

PROOF that Christians Are Required to Keep God's Law!

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Many people believe that God's law does not apply to Christians. That *erroneous* belief is usually based upon one or more of the following FOUR concepts... each of which is *clearly refuted* in this paper!

Section #1 "Is 'Belief' All That is Necessary for Salvation?"

Addresses the *false* concept that if you simply **believe** on Christ, you will be saved.

Section #2 "Does the *New Covenant* Require Obedience to God's Law?"

Addresses the *false* concept that those **under the New Covenant** are not required to obey God's law.

Section #3 "Law of Sacrifice & Rituals: A Set of SEPARATE & TEMPORARY Laws!"

Addresses *the failure to understand* that the law of sacrifice and rituals (which was a *temporary* set of laws) was **separate from** the spiritual law of God. God's spiritual law (summarized by the Ten Commandments) will **always** be in effect!

Section #4 "Is God's Law 'Bondage' and a 'Heavy Burden'?"

APPENDIX Other Articles of Interest

*****This paper may be freely *shared* with others who might be interested*****

Section #1

Is “Belief” All That is Necessary for Salvation?

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“...**Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...” (Acts 16:31). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). These two scriptures are often cited by sincere people who teach that the *only* thing an individual has to do to be saved is to “believe.”

Yet, will “belief” *alone* lead to one’s salvation? Is that what your Bible teaches? There is no question on earth that should be more important to you personally!

Other Scriptures Reveal More!

The eighth chapter of John discusses some Jews who “believed in” Christ (verse 30). They believed on the person of Christ, but did not believe His **words** (verses 45-46). They accepted the Messenger (Mal. 3:1), but rejected His Message! They “believed” on Christ, but they actually sought to kill Him! (verse 40). Obviously, their *belief* did not save them!

The common teaching is that we merely need to believe on Christ’s existence and on His sacrifice—and that we are thereby saved. Yet, “Even the **demons believe**—and tremble!” (James 2:19). Does *their* belief save them? No!

Notice Rev. 21:7-8. “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars **shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**” Consider that this passage in Revelation was written *after* the Temple was destroyed—and about sixty years after everything that was nailed to the cross *was* nailed to the cross. Yet, this passage says that *how people live*—whether they are sexually immoral, idolaters, liars, etc.—will *directly influence* whether they are saved *or* whether they meet a second death in the lake of fire!

Furthermore, well after the time of Christ’s crucifixion, similar statements were written by the Apostle Paul. “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**” (Gal. 5: 19-21; also see I Cor. 6: 9-10).

How can these scriptures be reconciled with the scriptures we saw earlier about “believing on Christ” and you will be saved?

First of all, belief on Christ is absolutely essential! Yet, *other* scriptures make it plain that “belief” is not *all* that is required before God will grant salvation to an individual. In other words, other scriptures show *what true belief entails!*

A TRUE Believer

In John 14:21, Christ describes a *true* believer—one who really *loves* Christ: “He who has My commandments and **keeps them**, it is **he** who loves Me...” John, who is sometimes referred to as “the Apostle of Love,” said the following: “For this **IS** the love of God, that we **keep** His commandments...” (I John 5:3). The Apostle Paul said that many people “**profess** to know God, but **in works they deny Him**, being abominable, **disobedient**, and disqualified for every good work” (Titus 1:16).

What about the Apostle James? He said, “faith **without works** is dead”! (James 2:26). Furthermore, Jesus Christ said, “why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not **do** the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Finally, notice I John chapter 2: “Now **by this** we know that we know Him, if we **keep His commandments**. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does **not** keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (verses 3-4).

Is it any wonder, then, that Satan, the great *deceiver* (Rev.12:9), tries to make people think that there is nothing at all that we must *do*... just believe!? Satan urges us to just be *sentimental* about Jesus, and believe in His sacrifice... and that’s all there is to it! He whispers, “Don’t be too concerned about the details of what Christ and the apostles actually *taught*.... just believe!”

Salvation is CONDITIONAL

Understand this: **It is totally impossible to *earn* salvation!** **Salvation—eternal life in God’s glorious Kingdom—is such a wondrous gift, that nothing you could do could ever begin to *earn* it!**

However, God does make salvation **conditional!** It is conditional upon our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our personal Savior (John 3:16; Acts 16:31)... and it is *also* conditional upon our surrendering our life to God that we will henceforth strive to live by God’s spiritual law—the law summarized by the Ten Commandments.

