

# Some Thoughts on the Law and Grace

by Art Katz

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*The Advent of the Messiah adds something new to the original plan of salvation, making it possible for believers to experience life-changing salvation and revealing the interconnectedness of the old and new.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:17, Luke 24:27, John 1:17, Romans 6:14, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 4:9, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 3:12, Colossians 2:14, Hebrews 8:13

**Topics:** "The New Covenant", "Law vs. Grace"

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## Description

Art Katz discusses the tension between law and grace in his conversations with unsaved rabbi friends, emphasizing that the coming of the Messiah has transformed the understanding and application of the law. He argues that reverting to strict law-keeping can lead to spiritual bondage and undermines the significance of Jesus' sacrifice. Drawing on Eugene Peterson's insights, Katz highlights that the incarnation of Christ reshapes the function of Scripture, making it salvational in a way that was not possible before. He warns that failing to grasp the connection between the Old and New Testaments diminishes the glory of the faith and the witness to the Jewish community. Ultimately, Katz encourages believers to embrace the newness brought by Christ, which enhances their faith and walk.

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## Transcript

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In my conversations with my unsaved rabbi friends, we frequently reach a snag. Though we are totally dedicated in our pursuit of the same God--I by grace, and he by Law--it is difficult for me to express why I am unable to "keep the commandments" he thinks incumbent upon any who profess to believe in God.

I try to communicate that something epochal has transpired with the Advent of the Messiah that affects all categories, and especially that of 'law keeping.' That somehow to go back to the prescription of these clearly biblical requirements is somehow to put one's self into bondage to the 'beggarly elements' and make void, and of no account, the finished work of Jesus at the Cross.

I am helped today by the remarks of Eugene Peterson in his devotional reading for March 2 in the book, *Living the Message*. In it he says, "The law and the prophets and the writings are set under the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and made to work for our salvation." That is, if I understand him correctly, they are subsumed in a new way as to function salvationally, perform something of a life-changing kind not possible before the Advent of Christ. Further, the mystery and power of "the incarnation works retroactively on all Scripture and reshapes it in this final vision." This is not to mean that anything of the original meaning and use of Scripture is in any way lost, let alone denigrated. Rather, something new is added or supplied with the Advent of Messiah that was not there before! The Lord's words, "I make all things new," take on new dimensions of meaning that enhance, all the more, the faith and walk of the believer. Ironically, this same newness confounds those outside that faith, like our dear rabbis.

Peterson goes on to say, "The [New Testament] does not add to what is already there, but shows how all Scripture is put to work in the church and the world." It is not "as some have assumed, a change of strategy on God's part after the original plan of salvation turned out not to work; it is the original plan itself, working powerfully, gloriously and triumphantly."

Our failure to have comprehended and appropriated this interconnectedness between the old and the new will rob us of the glory intended, and will rob the Jew of the witness intended to move him to envy. Perhaps we have been guilty, more than we know, of trivializing the New Testament faith in the reducing of its grandeur into principles, doctrines, and formulae. Like Paul, we have not been apprehended that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12). Though we stagger, choke and splutter in giving answer to those whom we seem to frustrate, the end of it, as Peterson reminds us, is glorious and triumphant!

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