

## Was Christ “The END of the Law”?

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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 for this scripture. Let’s see what several Bible commentaries have to say about this.

“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 (NIV)*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976, Vol. 10, 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’” (1970, 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 repeated **endorsement** (elsewhere) 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”!

### **Why “the 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.**” 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.<sup>1</sup> 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! Yes, 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!

### **Footnote:**

#1 See the following articles: “Christ OBEYED God’s Law and Requires Us to Do Likewise!”  
“How Did Christ ‘FULFILL’ the Law?”