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How Do We As Christians Apply the Old Testament to Our Daily Lives?

Our desire as Christians is to understand what God has revealed about himself and his will for us in the Bible and to follow it. To do this, we need to be sure that we understand how the Bible applies to our lives in the instructions that God gives to us in it. In understanding how the Bible applies to us, the greatest confusion among Christians tends to be with the Old Testament and how it applies to our lives.

If we do not understand how the OT applies to our lives then we will be hopelessly confused in trying to discern God's revealed will in a large section of the Scriptures. How do we apply the Old Testament to our daily lives as Christians so we can know the revealed will of God?

We need to realize that the Old Testament applies to us in a different way than the New Testament. The New Testament was written to believers in Jesus Christ who had become believers after Jesus died on the cross and the Holy Spirit was given to us at Pentecost. That's who we are. Therefore, many of the exhortations especially in the epistles can be directly applied to us.

The Gospels and Acts are transition books from the OT to the NT times. Sometimes Israel is spoken of and sometimes Christians are spoken of. We need to realize that the commands and exhortations that are given to Israel do not apply directly to us, nor do the commands and exhortations given to Christians apply to them.

This is also important because the Old Testament is rich in revelation for believers of all ages about the character and nature of God, how he works in the lives of people, and how we can trust and obey Him. It is also full of revelation that was given directly to Israel and is directly applied to them only. If we try to apply the OT laws directly to our lives we will become hopelessly confused in making decisions God's way and following Him the way He desires. There are three key questions that we can ask ourselves to help us apply the OT to our lives. Let look at the first one.

1. "Is this OT statement part of the Mosaic Covenant which does not apply to me as a NT believer?"

The OT portions that reflect God's plan for Israel in the Mosaic (Old) Covenant applied to them only.

A lot of Christians get confused in this area because they do not understand that God's covenant with us as believers in Jesus Christ is not the same covenant as He had with Israel as a nation. The Mosaic Covenant he had with Israel does not apply to us as New Testament believers.

As believers who exist after Christ came and died on the cross, we are NT Christians. Paul clearly reveals this in Eph.2:20-22 when he talks of the NT church being built upon the foundation of the apostles. He says, "And you, [the church] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together for a dwelling of God through the Spirit."

This is the church of Jesus Christ, a completely new and unique spiritual creation of God. Later, Paul tells the Ephesians that the revelation of the church was not made known by God in the OT. He says in Eph.3:5-6, "Which [this revelation] in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and [N.T.] prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel..."

Our lives are founded directly on the NT and the NT is founded upon the OT. What we use to interpret the OT in applying it to our lives is the NT. The entire OT reflects truth about God and is useful to us, but not all of the OT can be directly applied to our lives. There are several things that you as a Christian need to understand about the OT if you are to apply it to your life. The OT can be divided up in terms of two covenants God made, one with Abraham and one with Moses.

The Abrahamic covenant is given in Gen.12:1-3 and is an unconditional covenant where God told Abraham that from his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. In Gal.3:16 Paul tells us that the "seed" is Christ and therefore, the blessing in Gen.12 is salvation. This is a covenant that lasts forever and every believer has become a part of that covenant at the moment of salvation. That covenant has only one provision; you must accept it by faith.

However, God needed to make another covenant with Israel (an additional one for a different purpose) when he brought them into the land hundreds of years later because the Abrahamic Covenant was not given to govern them, but to save them. This covenant was made with Moses and is called the Mosaic Covenant. This covenant is conditional and was given for the purpose of governing the nation of Israel in the land God had given them. It was not for salvation. And it was only for Israel.

The Mosaic Covenant was given to govern Israel as a nation. Deut. 4:39-40 and 28:1-68 reveal that it was a conditional covenant to the nation. God told them if they fulfilled it as a nation, God would bless them as a nation. If they didn't fulfill it as a nation, then God would drive them out of the land as a nation.

In Deut.28:1-2 it says, "And it shall come to pass, if you shall listen diligently to the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that the Lord your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth; and all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you shall listen to the voice of the Lord your God."

In Deut.28:15 it says, "But it shall come to pass, if you will not listen to the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day; that all these curses shall come upon you, and overtake you..."

These conditional "blessings and curses" do not apply to us but to Israel as a nation.

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