

KINGDOM. SUPPLEMENT 13

[THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS] CHRIST THE GOAL AND THE END OF THE LAW

Romans 10:4. “Christ is the end (Greek: telos) of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” The Greek word “telos” may have the meaning of “the goal” or the end”. Also the word “law” may refer to the whole Old Testament revelation or God’s legal requirement as interpreted and elaborated by the Jewish teachers. Thus, Romans 10:4 may be translated in two ways and both are possible in the context of Romans chapter 10. In Romans 10:5 the following translation is the best: “Jesus Christ is the end of the law”.

A. (A possible translation:) Christ is the goal (meaning, substance, fulfilment) of the Law as defined by God.

The first possible translation of Romans 10:4: “For the goal (the meaning, substance) of the law (in the sense of the Old Testament revelation) (is) Christ so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. The word “telos” means “goal” and the word “law” refers to the Old Testament revelation, including its moral, ceremonial and civil laws. Romans 10:4 may be understood as: Jesus Christ is the goal (fulfilment of the purpose) of the Old Testament Scripture, so that there may be righteousness (salvation) for everyone who believes.

1. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law as revealed and defined by God.

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus Christ himself says that he did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them.

Jesus Christ was not a preacher of novelties that were in collision with the Old Testament revelation. He rather taught that the Old Testament revelation (the Law and the Prophets) was a preparation for his coming and therefore not yet complete. Jesus Christ came to complete or fulfil the Old Testament revelation!

Paul proves that the New Testament revelation about justification by faith does not oppose the Old Testament revelation. Also the Old Testament revelation taught justification, not by the works of the law, but by faith as the way of salvation (cf. Romans 3:21; 4:7-8; 9:11-12; 10:9-13; 11:20,23; Galatians 3:6-22). Thus, “the gospel” had already been proclaimed during the Old Testament period (Romans 3:21-22; Galatians 3:6-8; Hebrews 4:2)!

Since the return from exile from Babylon (538 B.C.), the Jewish religious teachers began to regard the Old Testament LAW as a means of earning righteousness and taught justification by the works of the law. Justification (salvation) would then be possible only for people who possess and keep the law!

Jesus Christ came to restore the original intention of the Old Testament revelation, namely, justification by faith, and to actually complete and fulfil the Old Testament revelation, so that justification by faith may become a reality for everyone who believes in him.

Jesus Christ said that he fulfilled and completed the revelation in the Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) (Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14) in the following sense: “Jesus Christ is the complete reality of what the shadows (types) in the Old Testament books pointed to (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1) and of what the prophecies in the Prophetic books predicted (Luke 18:31; 24:25-27,44)”.

The goal and intention of the Old Testament Law was to point to the first coming of Jesus Christ and his work of salvation as Prophet, Priest and King and thus to prepare people for his coming. People were prepared that the new life consisted of loving God through your faith with all your being and to love your neighbour as yourself (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-39). Jesus Christ himself is ultimately the meaning and the essential contents of the whole Old Testament revelation. Only Jesus Christ fulfils completely and perfectly every subdivision of the Old Testament revelation!

(1) Jesus Christ alone fulfilled the righteous requirements of God’s law.

By his life, death and resurrection Jesus Christ fulfilled God’s absolute requirement that people possess a perfect holy and righteous state (legal position) before God, that people as children of God live a perfect holy and righteous life on earth and that all their sins must be perfectly judged and punished (that complete atonement for sins have taken place). Only Jesus Christ acquired God’s required righteousness (with regard to position), holiness (with regard to life) and salvation from punishment for the people who believe in him (1 Corinthians 1:30). Only he guarantees their eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:8-9).

(2) Jesus Christ alone fulfilled the moral law.

He explained and lived the perfect meaning of the moral law: the Ten Commandments (Matthew 5:17-48; Mark 12:28-31).

(3) Jesus Christ alone fulfilled the ceremonial law.

The ceremonial law consisted of all regulations concerning the human body (Greek: dikaiomata sarkos) (ablutions, clean food) that were prescribed until the definite time of the new order (Greek: kairos diorthosis) (Hebrews 9:10). It consisted of laws concerning holy people (priests), holy places (temple), holy times (Sabbath, festivals and fasts) and holy actions (circumcision, ablutions, clean food, animal sacrifices, the first born, the first fruit of the harvest and the tithes).

