

Was Christ “The END of the Law”?

Notice the following scripture that people use to say that God’s law has been done away: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4).

So, the scripture says that Christ “is the end of the law.” Yet, does that mean that, due to Christ’s life and crucifixion, the law ceased---or that the necessity to live *by* the law has ceased? In this scripture, does the word “end” mean “termination”---or does it mean something else?

The Greek word translated here as “end” is “telos.” “Telos” has a variety of possible meanings. Unfortunately, the Bible translators, in using the word “end,” did not use the most appropriate English word. Let’s see what several Bible commentaries have to say.

“Considerable debate has centered on the interpretation of v.4, *especially* on the *meaning* of the word translated ‘end.’ Just as in English [the word ‘end’ can mean either ‘termination’ or ‘purpose’] the *same* dual possibility lies in the Greek word ‘telos.’ The second meaning [‘purpose’] has some plausibility here, because the statement ‘Christ is the end of the law’ (NIV; also KJV, RSV), **rather than** ‘Christ brought *to an end* the law’” (*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 1976, p.110).

So, according to the above commentary, it is plausible that the scripture could mean that Christ was the *purpose* of the law.

Now notice what Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown say in their commentary: “For Christ is the end (the *object* or *aim*) of the law” (1984, Vol. 3, p. 255). So, they endorse usage of the phrase “object (or aim) of the law,” *rather than* “end of the law.”

Finally, notice this quote from *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*: “*Christ is the end* (Gk. *telos*) of the law [is a phrase] capable of *diverse* meanings....[One] interpretation *makes Christ the goal* to which the law points...So ‘righteousness based on faith does **not** annul the law but brings it to its true *goal*, for [Jesus Christ is] the goal of the law’C.E.B. Cranfield’s rendering...is even clearer: ‘for *Christ is the goal of the law*, so that righteousness is available to everyone that believeth’” (1979, p.1036).

In finding the proper understanding of this scripture, let’s look at another scripture that uses this word “telos.” “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the **end** [*telos*] of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:11, KJV).

Obviously, James does *not* mean here that Christ’s end (or termination) had come. Rather, he means that they had seen the **purpose or aim** of the Lord---that He is “very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” In fact, that’s the way this scripture reads in the NRSV: “...you have seen the **purpose** of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”

According to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, the word “telos” can mean the “end or *goal* toward which a movement is being directed; *outcome*” (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich).

With all this in mind---and considering Paul’s **endorsement** of God’s spiritual law--- Paul’s phrase in Rom. 10:4 would be more *appropriately* translated as “Christ is the goal or purpose of the law”---He is the “aim or objective of the law”!

Now, *why* would Paul say that Christ is the “objective” of the law? Well, consider verse 3, the verse immediately prior to the verse in question: “For they being ignorant of *God’s* righteousness, and seeking to establish their *own* righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.” So, Paul says they

were going about to establish their own righteousness *apart from* God's righteousness; they ignored the Sacrifice of Christ, and thought that *mere* commandment keeping would be enough for anyone. Consequently, Paul then explained that Christ is the "end" or *objective* of the law.

So, *how* is Christ the "objective of the law"? Notice again verse 4, especially the latter part of the verse, where Paul said that Christ is the end (or objective) of the law "**for righteousness.**" And what is "righteousness"? Psalm 119 says that all God's "**commandments are righteousness**" (Ps. 119:172).

Furthermore, Christ *kept* God's spiritual law perfectly, and He requires that *we too* strive to **keep** the law. We are to become *like Him in law-keeping!* And that is possible *only by* having Christ living His life **in** us! Without Christ in us---without the Holy Spirit in us---we **cannot** keep God's law in its spirit and intent.

To have God's Holy Spirit in you, is to have "Christ in you" (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:9-10). And unless you come to *have* Christ in you, you have *only* your **carnal** nature---a nature which is **not subject to** God's law ((Rom. 8:7). Christ said, "*without Me* you can do **nothing**"! (John 15:5).

As we *keep* God's law---**by** the power of Christ in us---we increasingly have formed *in us* Christ's very **character**---a character based on *obedience* to God's spiritual law. Paul spoke of Christ being "*formed in you*" (Gal. 4:19). And, after all, that is the **aim** of the law---to become *like* Christ!

Yes, Christ is the **objective** of the law---*not* the termination of it!

Note: Also see "How Did Christ 'FULFILL' the Law?"