

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

Romans 10:4

How can you say that the Law of Moses is still to be followed by Christians today, when it is quite clear that Jesus terminated the Law, being its end?

This entry has been reproduced from *The New Testament Validates Torah*

Pastor: Romans 10:4: Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

“For Messiah is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (NASU).

Many people read Romans 10:4, as it appears in a great number of English Bible versions, and view it as being definitive evidence that the Torah is no longer relevant to be followed by God’s people today. Our pastor’s claim that “Christ is the end of the law...” is quite frequent in discussion between Christians, Messianics, and Jews relating to the position which the Law of Moses plays, or does not play, in the lives of followers of the One God of Israel. Is the claim of Romans 10:4 so absolute, meaning that the Messiah is the termination of the Torah? Or, might there be more which many Bible readers have overlooked? *Not enough probably understand that Romans 10:4 should never be read so simplistically.*

In Romans 10:1-3 Bible readers see how the larger issue at work is how the Apostle Paul was distraught over how many of his Jewish brethren had rejected Yeshua as Israel’s Messiah, trying to find righteousness via their own actions and deeds:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:1-3, NASU).

The answer to the dilemma of establishing one’s own righteousness is undeniably Yeshua the Messiah. Romans 10:4, in an English version like the NASU, communicates, **“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”** In what way is the Savior Yeshua the answer to the problem of establishing one’s own righteousness, if He is the “end,” viewed as being a nullification or abolishment of the Mosaic Law? If the Messiah really is the termination of Moses’ Teaching, would this not contradict the Messiah’s own words about the Torah not passing away (Matthew 5:17-19)?

The Contemporary English Version renders Romans 10:4 with, “But Christ makes the Law no longer necessary.” Is this what the Apostle Paul was really saying? Is the person who in Romans 3:31 said that Messiah followers were to “establish” (NASU) or “uphold the law” (RSV/NIV), and who in Romans 7:12 could communicate that “the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (NASU), and in Romans 7:14 that “the Law is spiritual” (NASU), and who even could claim in Romans 7:22 “I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man” (NASU)—suddenly have said that the Law of Moses was of no value?¹ If God’s Torah was valid in these preceding verses, then some further examination on what Romans 10:4 actually communicated is imperative.

¹ I would clarify that even if Paul was using the ancient rhetorical device of prosopopeia in the latter passages of Romans 7:12, 14, 22—Paul having spoken as an imaginary “I”—the sentiments of the Torah being of value were still very much Paul’s personal feelings.

If one were to only examine the English text of this verse, it could seem that our pastor has a legitimate claim against those who believe that the Torah or Law of Moses should be heeded and followed as valid instruction today. Many of today's Christians will eagerly point out the word "end" in Romans 10:4 and simply conclude, "Jesus Christ terminated the Law of Moses." But how many English speakers are aware of the fact that this is a stretch for the English language? *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, for example, does define the English word "end" with the definition "an outcome; result."² Perhaps a little more elementary would be how in *Webster's Intermediate Dictionary*, designed as clearly printed on its cover "for young teenagers," appears a critical definition for "end" which can go overlooked even by some of the most well-trained seminary professors: "the goal toward which an agent acts or should act."³ In the English language alone is an available definition of "end" which does not mean "termination" or "abolishment." Although in some popular speech the English word "end" is not always akin to "goal," it can legitimately be used this way.

For Romans 10:4, our appeal must be principally made to the source text, which asserts *telos gar nomou Christos*. Among Greek lexicons, we should not be surprised to see that the word *telos*⁴ too has a wider connotation of definitions not limited to "end." A critical definition of *telos* provided by *BDAG* includes, "the goal toward which a movement is being directed, end, goal, outcome"⁵; *Thayer* offers the definition, "The end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose"⁶; *Vine* says that it can mean "'the aim or purpose' of a thing"⁷; and *CGEDNT* provides the definition "outcome, result, goal, aim, fulfillment."⁸ Perhaps most importantly, *AMG* remarks that *telos* "does not, as is often supposed, mean the extinction, end or termination...It simply means the goal reached."⁹

It would not be wrong by any means to translate Romans 10:4 as: "Christ is the goal of the Law" (Common English Bible) or "Christ is the aim of the Law" or "Christ is the purpose of the Law" or even "Christ is the fulfillment of the law" (*Lattimore*). The 2005 Today's New International Version includes the much-improved rendering, "Christ is the culmination of the law."¹⁰ A footnote exists in the Contemporary English Version for Romans 10:4, which actually says, "Or 'But Christ gives the full meaning to the Law.'"¹¹ (The Complete Jewish Bible, widely used throughout today's Messianic movement, offers the rendering: "For the goal at which the *Torah* aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts.")

How one chooses to render the word *telos* is certainly dependent on one's presuppositional bias. If one's theological commitment is to the idea that Jesus Christ abolished or abrogated the Law of Moses, then Romans 10:4 will be translated along the lines of termination. If one's theological commitment is to the idea that Jesus Christ is the goal, purpose, or aim of the Law of Moses, then Romans 10:4 will at least be understood with "end" meaning this, and with "goal" as a preferred rendering. Recognizing the Messiah as the *telos* of the Mosaic Torah, from this latter perspective, has been acknowledged by many important Christian voices since the Protestant Reformation.

