

absolutely philosophical contrasts of Calvinism and Covenant Theology come to mind here. Consequently, it is important to establish the dramatic extent to which the New Testament itself erodes stereotypical oversimplifications of the distinctions between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant of Jesus Christ with regard to law, works, grace, and faith. Again, our purpose here in this study is not to demonstrate or conclude that the Law of Moses and the New Covenant are the same in all respects or that the two are, in fact, identical. Rather, our purpose is to have a biblically accurate (rather than oversimplified) understanding of how the two covenants relate to one another and how they are said to differ. (For more information on distinctions between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant, please see our “Liberty in Christ” study.)

(For the record, we absolutely believe that the Law of Moses and the New Covenant are 2 separate covenants. This is indicated by passages such as Hebrews 8:6-9, which specifically state that God would make a “new” covenant “Not according to the covenant” that God made “with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.” As such, the new covenant is not simply a slightly revised Law of Moses. While the new covenant does continue selected aspects of the Law of Moses, substantial aspects have been discontinued. The situation is analogous to replacing an old contract with a new contract. It would not be surprising to see some elements of the old contract appear in the new contract. Yet there remains a clear difference between amending an existing contract which remains in effect and replacing that contract with a new one. In our analysis, the new covenant is a replacement with some similarities to the old covenant rather than a continuation of the old covenant with amendments.)

It seems prudent to begin this portion of our study with a quick word of caution to dispel what might at first glance appear to be the root of the contrasts between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant.

First, as mentioned already during the introduction above, it is simply inaccurate to explain the contrast between these covenants as simply a matter of works contrasted with faith. We have already cited Hebrews 11:23-40, which plainly lists many examples of individuals with saving faith who lived under the Law of Moses. Conversely, the New Covenant doesn’t regard works as entirely irrelevant. Rather the New Testament itself necessitates works. The nuances of this latter point are established in our study entitled, “Righteousness on Credit,” but even a cursory reading of James 2:14-26 demands accommodation for works under the New Covenant. Although the sacrifice of Jesus Christ remains paramount because Christians can never erase, “pay off,” or make up for our sins through obedience and good works, after conversion we are nevertheless still required to practice good works and repentance from sin in order to attain salvation. Throughout this paper, we will continue to see additional evidence prohibiting explanations based upon oversimplifications regarding faith and works.

Second, as we demonstrate in our study entitled “The Priesthood and the Kinsman Redeemer,” a priestly office complete with intercessory sacrifice was well established from the earliest days of humanity long before the inauguration of the Law of Moses and the Levitical priesthood. While it is true that the New Testament takes great pains to establish Jesus’ connection with this ancient intercessory priesthood by means of his genealogy and connection to Melchizedek, the Levitical priests of Moses’ Law were (in purely biological terms) no less direct heirs of this same priesthood through Abraham.

And third, both covenants were also inaugurated or dedicated with sacrifice. Of course, the New Testament clearly affirms the utter supremacy of Christ’s sacrifice over the death of animals. Nevertheless, this is a distinction of exceeding quality, not manner or form. This commonality makes it difficult to blithely assert that the New Covenant is based on faith and grace because, in fact, at the New Covenant’s inception stands a sacrificial act.

Ultimately, we cannot simply explain the New Testament’s contrast to the Law of Moses by means of connection to the priesthood, inauguration by sacrifice, the absence of works, or even the presence of faith. Consequently, we’ll be forced to look elsewhere and dig deeper for the rationale behind the New Testament’s assertions that the Law of Moses was a covenant without faith or grace.

Preliminary Summary of Findings

To resolve these questions, a survey was conducted involving all of the New Testament occurrences of the terms law, works, grace, faith, sacrifice, forgiveness and atonement as well as other less prominent words such as propitiation, clean, purge, etc. An evaluation of the resulting texts produced the following conclusions, which have been placed here in summary form and will be reproduced in expanded detail over the course of this study.

Regarding the issue of faith, the New Testament unabashedly testifies that a significant number of persons had saving faith during the Law of Moses. Consequently, the New Testament contrast with the Law of Moses regarding faith rests, not upon the absence or presence of such faith, but on three other facts.

First, the New Testament defines faith with a very specific nuance that the belief must include future promises. Second, the Law of Moses was inaugurated at the onset of the Israelites’ reception of the Promised Land as they exited their historic servitude in Egypt and made their wilderness journey to Canaanite territory. Third, faith (particularly faith in future promises) operated concurrently alongside the Law of Moses but not directly as a mandate or component of the Law of Moses. This conclusion stems from three additional factors.

Number one, this kind of faith (faith in future promises) was not only in operation concurrent to the Law of Moses, it was in operation prior to the Law of Moses. Number two, pragmatically speaking adherence to the Law of Moses was not

facilitated by this kind of faith, nor did the Law of Moses necessitate this kind of faith. Number three, because the Law of Moses was primarily a civil code for governing promises that were contemporarily being received, faith in future promises was by necessity beyond the purview of the Law of Moses.

Consequently, such faith was neither necessitated by the Law of Moses nor was it prohibited by the Law of Moses. It could fully and compatibly cohabitate with the Law of Moses, even finding a natural, encouraging symbiosis with the Law of Moses, and yet the Law of Moses itself could be regarded an institution that was not itself based upon the faith in future promises that centrally defines the new covenant.

Regarding the issue of grace, or perhaps more specifically forgiveness and atonement, three critical factors underlie the New Testament depiction of the Law of Moses as a covenant without grace.

First, the first-century Jews who wrote the New Testament preserve a perception of great conceptual distinction between the Law of Moses and priestly service. While the Law of Moses certainly regulated and presided over the priesthood and its intercessory sacrifices as it did every other aspect of Israelite society, the Law of Moses was conceived of primarily as a code of civil governance, or in other words, a form of national government for a newly-formed Israelite kingdom. In that sense, the Law of Moses was conceptually parallel to any other state government or civil code.

Second, the priestly sacrificial system predated the Law of Moses by thousands of years. Consequently, it had full, independent existence in its own right and could not only be distinguished from the Law of Moses but it could be discussed without automatically invoking the Law of Moses as a whole and vice versa.

Third, the sacrifices regulated by the Law of Moses were seen by New Testament Jewish Christians as antitypes that prefigured the work of Christ Jesus and were efficacious only as provisional stand-ins for the sacrifice of Christ itself.

As a consequence of these three factors, the Law of Moses could be spoken of without inherently invoking the priestly intercession over which it presided and, apart from the work of Christ, the Law of Moses could be viewed as utterly incapable of administering atonement of any kind. The remainder of this paper will develop and establish these conclusions in further detail.

The Particulars of the New Testament Contrast

As we begin to establish the conclusions above, the first bit of insight comes when we begin to categorically identify exactly what the New Testament does and does not say about the Law of Moses regarding issues related to grace, faith, forgiveness, salvation, and inheriting the promises of God. We can break down the New Testament's statements into four classifications.

- 1) The Jews who wrote the New Testament specifically and repeatedly spoke of the Law of Moses as a covenant without grace or faith.
- 2) The Jews who wrote the New Testament spoke of the works of the Law of Moses as unable to attain forgiveness, election, salvation, or the promises of God.
- 3) The Jews who wrote the New Testament did not speak of the Law of Moses as a means of sacrifice or atonement but only as an instrument of death. (See note below.)
- 4) The Jews who wrote the New Testament spoke of the Law of Moses as requiring total, flawless obedience on all points.

(NOTE: Regarding number 3 above. Later on in this paper, we will discuss the extent to which the book of Hebrews constitutes the single exception to the silence described here concerning the commands in the Law of Moses governing sacrifices and atonement. And yet, as we will see, Hebrews contains some of the most explicit language anywhere in the New Testament asserting the overall model.)

