

Moses' Law for Moses' People

Although my chosen title leaves a lot to be desired, I can't think of a better. The law in question, while it can be called – indeed, is called in Scripture – ‘the law of Moses’ (Luke 2:22; 24:44; John 7:23; Acts 13:39; 15:5; 28:23; 1 Cor. 9:9), strictly speaking was God's own law given to Israel at Sinai by God through Moses. And while the people of Israel can be thought of as Moses' people, nevertheless, strictly speaking, they were God's own old-covenant people. But if I had used the title ‘God's Law for God's People’, a real ambiguity would have immediately arisen – one which would have confused the very point I want to make in this article.

And there is just one point – just one – that I want to make.

Without repeating all the arguments undergirding what I say here (which I have set out in numerous works),¹ contrary to what some have taught – and contrary to what many simply assume – the law in question – the law of Moses – was given to the nation of Israel, and given only to Israel, when in the exodus, under Moses, that nation was formed by God in his miraculous deliverance of Abraham's descendants from Egyptian slavery. The law was not given to Adam. It has not been given to all men. It was God's law in the old covenant for Israel, and only for Israel, until that covenant was fulfilled (and thus rendered obsolete) by Christ.

If that paragraph startles, I repeat that my full supporting arguments are set out in my aforesaid works. I am sorely tempted to justify my claims at this point, but I resist that temptation because I want to confine this article to that one simple point; namely, that God's law, the Mosaic law, was given at Sinai to

¹ See my *Christ Is All: No Sanctification by the Law; Three Verses Misunderstood: Galatians 3:23-25 Expounded; Sabbath Notes & Extracts; Sabbath Questions: An open letter to Iain Murray: The Essential Sabbath; Horne on the True Sabbath*, for instance.

Israel, and Israel only, until the old covenant was fulfilled by Christ.

This is no trivial matter or academic nicety. As I have said, many teach or simply assume that the law of Moses has had universal jurisdiction since the time of Adam, and is still in place, applicable to all men. Moreover, those of us who dare question this – to put it no stronger – are dismissed out-of-hand as antinomians. This is a travesty on several grounds, not least for those who make this blanket – and, in many cases, frankly ridiculous – unjustified accusation.² Failure to grasp the scriptural point I am making in this article leads to many other errors, some of which have disastrous consequences. Hence, this article, I hope, will, at the very least, start some people rethinking the stance over the law which they have adopted until now, either by conviction, or more commonly, simply by default.

I propose to make my point simply by repeating some relevant scriptures, adding only the briefest observations. The fact is, these scriptures speak for themselves. If only believers would submit to Scripture – and not Scripture glossed by a theological template, system or Confession – this endless debate would be brought to a speedy end.

The point is that God chose Israel as a special – unique – people, and that he dealt with that nation as he dealt with no others; in particular, he gave his special law to them as his special people, and gave it to them alone. The sabbath, at the very heart of the law, was a special – indeed, unique – sign to mark this people as special – indeed, unique – and separate from all others. I have found about 170 scriptural references to ‘sabbath’ in connection with Jews, none before Exodus, none urging sabbath observance

² Of course, real antinomianism has existed, and almost certainly still does exist somewhere, but a blanket, unthinking dismissal of those who dare to question a ‘revered’ Confession’s position on the law is too convenient. *Moreover, it is also wrong and unworthy.* The subject demands a far more serious attitude than that! See my *Four ‘Antinomians’ Tried and Vindicated: Tobias Crisp, William Dell, John Eaton and John Saltmarsh*, for instance.

on Gentiles. Just as separation was one of the key marks of Israel, its covenant and law, separation is a key mark of the *ekklēsia* in the new covenant.³

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The relevant scriptures:

[God] declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules [or just decrees] to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules [or just decrees] (Ps. 147:19-20).

Moses, addressing the children of Israel just before they entered Canaan, declared:

What great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?... [God] declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess...

But notice how Moses immediately drew Israel's attention to the fact that God – uniquely – gave them the law, in contrast to the giving of the stars, planets, and so on, universally to all men:

Beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven...

And Moses drove home the obvious lesson to be drawn from this:

‘Ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand

³ See my *Evangelicals Warned: Isaiah 30 Speaks Today*.

and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him. Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you... Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today...'. This is the law that Moses set before the people of Israel. These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the rules, which Moses spoke to the people of Israel when they came out of Egypt (Deut 4:8,13-14,19,32-36,40,44-45).

Speaking of Sinai, Moses demanded of the children of Israel:

For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived? (Deut. 5:26).

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples (Deut. 7:6-14).

