



Why is God's dealing with mankind before and after the law, and under grace different? Why did God give the law what was the purpose for the law?

One of the things we have to learn about God is that **He is a God of covenants**. He governs and He operates based on covenants. He deals with mankind based on covenants. The Old Covenant was one that God made with the children of Israel. It was a covenant that was based on the works and performance of the people of Israel. If they performed well, they were blessed and if they performed poorly, they were to be punished and cursed.

We see this in Deuteronomy 28 where it lists all the blessings and the curses. When the children of Israel entered into this covenant with God, they agreed to it in that, if they did well, they would be blessed and if they messed up, they would be cursed.

Let's look at these two verses from the Old Covenant

- i) *"And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD."* -Exodus 19:8
- ii) *"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do."* -Exodus 24:3
- iii) Exodus 24:7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.

In other words, the children of Israel signed on the dotted

line by saying we **agree (all that the Lord hath spoken we will do)**. So, if God was going to bless them when they did right, He was bound and obliged by the covenant to act by cursing and punishing them when they broke the law.

Coming to the New Covenant we have to first understand that this covenant is not the same as the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is completely different from the New Testament. The New Covenant is explained in detail in the book of Hebrews:

a) *"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*

—Hebrews 8:6-13

- i) The New Covenant is one that is established based on grace, not the people's performance. It was based on Jesus' obedience and sacrifice on the cross.
- ii) Under this covenant, God has placed all judgment (John 12:31-32) and punishment for all our past, present, and future sins on the Lord Jesus.
- iii) He doesn't punish us anymore as He would under the Old Covenant. This New Covenant doesn't allow Him to do that. He is bound by this covenant that He made, and He doesn't violate it.

b) *"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."* —John 1:17

i) Because of Jesus, who ushered in the New Covenant established on grace and truth, God deals with those under the New Covenant differently.

ii) Not because He is indifferent but **because these are two different covenants that require two separate dealings**. This explains why God treated the folks in the Old Testament (OT) differently from the folks in the New Covenant.

iii) With a closer look at the scriptures, you will see that God deals with people in three different ways in three different dispensations:

- after the fall (before the Law was given)
- after the Law was given
- after Jesus' death and resurrection

iv) God is not the one that changes or changed (Hebrews 13:5 and Malachi 3:6), but the people's behavior changed which was against the covenant they had entered into with God. Also, when the covenant changed, God changed the way He dealt with them, according to the New Covenant.

Let me explain:

**After the fall
(Before the Law was given)**

After the fall of man, God dealt with man based on grace. There was no law given, and therefore there was no sin imputed because where there is no law, sin is not imputed (Romans 5:13).

This does not mean that God was okay with the behavior of the people, but it means **He was not imputing their sins unto them**. "Impute" means "to attribute responsibility for." So, because God was not imputing sin unto them, holding them responsible for their sin, the people thought sin was okay. They had no idea what damage sin did to them. But sin was spreading rampantly like an epidemic (Genesis 6:5 "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," AND Genesis 19—Sodom and Gomorrah). Yet these

people, before the law, thought nothing about it. Matter of fact, they thought they were godly. Because of all this, God had to install a temporary measure to:

- a) Reveal God's standard of righteousness
- b) Keep sin from spreading further and destroying humanity

During this time (dispensation), sin had no cure. Jesus had not come to die for the sins of the whole world yet. People could not be born again; it was impossible for this to happen without Jesus' finished work on the cross and it was premature for Jesus to come at this point.

So, God had to find a way to deal with the rampant spread of sin that was going to corrupt all of mankind and even hamper His big plan of Salvation that would later come through a virgin. **God started to judge people for their sins although the law had not been given yet.** This sounds strange because at this time it was a time of grace and God was not supposed to judge people or impute sins unto them because there was no law and they were not under the law, at least not yet.