Each of these statements warrants careful examination in its own right. We will begin with the first statement, which uses the simplest and broadest terms on the topic.

Point No. 1: Establishing the Contrast in Basic Terms

- 1) The Jews who wrote the New Testament specifically and repeatedly spoke of the Law of Moses as a covenant without grace or faith.

Introduction to this basic New Testament language contrasting the Law of Moses and Jesus Christ can be found in the opening chapter of John's gospel, in which the apostle plainly states that grace did not come by Moses or the Law.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) **full of grace and truth.** 15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. 16 **And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.** 17 **For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.**

(NOTE: John's remarks concerning truth most likely infer that the Law of Moses was a foreshadowing or figure of things to come rather than suggesting the Law of Moses was false or untruthful. This would be similar to the sentiment expressed in Hebrews 8:2, 5 and 9:9, 23, 10:1, although admittedly those passages are speaking of the tabernacle and Temple.)

In Acts 13:39, Paul tells a Jewish synagogue that by Christ Jesus they can be justified from things which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. And he concludes in verse 43 by telling them to continue in grace, which implies that

this grace concerns the justification that was not available to the Jews in the Law of Moses.

Acts 13:39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; 41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. 42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: **who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.**

In Romans 3:19-28, Paul lays out the following lines of thought. First, the Law of Moses renders the whole world guilty before God. Second, by the deeds of the Law of Moses no one is justified. And third, the only way to attain justification and righteousness is not through the Law of Moses but through faith in Jesus Christ, which he identifies as God's grace. The exclusive nature of this juxtaposition, particularly as seen in verses 27-28, more than implies that grace and faith were not in operation as part of the Law of Moses.

Romans 3:19 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.** 20 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. 21 But now **the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,** being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 **Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 **Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:** 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare **his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,** through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. 27 **Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.** 28 **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**

Before we move away from Romans 3, we should note a relevant similarity between verse 25 and Hebrews 9:15.

Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare **his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,** through the forbearance of God

Hebrews 9:14 **How much more shall the blood of Christ,** who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of

the new testament, that **by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament**, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Although Romans 3 is slightly less explicit, stating only that Jesus's shed blood provides forgiveness "of sins that are past," Hebrews clarifies that by means of his shed blood, Jesus provides forgiveness from the sins that "were under the first covenant." Consequently, this comparison confirms the assertion from Romans 3 that there was no justification for sin brought by the Law of Moses. If the Law of Moses had provided forgiveness for the sins committed while it was in effect, then those sins would not be in need of atonement by Jesus Christ.

In Romans 4, Paul continues with his theme from the previous chapter. Having stated in chapter 3:20 that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified," Paul explains in chapter 4:4 that the notion of being justified through works is, by definition, not grace. Although he does not here specify work "of the Law," it is unreasonable to sever this shorthand reference from the longer, more explanatory, defining precedent provided by Paul himself in chapter 3.

Romans 4:1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? **2** For if Abraham were **justified by works**, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. **3** For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. **4** Now **to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.** **5** But **to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.**

A similar pronouncement can be found in Romans 6, where Paul again plainly states that, by definition, being under grace means not being under the Law of Moses. Paul could not make such a statement if he viewed the Law of Moses as a mechanism administering grace.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for **ye are not under the law, but under grace.** **15** What then? shall we sin, because **we are not under the law, but under grace?** God forbid.

Lastly, in Romans 11 Paul adds one final axiomatic declaration regarding his previous arguments. Here he once more describes that if salvation is by works, then it cannot be by grace. As we have previously noted, such a remark is not possible if Paul viewed the Law of Moses as an institution that dispensed grace.

Romans 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to **the election of grace.** **6** And **if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.**

Although perhaps not as straightforward, Paul makes similar comments in the second chapter of his epistle to the Galatians. It is important to note that the Greek

word for “frustrate” is “atheteo” (Strong’s No. 114), which means “to do away with, disregard, or nullify, or reject.” Here Paul explains that the idea that righteousness comes by the Law of Moses nullifies the grace of God provided through the death of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:21 I do not frustrate (114) the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Later in Galatians 5, Paul describes how those who seek to justify themselves through the Law of Moses are obligated to keep the entire Law of Moses and are fallen from grace. Again, this type of statement would not be possible if Paul saw the Law of Moses as an institution which administered grace.

Galatians 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

In light of the fact that throughout Romans and Galatians, Paul’s contrast of grace and works has explicitly centered on the works of the Law of Moses, we can also include Ephesians, 2 Timothy, and Titus in our survey. Although they do not mention the Law of Moses by name, all three passages repeat Paul’s consistent theme that the model of salvation based on grace and mercy is not compatible with a model of salvation based strictly on works, such as the Law of Moses. (Later on, we will examine Ephesians 2:8 in its surrounding context and find that the Law of Moses is actually identified specifically in this passage.)

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

As we conclude our survey of New Testament comments such as these, we must keep in mind three facts.

First, as stated in the introduction to this essay, in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers alone there are 25 chapters containing no less than 60 references to atonement in direct connection with sacrifices and offerings, the feast of atonement (with its sacrifices and offerings), and the Levitical priests’ work of making such atoning sacrifices.

Second, the Temple was still standing in Jerusalem when nearly all of the New Testament quotes cited above were written. This means that those sacrifices were still in practice when these specific New Testament remarks were penned. In fact, Paul himself participated in certain sacrifices after his conversion to Christianity. Such occasions are recorded in Acts 21 and retold in Acts 24. These accounts also depict James, one of the elders of the Jerusalem church, as encouraging Paul to make such offerings at the Temple.

In Acts 21:20, James and the elders happily report that the Jewish believers were “zealous for the Law” of Moses. In verse 23, some of these Jewish Christians go with Paul to the Temple to make offerings.

Acts 21:17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. **18** And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. **19** And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. **20** And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, **Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:** **21** And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs. **22** What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. **23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;** **24** Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. **25** As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. **26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple,** to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, **until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.**

In Acts 24:11, Paul describes how he had gone up to Jerusalem specifically to participate in Temple worship. In verse 17 Paul specifies that this worship included offerings. (It should be noted that in this context, particularly so close to the term “alms,” it is possible that “offerings” simply refers to charitable support for poor Christians living there. However, the interpretation of sacrificial offerings is supported by the contextual proximity to worship in verse 11 and the potential redundancy that arises if “offerings” refers essentially to “alms.”)

Acts 24:10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: **11** Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since **I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.** **12** And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the

city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. 14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, **believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:** 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men. 17 **Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.**

When recounting his visits to Jerusalem in Galatians 1-2, Paul identifies James as an apostle and “pillar” of the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem.

Galatians 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save **James the Lord’s brother...** 9 **And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars,** perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

These facts present an intriguing and important question. The earliest Christians were Jews living in and around Jerusalem who were very familiar with the Law of Moses and the sacrifices at the Temple. They even participated in such things. So, how is it possible that these same early, Jewish Christians could describe the Law of Moses as a system that did not administer grace and forgiveness?

Third, all of this comes into even more glaring relief when we consider the fact that such an all-or-none argument was neither the only, nor the easiest alternative. From a purely strategic perspective or perhaps judging strictly by minimalist necessities, a more natural conceptualization might have been to present the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ as two competing systems, both based on faith and offering some measure of forgiveness and grace. Then simply argue that Christ was superior, complete, and permanent.

This hypothetical highlights for us an important reality that emerges from all three of these factors. With their deep familiarity and affinity for the Law of Moses, there must have been a robust, well-established reason compelling the New Testament authors to argue so dismissively concerning the role of grace and faith in the Law of Moses, especially when a simpler, less controversial alternative argument was so readily available. Establishing exactly what that robust, well-established reason was will be the subject of our next segments. And while we’ll discover that the Law of Moses and the New Covenant operated with many of the same elements (commands, atoning sacrifice, discipline and ultimately the punishment of death, etc.), we will find that the differences in degree and specific nature of even these common elements warranted the stark characterizations repeated so often in the New Testament.