With regard to God’s spiritual law, Christ said that “**all the law**” hangs on the *two great* commandments to **LOVE** God and to **LOVE** fellowman (Matt.22:36-40). Yes, the first four of the Ten Commandments show the basics of how to love God, and the last six show the basics of how to love fellowman. The Ten Commandments are then further magnified throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament.

Jesus Christ did NOT come to do away with God’s spiritual law! He said, “Do **NOT** think that I came to destroy the Law”! (Matt.5:17). Rather than destroy the law, Christ “**magnified**” the law (Isa.42:21, *KJV*).

“Magnify” does NOT mean “diminish”! It means the direct *opposite* of diminish! It means that He **enlarged** the spiritual law, making it even **more** binding. We are now to keep *not only* the letter of the law, but **also** its spirit and intent. That is clearly *shown* in such passages as Matt. 5: 21-22, 27-28.

A young man once asked Christ, “what good thing shall I do that I may **have** eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16). How did Christ reply? Did He say, “Oh, there’s nothing you must **DO**... just believe!”?

No! Instead, Christ replied, “if you want to **enter** into life, **keep the commandments**” (verse 17). Christ then continued in verses 18-19, showing that He was referring to the Ten Commandments.

So, Christ plainly showed here that salvation is *conditional* upon our striving to live by the Ten Commandments. Likewise, notice Revelation chapter 22 (again, written about 60 years *after* Christ’s crucifixion): “Blessed *are* those who **do His commandments**, that they may have the **right** to the tree of life...” (verse 14).

Notice also what Christ said in Matthew chapter 7: “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. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; **depart** from Me, you who practice **lawlessness!**’” (verses 21-23).

Notice verse 19 of Acts 3: “**Repent** therefore and be converted, **that** your sins may be blotted out...” Here, Peter explains that in order for one’s sins to be forgiven (or “blotted out”) the person must *repent*—that is, turn his life around, to a life of striving to *obey* God’s Word.

John’s explanation was similar: “But **if** we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7). So, it is only “**IF** we walk in the light”—**IF** we walk, or live, according to God’s word (Ps. 119: 105)—that the blood of Jesus Christ “cleanses us from all sin.”

If a person has *not* surrendered his life to strive to **live by** God’s word, then Christ’s shed blood is *not* applied to that person—and does *not* cleanse him from sin! The person’s sins are *not* “blotted out”—*not* forgiven!

In I John 2:2, we are told that Christ “is the propitiation for our [true Christians’] sins, and not for ours only but **also for the whole world.**” This scripture is speaking of a *future* time... a time when the vast majority who have ever lived will come to real repentance and faith in Christ (Rom. 8:1; I John 5:12). (For a better understanding of this *fascinating* subject, read the booklet *Is This the Only Day of Salvation?* That *free* booklet is found on the following website: www.TomorrowsWorld.org)

Again, salvation is *conditional*. It is conditional upon, *not only* belief on Christ, but *also* upon surrendering your life to strive to live according to God’s spiritual law, as summarized by the Ten Commandments.

Ask yourself this question: **Is a person EARNING his salvation by his belief on Christ?** **No! He is merely fulfilling a condition for salvation. And, likewise, when the person**

surrenders his life to strive to live by God’s spiritual law, he is fulfilling a *condition* for salvation. Nothing you could do, could ever begin to *earn* salvation!

Still to Obey?

All through the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—we are commanded to stop *sinning*. And, since “sin” is **defined** as “the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4, *KJV*), we are therefore commanded throughout the Bible to *stop transgressing God’s law!*

Christ said this: “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice **lawlessness**, and will cast them into the furnace of fire...” (Matt. 13: 41-42). Also, the final book of the Bible describes “saints [true Christians]” as those “who **keep the commandments of God**” (Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

Scripture says that God gives His Holy Spirit only “to those who **obey** Him” (Acts 5:32).