The LORD came from Sinai... he loved his people... Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob (Deut. 33:1-4).

When Deborah and Barak praised God in their jubilant song for delivering his people, his unique people, from Sisera's horde, they described God in a way which emphasised Israel's uniqueness and privilege in connection with his giving them the covenant and the law:

The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai,
before the LORD, the God of Israel (Judges 5:5).

As the psalmist said:

God made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of
Israel (Ps. 103:7).

[God] gave [Israel] the lands of the nations, and they took
possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, that they might keep
his statutes and observe his laws (Ps. 105:44-45).

And that takes us back to where we started:

[God] declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules [or just
decrees] to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation;
they do not know his rules [or just decrees] (Ps. 147:19-20).

Until, at the very end of the Old Testament, we have God's
command to his old-covenant people:

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules
[just decrees] that I commanded him at Horeb [that is, Sinai] for
all Israel (Mal. 4:4).

And what about the New Testament?

Peter, addressing the Jewish crowd on the day of Pentecost,
pulled no punches:

Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and
foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of
lawless men [that is, men – Gentiles, Romans – who do not have
the law] (Acts 2:23).⁴

⁴ The Jews were responsible for crucifying Christ but, to do the dirty
work, they used Roman hands, Gentile hands, 'lawless hands'. The
NASB, translating the phrase, 'by the hands of godless men', has a
marginal note: 'Lawless hands, or, men without the law; that is,

[The] Gentiles... do not have the law... they do not have the law (Rom. 2:14).⁵

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God (Rom. 3:1-2).

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen (Rom. 9:4-5).

In setting out his approach to unbelievers with the gospel, Paul clearly distinguished between those who had the law – the Jews – and those who did not have it – the Gentiles:

heathen'. The NIV correctly notes: 'Of those not having the law (that is, Gentiles)'. Christ had already foretold this is what would happen: 'The Son of Man... will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge him and kill him' (Luke 18:31-33). Peter, steeped in Jewish thought, was using the phrase, 'lawless men', in the Jewish sense. The men he was talking about were 'men without the law'. That is to say, they were law-less, outside the law of God, Gentiles. The Jews boasted of their having the law. They were the only people to have it. All the rest were 'law-less'. So, as Peter said, Christ was crucified by the Jews (who had the law) making use of the Gentiles (who did not have the law, the without-the-law people) to do the work. See also Matt. 20:18-19; and Gal. 2:15, where 'Jews by nature' are contrasted with 'sinners of the Gentiles' or 'Gentile sinners' (NIV). 'Sinners' and 'Gentiles', in such a context, means those who are law-less, outside the law, beyond the pale.

⁵ Here is the full extract: 'Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus' (Rom. 2:14-16). Gentiles have 'the work of the law on their hearts', but they are not under the law of Moses; it was not given to them. See my *Christ Is All; Believers Under the Law of Christ*.

Though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law (1 Cor. 9:19-21).

So much for the law in general; now for the sabbath – the very heart of the law – given to Israel marking Israel as a special – unique – people. Those who claim that sabbath observance is of universal obligation make a nonsense of God’s designation of the sabbath as Israel’s special sign:

Surely my sabbaths⁶ you shall keep, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that it is the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death... Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed (Ex. 31:13-17).

I made myself known to [Israel] in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. [At Sinai,] I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live. Moreover, I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and my sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I said I would pour out my

⁶ The use of ‘sabbaths’ must not be misread; God is not speaking only of ‘special sabbaths’, but all sabbaths, including and especially, the weekly sabbath.

wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them. But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands, because they rejected my rules and did not walk in my statutes, and profaned my sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. Nevertheless, my eye spared them, and I did not destroy them or make a full end of them in the wilderness. And I said to their children in the wilderness: ‘Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor keep their rules, nor defile yourselves with their idols [that is, your ancestors’ adulteration of the covenant].⁷ I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules, and keep my sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God’. But the children rebelled against me. They did not walk in my statutes and were not careful to obey my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; they profaned my sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. But I withheld my hand and acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries, because they had not obeyed my rules, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their fathers’ idols. Moreover, I gave them statutes that were not good and rules by which they could not have life, and I defiled them through their very gifts in their offering up all their firstborn, that I might devastate them. I did it that they might know that I am the LORD (Ezek. 20:9-26).

My point once again:

God chose Israel as a special – unique – people, and that he dealt with that nation as he dealt with no others; in particular, he gave his special law to them as his special people, and gave it to them alone. The sabbath, at the very heart of the law, was a special – indeed, unique – sign to mark this people as special – indeed, unique – and separate from all others.