A Closer Look at Faith during the Law of Moses

Our previous section established the explicitness of the New Testament denials that the Law of Moses was an institution based on faith to dispense atonement and forgiveness. Consequently, the next step is to explain how the New Testament could deny the role of faith in the Law of Moses given the New Testament's own attestation that so many persons under the Law of Moses exhibited saving faith. And the most obvious place to start is to establish that the New Testament does, in fact, unabashedly testify that a significant number of persons had saving faith during the Law of Moses.

On this point, it is important to properly define our timeframe. While it might seem initially obvious to turn to Romans 4, which holds up Abraham as the model of faith, we have to be more careful and particular. While the record of Abraham is contained in Genesis, the first of the five books of Moses, technically Abraham lives over four hundred years before the Law of Moses. While his faith is relevant to this larger investigation for other reasons, Abraham is not an example of saving faith under the Law of Moses.

For an explicit testimonial that people did have saving faith during the Law of Moses, we turn to Hebrews 11:23-24. This passage was mentioned summarily in two previous sections. We will now finally take a moment to examine it in detail.

Hebrews 11:22 By faith **Joseph, when he died**, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. 23 By faith **Moses**, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. 24 **By faith Moses**, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. 27 By **faith** he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. 28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. 30 **By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.** 31 **By faith the harlot Rahab** perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. 32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of **Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:** 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, **stopped the mouths of lions,** 34 **Quenched the violence of fire,** escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; **that they might obtain a better resurrection:** 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in

sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (**Of whom the world was not worthy:**) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 **And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:** 40 **God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.**

As we can see, verse 22 finishes describing the period prior to Moses, which is plainly indicated by the reference to the death of Jacob's son Joseph. Verse 23 immediately begins the account of Moses. Still, since the Law is given by Moses, Moses himself isn't an ideal example of faith under the Law. Verse 30, which describes the fall of the walls of Jericho as the Israelites entered the Promised Land, marks the first clear reference to Israelites after the Law of Moses had been inaugurated. Verses 31-38 then proceed to mention both general and specific examples starting with Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and by implication many others. In verse 38, the phrase "of whom the world was not worthy," implies that all these individuals are worthy of the world that is to come, which is to say, worthy of inheriting the kingdom of God. And verse 39 concludes even more strongly that all of these have obtained a good report based on their faith. Verse 40 goes on to plainly state that they are made perfect with "us," with New Testament Christians.

For reference, it is also important to note that verse 34 relates this faith to the promise of a better resurrection. Moreover, verse 39 points out that these people died believing in promises that they had not yet received. Notice the perfect parallel between verse 39 and verse 13. Verse 13 describes patriarchs like Abraham, saying, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." We will discuss the relevance of belief specifically in future promises a little while later. But for now, it is clear that Hebrews 11 is talking about faith specifically regarding promises that have yet to be received in the future, not things contemporarily received.

Moreover, it is clear that the word "faith" is being used consistently and without interruption throughout this entire chapter following its initial use in the opening verses. There is no distinction between the type of faith exhibited by the people under the Law of Moses and the faith of Abraham in verse 8 or the faith that is necessary to please God in verse 6. This fact becomes even more pressing once we incorporate Paul's analysis of the faith into the New Testament model of faith that we are seeing in Hebrews. Romans 4 presents Paul's discussion of the faith of Abraham, a faith that attains righteousness apart from the works of the Law.

Romans 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, **faith** is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. 16 **Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to**

that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.

Here Paul states that it was by faith, not the Law of Moses, that Abraham was counted as righteous and received God's promise that he would inherit the world. Furthermore, Paul also points out that it was not only Abraham, but "all the seed" including the seed that "is of the Law." This comment from Paul directly confirms Hebrews 11, which describes many people living under the Law of Moses who had the same kind of saving faith as Abraham. Romans 4 also specifically includes faith in the future promise of inheriting the world just like Hebrews 11, as we will see momentarily.

At this point, there can be little doubt that the New Testament authors affirmed that many people living under the Law of Moses exhibited the kind of saving faith that God credits as righteous and counts worthy of inheriting the world when they receive his future kingdom through Jesus Christ. With this fundamental fact in place, we have established the need to address the central question of this section. How can the New Testament deny the role of faith in the Law of Moses given the fact that so many persons under the Law of Moses exhibited saving faith?

As summarized during the introduction, the answer to this superficial conundrum rest on three facts, which we will now expound in fuller detail.

First, the New Testament defines faith with a very specific nuance. In the New Testament, faith inherently involves general belief in all the teachings of the covenant, which must result in real lifestyle change involving repentance and good works, but New Testament faith must also entail the specific belief in "things unseen," promises not yet received. Perhaps not surprisingly, this very particular definition of faith is not only inferred in Romans 8 but it is explicitly provided in Hebrews 11 itself, the very same chapter that lists so many saints with saving faith who lived under the Law of Moses. Notice how Romans 8 and Hebrews 11 parallel one another in this regard.

Romans 8:21 Because the creature itself also shall be **delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.** 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, **even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.** 24 **For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?** 25 **But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.**

Hebrews 11:1 Now **faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.** 2 **For by it the elders obtained a good report.** 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But **without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder** of them that diligently seek him. 7 By **faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear**, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, **and became heir** of the righteousness which is by faith. 8 **By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance**, obeyed; and he went out, **not knowing whither he went**. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a **strange country**, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For **he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God**.

In Romans 8:21-23, Paul discusses how we wait for the deliverance of our bodies from corruption. The word “waiting” is a rather obvious demonstration that this event does indeed lie in the future. In verse 24, Paul says that, in fact, we are saved by this hope. And he goes on to explain that “hope” by definition is something that we have not yet seen. Hope, even the hope that saves us, by necessity requires us to wait for the arrival of the future promise.

Likewise, in near perfect parallel but using alternate terms, Hebrews 11 states that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” And it is by this faith in “things not yet seen” that “the elders received a good report.” In fact, as the passage goes on to explain in verse 6, it is this kind of faith specifically that God requires, a faith that waits for things promised in the future. Verses 7-10 go on to cite Noah and Abraham as examples of “elders” waiting to inherit the world.

Moreover, as we can see from Romans 8 and Hebrews 11, these “yet-to-be received” promises include such things as immortality and inheriting the earth during the literal, physical, geopolitical kingdom of God that will reign over all nations commencing at the return of Christ. Paul’s reference to the redemption of our bodies is fairly unveiled in Romans 8 and references to the saints’ future reception of the land promised to Abraham are likewise plainly articulated in both Romans 4:13-16 and Hebrews 11:8-10. The conceptual parallel between Abraham and Noah as inheritors of the earth in Hebrews 11:7-10 is also interesting, since Noah quite literally became the heir of the earth itself after the Flood when God judged and removed the wicked. Abraham was waiting for a similar event and this contextual proximity conveys that association. (Although not specifically expounded here, evidence for the premillennial view of the kingdom of God can be found in our series, “Prophetic Symbols,” “Revelation Chronology,” and especially “Covenant and Dispensational Theologies.”)

With this specific definition of faith established, we can now consider some of the direct implications this definition has concerning the Law of Moses. This brings us to our next point.

Second, the Law of Moses was inaugurated at the onset of the Israelites' reception of the Promised Land as they exited their historic servitude in Egypt and made their wilderness journey to Canaanite territory. This reception of the promised Canaanite Land was characterized by a very "here-and-now" setting. When the Israelites received the Law of Moses, they were not waiting to receive this land. Rather, they were receiving it contemporarily. Likewise, they went on to dwell in the Promised Land for generations. In this light, it is easy to recognize the Law of Moses as primarily in its essence a civil code for governing the national society of Israel during that contemporary reception of the land from God at that time. This essence will be discussed in more detail later in this essay. For now the pertinent point is that the contemporary reception inherent to the heart of the Law of Moses is directly in contrast with the New Testament mandate that faith, by definition, requires belief in something "yet to be received." This leads to our third and final fact concerning faith under the Law of Moses.

