So, Paul repudiates all those rules and regulations. When human beings misapply the Scriptures and add the Mosaic Covenant rules onto Christians they are doing it out of v. 22 "human precepts and teaching."

The Tithe

"Tithe" means a tenth (or 10%). The tithing system described in the Bible was designed specifically to meet the needs of the religious, economic, and political system of ancient Israel.

The 10% Tithe was basically a national religious tax for the Levis and Levitical Priests of the tribe of Aaron.

In Israel there was a priesthood, the family of Aaron. They were assisted by the Levites. They did not own land. How would they support themselves? Each of the twelve tribes of Israel, except the

tribe of Levi, initially received an allotment of land in the promised land of Canaan. The Levites were assistants to Israel's priests and were supported by a tithe offering from the other eleven tribes.

Leviticus 27:30-33

Numbers 18:21-28

All families of those eleven tribes were to give a tenth of all produce, flocks, and cattle to the Levites. In turn, the Levites were to give a tenth of that to support the priests. Because Israel was a theocracy, the Levitical priests acted as the civil government. So the Levite's tithe (Leviticus 27:30-33) was a precursor to today's income tax. Tithes were not primarily gifts to God, but taxes for funding the national budget in Israel. There were also some smaller tithes required.

All giving apart from these tithes required to run the government was purely voluntary (cf. Exodus 25:2; 1 Chronicles 29:9). Each person gave whatever was in his heart to give; no percentage or amount was specified.

New Testament believers are never commanded to tithe. Matthew 22:15-22 and Romans 13:1-7 tell us about the only required giving in the church age, which is the paying of taxes to the government. Interestingly enough, we in America presently pay between 20 and 30 percent of our income to the government--a figure very similar to the requirement under the theocracy of Israel.

The guideline for our giving to God and His work is found in

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 – a cheerful giver

There is more, but we don't have time to look at it. Suffice it to say the principle of the tithe is not a New Testament command.

2.2 OT passages that speak directly about the blessings of obeying and the curses of not obeying the Mosaic Covenant do not apply to Christians.

Does this passage talk about the blessings or curses that come from following the Mosaic Covenant? We have already looked at the blessings and curses Moses talked about to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai.

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

Moses gives the blessings of obeying the Mosaic Covenant.

v.1-2 states that they will get blessings if they follow the covenant

v.3-14 describes the blessings that they will get (all centered in the land and them as a nation)

Deuteronomy 28:15-68

Moses gives the curses of not obeying the Mosaic Covenant

v.15 state that they will receive curses if they do not follow the covenant

v.16-68 describes those curses

But there are many passages in the OT that speak of these blessings and curses. Notice that the blessings and curses are physical and financial. They speak of the land of Canaan. You cannot spiritualize or allegorize them.

Giving the Firstfruits

Let's look at the practice of giving the firstfruits. It is commanded in Exodus which became one of the feasts of Israel.

Exodus 23:19

It is restated in Proverbs with the blessings God gives if the Jews fulfilled it.

Proverbs 3:9-10

In accordance with Mosaic law, individual Israelites brought to the house of the Lord “the choice (that is, “the best”) first fruits of your soil. These firstfruits included grain, wine, and oil, which were used—except for the grain (Lev. 2:14–16)—for the support of the priests (Num. 18:12; Deut. 18:4).

The firstfruits were presented by every Israelite to the priests, in token of gratitude and humble thankfulness to Jehovah, and consisted of the produce of the land. Like the tithe, the practice of giving the firstfruits is not mentioned in the NT except metaphorically.

1 Corinthians 15:20

2.3 OT passages that speak of God's specific miraculous work in the nation of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant do not apply to Christians

The specific miracles that God did on behalf of Israel are not to be taken as applying to us.

Examples:

Parting of the Red Sea – Exodus 14

Crossing of the Jordan – Joshua 3

Walls of Jericho - Joshua 6

Fleece of Gideon – Judges 6

These passages demonstrates God's incredible power which He exercised on behalf of His people Israel, but it is not a principle for us to use. God does do miracles in our lives, but not necessarily these exact kinds. These can be applied to us as examples of God's incredible power which He uses also on our behalf, but not necessarily in dramatic displays like these. More on this in the next session.

As our first principle says, if it is not in the NT we don't follow it.

2.4 OT passages that speak of the specific promises God made to Israel concerning the end times do not apply to the church

The blessings of a great nation and the blessings of the land are specific to Israel in the last days.

As I mentioned in our first session, God was not just going to bless Abraham and the nation of Israel and use them for His plan as a military commander would use his troops under the Mosaic Covenant. And when God was done with them, He was done with them.

No, the Lord God of the universe was going to shine His love on Abraham and His descendants and give them honor in His kingdom forever for playing such an important part in His redemptive plan. They were to be His OT bride, the “Bride of Yahweh,” that He would bless. The Church is His NT Bride, the “Bride of Christ.”

That is the purpose of giving Abraham and His descendants an unconditional promise of being a great nation in a great land.

Jesus brought the “New Covenant.”
Luke 22:19-20

The New Covenant was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant which encompasses both of Christ’s comings.

In Christ’s first Coming, Christ brought the new covenant which was the “spiritual form” of the future physical and eternal kingdom experienced by Christ’s Church where individual Jews and Christians form the body of Christ.

God revealed to Moses that the Jews would ultimately break the Mosaic Covenant and receive the curses God promised. So out of God’s grace, God promised a new Covenant for Israel.

The New covenant was revealed in Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah 31:1-14
The land of Israel will flourish

Jeremiah 31:31-34
God will bring the nation into the New Covenant

Zechariah 11-14
will be literally fulfilled when Jesus returns.

These promises are for Israel. They cannot be figurative for the church.

God wanted to honor Israel whom He loved and who He chose for the special role He gave them.

The Second Coming of Christ

The Millennial kingdom is God's fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant where God gives believing Jews the land of Israel, rules from there and makes them a blessing to all the nations during this time.

It is part of the New Covenant God promised in Jeremiah 31 and Jesus revealed and brought about by His death.

Judgment – Who Will Enter the Millennium in Physical Bodies?

Christ will judge all the Gentiles – Matthew 25

Christ will judge all Jews – Zechariah 13:8-9

Believing Jews will form the Nation of Israel in Millennium. The believing Gentiles will form “the nations” in the Millennium.

All of the Jews who come out of this judgment because they believed in Jesus will enter the Millennium in physical bodies as the believing nation of Israel.

Christ will reign in Jerusalem on the throne of David

Israel will be a great nation on a great land just as God promised to Abraham.

This is why there is a seven year tribulation. It is not for us (His church we will be raptured), but for the Jews. The persecution purifies Israel. And it won't be us evangelizing during the tribulation (we will be raptured), there will be 144, 000 believing Jews, 12,000 from every tribe in Israel, evangelizing during the last 3 ½ years of that period who can't be killed. It is to purify Israel and bring many many Jews to Christ to inhabit Israel during the millennial kingdom.

God's Promises of Israel's Future Do Not Apply to the Church (Dispensational)

Christians who do not believe in a millennial kingdom, primarily reformed Christians, believe that Israel has been replaced by the church and these promises to Israel have been spiritualized to apply to the church. So there is no need for a millennial kingdom.

These promises belong to Israel and involve them as a nation who have embraced the messiah and the messiah has brought them back into the land and will reign with them for a thousand years. Thus these promises do not apply to us.

Conclusion:

So we have looked at the first two principles of applying the OT to our lives. Next week we will look at the rest.