Two Natures

Every human being is born with, and has, “human nature.” Is human nature inherently “good”? Is it naturally “in tune” with God and His way? No! “...the carnal mind [the *natural* mind, which we all have from birth] **is enmity against [hostile to] God**; for it is **not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be**” (Rom. 8: 7). “The **heart** *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately **wicked...**” (Jer. 17:9). “...truly the hearts of the sons of men are **full of evil...**” (Eccl. 9:3)

So, the carnal, natural mind is **not subject** to God’s spiritual **law**. As explained in Romans chapter 8, verses 4-9, it is only **by receiving God’s Holy Spirit**, that one can *become* “spiritually minded” and thereby become **able** to live according to God’s spiritual law—both the letter and the *intent* of that law.

In receiving God’s Spirit, one becomes a partaker of God’s very nature—“the divine nature” (II Peter 1:4). God’s divine **nature** is in perfect harmony with God’s **law**—which is the way of Godly **love!**

However, if a person *receives* God’s Holy Spirit—partakes of God’s divine nature—the person’s own human nature still remains! The person then has *two* natures—God’s *divine* nature, and his own carnal, *human* nature. And, these two natures are at constant *war* against one another! “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are **contrary** to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Gal. 5:17). That struggle—that war—*between* these two natures, is described at some length by Paul in Romans 7:15-25.

Yes, even Paul had to *struggle* against his own human nature and Satan! Elsewhere, Paul gives us this admonition: “do not **let** sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts” (Rom. 6:12). Paul also said, “I have **fought** the good fight...” (II Tim. 4: 7). He said, “...I **discipline** my body and bring *it* into subjection...” (I Cor. 9: 24-27).

Let's understand. If a person has God's Holy Spirit dwelling within him, then God's Spirit *guides* the person, and *enables* the person to fulfill God's spiritual law. It *enables* him to live by the spirit and intent of that law (Ezek. 36: 26-27). Yes, God's Spirit guides him, but it does *not* *force* him. It is up to the individual whether he *follows* that guidance!

It is *not* true that Christ "did it all for us." We have *our* part to do! It is a *requirement* of God that we **strive** to live according to His word. "*Strive* to enter through the narrow gate," said Christ (Luke 13:24). "You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, **striving** against sin" (Heb. 12: 4). Notice Paul's comment: "if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I **press on**, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do **not** count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I *do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I **press toward** the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3: 11-14).

It is certainly true that no Christian will ever *attain* perfection in this life. Yet, God requires that we strive *toward* perfection. "Be ye therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," said Christ (Matt. 5: 48, *KJV*). We are to be "bringing **every thought** into captivity to the **obedience** of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). Likewise, Christ instructs us to live "**by every word** of God" (Luke 4:4).

How does God want us to *regard* His written word? "But on **this** one will I look: On him *who...trembles* at My word" (Isa. 66:2).

Jesus Christ was **obedient** to God's law. He said, "I have **kept** My Father's commandments"! (John 15:10). Scripture tells us that Christ *never* sinned (Heb. 4: 15; II Cor. 5: 21)—that is, He never transgressed the *law* of God (I John 3:4). Christ "humbled Himself and became **obedient** to the *point of* death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2: 8).

Yes, Christ was obedient to God's law, and if God's Spirit dwells within you, it is actually Christ living **His** life within you (Gal. 2: 20; Rom. 8: 9-10). And, to the extent that you *yield* your life to Christ's guidance, Christ then lives, in you, the **same** manner of life He lived 2,000 years ago—a life of *obedience* to God's law! "Jesus Christ *is* the **same** yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13: 8).

With the Holy Spirit dwelling within you—with Christ dwelling within you—you then begin to take on the very *mind* of Christ (Phil. 2: 5)—a mind of humble *obedience* to God (verse 8)—an attitude of "not My will, but Yours, be done"! (Luke 22: 42).

Again, we have our part to perform; but it is *only by* having God's Spirit within us that we *can* fulfill God's will of living by both the letter and the "spirit and intent" of His spiritual law.

Receiving God's Holy Spirit

How can a person come to have God's Spirit dwelling within him? Peter sums up the answer for us: "**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins; and you **shall receive** the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

At baptism, we actually enter a *covenant* (or agreement) with God. God agrees to give us His Holy Spirit **on the condition that** (1) we accept Christ as our Savior, and (2) we **repent of**—turn **from**—our past way of life. We make an unconditional *surrender* to God—that we will henceforth *strive*, with the help of the Holy Spirit—to live in accordance with God’s *spiritual law*.