(NOTE: While there was a gap of 40 years spent wandering in the wilderness, this gap was a punishment for repeated disobedience. God had originally intended to bring the Israelites directly into the Promised Land after giving them the Law of Moses. Thus, the 40-year delay does not overturn the fact that the Law of Moses was intended to govern the contemporary reception of the Promised Land. For reference regarding the unintended delay, see Exodus 3:8, 17, 12:25-27, Numbers 13:1-3, 25-26, 14:21-34, 32:7-15, Deuteronomy 1:2-3, 19-39.)

Third, faith (particularly faith in future promises) operated concurrently alongside the Law of Moses but not directly as a mandate or component of the Law of Moses. This conclusion stems from three additional factors.

Number one, this kind of faith (faith in future promises) was not only in operation concurrent to the Law of Moses, it was in operation prior to the Law of Moses. We have already examined Hebrews 11:23-40 earlier in this study. Before listing examples of saving faith from the time of Moses onward in verses 23-40, Hebrews 11:1-22 lists saints of old who exemplified the same saving faith starting from Abel and continuing right up until Joseph before moving on to the time of Moses himself. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph all lived in such faith prior to the Law of Moses. And because such faith was in operation prior to the Law of Moses, the Law of Moses is not needed as an explanation for the existence of such faith even during the time when the Law of Moses presided. In short, logically speaking, if people could have this kind of faith before the Law of Moses, then people could have this kind of faith during the Law of Moses without it being derived from or necessitated by the Law of Moses.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. **2** For by it the elders obtained a good report. **3** Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. **4** By faith **Abel** offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. **5**

By faith **Enoch** was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. 7 By faith **Noah**, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. 8 By faith **Abraham**, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also **Sara** herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. 17 By faith **Abraham**, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. 20 By faith **Isaac** blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith **Jacob**, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. 22 By faith **Joseph**, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Number two, pragmatically speaking adherence to the Law of Moses was not facilitated by faith, nor did the Law of Moses necessitate faith. This conclusion is itself a necessary corollary to the fact that the nature of the Law of Moses was primarily, in large part, to administer and govern promises that were contemporarily being received by the Israelites shortly after the Exodus from Egypt. Because these promises were being received contemporarily rather than conditionally in the future, a particular motivational dynamic could be put into place as part of the governing faculty of the Law of Moses. This will be a topic that we examine in some detail later on in this study, so we will not belabor the point here. For the sake of brevity, for the moment we will simply point out that the overwhelming motivation engendered by the Law of Moses was a rather immediate execution of the death penalty. (By stating this, we do not mean to overlook the fact that as a civil law code, lesser punitive measures were of course also readily available for certain types of infractions.)

The result is that from start to finish, the Law of Moses governed promises that were contemporarily received and compliance was motivated by the threat of being personally, contemporarily deprived of those promises. By design, fear of immediate death or punishment, not faith, was the facilitator of adherence under the Law of Moses. Consequently, one could adhere to the Law of Moses out of fear of consequence just like any other civil governance from any nation without necessarily having devoted belief in God or even in the virtue of the ordinances themselves.

Number three, as another necessary corollary to the fact that Law of Moses was primarily a civil code for governing promises that were contemporarily being received, faith in future promises was by necessity beyond the purview of the Law of Moses.

Consequently, for the reasons articulated above, we conclude that the kind of faith required by the New Testament (faith in future promises) was neither necessitated by the Law of Moses nor was it prohibited by the Law of Moses. It could fully and compatibly cohabitate with the Law of Moses, even finding a natural, encouraging symbiosis with the Law of Moses, and yet the Law of Moses itself could be regarded an institution that was not itself based upon such faith.

Forgiveness: Learning from the Specificity of the Contrast

Since the previous sections explained the New Testament's denial that the Law of Moses was an institution based on faith, the remaining challenge is to explain the New Testament's denial that the Law of Moses was a mechanism for dispensing atonement to sinners. Up until this point, we have only established one of the four points describing the New Testament's self-described contrast with the Law of Moses. This first point defined the basic terms and the essential manner in which the contrast was articulated. The New Covenant was a covenant dispensing grace in the form of forgiveness based on faith in Jesus Christ and the Law of Moses was a covenant that did not dispense grace and in which righteousness and divine acceptance were based upon the works it prescribed. But in order to resolve this challenge, we'll need to probe a little farther into the exact nature and details of the contrast between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant of Christ as portrayed by the Jewish authors of the New Testament

The remaining three points will allow us to fill in more specifics about this critical contrast, particularly regarding the aspects of grace and forgiveness. These specifics unveil a robust, underlying perspective, which allowed Jews who were very familiar with the Law of Moses, who applauded zeal for it, and who practiced its sacrifices to write so dismissively regarding the role of grace and forgiveness in it.

It's important to note that when we ask the question, "How could Jewish men who participated in sacrifices and who knew the Law of Moses, say such things?" this isn't a question expressing surprise. It's not meant to convey shock or

disapproval. Instead, we're asking this question from a perspective of technical interest. We believe there is fundamental knowledge, which they had about both the Law of Moses and the New Covenant that finds itself preserved for us in this seeming paradox. And once we understand the details, the underlying system will emerge to answer the critical question, and the paradox will unravel. But to unravel the paradox, we must first define its features. And for this reason, the second, third, and fourth points of contrast are much more detailed than the first. We will begin with our second point of contrast as articulated by the New Testament.

Point No. 2: What the Works of the Law of Moses Could Not Attain

2) The Jews who wrote the New Testament spoke of the works of the Law of Moses as unable to attain forgiveness, election, salvation, or the promises of God.

We find early references to this general New Testament assertion in Acts 13. In verses 38-39, Jesus is lauded as the means for the forgiveness of sins that could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Verse 43 concludes by applying the term grace to the belief that forgiveness comes through Jesus rather than the Law of Moses.

Acts 13:38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that **through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses...** 43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: **who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.**

Of course, there is the possibility that this phrase intends to convey that the Law of Moses provided some measure of forgiveness for a limited range of sins and Christ provides forgiveness for sins beyond that limited range. However, this phrase is also compatible with the idea that the Law of Moses ultimately provided forgiveness for no sins and that all forgiveness is found in Christ alone. Earlier we demonstrated a parallel between Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:14 that is also relevant here.

Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare **his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,** through the forbearance of God

Hebrews 9:14 **How much more shall the blood of Christ,** who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that **by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament,** they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

As we have seen, both Hebrews 9 and Romans 3 testify that Jesus' death is the means for the redemption for sins committed in the past against the Law of Moses. Acts 13 should be interpreted in harmony with these passages in reference to Christ as the mechanism for forgiving the totality of sins committed under the Law of Moses, not some of them. Such statements, in turn, necessitate that the works of the Law of Moses were unable to attain forgiveness, election, salvation, or the promises of God.

The next affirmation of this second point comes from the familiar passage of Romans 3, where Paul declares that the Law renders the entire world guilty before God and by the works of the Law is no man justified. Instead, redemption for sin comes only through Jesus Christ. (Notice the inherent contextual connection between the phrase "sins that are past" in verse 25 and condemnation under the Law of Moses in verse 19, which affirms that verse 25 is a reference to sins committed when the Law of Moses was in effect.)