All these Old Testament types or shadows pointed forward to the new order, namely, the reality of Jesus Christ and his work of salvation during the New Testament period (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 9:10; 10:1).

- By his death on the cross he fulfilled the type of “a lamb without defect” that was sacrificed as atonement for sins (Exodus 12:4-5; Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 7:26-27). He thus terminated the need for all (animal) sacrifices (Hebrews 10:8-10).
- By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament type of the temple building: he tore it down (Matthew 27:51) and replaced it with the New Testament Body of Christ (John 2:19-21).
- By his resurrection from the dead he changed the priesthood (Hebrews 7:12) and he is the only indestructible, permanent and perfectly holy High Priest (Hebrews 7:16-28).
- By the spiritual circumcision of the heart by his Spirit he abrogated the physical circumcision of the body by (Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11-12).

When Israel accepted and obeyed the ceremonial law (the shadows) during the Old Testament period, they accepted and obeyed Jesus Christ (the reality)! Jesus Christ was “born under law” (thus subject to the law)(Galatians 4:4). He was the only One who obeyed the law perfectly, because he fulfilled the shadows (the ceremonial law) and the prophecies and lived according to the law.

And when Jesus Christ had *fulfilled* the law (Matthew 5:17), he *cancelled* it (Colossians 2:14) and *abrogated* it (Ephesians 2:15). After the first coming of Jesus Christ the ceremonial laws may never again be re-introduced into the Church! The ceremonial law in the Old testament pointed forward to the reality, Jesus Christ, and may not replace this reality in the New Testament! Any religion that maintains the LAW as a *means* of gaining righteousness with God is accursed (Galatians 3:10-14; cf. 1:6-9)!

(4) Jesus Christ alone fulfilled the civil law.

The civil laws of the nation-state of Israel consisted of laws about the kings, property, marriage, sex offences, war, prisoners of war, tax, etc.

Jesus Christ alone perfected and superseded the civil laws by establishing the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17; 12:28-30) together with the culture of the kingdom of God (Matthew chapters 5 to 7, 13, 18 and 23 to 25) within all the nations of the world (Matthew 24:14).

Conclusion. The nation of Israel and the laws were only the means of God’s revelation, but not the final goal of God’s revelation. “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22) means that the purpose of the nation of Israel was to bring forth the Saviour (Isaiah 49:3; Romans 1:16; 3:2; 9:4-5; 15:8-9; Acts 13:23,39). From the beginning God purposed that the means of his revelation (namely the nation of Israel) would make place for the goal of his revelation (namely, Jesus Christ) (cf. Genesis 3:15; 22:17-18)!

Before the first coming of Christ, God lived as it were in a temple building in Jerusalem among his people Israel (cf. John 2:19-21). At the first coming of Christ, Israel as the people of God and the ceremonial and civil law of Israel reached their final goal. “The mystery” that is revealed in the New Testament is (that God no longer lives in a temple building among the Israelites, but) that Jesus Christ has come to live in Christians from all the nations (Colossians 1:27). These Christians come from both the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations and together *on completely equal terms* they constituted “the people of God” (Ephesians 3:2-6) through Jesus Christ who came to live in them through the Holy Spirit!

2. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Prophets.

All the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, the enthronement of the Messiah (Christ), and the functions of the Messiah (Christ) as the Greatest Prophet, the Highest Priest and the Mightiest and Eternal King became a reality in Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

- During the Old Testament period people were only justified by faith in *the coming Messiah* (Christ) (Genesis 12:3; 15:6; 22:18; Galatians 3:16).
- But during the New Testament period people are justified by faith in *the Christ who has already come* (Romans 3:28)!

(1) Jesus Christ is the Greatest Prophet.