In the effort to deal with the ruthless cancer (sin), God sent the flood and later brimstone and fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah. **God was not going to sit there and let the cancer of sin abort His entire plan of salvation by corrupting the whole human race. Two important aspects of God's judgement at this time before the law were:**

a) **The Flood**

i) *"And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die." -Genesis 6:17*

ii) *"Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark—these were spared and saved from the flood." -Genesis 7:13*

- All people were destroyed except for Noah and his family

b) **Sodom and Gomorrah**

- i) *"And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous." – Genesis 18:20*
 - ii) *"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven." –Genesis 19:24*
- Lot and his two daughters were spared and saved from the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. –Genesis 19:30

Reasons God Sent the Flood:

- a) **Sin was like a cancer that was out to destroy the entire body.** At this point, this cancer was at the leg working its way up to the head. What God did was to cut off or amputate the leg! This could stop the spread of cancer to the rest of the body. This act was quite barbaric and brutal to the leg and the person being amputated. However, by looking at the bigger picture, we can see that this act saved the life of this man. It's better to have no leg but be alive than to have one six feet under.
- b) **The acts of judgment under the OT specifically before the law were an act of grace and mercy to mankind as a whole.** It saved the rest of mankind from the destructive cancer of sin that was aggressively reaching to plague and corrupt all. That said, we see the grace of God even in these acts that seemed so brutal. God was looking out for you and me, but it had a cost to some people. It's just like salvation; it cost God His Only Son (Jesus), but the result was that it paid for the sins of us all.
- c) During the time before the law, like the time under the law, **God's judgment against evil was mercy to the rest of the people at large.** However, in the New Testament (NT), we can be delivered from the destructive cancer of sin. Because of Jesus and His finished work at the cross, the way God relates to us under the NT has changed.

After the Law

Why did God give the law; what was the purpose for the law?

- a) After the first dispensation, *before and without the law*, God gave the law.

- i) Although the law was given, it was temporary. It was only for a season or for a specific period of time.
 - ii) It was not God's best—the best was yet to come. I personally do not believe that God's heart was to give the law. If it was, why didn't He give it right away after the fall of man? I believe God's heart was grace from day one as we see it revealed after the law. God's heart was not to impute sin unto man. However, God had to change the way he dealt with mankind as man's behavior changed to combat the sin problem at hand.
 - iii) He had to deal with the proliferation of sin.
- b) Because man thought he was awesome, perfect, and godly, not in need of a savior, God gave the law to reveal His righteous standard to man.
- i) The law showed man how impoverished he was, and his need of a savior.
 - ii) It blew all the blinders of deception off him because now he knew how ugly and ungodly, he was.
 - iii) It revealed all the ugliness of man. Man realized he was not as good as he thought once God's holy and righteous standard had been revealed.
- "The law can still do the same to those who think they are so good and have no need of a savior." (1 Timothy 1:8-10).**
- c) The way God turned away people from sin under the OT law was by bringing judgment on the sin through punishment.
- i) When the law was given, it held people accountable for their sin.
 - ii) It did not set them free from sinning.
 - iii) It was like a mirror that showed them what was wrong, but it could not fix it.
 - iv) So, the law, to a degree, limited the dissemination of sin and revealed God's standard of righteousness.
 - v) The law was a part of God's plan for redemption, but it

was only a temporary measure put in place until Jesus came (Galatians 3:23-25).

d) Contrary to what most people think, God did not give the law to be kept. If anything, it was the very opposite.

i) Some people think they can or have kept the law (Mark 10:17-23). Nothing can be further from the truth.

- The law couldn't be kept. It was powerless to justify even if one were to keep it. Justification couldn't come through the keeping of the law but by faith in the finished work of the cross.

ii) No one has ever kept the big Ten Commandments, let alone all the 613 laws in total.

iii) James 2:10 says that if you stumble in one law, you are guilty of breaking all.

iv) For one to truly keep the law he not only has to do the **outward** physical keeping of the law, but also the **inward** keeping of it. This was and is impossible.

v) The Law should drive anyone to surrender and give up. It is impossible to keep. Matter of fact, only Jesus (God) kept the whole law perfectly. There is not another person that could do it.

e) God gave the law to drive these people to the end of themselves and get them to give up trying to save themselves, and instead cry out for a Savior-Jesus.

i) He gave it to show people how sinful and unholy they were. The law showed people that they were sinful and incapable of keeping it through trying.