Romans 3:9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved **both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;**...**19 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.** **20 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.** **21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,** being witnessed by the law and the prophets; **22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:** **23 For all have sinned,** and come short of the glory of God; **24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:** **25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,** through the forbearance of God; **26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.** **27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.** **28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.** **29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:** **30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.** **31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

Near the end of the epistle to the Romans, in chapter 11 Paul compares the Israelites of Elijah's day to his contemporary situation.

Romans 11:1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. **2** God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, **3** Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. **4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the**

image of Baal. 5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

As Paul attests, in the times of Elijah, most of the nation of Israel had fallen into worshipping false gods. But there were seven thousand men who were still accepted by God. The text does not state that these men had never sinned, only that they had not bowed their knees to Baal. Verse 5 then begins with the phrase “even so,” which is the Greek word “houto” (Strong’s No. 3779), meaning literally, “in this manner.” Then Paul immediately goes on to say, “In this manner at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”

By including the phrase “in this manner” and “in the present time also,” Paul is necessitating that just as the present remnant of Israel is accepted based upon grace, the same is true for the seven thousand men in Elijah’s day. Consequently, although these seven thousand men were not idolaters, they must have been sinners in some respect since both here and (with regard to Abraham) in Romans 4, Paul has argued that justification derived from what men’s deeds deserve, by definition, is not grace. This implies that neither these seven thousand men, nor Abraham, were flawless in their deeds, which is why they were in need of justification based upon grace. This brings us back to our main point. In chapter 11:6, Paul repeats the axiom that if a man is accepted “by grace, then it is no more of works.” His application of this axiom to the seven thousand elect Jews from Elijah’s day implies that these men were unable to attain their election, forgiveness, or righteousness by means of the works of the Law of Moses.

Galatians 3 is replete with similar assertions. In verses 1-9, Paul chastises the Galatians for succumbing to the notion that it was necessary for them, as Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in order to be counted as righteous by God. Using the reception of the Holy Spirit as an indicator of divine acceptance, in verse 2 Paul declares that they did not receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the Law of Moses but by faith. In verse 3, Paul rhetorically infers that the Galatians will likewise attain completion or maturity, not by the flesh, which is to say, circumcision and the Law of Moses, but by faith.

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? **2** This only would I learn of you, **Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** **3** Are ye so foolish? **having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?** **4** Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. **5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** **6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.** **7** Know ye therefore that they which are of **faith**, the same are the children of Abraham. **8** And the scripture, foreseeing **that God would justify the heathen through faith,**

preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of **faith** are blessed with **faithful** Abraham.

(NOTE: A comparison between verses 3 and 5 makes it clear that the phrase “by the flesh” does not refer to all works but to the “works of the law” of Moses in particular and, as such, this phrase does not countermand the conclusion that the new covenant itself requires works of its own. For more information, see our article, “Righteousness on Credit.”)

However, Paul makes additional relevant comments in verses 15-21. The salient component here is seen most directly in verses 17-18. Here Paul declares that the inheritance promised to Abraham and his descendants was not attained through the Law of Moses. In other words, once again, men were unable to attain their election, forgiveness, or righteousness by means of the works of the Law of Moses. It is also relevant that having dismissed the Law of Moses as the means for attaining such things, Paul goes on in verse 19 to ask what the purpose of the Law of Moses was if not to deliver the promises. We will discuss Paul’s answer in a later segment, but for now it is simply relevant that Paul clearly assigns to the Law of Moses an entirely different function than delivering the promises of God.

Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. 16 Now **to Abraham and his seed were the promises made**. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, **that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect**. 18 For **if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise**: but **God gave it to Abraham by promise**. 19 **Wherefore then serveth the law?** It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. 21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

As we turn to Ephesians 2, it is important to begin by taking note of verse 15 in which Paul refers to “the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” This phrase is used in close proximity and association with the phrase “commonwealth of Israel” in verse 12, which demonstrates that Paul is not talking about any law in any nation, but rather the law that had governed the nation of Israel for generations, the Law of Moses. So, what does Paul have to say in this chapter about the Law of Moses with regard to the role of delivering mercy, divine acceptance, and salvation?

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in **mercy**, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even **when we were dead in sins**, hath quickened us together with Christ, (**by grace ye are saved**;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might

shew the exceeding riches of his **grace** in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For **by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:** 9 **Not of works, lest any man should boast.** 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. 11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from **the commonwealth of Israel**, and strangers from **the covenants of promise**, having **no hope**, and **without God in the world:** 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, **even the law of commandments contained in ordinances;** for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19 Now therefore ye are **no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints**, and of the household of God.

According to Paul's commentary here, men are saved by grace, as seen in the end of verse 5. In verse 7, he states plainly that this grace comes to us through Jesus Christ. And in verses 8, he declares that this grace is based upon faith in Jesus Christ, not works. In fact, in verse 9 Paul couples the idea of works with boasting. We have seen this language before in Romans 3:27-28, where Paul writes, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." So, even though Paul does not specify "works of the Law" here in verse 9, we know from context and comparison that he does indeed have the Law of Moses in mind.

And according to Ephesians 2, what do we attain by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, which we could not attain through the works of the Law of Moses? The answer is found in verse 12, which identifies our entrance into the commonwealth of Israel and participation in the covenants of promise. Verse 13 states explicitly that we attain these things by the blood of Christ and verses 14-15 likewise explicitly state that not only did the Law of Moses fail to provide these things, but rather it was an obstacle to our receiving them. Moreover, verse 16 clarifies that this pertains not only to the Gentiles, but also to the Jews because both groups are reconciled to God, not through the Law of Moses, but through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross.

Ephesians 2 provides additional insight into our overall investigation, but for now the importance of Ephesians 2 is that it once again testifies directly that reconciliation with God and participation in the promised kingdom of Israel could not be attained through the works of the Law of Moses, and, consequently, no man can boast.

Philippians 3 provides some interesting commentary from Paul on this subject concerning his own status and experience as a Jew.

Philippians 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

In verse 5, Paul explains his credentials as a Jewish man. He was circumcised in the manner required by the Law of Moses. He is an Israelite descended from Abraham's own great grandson Benjamin. Concerning the interpretation of the Law of Moses, he was a member of the prominent sect known as the Pharisees. And concerning the Pharisees' interpretation of the Law of Moses, Paul was blameless in his execution of it. And yet, in verse 9, Paul declares that despite all these things, he was not righteous of himself. Imagine this man, a faithful Jewish man, "a Hebrew of Hebrews," for whom the Law of Moses could not deliver righteousness. Consequently, in order to attain the resurrection of the dead, he had to rely on righteousness credited based on faith in Jesus Christ as verses 9-11 go on to explain. Clearly, Paul's own self-assessment is a personal testimony that, in his view, the works of the Law of Moses did not attain righteousness or the eternal reward.

Similar statements can be seen in 2 Timothy 1:9 and Titus 3:5, although they do not mention the Law of Moses particularly. We have examined these passages earlier because they reflect the more general proposition that the Law of Moses was not an institution administering grace. At that time, we noted how they perfectly paralleled Romans 3 and Ephesians 2, which do identify the Law of Moses specifically.

2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath **saved us**, and called us with an holy calling, **not according to our works**, but according to his own purpose and **grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.**

Titus 3:5 **Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.**

At this point, we notice that these passages more specifically assert that by the works of the Law of Moses we cannot attain salvation, or mercy, or the Holy

Spirit. Rather these things we attain through Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy says we are saved, not by works of the Law of Moses, but through Christ Jesus. Titus says that we receive mercy, the rebirth, and the Holy Spirit, not by works of righteousness but through Christ Jesus.