⁷ See my *Evangelicals Warned*.

If this weight of scriptural evidence does not convince those who are determined to cling to a Confession or theological system in defiance of clear Scripture, then I fear that nothing will.

Those who wish can stop reading here and let the point sink in. For those who would like a little more, I append two lightly-edited extracts from my *Christ is All*, pp27-29,33-35.⁸ Please see that volume for the way I go on to develop the important conclusions to be drawn from what I have said here.

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Extract 1

The principle – that the Mosaic law was given to Israel only – underlies Romans 9:30-32. We are told expressly that the Gentiles do not have the law (Rom. 2:12-14), but that it was given to the Jews, being ‘the statutes and judgements and laws which the LORD made between himself and *the children of Israel* on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses’ (Lev. 26:46), God immediately reiterating the point with the closing verse of Leviticus: ‘These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses *for the children of Israel* on Mount Sinai’ (Lev. 27:34).⁹ Right from the start, while the people were camped in the wilderness of Sinai, even as Moses was called up to the mountain to receive the law, God prefaced it all: ‘Thus you shall say to *the house of Jacob*, and tell *the children of Israel...*’ (Ex. 19:3-6). God opened the ten commandments thus: ‘I am the

⁸ I have resisted the temptation to include similar extracts from my sabbath books, proving the sabbath is unique to Israel. Otherwise, this article would have become a booklet.

⁹ This is not to be confined to the so-called ‘ceremonial law’ – see chapter 7 of my *Christ Is All*. For now, notice how this blanket description in the closing verse of Leviticus includes at least the second, third, fourth, fifth, seventh, eighth and ninth commands (Lev. 19:3,4,11-13,16,30; 20:9,10; 23:3; 24:10-23; 26:1,2) of the so-called ‘moral law’. As for the rest, the first commandment is implied throughout Leviticus – see in particular Lev. 26:1, the sixth in Lev. 19:16-18, and transgression of the tenth is pervasive – Paul found it so (Rom. 7:7), since the Jews thought it summed up the law, and to break it to be the root of all sins.

LORD your God, who brought *you* out of the land of Egypt...’ (Ex. 20:2). And after the re-giving of the law, God could declare to Moses: ‘According to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with *Israel*’ (Ex. 34:27). (See also 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chron. 5:10; 6:11; Neh. 9:1,13-14; *etc.*).

Nor was it the last time Israel was reminded of the fact. Solomon called Israel to ‘take care to fulfil the statutes and judgements with which the LORD charged Moses *concerning Israel*’ (1 Chron. 22:13). When Israel was removed from the land and taken into captivity, the king of Assyria replaced the children of Israel in Samaria with foreigners. These foreigners, it is recorded, brought their own gods, and their own ‘rituals’. Rejecting the law of the Hebrews, they did not ‘follow *their* statutes or *their* ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded *the children of Jacob*, whom he named *Israel*’ (2 Kings 17:34). Addressing Israel, God could speak of ‘the statutes, the ordinances, the law, and the commandment which he wrote for *you*’ (2 Kings 17:37), promising Israel they would not ‘wander any more from the land which I gave *their* fathers – [but] only if *they* are careful to do according to all that I have commanded *them*, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded *them*’ (2 Kings 21:8). As with the land, so with the law – both had been given to Israel, and no others. When God revealed his law to Israel, he expressly commanded them not to do as the pagans did, but to ‘observe my judgements and keep my ordinances... [to] keep my statutes and my judgements’ (Lev. 18:1-5,26-30). Centuries after Sinai, God had to complain that Israel had not done this: ‘You have not walked in my statutes nor executed my judgements, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which are all around you’ (Ezek. 11:12), they had ‘conformed to the standards of the nations around’ them (NIV), breaking God’s law (Deut. 12:29-32).¹⁰ This makes sense if, and only if, God’s (and Israel’s) laws were different to the laws, principles, statutes, norms, judgements and standards of the pagans.

¹⁰ Israel was worse than the pagans (Ezek. 5:5-7; 16:47).

Asaph reminded Israel that the LORD ‘established a testimony in *Jacob*, and appointed a law in *Israel*, which he commanded *our* fathers’ (Ps. 78:5). Daniel, when praying for the children of Israel, could speak of God’s ‘laws, which he set before *us* by his servants the prophets’ (Dan. 9:10-13). God reminded Hosea, concerning Israel: ‘I have written *for him* the great things of my law’ (Hos. 8:12). And ‘God, the one of Sinai... God, the God of *Israel*’ (Ps. 68:8, NIV), commanded Israel to ‘remember the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb *for all Israel*, with the statutes and judgements’ (Mal. 4:4). In Numbers 15, God said the law applied to the Jews, and those who would be reckoned Jews – proselytes and sojourners.