ii) **In simple terms, the Law empowered and strengthened our enemy, sin, not us.**

f) Why would God give us the Law to strengthen our enemy (sin)?

i) Sin had already defeated and beaten us, but we weren't aware of it.

ii) We were deceived in our thinking that we weren't so bad.

iii) We thought we were somewhat good. However, according to Romans 3:23, the Bible says that we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We were sinners, imperfect and unholy, although we thought we weren't.

g) **To recap, the Bible says God gave the Law:**

i) **To produce guilt and stop every mouth**

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

— Romans 3:19

- **No one to boast, after all, we have all come short.**

ii) **To give knowledge of sin**

"Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

—Romans 3:20

- **Thereby revealing our need for the Savior by showing us how horrible we were.**

iii) **As a school master (tutor) to hold back the growth and spread of sin to a degree.**

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

— Galatians 3:23-25

iv) **To strengthen sin**

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law."

—1 Corinthians 15:56

- **So, we can surrender and call out for help from Jesus the Savior.**

v) **To deceive and slay**

"For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." – Romans 7:11

vi) **To condemn**

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory."

– 2 Corinthians 3:9

- **No one enjoys condemnation. The law will condemn you, thereby driving you to the Savior.**

vii) **To kill**

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

– 2 Corinthians 3:6

- **The law kills. Those who don't want to die would call out for help from the Savior.**

Important Considerations Regarding the Law Dispensation

A. The Law was mankind's infancy stage

- a) The Law was like an infancy stage of mankind. At that point, reasoning could not work because mankind was an infant. You do not reason with an infant. Infancy calls for a different approach than maturity. All you need to do for a child or an infant to stop them from doing what is wrong is punish them. You have to say to an infant, "Do this and I will spank you." Infants understand that type of language. They cannot understand the reasoning language yet.
- b) For instance, you can't tell them that if you do something wrong you are yielding to the devil, and you will reap bad things. They may not know about resisting the devil (James 4:7), but the truth is that when that thought of sin comes again, they will resist because they don't want to be spanked.
- c) I believe this is the reason the Bible advocates spanking

children (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13; 29:15; 29:17). Sometimes kids need to be spanked not to hurt them, but to deter them from doing what is **wrong until such a time as they can be reasoned with.**

- i) This works perfectly well but only up to a certain age.
 - ii) Spanking is not a long-term solution.
 - iii) You only use physical restraint for a short period of time until a child grows up and then you can teach them by instruction.
 - iv) You do not spank an 18 or 20-year-old, but instead you reason or instruct him. Why? Because he is no longer an infant. He has matured and can be reasoned with.
- d) Likewise, the OT revealed God's wrath against sin, and He put punishment in place to deter the Israelites (at an infant stage) from sinning until His plan of redemption could unfold.
- i) When the time was right, Jesus came and paid for our sin (Gal 3:24-25).
 - ii) God dealt with sin harshly in order to keep the Israelites out of trouble.
 - iii) The law limited and restricted sin, although it **could not completely stop it.**
 - iv) The law was just a training tool God used to guide His children until they could be saved by faith. **Another way of saying this is that the human race was at its infancy stage until Jesus came and revealed the true nature of God.**
- e) Under the Old Covenant there were very harsh punishments for sin.
- i) For example, God commanded to kill all the men, women, children, and even animals when they conquered other nations (Joshua 6:17:21, 10:40; 11:11-14).
 - ii) Another command was for the Israelites to kill

their own children if they were persistently stubborn and rebellious (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

iii) This is because, like the times of the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, they couldn't be cured or healed. So, they were "taken out" of the society; in much the same way doctors cut out a cancerous tumor in an effort to save the rest of the body.

iv) It wasn't possible for anyone to be born again, and God didn't want foreign people infecting the children of Israel with demonic beliefs or behavior which would further the sin instead of limiting it.

B. The Israelites agreed to do all in the Old Covenant.

"And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD." -Exodus 19:8

"And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people: and they said, all that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient." -Exodus 24:3, 7

a) *"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."*

-Exodus 19:5-6

i) God promised the children of Israel that they would be to Him a peculiar treasure above all people.

ii) The people agreed to God's words.

iii) God then proceeded to give the law to Moses with the blessings and the judgments.