Notice also in 2 Timothy 1:9 that this grace was given “before the world began.” This reflects the fact that even before he created the universe God foresaw the future descent of the world into sin and decided to redeem mankind through the sacrifice of the Person of the Word of God. But it also conveys the very important idea that this grace was available from the foundation of the world even before the first advent of Jesus Christ and that it was by the grace of Christ that men of all past ages were accepted by God. Consequently, God’s acceptance of men under the Law of Moses (even his acceptance of the seven thousand men of Elijah’s day, which Paul discusses in Romans 11) was available because the grace of God through Jesus Christ was already something God had decided from the beginning of creation. Therefore, the acceptance of men from earlier ages including those who lived under the Law of Moses, does not demonstrate that grace was made available through Moses’ Law.

Lastly, we turn to Hebrews 7, which plainly states in verse 19 that the Law of Moses did not make men perfect nor did it bring men near to God. According to verse 18, it was unprofitable. It simply did not avail in this regard.

Hebrews 7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. 19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Like the other passages we have examined in this section, Hebrews 7 explicitly displays that in the mind of the Jews who wrote the New Testament, the works of the Law of Moses were unable to attain forgiveness, election, salvation, or the promises of God. For Jewish men who knew the Law of Moses, who were not averse to its precepts, and who participated in its prescribed sacrifices and offerings even after Jesus’ first advent, such repeated sentiment could not have been cavalier or shortsighted. In fact, such statements would not have been possible without a very clear, established underpinning that allowed them to make such direct and unrestrained characterizations of the Law of Moses. We will see the same things from our next two points of contrast as well.

Point No. 3: The Law of Moses Was an Instrument of Death and Punishment

3) The Jews who wrote the New Testament did not speak of the Law of Moses as a means of sacrifice or atonement but only as an instrument of death.

(As noted during the introduction to this paper, the book of Hebrews constitutes the single exception to the silence described here concerning the commands in the Law of Moses governing sacrifices and atonement. And yet Hebrews contains

some of the most explicit language anywhere in the New Testament asserting the overall model. We will discuss the relevant passages from Hebrews in a later section and focus instead on the general rule to which Hebrews constitutes the lone exception.)

We begin our chronicling of this phenomenon with Romans 2:12.

Romans 2:12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.

If you look at this verse out of its context, you might suppose that the only people who will “perish” or die from sin are those who do not have the Law, which is to say, the Gentiles. Conversely, you might suppose that those who sin “in” or “under” the Law (which is to say, the Jews) will merely be “judged,” but not necessarily put to death. However, when we examine this verse in its wider context, it becomes clear that Paul’s point is quite the opposite.

Romans 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. **2:1** Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. **2** But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. **3** And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? **4** Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? **5** But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; **6** Who will render to every man according to his deeds: **7** To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: **8** But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, **9** Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; **10** But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: **11** For there is no respect of persons with God. **12** For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.

First, notice that the judgment of God is a theme throughout this passage, starting even in chapter 1. In fact, verse 32 of chapter 1 connects God’s judgment explicitly to the punishment of death. Second, notice that another theme of this passage is the idea of the same treatment for the same behavior. This is seen right away in chapter 2:1, which begins by chastising the man who judges someone else while committing the same crimes himself. The accuser will most certainly receive the same punishment as the man he accuses. They are treated the same. Third, judging and condemning are treated as virtual synonyms in the first half of chapter 2:1. Fourth, the hypocrite’s judgment and condemnation of his fellow

sinner is paralleled at the end of verse 1 by God's judgment of the hypocrite, which in turn is also a judgment of condemnation. Fifth, in the immediately preceding context of chapter 1:32, God's judgment of condemnation is most certainly a condemnation unto death.

As we continue, we see references to two men "doing the same" sin and being treated equally, both received the "judgment of God." In verse 5, the hypocrite is again depicted as accruing wrath for himself under God's judgment. In verse 6, we see that "every man" will receive according to his deed, there are no exceptions. Verses 9-10 states that whether Jews or Gentiles, each person will receive the reward or punishment their deeds merit. And verse 11 leads into verse 12 by declaring that God is no respecter of persons. He does not play favorites but operates by the same rules for everyone, which in this context implies both Jews and Gentiles are judged by the same standard.

In light of this context, we must interpret the assertion that those who have sinned in the Law of Moses will be "judged" as a reference to perishing or death, the same consequence for those who sin without the Law of Moses. Consequently, the phrase "judged by the law" must be seen contextually as equivalent to the punishment of perishing.

Fortunately, we don't have to travel very far. The next reference to the Law of Moses as an institution characterized by condemnation and punishment can be found just two chapters later in Romans.

Romans 4:14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15 Because **the law worketh wrath (3709)**: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Here in verse 15, we find the phrase "the law worketh wrath." The tail end of the verse also (particularly in comparison to Romans 3:20) begins to suggest that the Law of Moses is to declare or identify what is sinful for the purposes of taking an account of men's sinful deeds which, in turn, is for the purposes of judgment and condemnation. But for now, the word "wrath" is most noteworthy. We have already discussed chapter 1:32 and chapter 2, which contextually defined God's wrath in terms of death as the consequence of divine condemnation for sinful deeds. In the literary setting of Romans 1-4, the phrase "the law worketh wrath" is a simple declaration that the Law of Moses has as its primary function the condemnation of men unto death for their sinful deeds. This is a notable contrast to the idea of the Law of Moses working atonement for sins through sacrifice, an idea which is nowhere presented so far in Romans 2-4.

But before we leave the word "wrath" behind and move on, we should note that the same Greek word "orge" (Strong's No. 3709) is used for "wrath" here in Romans 4:15 concerning the Law of Moses as is used in Romans 13:4.

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto **the higher powers**. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore

resisteth **the power**, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 **For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?** do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for **he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath (3709) upon him that doeth evil.** 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. 6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

We will discuss this passage of Romans in more detail later on. But for now, it is important to note that Romans 13 is clearly a discussion of secular rulers, as seen most evidently in verse 3. But it is most noteworthy that the terms used to describe the essential function of secular government here in Romans are identical to the way Paul describes the Law of Moses elsewhere in Romans. The phrase "beareth the sword" in connection to "wrath" in verse 4 informs us that this central governmental function entails putting to death criminals, or in other words law-breakers. The fact that Paul describes secular authorities in similar terms to the way he repeatedly describes the Law of Moses further undergirds that Paul saw the Law of Moses largely as a means of civil governance parallel to any other national government, just as we have previously suggested.

Romans 5:13 continues the fleeting thread of a trail we already picked up on in Romans 4:15. Once again, it hints that the Law of Moses had at its heart the function of identifying sins for the purpose of counting men's misdeeds so that they might be judged by that accounting.

Romans 5:13 For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come...) 20 Moreover **the law entered, that the offence might abound.** But where sin abounded, **grace did much more abound:** 21 That as **sin hath reigned unto death**, even so might **grace** reign through righteousness unto eternal life **by Jesus Christ our Lord.**

As we push a little further into the text, we come to verse 20. Verse 20 states that the Law of Moses came into the world that sins "might abound." Of course, the purpose of the Law of Moses was not to cause men to sin more. Rather, the basic idea here is that men can be condemned for more misdeeds after those deeds are clearly identified as sinful. In fact, verse 13 relates to this as well when it declares that before the Law of Moses, certain deeds that men committed were contrary God's righteousness and yet the sinfulness of those deeds in some sense were not fully accounted because there was as yet no clear declaration about them.

Interesting insight on this subject comes from examining the commands that God gave Noah after the Flood in Genesis 9:1-7. These commands are quite simple

and contain only two prohibitions. First, man could not eat the blood of any animal. And second, man could not unjustly kill another man. This is a remarkable contrast to the far greater enumeration of sins found in the Law of Moses, but even more relevant to our study is the fact that in Genesis 9:5, Noah and his sons are authorized to kill any man who unjustly took the life of another. This contrast between the covenant with Noah when he inherited the earth and the covenant through Moses when Israel first inherited the land of Canaan is central to Paul's comments in these chapters, including chapter 5:20 in particular. Notice once again the fundamental connection to the civil authority to put to death law-breakers, which we argue is fundamentally how Jews like Paul viewed the Law of Moses. Both the covenant with Noah and the covenant of Moses required death for certain sins, but there were exceedingly fewer sins for which death was prescribed in the covenant with Noah. This means that all of the additional deeds that Moses' Law prescribed death for were still occurring from Noah to Moses but without the prescribed death penalty.