To say that the law applies to the entire human race, is to render these statements and demands utterly superfluous and meaningless. What is more – and a glance at the passages quoted above will confirm it – we are talking about the law, the law of God, the law of Moses, the whole law, the law in its entirety. The law was given to Israel, for Israel, to distinguish Israel from all others.

Nor was this a mere quirk of history. As I have noted, God treated the Jews as special, showing special regard for them in giving them his law. This was his *purpose*. He gave his law to the Jews *in order to* distinguish them from all others. Division was God’s intention in giving the law to the Jews. Division! Separation! Distinction was God’s great concern for Israel (Lev. 20:24,26).¹¹ And it was the law that especially marked the Jews out from the Gentiles, serving as a dividing wall, a partition, a demarcation between them and the pagans (Gal. 3:23-25 – note the ‘we’ and ‘our’; Eph. 2:11-16). The law regulated their national and personal life in every respect. Finally, it was a temporary measure confining Israel until the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:19-24).

Moses, when repeating God’s law in Moab, made it plain to whom it was given, declaring: ‘Hear, O *Israel*... The LORD our

¹¹ God’s presence also distinguished them from all other people (Ex. 33:16).

God made a covenant with *us* in Horeb... He said: “I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Deut. 5:1-2,5-6). God said ‘Israel’, and he meant Israel, and only Israel. It was only Israel whom he had delivered from Egypt.¹² But not only was the preface to the ten commandments peculiar to Israel. The fourth commandment concerned the sabbath which was a special sign for Israel (Ex. 31:13,16-17; Ezek. 20:12,20), and the fifth commandment referred to the land promised to Israel. In addition, the overwhelming bulk of the hundreds of other commandments contained in the law were spelled out in terms which belonged only to Israel. In short, Gentiles were not brought out of Egypt – in fact many of them (that is, the Egyptians) perished in Egypt or the Red Sea.¹³ Gentiles were not given the sabbath as a special sign that they were the people of God. Gentiles were not given the pillar of cloud and fire. Gentiles were not given the manna. Gentiles were not given the promised land – the truth is, they had to be removed from it. Gentiles were not given the ordinances of the tabernacle. And so on. As just one example of how these things are linked, take Nehemiah 9:5-15.

Sadly, all this has too often been forgotten, and the law which was given uniquely to Israel, and applied only to them, has been mistakenly applied to Gentiles in the gospel age, to the confusion of both law and gospel.¹⁴

What is more, not only did God at Sinai give his law to Israel, and only to Israel, but prior to Sinai, nobody had the law – not even the patriarchs (Deut. 5:3; Rom. 5:13).¹⁵ Notice how explicit Moses was at the repetition of the law in Moab, when reminding the Israelites of the first giving (and its re-giving) of the law at

¹² The exodus from Egypt continued to preface references to the law. See 2 Kings 17:36, for instance.

¹³ Some pagans had joined the Israelites as proselytes (Ex. 12:38,48-49; see Neh. 10:28; Est. 8:17; Isa. 56:3).

¹⁴ See chapter 7 of my *Christ Is All*.

¹⁵ Israel *as a nation* did not exist before the exodus and the giving of the law. The giving of the law was a vital aspect of *making* them into a nation.

Horeb (Sinai): God did not make the covenant ‘with our fathers, but with us’ (Deut. 5:3). Who were these ‘fathers’? and who were the ‘us’? The ‘fathers’ were the patriarchs and their descendants who had died before the giving of the law at Sinai; God did not give his law to them. The ‘us’ were the Israelites – the people (with their children) who, having been delivered from Egypt, were gathered as the nation of Israel at Sinai – it was to them that God originally gave the law, and it was to their children that he was now renewing it in Moab. That generation of Hebrews at Sinai, therefore, was the first to receive the law. The patriarchs – the ‘fathers’ – who lived before the children of Jacob even entered Egypt, let alone left it – did not have the law. The song of Moses, when he ‘blessed the children of Israel before his death’, is plain: ‘The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir... from his right hand came a fiery law for them... Moses commanded a law for us, a heritage of the congregation of Jacob... Levi... shall teach Jacob your judgements, and Israel your law’ (Deut. 33:1-4,8,10).¹⁶ (See also Deut. 11:1-7; 29:9-15).¹⁷