- iv) Moses read the words of the Lord and the judgments, and the people agreed to the covenant.
 - v) In Exodus 24:7, they again agreed to the covenant. In so doing, they authorized God to fulfill the words of His covenant with them.
 - vi) They were to be blessed for obedience and cursed for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28).
- b) **Each disobedience from the children of Israel obligated God to act accordingly. They had a covenant and He had to act based on that covenant. He had given His Word and the people had given their word.**
- i) God is not the author of evil. Israel's disobedience to God released the judgment of the Old Covenant.
 - ii) Under the OT God's judgment against evil was mercy to the rest of the body, but in the NT, we can be delivered from sin. Because of Jesus, the way God relates to us under the NT has changed.

Under Grace

- a) Unlike under the Law which came by Moses, the New Covenant of grace and truth came by Christ Jesus (John 1:17).
 - i) The death and resurrection of Jesus ushered in the New Covenant—the covenant of grace, not of law and performance.
 - ii) This covenant is totally dependent on Jesus and His finished work at the cross.
 - iii) This covenant enabled us to be born again (saved), which in return removed and stopped all judgment and imputing of sin on us, because Jesus took our judgement (John 12:31) and all our sin was imputed on Him.
- b) At this stage, mankind is at **maturity**.
 - i) God doesn't spank us or punish us anymore. He reasons with us because we can be born again.

- ii) Although spanking was effective during mankind's infancy, it is no longer applicable, and its role has come to an end.
- c) Under the NT, our sins have been paid for by Jesus and God isn't holding sin against us anymore.
 - i) God has changed the way He deals with us because the price of sin has been paid.
 - ii) This single event made us brand new (2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 8:12-13).
 - iii) Jesus changed how God relates to and deals with us-forever.
 - iv) Jesus revealed God in a way that **superseded** all previous revelations (Hebrews 1:3).
 - v) The revelation of God had been progressive up until Jesus. Jesus is the complete revelation of God the Father (John 14:3-9, Col 2:9).
- d) **Illustration 1: Jesus shows mercy to the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)**
 - i) Under the law this woman caught in adultery would have been stoned to death (Lev 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22), however, we see a totally different approach in the New Testament.
 - ii) Jesus showed her grace and mercy instead of judgment.
 - iii) God was already dealing with people differently because of the difference Jesus made. Jesus brought grace and truth, not law and judgement (John 1:17).
 - iv) He also said all law and prophets prophesied until John the Baptist (Matthew 11:13).
- e) Adultery is wrong (Proverbs 6:24-33) and Jesus was not excusing or condoning her sin. However, the way God deals with mankind under the New Testament has changed because of Jesus.
 - i) Sin is no longer imputed unto people.

- ii) In this instance, Jesus was going to take all the judgment and the sin of this woman.
 - iii) It is astonishing to see that the Pharisees and the scribes brought only the woman that they said was caught in the very act of adultery. Where is the man that was involved in this adulterous relationship? If she was caught in the very act, then the man must have been present along with this woman. **These scribes and Pharisees were not seeking justice because the man was not brought before Jesus.** I tend to think that this hidden man was one of them—a Pharisee or a Sadducee.
 - iv) They wanted to trap Jesus in front of the multitude because a woman would invoke more sympathy than the man so; by playing the "woman card" it would serve their plans better.
- f) Unlike the harsh, judgmental, legalistic message of the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees, people knew Jesus as the **gracious one**, not the judging one.
- i) He had been teaching grace and forgiveness towards sinners. Agreeing to stone this woman would have sent a totally contradicting message. Any contrary action would have blown His testimony and reputation.
 - ii) These Pharisees wanted to destroy Jesus, and this was a good opportunity for pushing their narrative that "Jesus condoned and practiced sin by His association with the sinners, breaking Jewish traditions such as Sabbaths." However, every time, Jesus successfully tamed every attack into a victory for the side of grace and mercy. Here these religious men thought they had Him "cornered" or trapped, and in their minds, they thought He was faced with only two options: to either condone her sin or to condemn her. Little did they know that God had option three: **"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."**
- g) If Jesus held His teaching of forgiveness and refused to stone this woman, He would be in direct opposition to the Law of Moses (Lev 20:10) hence giving the Jews legal grounds to kill Him.
- i) If Jesus stoned the woman as says the law, then the people would forsake Him and not trust Him anymore. They

would have seen Him just like the Pharisees.