As we’re told in Acts 5:32, God gives His Spirit only “to those who **obey** Him”—only to those who have repented—only to those who are *striving* to live God’s way. True Christians—also referred to as “saints”—are described as “those who **keep** the commandments of God” (Rev.14:12; 12:17).

So, upon entering that agreement with God at baptism, the individual (upon having hands laid upon him) then *receives* God’s Spirit. It is the **death** of the old self and the start of a whole *new* life! (Rom. 6: 3-6, 12-13)

Yes, at baptism the person begins a new life, of being “a living sacrifice” unto God (Rom. 12:1). He enters a lifelong process of having God’s **laws** written in his mind and placed in his heart (Heb.10:16).

Occasional Slips

Jesus Christ made it plain that a person’s salvation is *conditional* upon a life of striving to obey God (Matt. 19: 16-19; 7: 21-23). Paul showed the same thing (Gal. 5: 19-21; I Cor. 6: 9-10).

Yet, does that mean that if the Christian is *less* than totally obedient—*less* than totally perfect for the rest of his life—that he will not be saved?

No! But it does mean—as other scriptures show—that it is an absolute requirement of God that we strive *toward* perfection! (Matt. 5: 48 *KJV*; Luke 4:4; II Cor. 10: 5). Yes, we must strive! “Then one said to Him, ‘Lord, are there few who are saved?’ And He said to them, “**Strive** to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13: 23-24; also see Heb. 12: 4 and Phil. 3: 11-14.)

At baptism, the Christian turns *from* his past sins, and—with the help of God’s Spirit within him—he strives to refrain from committing those, or any other sins, again. He now *wants* to live God’s way. He now *strives* to live God’s way. And, in general, God’s way is now *his habitual way* of life. Yet, on occasion, he slips and commits sins—though fewer and fewer, as he *grows* in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18).

However, such an occasional slip or sin—each time sincerely repented of—does *not* mean that he has rejected God and His way of life!

Such occasional slips committed by a person who is truly striving to live by God’s word, and who *confesses* each sin and *repents* each times he slips—such acts of sin are entirely **different** from sin committed by one who has *not* surrendered his life to God in obedience—**even if** this latter person *professes* Christ! (Matt. 7: 21-23).

Yes, very few understand the extremely important *difference* between (1) sins committed by an individual who has **not** surrendered his life to God—who has not received the Holy Spirit,

and (2) occasional slips committed by one who *has* made an unconditional surrender of his life to obey God's word, but who falls short from time to time.

If a person accepts Christ and comes to the point of deep repentance (surrendering his life in obedience to God) and is baptized, he then receives God's Spirit and becomes a newly begotten "babe" in Christ (I Peter 2:2). As a "babe," he must then *grow*. And, such growth comes as he increasingly walks according to God's commandments (II John 6). Yet, *as* he grows, this "babe in Christ" stumbles and falls on occasion—just as a small child stumbles and falls as he learns to walk.

Living according to God's spiritual law now becomes an ever-present, *fixed and primary goal* of this newly begotten child of God. With the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, God's way increasingly becomes the person's *habitual way of life*. Still, he falls short from time to time, and sins. "If we say that we **have no sin**, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we [as Christians] **confess** our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1: 8-9).

Yes, Christ *forgives* the sins of a Christian—as long as the individual confesses his sins and continues striving to "walk in the light" (verse 7)—striving to live "by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). When the Christian slips, he repents, and—with God's help—he strives to more perfectly live God's way.

Again, such sin, each time repented of, is *entirely different* from sin committed by a person who has *not* surrendered his life to God. In reality, the one is forgiven, while the other is not! (Acts 3:19; I John 1:7).

In this regard, notice what Paul wrote: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will **not** inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6: 9-10).

Is Paul saying that if anyone commits one of these acts that God will not allow the person into His Kingdom? No! Paul is referring to those who practice these things *as a way of life*—that is, those who have *not* surrendered their lives in obedience to God—those who have *not* truly repented and received God's Spirit.

Consider the person who truly follows the instructions in Acts 2:38. He accepts Jesus Christ, and he thoroughly *repents* of his way of life—a way that has been *contrary* to God's law (Rom. 8:7). The person is then baptized, which *symbolizes* both his acceptance of Christ **and** a new way of life—a life of striving to *obey* God's spiritual law (Rom. 6: 3-6; I John 1:7; 5:3; Matt. 19: 16-19; 7: 21-23). Upon whole-heartedly following these steps spelled out in Acts 2:38, the person then has God's Spirit dwelling within him. He is then in a *different category* than people who have *not* done so! He is then no longer "under the law"—i.e., no longer under the **penalty** of the law—which is death. Having been *freed* from the death penalty—having been freed from the *penalty* of transgressing God's spiritual law—the person is now **under grace**.

Christ's shed blood is then *applied* to that individual (Acts 3:19; I John 1:7). The person's past sins are thereby *forgiven*. His *future* sins will also be forgiven—but only as long as his

attitude *continues* to be one of “walking in the light” and leading a *repentant* life—a life of striving to obey God.

In his new, obedient walk with Christ (Luke 6:46; 8:21; John 14:21; 15:14), the Christian sometimes stumbles and sins (I John 1: 8-9). However, being under grace, he can then come to God in a repentant attitude (Acts 3:19), *ask* for forgiveness, in Christ’s name... and *be* forgiven!

Not by Our Effort Alone!

Although we have an important part, *Christ’s* part in all of this is absolutely essential! Without Christ, we could *not* have our sins forgiven, we could *not* receive God’s Holy Spirit, and we could *not* obey God’s spiritual law in its spirit and intent!

“...make no mistake about it. The Christian cannot put sin out of his life *by himself*—without the help of his living Savior, Jesus Christ... We are *not alone* in our struggle against sin! ...Yet, we must put forth *our own efforts!*... The Christian must *expel* sin—root, core and branch—out of his life. But he *cannot do it alone* without constant forgiveness for his slips and falls along the way—and without the active help of his Savior and High Priest who understands his every weakness.”¹

Yes, even though God requires us to *strive* to live His way, we have powerful **help** in our battle! The divine *help* which we have access to, is described in Eph. 6: 10-18, where we are admonished to “be strong **in the Lord** and in the power of **His** might. Put on the whole **armor** of God, that you may be **able** to stand against the wiles of the devil” (verses 10-11).

We are to look to Christ, “the author and finisher [‘originator and perfecter’—*NASB*] of *our* faith” (Heb. 12: 2). Without Christ, we “can do nothing”! (John 15:5). By our efforts alone, we are doomed to fail. “...‘Not by might nor by power, but **by My Spirit,**’ says the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 4: 6). As Paul declared, “I can do all things **through** Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

In light of Christ’s help and power, we can have great **confidence** that we will succeed in our journey towards God’s glorious Kingdom. “being **confident** of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will **complete it...**” (Phil. 1: 6). At the end of our life, we, like Paul, can confidently say: “I have **fought** the good fight, I have finished the race, I have **kept** the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day...” (II Tim. 4: 7-8).

[continued below]

Once Saved, Always Saved?

The Bible speaks of “salvation” in 3 ways—or as a process in three stages.

(1) Christ has *already* saved us from the death penalty which we have earned for our **past** sins. As explained above, Christ’s sacrifice *applies* only to those who have accepted Christ, have truly repented, and have been baptized. Two scriptures that speak of salvation in the *past tense*, are Rom. 3:25 and Titus 3:5 (notice that in verse 7, it speaks of justification of *past* sins.)

(2) We also *are being* saved (present tense). As long as the Christian *continues* his life of repentance and faith in Christ, then he is “on the road toward” final and ultimate salvation... on the road toward everlasting life in God’s Kingdom. Both of the following scriptures speak of Christians as “*being* saved” (present tense): I Cor. 1:18; II Cor. 2:15.

(3) *Many* scriptures speak of a Christian’s *future and ultimate* salvation. Speaking of Christians, Christ declared, “But he who endures to the end **shall be** saved” (Matt. 24:13). The following scriptures *likewise* speak of a Christian’s *future* salvation: Matt. 10:22; Rom. 5:9-10; John 6:27; James 1:12; Rev. 12:10; Acts 14:22.