That nobody had the law before Sinai is clear – since Paul expressly pointed out that the law came – ‘was added’ – 430 years after God’s covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:16-17,19). It was *revealed* at Sinai; it was not *renewed*. How can it be claimed that God gave the law to Adam at creation, or to the patriarchs? Yet many do say it! No! As Christ said, when replying to the Pharisees’ question over the divorce-certificate regulation introduced by Moses (Deut. 24:1-4): ‘From the beginning [Adam] it was not so’ (Matt. 19:7-8). The law was given to Moses 430 years *after* the promise to Abraham, not given to

¹⁶ Not only did the law have a beginning on Sinai; it had an end-point also, and that by God’s intention. Paul said the law ‘entered’ the Jewish world at the time of the exodus (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:17,19), as a temporary system for the Jews, to last only until Christ came (Gal. 3:19), when he fulfilled it, thus bringing it to the end God had designed for it (Matt. 5:17-18; Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 3:7,11; Heb. 7:18; 8:13; 9:8-9). Right from the start, it was ‘fading away’ (2 Cor. 3:11,13, NIV).

¹⁷ The words, ‘him who is not here with us today’ (Deut. 29:14-15), refer to the descendants of the Israelites, not to all the rest of the human race.

Adam hundreds of years *before* Abraham. In stressing this, I am not straining out arithmetical or historical gnats. To say that Adam was given the Mosaic law is to miss a point of major consequence, contradicting Paul's argument in Romans 5 and Galatians 3.¹⁸ The law was given to Moses long after God had revealed his saving purpose in and to Abraham.

Extract 2

When the Jews wanted Christ put to death, they could tell Pilate: '*We* have a law, and according to *our* law he ought to die' (John 19:7; see Lev. 24:16), but the Roman governor had already told them: '*You* take him and judge him according to *your* law' (John 18:31). When the Jews of Corinth brought Paul to court before Gallio, accusing him of persuading 'men to worship God contrary to the law' (Acts 18:11-16),¹⁹ Gallio refused to entertain the case, on the grounds that it was none of his business. He roundly told them he would not get involved in 'a question of words and names and your own law'; '*your own* law', I emphasise. With a dismissive, 'Look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters', he cleared the court. Claudius Lysias spoke in a similar way when writing to Felix, calling the accusation laid against Paul by the Jews, 'questions of *their* law' (Acts 23:29), no concern of his, something outside his jurisdiction, comprehension and competence. The Jews confirmed this by telling Felix they had 'wanted to judge [Paul] according to *our* law' (Acts 24:6). Festus was in the same quandary as Felix. While he was familiar with 'the custom of the Romans', he was 'uncertain of such questions' as he was now being asked, 'questions... about *their own* religion' (Acts 25:16,19-20). Paul, standing before Agrippa, was happy to think his judge was an 'expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews', including the words of the prophets. '*Our* religion', he called it (Acts 26:1-5,26-27) – with the clear implication that Gentiles generally speaking had at best only a limited knowledge of God's revelation to the Jews,

¹⁸ Adam, of course, was given his own commandment which he broke (Rom. 5:14).

¹⁹ The law of Moses, they meant, not the law of Corinth.

and their customs, religion and *law*. All this is strange, to put it mildly, *if these Gentiles had been as much under the law as the Jews*. I realise these Gentiles were politicians as well as magistrates, soldiers or kings, and I would not treat their words as the final authority on biblical principles, but they do nothing to contradict the claim that the law was given only to the Jews.²⁰

And what of Hebrews 7:11? We are told that ‘under [the levitical priesthood] the people received the law’. While it is not easy to determine precisely what the writer meant, at the very least we may speak of a link between the levitical priesthood, the Israelites and the law. In fact, it is much stronger than this. It was *under* the levitical priesthood that Israel received the law. The NIV and the NASB use the word *basis*; Israel received the law *on the basis* of the levitical priesthood. Now who received the levitical priesthood? The Jews. The Jews and no others. No Gentiles had the levitical priesthood. Consequently, only the Jews could have received the law, since no people could have the law without the levitical priesthood, and *vice-versa*. The two were inextricably linked (Heb. 7:11-12,14,18-19,22,28). The two stood or fell together: ‘The priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law’ (Heb. 7:12). Under this system – unique to the Jews – the law required Levi to collect the tithe from his brothers – not all men (Heb. 7:5). And so on.

Therefore, of all nations, Israel alone received the law.

²⁰ In chapter 7 of my *Christ Is All*, I deal with the objection that such passages are concerned with the ceremonial or judicial law. They are not! We are talking about the whole law.