This is what Paul means when he says sin was in the earth before the Law of Moses but particular sins cannot be imputed or held to account when there is no law, no declaration that a particular deed is sinful. After Adam sinned, there is no record of God giving additional commands until the time of Noah. Thus, the sins that occurred from Adam to Moses did not fit the pattern of Adam's sin, which was a violation of a declared command, a law. This means that a whole host of misdeeds were occurring during that era, which had not formally been declared to be sins. From the time of Adam to Moses, death reigned over such undeclared sins because God himself (as Genesis 9:5 hints) executed justice (presumably through angels or even perhaps animals) most likely on the basis of the standards revealed in the created world (Romans 1:18-32), but men were not authorized to impute sin or put to death for sins on a grand scale until the Law of Moses. Thus, verse 20 states, "the law entered, that the offence might abound." In these verses from Romans, we see the interplay between God's standards and God's execution of punishment for breaking those standards through authorized human law (or other means).

Verse 21 follows verse 20 immediately with another closely-related comment. It declares, "sin hath reigned unto death." So, we continue to see that the consequence of death is always stressed and never far from view when the accounting of sin is discussed. This passage describes not only that the purpose of the Law of Moses was to increase the accounting of sin, but the phrase "sin reigned unto death" conveys that the purpose of accounting sin was to facilitate the death of sinners. Since the Law of Moses was instrumental in the increase of accounting sin, it was by nature, seen as fundamentally occupied with dispensing the penalty of death.

We will be even more affirming of this fact as we continue forward in Romans. However, it is also noteworthy that Romans 5:20 also declares that grace was abounding right alongside sin. Contextually, verse 20 tells us that this phrase pertains to the timeperiod during the Law of Moses, after "the law entered." However, rather than stating that grace was dispensed by the Law of Moses, the

only source or mechanism identified for grace in this passage is found in verse 21, which identifies Jesus Christ. Now, we might ask how Jesus Christ could be the source of grace so long before his sacrificial death, but we have already reviewed 2 Timothy 1:9, which states plainly that this “grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Because God had foreknowledge that sin would occur even before he created the universe, he had already decided to dispense grace by redeeming the world through Jesus Christ. This is why during the Law of Moses Paul can attribute grace abounding to the work of Jesus Christ.

In summary, what we have in Romans 5 is another passage in which the Law of Moses is overwhelming identified as an institution accounting sins and administering death. Grace is mentioned as concurrent with the Law of Moses but attributed to Christ and so far in Romans 1-5 the Law of Moses is nowhere described as administering grace or forgiveness.

Moving into Romans 7, in verse 5 we find the phrase “sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth the fruit of death.” Although chapter 7 perhaps provides a more explicit connection between the various pieces, it’s largely a composite of what Paul has been saying in the previous chapters of Romans. The Law of Moses defined a great many sins. Those sins brought forth death for sinners. But the question is how did those sins, defined in the Law of Moses, bring forth death? The answer is that the sins identified by the Law of Moses brought forth death for sinners because the Law of Moses prescribed death as a penalty for sin. This is the understanding that underlies such assertions.

And verse 6 confirms this conclusion by the phrase “we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held.” Why would we need deliverance from the Law of Moses? Because we were “dead” in the Law of Moses. Because the Law of Moses was seen as dispensing death for sinners. Consequently, when you engaged in a behavior that the Law of Moses defined as a sin, that behavior brought forth death for you because the Law of Moses also mandated death for sin.

Romans 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, **the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.** 6 But now we are **delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held;** that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Before we leave this chapter, we should also notice that chapter 7:5 is really just a more elaborate form of Paul’s shorthand from chapter 4:15 in which Paul wrote, “the law worketh wrath.” And the parallel to chapter 4 confirms our analysis that the phrase “the law worketh wrath” simply referred to the central function of the Law of Moses as an institution dispensing death to sinners.

While Romans 7 might provide the more elaborate connection between the various elements in the chain of cause and effect involving sin, the Law of Moses, and death, Romans 8 probably provides the most straightforward and eloquent. Here we see that the perception of the Law of Moses fundamentally defined as an

institution dispensing death for sin is perfectly captured in verse 2, which refers to Moses' Law simply as "the law of sin and death."

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from **the law of sin and death.**

As we move on to other epistles, we conclude our journey through Romans by noting that Paul has used 5 separate chapters to establish his perception of the Law of Moses as an institution dispensing death as a penalty for sin without any mention of the Law of Moses as an institution dispensing forgiveness for sin through sacrifices.

Like Romans 8:2, 1 Corinthians 15 provides a succinct yet clear articulation of this perception of the Law of Moses. Verse 56 states, "the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." In other words, the pain caused by sin is death and Law of Moses is the strength or powerbase that enforces and ensures this painful consequence of sin.

1 Corinthians 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also find great clarity in 2 Corinthians. In chapter 3, Paul invokes a direct comparison between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? 2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; **not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.** 4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: 5 **Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;** 6 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.** 7 **But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones,** was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of **Moses** for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: 8 How shall not **the ministration of the spirit** be rather glorious? 9 For if **the ministration of condemnation** be glory, much more doth **the ministration of righteousness** exceed in glory.

We see this comparison most clearly in three places. First, in verse 3, Paul refers to "tables of stone." Second, in verse 7, Paul refers to what was "written and engraven in stones." And third, at the end of verse 7, Paul connects this writing in stone to Moses. With these three components, Paul clearly invokes the historic events of Mount Sinai in which Moses wrote the commandments of God on stone tablets. However, in verse 7, Paul specifically describes what was written on these

stone tablets as “the ministration of death.” In verse 9, he likewise refers to the Law of Moses as “the ministration of condemnation.” In verses 8 and 9, the Law of Moses which administers condemnation and death is contrasted with the ministration of righteousness and the Spirit. We find an earlier rendition of this same contrast in verse 6, which reads, “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” in which case “the letter” signifies the Law of Moses and “the spirit” signifies the New Covenant.

Once again, like Romans, there is absolutely no mention whatsoever of the Law of Moses as an institution administering forgiveness of sin through sacrifices. Instead, in this is rather lengthy head-to-head contrast between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant, the Law of Moses is predominantly, if not entirely, defined as an institution that administers condemnation for sin and administers death for those condemned as sinners.

By now these themes should be both established and familiar to us. In Galatians 2, we find them again on open display.

Galatians 2:15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. 17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed (2647), I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Galatians 2:16 declares openly that the works in the Law of Moses do not justify sinners. Then Paul goes on to explain in verse 19 that “I through the law am dead to the law.” Although we will work out more of the particulars as we go, such statements as these inherently communicate not only that the Law of Moses is not a means of attaining atonement, but also the characterization of the Law of Moses as a mechanism for dispensing death to sinners. And once again, the only source of righteousness and grace depicted in this passage is Jesus Christ as indicated in 16 and 21. Just like Romans and Corinthians, there is no mention of the Law of Moses as administering forgiveness of sins through sacrifice.

Galatians 3 picks up with other aspects of the themes articulated in Romans.

Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. 21 Is the law then against the promises of

God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept (5432) under the law, shut up (4788) unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster (3807) to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster (3807).