It was no one less than the Spirit of Jesus Christ who through the Old Testament prophets (1 Peter 1:10-12; cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16) predicted and proclaimed the Old Testament prophecies! It was no one less than Jesus Christ who also fulfilled these prophecies in the New Testament history (Matthew 5:17)! For example, Christ fulfilled the prophecies of being “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23), that he took on the human nature through his birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-7), that was crucified (Psalm 22:1,16,18; Luke 23:33), that was resurrected from the dead (Psalm 16:10-11; Luke 24:1-6) and that he ascended and was enthroned in heaven (Psalm 110:1,4; Revelation

5:1-13). Jesus Christ is the only Prophet in history who fulfilled all the prophecies he predicted. In this way Jesus Christ revealed himself as the Greatest Prophet that ever lived and still lives (Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Acts 3:22-23).

Jesus Christ spoke God's last and final Word to man (Hebrews 1:1-2). "The faith was only once (Greek: hapax) entrusted (Greek: paradidómi) (aorist tense) to the saints (the believers in the Old and New Testament period)" (Jude 3). The Christian Faith was only once in human history entrusted to believers. Every so-called "prophet" that comes after Jesus Christ and changes, adds or subtracts from the Old and New Testaments, is a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-22; Proverbs 30:6; Matthew 15:3-14; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19). Any so-called prophet that makes predictions that contradict the revelation given in the Bible is guilty of adding to the Word of God and should be rejected!

(2) Jesus Christ is the Highest Priest.

Jesus Christ fulfilled all the requirements or demands of the Old Testament law. In his human nature, he lived a complete holy and righteous life on earth (John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15; 7:24-28) and thus only he fulfilled the requirements of God's moral laws. He lived a perfect life, cared (Psalm 78:72), loved and prayed for people (Isaiah 53:12), went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil (Acts 10:38). Finally he died on the cross to make atonement for the sins of people (Isaiah 53:5-6; Psalm 40:6-8; John 10:11; Hebrews 10:5-7). Jesus Christ was the only Priest in human history who gave himself as a complete perfect (sinless) sacrifice for sins. He is the only Priest who gave himself as a perfect (sinless) sacrifice for the atonement of sins of others. He is the only one that has been resurrected from the dead (all other prophets and priests and founders of religions lie dead in their graves); he lives forever and thus has no successor.¹ After Jesus Christ there are no more "prophets" who functioned as "mouthpieces" of God to people (Acts 3:22-23; Hebrews 1:1) and also no more "priests" (Hebrews 7:23-28) who functioned as "mediators" between God and people! In this way Jesus Christ revealed himself as the Greatest High Priest that ever lived and still lives (Psalm 110:4; Zechariah 6:13).

(3) Jesus Christ is the Mightiest and Eternal King.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the prediction of the coming King (Genesis 49:10), who by his royal rule would deliver his people from the power of their enemies and rule over them forever (1 Chronicles 17:14; Isaiah 9:7; Revelation 1:5; 19:16). He has all power and authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18)! He inaugurated the only kingdom that will never be shaken (Hebrews 12:28), that will finally crush all other kingdoms in the world (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 17:14) and that will last forever (Isaiah 9:7)! So all other political, military and religious rulers in the world must beware (Psalm 2)! In this way Jesus Christ revealed himself as the Greatest King that ever lived and still lives.

(4) How the Old Testament must be interpreted.

Because Jesus Christ came to fulfil the Old Testament revelation, the Old Testament can only be correctly understood in the bright light of the New Testament revelation!

B. (The best translation:) Christ is the end (termination) of the law as defined by religious people.

1. Jesus Christ terminated legalism as designed and explained by religious man.

The second possible translation: "The end (the termination) of the law (in the sense of God's legal requirement for righteousness as also interpreted and elaborated by the Jewish teachers) (is) Christ so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." The word "telos" means "end" and the word "law" refers to "the law as God's legal and righteous requirement for justification, especially in the sense the Jewish religious leaders and teachers interpreted and elaborated the Law of Moses. Romans 10:4 may then be understood as: "Jesus Christ is the end (termination) of the law as the ground of justification, so that there may be righteousness (salvation) for everyone who believes."