² *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, second edition (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc, 2002), 209.

³ *Webster's Intermediate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1977), 245.

Even the strongly fundamentalist *The Christian Student Dictionary* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1982), 240 includes the definition "A purpose; goal" for the English word "end," actually providing the explanatory sentence: "To what end are you doing all that work?"

⁴ Given the theological and spiritual importance of *telos*, not only for Messianics in Romans 10:4, but how frequently you will see *telos* used in scholastic works, please be aware that it is properly pronounced as *tēlōs*, with both a short ē and short ō sound.

⁵ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 998.

⁶ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 620.

⁷ W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1968), 199.

⁸ Barclay M. Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, Revised Edition (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies/Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), 180.

⁹ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1376.

¹⁰ Kenneth L. Barker, ed., et. al., *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 1761 while employing the 1984 New International version which uses, "Christ is the end of the law," does say interestingly enough, "Although the Greek for 'end' (*telos*) can mean either (1) 'termination,' 'cessation,' or (2) 'goal,' 'culmination,' 'fulfillment,' it seems best here to understand it in the latter sense." But the commentary goes even further, surprisingly stating,

"Christ is the fulfillment of the law...in the sense that he brought it to its completion by obeying perfectly its demands and by fulfilling its types and prophecies. Christians are no longer 'under law'...since Christ has freed them from its condemnation, but the law still plays a role in their lives."

¹¹ *Holy Bible, Contemporary English Version* (New York: American Bible Society, 1995), 971.

From my own evangelical Protestant background, John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* offered these comments on Romans 10:4:

"For Christ is the end of the law—The scope and aim of it. It is the very design of the law, to bring men to believe in Christ to justification and salvation. And He alone gives that pardon and life which the law shows the want of, but cannot give."¹²

Some might wonder, given the strong evidence in favor of *telos* meaning something along the lines of goal, purpose, aim, or even culmination—why more of today's English Bibles have not represented a more Torah- or Law-positive position on Romans 10:4. Not very many laypersons are aware of **the considerable amount of ink spilled in Romans commentaries and theological resources over this verse**. Surveying a small selection of publications released over the past half-century, a majority still seems to favor *telos* being some kind of a termination of the Mosaic Torah,¹³ a minority favors *telos* as the Messiah being the goal of the Torah,¹⁴ and others simply list the interpretational possibilities without necessarily favoring one or another.¹⁵

Commentators, who are unfavorable to the continued validity of the Torah or Law of Moses in the post-resurrection era, still have to certainly recognize the possibility that *telos* can mean something other than "end" as akin to "termination." Ben Witherington III indicates the dilemma for the interpreter having to choose: "for end/termination/purpose/goal of the Law [is] Christ for righteousness for all those believing."¹⁶ Some interpreters, recognizing how "end" as akin to "termination" can be seen as being a bit disrespectful to God's (previous) revelation in the Mosaic Law, have opted for some combination of applications for the term *telos*. Douglas J. Moo thinks,

"[W]ith the coming of Christ the authority of the law of Moses is, in some basic sense, at an end. At the same time, a teleological nuance is also present. This is suggested not only by the contextual factors...but also by the fact that similar NT uses of *telos* generally preserve some sense of direction or goal. In other words, the 'end' that *telos* usually denotes is an end that is the natural or inevitable result of something else. The analogy of a race course (which many scholars think *telos* is meant to convey) is helpful: the finish line is both the 'termination' of the race (the race is over when it is reached) and the 'goal' of the race (the race is run for the sake of reaching the finish line)...The English word 'end' perfectly captures this nuance; but, if it is thought that it implies too temporal a meaning, we might also use the words 'culmination,' 'consummation,' or 'climax.'"¹⁷

Moo, who does not believe in the continued validity of the Mosaic Law in the post-resurrection era, argues that *telos* regards the Messiah being the "goal" of the Torah along the lines of someone crossing the finish line of a race, which would then terminate the race. Yet the Messiah Himself actually directed those who have found Him, to uphold the continued authority of Moses' Teaching, instructing its commandments to others (Matthew 5:19). To his credit, though, Moo offers an array of alternative translations for *telos* like culmination, consummation, and climax which those who favor the continued validity of the Torah in the post-resurrection era should welcome in modern English translations (like the TNIV), as these English terms draw the attention of the reader to how the Torah is *to point to the Messiah*.

The argument as to what *telos* means in Romans 10:4 does need to take into consideration various linguistic factors, the least of which concern how *telos* is used in the Epistle to the Romans. N.T. Wright describes how

¹² John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, reprint (Peterborough, UK: Epworth Press, 2000), 561.

¹³ Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al., *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 10:110-111; James D.G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans*, Vol. 38b. (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), pp 596-597; John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), pp 281-282; Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Branch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), pp 563-566; Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp 260-261.