Verse 19 states that the Law of Moses was added “because of transgressions.” This echoes Paul’s words in Romans 5 in which he states that “sin is not imputed when there is no law” and “the law entered, that the offence might abound.” This basic concept is also articulated in 1 John 3:4, which states, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

1 John 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. 5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Having defined sin as the transgression of the Law of Moses in verse 4, 1 John 3:5 immediately identifies Jesus Christ as the solution to the transgression of the Law of Moses. This indicates that John understood that Jesus provided forgiveness for all of the sins committed when the Law of Moses was in effect and, therefore, that John did not see the Law of Moses as a mechanism for dispensing a remedy for sin.

So as we can see, John and Paul seem to be in agreement on the nature of the Law of Moses as an institution primarily put in place to identify sin and condemn sinners as transgressors. Likewise here in Galatians 3, it seems that the central function of the Law of Moses is to identify what was sinful for the purposes of demonstrating condemnation, as verse 22 states, “scripture hath concluded all under sin.”

And although Galatians 3 does not directly state that the Law of Moses administers death, verse 21 does rhetorically require that the Law of Moses does not administer life or righteousness. The contrast is obvious. Instead, the Law of Moses administers condemnation and death.

Before we move away from Galatians 3, we should address Paul’s comments in verse 21. In verse 21, Paul states that the Law of Moses is not contrary to God’s promises and, out of every law or government that ever could have been, the Law of Moses was ideal for delivering eternal life and righteousness. Here there seems to be an emphasis on real potential in the Law of Moses to accomplish these objectives. But how can Paul say such things while maintaining in this very passage (not to mention so many of the others we have looked at) that the Law of Moses definitively is not an institution dispensing grace, life, or righteousness?

Reconciling this potential in the Law of Moses is yet another piece of the puzzle we are assembling. The underlying concept of the Law of Moses as understood by the Jewish authors of the New Testament will need to explain both the potential itself as well as the reason that potential was not reached without contradicting repeated denials that the Law of Moses operated based on grace, forgiveness, and faith. At this point, however, at least one thing is clear. If the atoning sacrifices described in the Law of Moses were a sufficient means on their own for attaining that potential, then there would be no reason for this potential to be missed. We will establish these points further as we move forward. For now, having recognized these helpful clues, we will continue our exploration of all the factors in the overall model.

Ephesians 2 also contains elements reflecting this same aspect of the New Testament contrast with the Law of Moses.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in **mercy**, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **5** Even **when we were dead in sins**, hath quickened us together with Christ, (**by grace ye are saved;**) **6** And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: **7** That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his **grace** in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. **8** For **by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:** **9** **Not of works, lest any man should boast.** **10** For we are his **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Verses 8-10 repeat associated themes that the Law of Moses was not an institution dispensing grace based on faith. However, at this point in our examination, verses 4-5 are where we want to turn our attention. These verses declare that we received God's mercy when "we were dead in sins." This idea of being dead in sins is a hallmark of the New Testament Jewish perspective concerning the Law of Moses. It conveys in somewhat poetic sentiment the idea that for our sins we are condemned unto death by the Law of Moses. And for this reason, we are in need of mercy.

Although the Law of Moses is not mentioned by name, as we covered earlier the language of verses 8-9 are very parallel to Romans 3. In verse 27-28 of Romans 3, Paul writes, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Consequently, even though the Law of Moses isn't mentioned by name in Ephesians 2, we can be sure that the reason we cannot boast or be accepted by God based upon our works is because we have violated the Law of Moses specifically and are, therefore, condemned to death.

Colossians 2 uses similar language in regard to this same theme. Like Ephesians 2, here in verse 13 we find the phrase "dead in your sins." And in verse 14, we find this death associated directly with the "handwriting of ordinances that was against us." Again there is no overt mention of the Law of Moses by name, but the phrase "handwriting of ordinances" is a not-so-subtle reference to the famous

fact that the words of the Law of Moses were written by God's own finger on the tablets of stone according to Exodus 24:12, 31:18, 34:1, and Deuteronomy 9:10.

Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; **14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,** which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

While Ephesians 2 and Colossians 2 are somewhat poetic in their assertions that we are "dead in sin," Hebrews 2 and 10 are quite literally explicit on this point.

Hebrews 2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; **3** How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; **which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him...** **14** Forasmuch then as **the children** are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; **that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death,** that is, the devil; **15** And **deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.** **16** For verily he took not on *him the nature of angels*; but he took on *him the seed of Abraham.* **17** Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Notice that Hebrews 2 refers to how "the word spoken by angels" received "a just recompense of reward." And verse 3 compares this immediately with what was "spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by those that heard him." To modern readers, it may not be entirely clear what is being compared here. However, the New Testament reflects the common Jewish perspective at the time Hebrews was written that angels had been present and involved in the circumstances under which the Law of Moses was delivered on Mount Sinai. (These facts are detailed in the addendum to our Trinity study, in a section entitled, "Angels Involvement in the Law of Moses.") Consequently, verses 2-3 are presenting a simple contrast between the Law of Moses on one hand and the New Covenant given directly to the people by Jesus Christ himself. We will see this same contrast with both covenants explicitly identified in chapter 10.

Against the backdrop of this contrast between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, verses 14-15 revive the central focus of this segment. The phrase "the children" are "flesh and blood" in verse 14 is a reference to their mortality, which is confirmed at the end of the verse where it states that "the children" are in some peril from the devil, who wields the authority or power of death. This somewhat obscure statement will be explained plainly in verse 15.

(As a side note, verse 14 confirms one other interesting point that we made earlier in our study. When discussing Romans 5:13-14, 20-21, we brought in Genesis 9:5 for comparison and noted that from the time of Adam to Moses, God may have employed angels (or perhaps even animals) to enact the penalty of death against

sinner. At the time, this reference to men being put to death through angels may have seemed somewhat speculative, but here we see it explicitly stated in Hebrews 2:14.)

While verse 14 described the “children” being under the devil’s authority to put them to death, verse 15 states that Jesus came to “deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Verse 16 identifies these children as the “seed of Abraham.” Here we find the simple idea that fear of death was the motivational factor that obligated the children of Israel under the Law of Moses.

Chapter 10 of Hebrews makes similar comments.

Hebrews 10:28 He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Here in verses 28-29, we again see the contrast between the Law of Moses and the new covenant that was brought by Son of God, Jesus Christ. And verse 28 describes how under the Law of Moses, sinners died without mercy under the testimony of two or three witnesses. Now, of course the point of verse 29 is that there will also be punishment for those who reject the New Covenant. On this point, we can see that the contrast between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant of Jesus is not that one has a penalty and the other does not. Nor is the contrast that disobedience brings death under one covenant but not the other. The difference is found in the phrase “without mercy” in verse 28 concerning the Law of Moses in contrast to the blood of Jesus, which is the mechanism for mercy under the New Covenant.

Under the Law of Moses, death was immediate once sin was discovered. Under Christ, there is still ample chance for repentance and mercy even after sin because death is not a penalty that is mandated under the New Covenant until the destruction of sinners at the return of Christ. Until then, sinners are motivated by the hope of escaping this future punishment (even as Hebrews 11:7 speaks of Noah’s faith pertaining to the looming threat of global destruction) and participating in the future kingdom.

Ultimately, these passages from Hebrews demonstrate the main point we’ve been tracking throughout this section. The Jewish authors of the New Testament conceived of the New Covenant as a covenant conveying mercy, delaying punishment until the return of Christ Jesus, extending opportunity for repentance and forgiveness, and operating based on faith in the hope of escaping future punishment and participating in the future kingdom. But by contrast, these same Jewish authors defined the Law of Moses in large part as an institution based not on faith but fundamentally upon dispensing death contemporarily without mercy or forgiveness.

Here, the remarkable question is why these Jewish authors didn't associate the Law of Moses with both administering death for sin and also forgiveness of sins? In other words, why weren't the atoning sacrifices regulated by the Law of Moses taken into account here to balance out this portrayal? This will become a more and more central question that we need to answer as we move forward.