The Jewish religious leader and teachers had made the keeping of the law the only way of justification (salvation). See for example what the Jews teach about "circumcision" (Acts 15:1). Jesus Christ made an end to the Jewish misconception that a person can be justified by keeping the law. Christ is the end or termination of righteousness by law, so that there might be righteousness by faith (in Christ and his completed work of salvation). Paul is then not speaking of the goal or fulfilment of the Old Testament revelation as the preparation for salvation, but he is speaking of the end or termination of the false Jewish faith that righteousness could be gained by keeping the law (as the Jews interpreted the law).

Moses described the legal requirement of God's law as follows, "The man who does the law (the decrees and laws of the Old Testament revelation), will live (that is: maintain their righteous state or eternal life) by them" (Romans 10:5; Leviticus 18:5). Only Adam and Eve had the possibility to maintain their state of righteousness or eternal life before they fell into sin (Genesis 2:15-17)! After the fall into sin not a single person can do this, because no one has the righteous state any more! The only way anyone could be justified was and still is by faith in Christ and his completed and perfect righteousness on their behalf and in their place (Genesis 15:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21)!

¹ People who claimed to be the successor of Jesus Christ are: Mohammed (569-632 A.D.) ("Mohammed, the man and his faith", Tor Andrae, 1960) and Joseph Smith (1805-1844) ("Understanding the Cults", Josh McDowell, Dan Stewart). Both claims are false!

However, the Jewish religious teachers since the return from Babylon (538 B.C.) till the time of Jesus turned God's law into a religion and interpreted the words "will live by them" in Leviticus 18:5 as "will be justified (will be saved) by them".

They consequently proceeded to bury the Old Testament under hundreds of their man-made interpretations and regulations of the law². They turned "righteousness (salvation) by faith (in what God said and did)" into "righteousness (salvation) by law (through what people say and do)". It was not Jesus Christ, but these Jewish religious teachers, who set aside the Old Testament and replaced it with their man-made laws (Mark 7:1-13)!

2. Contrasting the Jewish view with the Old Testament teaching.

It was not the Old Testament, but the Jewish religious teachers in the period between the exile to Babylon and the first coming of Christ (586 – 0 B.C.) that taught that people could be justified (saved) by doing works of the law. The Jews clearly misunderstood or misinterpreted God's purpose with the law.

In the Old Testament and in the New Testament itself there is absolutely no evidence that keeping the law was presented as the ground (basis) for justification during the Old Testament period. And there is absolutely no evidence that the alleged ground (basis) for justification in the Old Testament (i.e. keeping the law) was *replaced* in the New Testament by faith in the completed work of salvation of Christ!

Nowhere in the Old Testament is it taught that the Law of Moses was the means to attain righteousness in God's eyes! Paul's frequent appeal to the Old Testament and specifically the Law of Moses in support of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith makes the Jewish view untenable (e.g. in Romans 3:21-22; 4:6-8,13; 9:15-16; 10:6-8; 15:8-9; Galatians 3:10-11,17-22; 4:21-31)! Paul is definitely NOT speaking of the replacement of the law as the way of salvation in the Old Testament period with the gospel as the way of salvation in the New Testament period.

Paul is rather *contrasting* the false Jewish doctrine of justification by works of the law with the true Old and New Testament teaching about justification by faith! Since the exile to the time of Jesus the Jewish religious leaders and teachers taught that keeping the law (in the sense of the moral, ceremonial and civil laws) was the way of salvation. But the whole Old Testament and New Testament revelation teaches that faith in Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is the only way of salvation! Paul contrasts the true biblical principle of faith with the false Jewish principle of legalism (attaining righteousness through works of the law). The righteousness of God can only be attained through faith in the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ.

Therefore this second interpretation of Romans 10:4 is probably what Paul intended to say. Paul says that Jesus Christ terminated the legalistic way or approach. He terminated the wide-spread notion that righteousness must be earned by keeping the law of Moses (especially as interpreted by the Jewish religious teachers and leaders)! Paul did this in order to establish clearly that righteousness (salvation) is:

- only acquired by Jesus Christ
- only given (imputed and imparted) by grace by Jesus Christ
- only received (and implemented) by faith in Jesus Christ.

² 613 man-made laws: 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions.