

proclaimed this message, they sure to make it clear that ONLY through Christ could this reconciliation and salvation from sin come.

Acts 4:5-12 - 5 And it came about on the next day, **that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.** 7 And when they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this name this man stands here before you in good health.** 11 "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone. 12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." NASB

For this message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they were severely persecuted and even put to death. This clearly proves the nature of transition from the Old Covenant age, which was firmly resisted by the religious Jews, and the New Covenant age of salvation which had come in and through Christ. For this Gospel the Apostles and early Christians were willing to suffer and die.

Nevertheless, they continued to clarify and proclaim the Gospel and make clear the contrast between **Old Covenant** Judaism and **New Covenant** Christianity, or if you will, a contrast between **Law** and **Gospel**. In this contrast they clearly made the point that the Law could not “free” anyone, but the Gospel was the way of forgiveness, freedom and salvation. Notice here how the Law is seen as **temporary** and **ineffectual**, and the Gospel as **eternal** and **effectual**.

Acts 13:38-39 - 38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.** NASB

As the Gospel of the Kingdom is unfolding in the transitional age between Judaism and Christianity, the debate over **justification by faith alone** is highlighted in a disagreement between Paul and the Judaizers. The central issue at stake in this debate was whether obedience to certain aspects of the Ceremonial Law were a legal requirement for salvation. This doctrinal issue is heard and judged by the Jewish Christian Apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

Acts 15:1-5 - 15 And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, **"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."** 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them **should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.** 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 4 And when they arrived at Jerusalem, **they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders,** and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, **"It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."** NASB

This controversy in highlighted and intensified by believing Pharisees in Jerusalem who also hold to the doctrine of the Judaizers, claiming obedience to certain aspects of the Ceremonial Law, were a requirement for Christians. As the Apostles and elders heard the matter they clearly affirmed **salvation by grace through faith in Christ, apart from obedience to the Law.**

Acts 15:6-11 - 6 And **the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.** 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 **"And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.** 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which

neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 "**But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.**" NASB

As they discuss the matter further, they not only affirm Gentile salvation apart from Jewish Law customs, they also affirm that the Old Testament Scriptures affirm that this day of Gentile salvation would arrive. They also give a short list of issues they deem important for Gentiles to observe in their new faith, which were a radical departure from the sinful Gentile culture.

Acts 15:12-21 - 12 And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 "**And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 'After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it, 17 In order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,'** 18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old. 19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that **we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.** 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." NASB

See here a ruling by the Apostles and Jewish elders of the church on the controversy of what is essentially necessary for Christian Faith in regard to obedience to the Old Covenant Mosaic Law. It is of particular import here to see that the issue at hand, a ceremonial issue of circumcision, was in no way acknowledged by the Apostles as necessary, but rather they lay down a few brief maxims which were of particular importance in the debate at hand. Primarily, these issues of **idolatry, fornication, and the eating of blood** were rampant among the Gentiles to the point of being part of the sinful cultural lifestyle in the Greco-Roman world. Secondly, these particular sins, being essential parts of the moral Law were of an offensive nature to the Jewish Christians living in these Gentile regions. Therefore, the Gentiles would minimize conflict with the Jewish Christian brothers by abstaining from these particular sins. More importantly, the Apostles uphold the import of obedience to the Moral Law as an expression of true saving faith, and require none of the Ceremonial or Civil aspects of the Law, which were *abrogated* in the Gospel.

Here then is a general summary of the Old Covenant Mosaic Law in the Gospels and Acts. The Law is seen as the true religious expression of the worship of God **UNTIL** the arrival of the Messiah whom it promised would come and restore all things. It is seen as the holy words of God Himself, the Scriptures, which expressed the true form of worship that God intended for His covenant people Israel, in all three aspects of its nature, Moral, Ceremonial and Civil. Jesus taught that He came both to **fulfill** and to **interpret** the Law, and usher in a New Covenant age of Messianic salvation which was to remain as God's **final** and **eternal** purpose for the whole world of people, both Jew and Gentile alike. In this, His person and work ushered in the Kingdom of God, the radical in-breaking of the eschatological and eternal age of life and immortality. Therefore, His **Person** (King, Messiah, Savior) and His **Work** (substitutionary atonement and legal obedience), become not only the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets, but an entirely new and eternal form of worship focused on His Person and Work, which was received by grace, through faith, in Christ alone. This faith was then expressed practically in obedience to the moral precepts of the Law. Ceremony and ritual gave way to genuine and heartfelt conformity to God's holy will, by a radical regeneration of the Holy Spirit. This **eternal** and **effectual** New Covenant age of Messianic salvation is ushered in by the preaching of the Gospel, in which the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, eternal life and immortality is proclaimed. The book of Acts bears out this exact pattern as the Apostles carry this good news of the Gospel to the Gentile nations.