

John 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Analysis

The contrast between Moses and Christ is explicit: 'the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' The law was 'given' (edothē, passive voice)—Moses was merely an instrument. Grace and truth 'came' (egeneto)—came into being, arrived personally in Christ. The law was good, holy, and revealed God's will, but it couldn't save. Christ brings what the law pointed toward: redemptive grace and ultimate truth. This is not antithesis but fulfillment—the shadow gives way to substance.

Historical Context

Moses was revered in Judaism as the supreme prophet and lawgiver. To compare anyone favorably to Moses was extraordinary; to declare someone superior was radical. Yet John presents this comparison as obvious—Christ surpasses Moses as reality surpasses shadow. The early church debated the law's continuing role; this verse establishes that while Moses' law revealed sin, Christ's grace provides salvation.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do grace and truth work together in Christ rather than opposing each other?
2. What is the proper relationship between law and grace in the Christian life?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	ὁ	νόμος	διὰ	Μωσέως	ἐδόθη	ἡ	χάρις	καὶ	ἡ
For	G3588	the law	by	Moses	was given	G3588	but grace	and	G3588
G3754		G3551	G1223	G3475	G1325		G5485	G2532	
ἀλήθεια	διὰ	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	ἐγένετο					
truth	by	Jesus	Christ	came					
G225	G1223	G2424	G5547	G1096					

Additional Cross-References

Romans 6:14 (Grace): For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

John 14:6 (Truth): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Hebrews 9:22 (Word): And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

John 1:14 (Grace): And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 8:32 (Truth): And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 7:19 (Word): Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

Genesis 22:18 (Parallel theme): And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Acts 28:23 (Word): And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

Galatians 3:17 (Word): And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Deuteronomy 5:1 (References Moses): And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.