¹⁴ C.E.B. Cranfield, *International Critical Commentary: Romans 9-16* (London: T&T Clark, 1979), pp 515-520; N.T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans," in Leander E. Keck, ed. et. al., *New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:655-658.

¹⁵ F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 190.

¹⁶ Witherington, *Romans*, 260.

¹⁷ Douglas J. Moo, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 641.

“The...problem with the mainstream reading is Paul’s use of the word *telos* and its cognates elsewhere, not least in Romans itself. The only other occurrences of the noun in this letter come in 6:21-22: ‘the end of those things is death¹⁸...the fruit you have is unto sanctification, and its end is eternal life¹⁹.’ By itself, we might be misled into reading the first of these as meaning ‘termination,’ but the second makes it clear what Paul means is ‘goal.’ Sanctification leads to, points toward, eternal life, and is consummated and completed thereby.”²⁰

When the Apostle Paul communicated to his disciple Timothy about *telos tēs parangelias*, this was not at all to be understood as “the termination of our instruction,”²¹ but instead “the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5, NASU). Other valid renderings include “the aim of our charge” (RSV), “The whole point of what we’re urging” (The Message), or even “the purpose of the commandment” (NKJV). *Telos* regards the purpose or the focus of someone’s instruction in the faith, and as it regards Romans 10:4, such an educational goal or purpose for understanding the Messiah would be most appropriate to add to the components intended by *telos*. In Wright’s valid estimation, though, he approaches *telos* in Romans 10:4 from the perspective of Yeshua being the Torah’s climax:

“I conclude that in 10:4 Paul does not intend to declare the law’s abrogation in favor of a different ‘system,’ but rather to announce that the Messiah is himself the climax of the long story of God and Israel, the story Torah tells and in which it plays a vital though puzzling part. God’s purposes in Torah, purposes both negative and positive, have reached their goal in the Messiah, and the result of that is the accessibility and availability of ‘righteousness’ for all who believe.”²²

Theologically speaking, it is by far most imperative that *telos* in Romans 10:4 be approached from the perspective of goal, aim, purpose, or even climax—and **not** termination. What was the Apostle Paul really trying to communicate? Was he not trying to say that his own fellow Jews had largely missed the point of the Torah? Did he not express the frustration, “since they are unaware of God’s way of making people righteous and instead seek to set up their own, they have not submitted themselves to God’s way of making people righteous” (Romans 10:3, CJSB)? If God’s Torah were approached properly, then whether it be First Century Jews who were unable to see Yeshua as the Deliverer or modern evangelical Protestants who need greater clarification in the ways of holiness and obedience—then the Torah could rightly serve as the foundation of one’s understanding of salvation history. Without Moses’ Teaching, you cannot fully appreciate the arrival of the Messiah onto the stage of not only redemption for all humanity—but *yourself personally*. The common mortal inability to obey the commandments in the Law, for example, is to clearly point all people to the need **we all have** for a Divine Savior!

Representing a rather standard view that *telos* in Romans 10:4 means “goal,” we should fully concur with C.E.B. Cranfield’s excellent conclusions:

“[I]n this passage Paul is concerned to show that Israel has misunderstood the law. At this point a statement that Christ is the goal to which all along the law has been directed, its true intention and meaning, is altogether apposite. Israel has misunderstood the law, because it failed to recognize what it was all about...So we conclude that [*telos*] should be understood in the sense...Christ is the goal, the aim, the intention of the law—apart from Him it cannot be properly understood at all...We conclude that the verse as a whole means: For Christ is the goal of the law, and it follows that a status of righteousness is available to every one who believes.”²³

Within Romans 10:4, the Apostle Paul was by no means communicating that Yeshua the Messiah is the abolition of the Mosaic Torah; in being the *telos nomou* Yeshua the Messiah is the Torah’s goal, its climax, its

¹⁸ Grk. *to gar telos ekeinōn thanatos*; “For the outcome of those things is death” (NASU).

¹⁹ Grk. *to de telos zōēn aiōniōn*; “and the outcome, eternal life” (NASU).

²⁰ Wright, in *NIB*, 10:657.

²¹ The KJV actually does have “the end of the commandment.”

²² Wright, in *NIB*, 10:658.

²³ Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pp 519-520.

inevitable outcome. Arriving at saving faith in the Messiah of Israel is the *resultant end*, with Him being the consummation to whom the Torah points.

Paul did not say that Yeshua the Messiah terminated the validity and relevance of the Law of Moses, as Romans 10:4 is so commonly misinterpreted. The purpose of the Torah—**and indeed all of Holy Scripture**—is that it must point to human beings' innate need for a Savior. If we can realize how “through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20b, NASU), *then* we can also realize how “Messiah is the goal of the Torah for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4, author's rendering). Recognizing how we all fall short of His high standard (Romans 3:23), each man and woman must be convicted of sin, cry out in repentance before the Father, and receive the forgiveness which He offers in His Son. The Torah is to always show the people of God the need for a Redeemer, and the fact that we need salvation.