ii) The Pharisees believed that Jesus was trapped. They probably thought, "Here we go Jesus, let's see if You can come out of this trap. We got you cornered." No, He wasn't cornered because the foolishness of God is wiser than men (1Corinthians 1:25). Jesus rose to the occasion as always.

iii) **Notice that He did not condone the sin or disregard the Law of Moses.** He simply told the one without sin to cast the first stone at her (John 8:7).

h) Why did Jesus not allow the stoning of this woman?

i) He was simply forgiving this woman because **"all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13).**

ii) Jesus was operating under the dispensation of grace (John 1:17; Ephesians 3:2), not the law. **Jesus operated in the superior Law of grace, not the Law of works.**

iii) If anyone could rightfully stone this woman, it would have been Jesus because He was sinless, not the Sadducees, Scribes, and Pharisees.

i) Under our new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6, 13), we don't kill our rebellious children or people who have sinned and are committing ungodly acts because, unlike in the OT, they can be born again and changed.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 says, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."*

After we accept Jesus and make Him the Lord of our lives, the following happens:

i) We become new creatures.

ii) We are reconciled to God. The word "reconcile" means

to make or bring two or more opposing parties at peace or friends again.

iii) God does NOT impute sin unto us. God did not charge sin to our account.

- David saw this very thing (God not imputing sins unto us) and prophesied about it over a thousand years before Jesus. He said, "*Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*" -Psalms 32:2
- God took away all the punishment and separation that sin caused, and He harmonized our relationship with Him again. God took the sins of all humanity and charged it to the account of Jesus—His own account (2 Corinthians 5:21). Thank You, Jesus. Hallelujah!

j) **Illustration 2: Luke 9:51-54 (Samaritans, Jesus, and the disciples).**

- i) In this story, the Samaritans **refused to allow Jesus into their city because He was going to Jerusalem.**
- ii) The Samaritans hated the Jews down in Jerusalem and anyone who associated with them.
- iii) When the disciples saw this rejection, they were not impressed. They asked Jesus if they could **call down fire from heaven to burn these Samaritans** as Prophet Elijah had done earlier in the Old Testament (2 Kings 1:3-4).
- iv) Jesus' response was off the charts.
- v) He responded with grace and mercy for the Samaritans while rebuking His disciples.
- vi) He said in Luke 9:55-56, "*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*"

k) Again, Jesus dealt with these Samaritans based on the **New Covenant of grace**. Had this been the Old Testament, the results would have been totally different.

i) Additionally, the Samaritans' rejection of Jesus was much

worse than anything the army captains and their soldiers did to Elijah (2 Kings 1).

ii) **The Lord did not come to destroy lives but to save them.**

iii) **How could He save those He was to destroy?**

1) **Once you truly understand the significance and magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice, then you can understand why God dealt with people differently under the New Covenant than He did under the Old Testament.**

i) Under the Old Testament, the payment for our sins had not been made and people's sins were imputed unto them. **However, Jesus' coming to the earth made a pivotal difference in the way God dealt and deals with mankind.**

ii) God always desired to relate to us by grace, but He couldn't under the OT because of humanity's hardness of heart and the inability to be born again.

In conclusion, although under the New Covenant God is not punishing us, judging our sins or imputing them unto us, the **consequences of sin** have not gone away and they are not a punishment from God. Sin has already been dealt with in full, but:

a) **The consequences of sin still apply.**

b) **The law of sowing and reaping is still in full effect.** *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."* (Galatians 6:7-8 emphasis mine).

i) I just want to point out that this verse says of the **FLESH we reap corruption, not of GOD.** The natural horizontal consequences of sin will still occur although the vertical consequences that hindered our relationship with Jesus and separated us from God have been taken care of once for all.