Yes, to be *ultimately* saved, we must “endure to the end.” And, *until* the end—that is, **during any point in a Christian’s life—it is possible for him to fall away and lose the Holy Spirit!** “For *it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **if they fall away**, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame” (Heb. 6:4-6). Other scriptures show the same thing: II Peter 2: 20-21; John 15:2, 6; Heb. 10:26; 2:3; I Cor. 9: 27; 10:12; Matt. 25: 7-12, 23-30.

References:

1. ““These Are The Appointed Feasts...”” by Brian Knowles & John R. Schroeder, *The Plain Truth*, Dec. 1978

Section #2

Does the *New Covenant* Require Obedience to God's Law?

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Prior to discussing the Old and New Covenants, it is vital to first consider the paramount *importance* of God's *way of life!*

God's Way of Life

Mankind has always wanted to go his *own* way... to live the way that he himself deems fit. "Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:2). "All the ways of a man *are* pure in his own eyes" (Prov. 16:2).

Yet, by living according to the dictates of his own reasoning, mankind has brought about untold suffering... to himself and to others! God's word says, "There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death"! (Prov. 16:25).

Rather than deciding *for ourselves* how to live, God's holy word instructs us to, "Trust in the LORD with **all** your heart, and lean **not** on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall **direct** your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6). "**Direct** my steps **by Your word**," the Psalmist implores God (Ps. 119: 133). "Your **word is a lamp** to my feet and a **light** to my path" (verse 105). Jesus Christ Himself instructs us to live "**by every word of God**"! (Luke 4:4).

Only God, in His supreme wisdom, knows the **way** of life that **leads** to true and lasting peace and happiness. "'For My thoughts *are not* your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,' says the LORD. 'For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways **higher** than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isa. 55: 8-9).

Yes, God knows the way, and the Bible is God's *revelation* of that way of life! It is the revelation of the way of life that *God Himself* and Jesus Christ live! And, it is the way that He commands **us** to live! Again, Christ said that man shall live "**by every word of God**" (Luke 4:4). "Not My will, but **Yours**, be done," is the attitude which Christ had... and the attitude which He wants *us* to have (Luke 22:42).

God's desire is that we *humble* ourselves, and that we have such **deep respect** for His word, that we virtually *tremble* when we read it! God says, "on **this one** will I look; on *him who is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and who **trembles** at My word" (Isa. 66:2).

In telling us how to live, God gives us **laws** that He commands us to live by. The "law" being referred to is God's *spiritual* law.

“The law **is spiritual**,” said Paul (Rom. 7:14). But *what* law is Paul referring to as “spiritual”? The answer is found just a few verses earlier, where Paul says the following, in verse 7: “I would not have **known** sin [i.e., he would not have known ‘**what sin was**’ (NIV)], except **through** the law. For I would not have known covetousness [i.e., he would not have known that covetousness was sinful] unless the **law** had said, you shall not covet.”

Now, *which* law says, “you shall not covet”? The Ten Commandments! **So, the Ten Commandments is the law which Paul says is “spiritual”!** It is the law through which God tells us *how* to live. It is the law which **defines** sin.

“Sin **IS** the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4 *KJV*). That is what sin **is**—disobedience to God’s spiritual law! Yes, “**by the law is the knowledge** of sin” (Rom. 3:20)—the *knowledge* of the right and wrong **way** of life!

The spiritual law, summarized by the Ten Commandments, is God’s *revelation* of the **way** of life that *leads* to lasting peace and happiness. It is the *way* of life that Jesus Christ instructs us to live (Matt. 7: 21-23; 19: 16-19).

