

## The NEW Commandment of Christ

What do the churches and theologians of this world teach about the *law* of God---about the *commandments* of God? They teach that they have been done away! This is sometimes taught directly, but probably more often taught indirectly---by the teaching that God's commandments have been *replaced* by the "New commandment of Christ."

So let's now examine this "New commandment of Christ."

Yes, Christ did speak of a "new commandment," but there's only *one* scripture in the entire Bible where He spoke of that. (There are two other scriptures in the New Testament which speak of a "new commandment," but these two statements by John are simply referring to the same principle which Christ spoke of.)

Notice the one scripture where Christ referred to His new commandment: "A **new** commandment I give to you, **that you love one another**; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this will all men know that you are My disciples if you have **love** for one another" (John 13: 34-35).

Many people read the above passage and then assume that all that is required of a Christian is to "love" one another. They interpret "love" to mean affection---and somehow assume that we no longer need *obey* God's spiritual law!

What people totally fail to understand is that God's law is a law OF love! The Ten Commandments show us the basics of *how* to express Godly love. The whole spiritual law can be summed up in the one word "love." Then (as Christ explained in Matt. 22:36-40) this "love" can be divided into the two *great* commandments---love toward God (the first 4 of the Ten Commandments) and love toward fellowman (the last six of the Ten Commandments).

The divine *love* of God (imparted to us *by* the Holy Spirit---Rom. 5:5) is expressed **within the bounds** of God's spiritual law. Godly love flows down the channel or riverbed **of** the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are a *guide* to teach us **how** to love. So, if you are engaging in some activity contrary to the Ten Commandments---contrary to God's spiritual law---then you are *not* expressing Godly love!

Many people think that Christ had a *sentimental* type of love in His heart---but that He did not literally *obey* God's commandments. However, scripture tells us that Christ *never sinned* (Heb. 4:15); and since "sin" is defined as the transgression of God's law (I John 3:4), then that means that Christ *never* transgressed God's law! Christ "humbled Himself and became **obedient** to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Christ said, "I have *kept* My Father's commandments" (John 15:10).

Very plainly, then, Christ *obeyed* God's commandments. Furthermore, He requires that *we* do likewise! Christ said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven...depart from Me, you who practice **lawlessness**" (Matt. 7:21-23).

Speaking of the end-time judgment, Christ said that those who practice *lawlessness* will be cast into the furnace of fire (Matt. 13: 41-42).

Yes, Christ was obedient to God's law, and He set us an *example* that we should follow His steps (I John 2:6; I Peter 2:21-22). If you *surrender* your life to God, then, at baptism, Christ begins to live **in you** (Acts 2:38; Gal. 2:20). And He will live, in you, the *same* **obedient** life that He lived 2,000 years ago. "Jesus Christ is the **same** yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

## The Law of Christ

When Paul speaks of “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2), does Paul mean that Christ came to undermine God’s law with some *better* law? No! Christ said, “Do **NOT** think that I came to destroy the Law”! (Matt. 5:17). Rather, Christ came to “**magnify** the law” (Isa. 42:21). “Magnify” is the direct *opposite* of diminish!

Christ said, “if you want to enter into [eternal] life, **keep** the commandments”---and He then showed that He was speaking of the *Ten Commandments*, by naming some of them (Matt. 19: 16-19). Furthermore, Christ taught that we are to live *by every word* of God! (Luke 4:4).

“Love” is not left to the interpretation of the individual Christian. Rather, God’s spiritual **law**---along **with** the Holy Spirit---guides us as to *how* to express Godly love.

Love *is* the fulfilling of the law, but unless our actions are *within* the confines of God’s law, then it’s not Godly love that we are expressing.

Likewise, John said, “For this is the **love** of God, that we keep His **commandments**”! (I John 5:3). And John wrote that scripture about 60 years *after* the Holy Spirit---*after* agape love---had become available to the Church.

The Holy Spirit---and the agape love which It provides (Rom. 5:5)---first became available to the Church on the day of Pentecost that occurred just weeks after Christ’s crucifixion. Now, if it’s true that ever *since* that time, we no longer need the letter of the law---that we need *only* the agape love supplied by the Holy Spirit---then why did the New Testament writers *continue* to repeatedly endorse God’s law *after* that time? Why didn’t they, from that time forward, *cease* all positive mention of God’s law, and speak **only** of “love”?

To hear professing Christians speak, you’d *think* that at the end of His ministry, Christ had said this: “Hold on fellas! What I have just spent my entire ministry teaching you is now **DONE AWAY!** From now on the Church and all of you should [only teach a message of believing on My *person* and just having ‘love.’ *Forget* about teaching the necessity of striving to keep God’s commandments---something that I Myself have always kept, and have always taught others to keep!]”<sup>1</sup>

## Christ’s New Commandment

So let’s now answer the question: “*What was NEW* about Christ’s ‘New Commandment’?” Christ said, “A **new** commandment I give to you, **that you love one another**; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34).

But how was this command to love one another “new”? For, even the ancient Israelites were commanded, “You shall *love* your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18).

Well, what made Christ’s commandment “new” was the part where He said to “love one another **as I have loved you.**” Christ had loved His disciples **with agape love**---*spiritual* love---God’s *own* love. And His life’s *example* of love was that of perfect outgoing concern and selflessness.

Christ had magnified God’s law, not only by His teaching, but also by His perfect *example*. Christ had *demonstrated* how Godly love actually functions in day-to-day life.

Also, consider that Christ *gave* this “new commandment” on the very last night of His physical life on earth, and that only about seven weeks later, beginning on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit would be made *available* to those in the Church.

God did not *offer* His Holy Spirit to Old Testament Israel---only to the prophets and patriarchs. Therefore, Old Testament Israel could live *only* by the letter of the law---*not* by its spirit and intent---*not*

by the magnification of the law that Christ would bring. Because they did not have access to the Holy Spirit, *they did not have agape love*---and God's spiritual *law* can only be fulfilled *through* agape love. In fact, one of the main reasons God raised up the nation Israel was to demonstrate that mankind *needs* God's Holy Spirit! It is only by having the Holy Spirit within you that you *can* fulfill God's law---that you have access to God's agape love, and thereby are enabled to live by the spirit and intent of God's spiritual law---which is a law OF love!

It should now be clear why Christ said that this commandment to love one another was a "new" commandment. It was "new" because His followers would *now* be required to love with **agape love**---the very love of Christ and the Father. Without access to God's Spirit (and the agape love It provides) we *cannot* love one another **AS** Christ loved us! We *cannot* live by the **spirit and intent** of the law. We *cannot* **fulfill** God's spiritual law, as summarized by the Ten Commandments.

No, Christ's "new commandment" *in no way* diminishes our obligation to strive to *obey* God's law. Instead, this "new commandment" brings the *good news* that we can now receive the Holy Spirit---we can have Christ live *His* life *in us*--- and **fulfill** God's law of love!

### **References:**

1. *Now Revealed---Christianity's Greatest Deception*, 1997 booklet by Roderick C. Meredith, p.8