Consider what Herbert W. Armstrong had to say about God’s spiritual law:

Notice how **like** God it [the law] is!
 The law is **GOOD** (Rom. 7:12). GOD is good.
 The law is **HOLY** (Rom. 7:12). GOD is holy!
 The law is **JUST** (Rom. 7:12). GOD is just!
 The law is **SPIRITUAL** (Rom. 7:14). GOD is spiritual!
 The law is **PERFECT** (Psalm 19:7). GOD is perfect!
 The law—including all his Commandments—is immutable, **ETERNAL**,
 stands fast FOREVER AND EVER (Ps. 111: 7-8). And GOD is eternal!
 Of course—for the law is the very **character**, the very **nature**, of God!
 It is the **WILL** of God.¹

Yes, God’s spiritual law is of *extreme* importance! In fact, “God **GAVE** His **ONLY** BEGOTTEN SON **rather than compromise** one iota with **HIS LAW!**”²

Aside from Christ’s sacrifice and His living within us, there is absolutely *nothing* more important than God’s spiritual law!

[What about the *ceremonial* laws—the laws of *rituals* and *sacrifice* which were given to ancient Israel? The ceremonial laws were SEPARATE from the spiritual law! Unlike the spiritual law (which will ALWAYS be in effect), the ceremonial laws were given **temporarily**... only for a specific time period. The *ceremonial* laws are discussed in Section 3 of this paper.]

Law, Love, and the Holy Spirit

God's entire "spiritual law" can be summed up in the one word "LOVE"! This "love" is then divided into the *two* Great Commandments of the Law: "love *toward God*" and "love *toward fellowman*" (Matt. 22: 36-40). Then, those two Great Commandments are *further* divided into the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments themselves, are *further* magnified *throughout* the Bible, *especially* in the New Testament.

Yes, as Jesus Christ stated, "**ALL the Law**" hangs on the two overall commandments to *love* God and to *love* fellowman (Matt. 22: 36-40). The first four of the Ten Commandments show the basics of *how* to love God. The last six show the basics of *how* to love fellowman.

Plainly, **God's spiritual law—the Ten Commandments—is a law OF love!!** It tells us the basics of what *true* love is!

The **way** of "love" is *not* left to the interpretation of each human being. "God **IS** love" (I John 4:8)—and so **He knows** the *way* of love (Isa. 55: 8-9). As Dr. Roderick C. Meredith said, **God's LOVE flows down the channel (or riverbed) OF God's Ten Commandments!**

Yes, Godly **love**—the love imparted to a Christian *by* the Holy Spirit—is expressed **WITHIN THE BOUNDS** of God's **law**. So, if an individual engages in some activity that is **contrary** to God's spiritual law—*contrary* to the Ten Commandments, then such activity is **not** an expression of true, Godly love! If the person says, "**I love** my neighbor's wife," then that is *not* Godly love!

Let's now ask the question... how does God *guide* a Christian? Many people believe that the **only** guidance which Christians need, is the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They believe that the guidance of the Holy Spirit (or that "love" itself) has **replaced** God's law. Yet, scripture says that God **GIVES** His Holy Spirit only "**TO** those who **obey** Him" (Acts 5:32)—that is, only **TO** those who follow the guidance of God's spiritual law! Furthermore, years **after** everything "that was nailed to the cross" **was** nailed to the cross, Paul stated that "**BY the law is the knowledge** of sin" (Rom. 3:20). He said that it was God's **law** (the Ten Commandments) which **enabled** *him* to *realize* that it is a sin to covet (Rom. 7:7).

And notice... Paul *wrote* these two scriptures **DESPITE** the fact that he **had** God's Holy Spirit powerfully **guiding** him! Even *with* God's Spirit in him and guiding him, Paul **still needed** the *letter* of the law as a general guide! A guide as to **how** to avoid sin—**how** to express true Godly love.

Yes, a Christian needs the guidance of BOTH the Holy Spirit **and** God's written word! Christ Himself said that we are to live "BY every word of God" (Luke 4:4). What else did Christ say? He said, "**IF** you want to enter into life, **keep the commandments**" (Matt. 19:17). And He then continued in verses 18-19, showing that He was referring to the Ten Commandments.

Also consider this. The Holy Spirit **first** became *available* to members of the Church on the day of Pentecost that occurred about 7 weeks after Christ's resurrection. Now, if it is true that *since* that time, we no longer *need* the letter of the law... that we now need **only** the agape love supplied **by** the Holy Spirit... then why is it that **after** Christ's crucifixion, the New Testament

writers *continued* to repeatedly **endorse** the keeping of God’s law?! Why didn’t they, from that point on, *cease* all positive mention of God’s law, and speak *only* of “love”?!

Notice Revelation chapter 22 (written about 60 years after Christ’s crucifixion): “Blessed *are* those who **do** His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life...” (verse 14). Also in this—the **final** book of the Bible—notice that the *saints* are described as those “who **keep the commandments** of God” (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). (Also see Matt. 7: 21-13; 13: 41-42.)

Is it true that “Law” and “Love” are somehow *opposed* to one another? No! Notice the following scriptures where “love” and “commandment-keeping” are **linked together**... and even **EQUALIZED**:

“For this **is** the **love** of God, that we keep His **commandments**” (I John 5:3).

“This **is** love, that we walk according to His **commandments**” (II John 6).

“And because **lawlessness** will abound, the **love** of many will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12).

“He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His **commandments**, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever **keeps** His word, truly the **love** of God is perfected in him...” (I John 2: 4-5).

“He who has My commandments and **keeps them**, it is he who **loves Me**” (John 14:21).

Yes, the Bible plainly shows that “love” and “commandment-keeping” are **linked together**—and even equalized! In fact, how could it be otherwise... when we consider that God’s **LAW** is the very **reflection** of His *love* and His *character*?!

Consequently, those who say that we don’t need to obey God’s **law**, are actually teaching *against* love!

“Love” Does Not REPLACE the Law!

Many people today believe that “love” has somehow *replaced* God’s spiritual law. They base that idea on a *misunderstanding* of Paul’s words in Romans chapter 13. Paul said, “he who loves another has **fulfilled** the law” (verse 8), and “love *is* the fulfillment of the law” (verse 10).

Yet, people misinterpret what Paul was saying here. They also fail to realize that Paul wrote *many* plain scriptures in **support** of obedience to God’s spiritual law!

In the above two scriptures, Paul was merely saying that the spiritual *law* of God is **synonymous** with *love*! And that is exactly what we just saw above—that “commandment-keeping” and “love” are *linked together*... and even *equalized*!

(For more on that subject, see the following articles on this website: “Does ‘Love’ REPLACE God’s Law?”; “How Does Love *FULLFILL* God’s Law?”; “Did Paul Do Away With God’s Law?”)

Written On Our Hearts and Minds

When a person accepts Jesus Christ *and* truly repents of going contrary to God’s spiritual law, then, upon baptism, the person receives God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). If God’s Spirit dwells within an individual, then it is actually Christ living *His* life within that person (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8: 9-10). And, to the *extent* that the person *yields* his life TO Christ’s guidance, Christ then lives **IN** that person the **SAME** manner of life that He lived 2,000 years ago... a life of **OBEDIENCE** to God’s law! “Jesus Christ *is* the **SAME** yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

Christ said, “I have **kept** My Father’s commandments”! (John 15:10). Christ *never* sinned (Heb. 4:15; II Cor. 5:21)—that is, He never transgressed the *law* of God (I John 3:4). Jesus Christ “humbled Himself and became **obedient** to the *point of death*, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).

If Jesus Christ lives **in you**, then you begin to take on the very *mind* of Christ (Phil. 2:5)—an attitude of “**not** My will, but **Yours** [the heavenly Father’s], be done” (Luke 22:42). And, as you spiritually mature, you increasingly have God’s spiritual **law** written in your mind and heart. Indeed, that is the very **purpose** and goal of the New Covenant! “This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put **My laws** into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them” (Heb. 10:16).

When scripture says that God puts His law **in our minds and hearts**, how can anyone possibly think that this *means* that God’s **law** does not **apply** to us?! “Putting His law in our minds and hearts” simply means that, by giving us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God is giving us the **desire** to live according to His spiritual law, as well as the **ability** to live by that law—to live by both the “letter” *and* the “spirit and intent” of that law.

Jesus Christ said, “Do **not** think that I came to destroy the Law...” (Matt.5:17). He said, “...depart from Me, you who practice **lawlessness!**” (Matt. 7:23). One of the very *purposes* of Christ coming to this earth, was to *magnify* God’s law (Isa. 42:21, *KJV*)—to *enlarge* it, and make it even **more** binding!

God’s spiritual law is simply the expression of God’s *way* of life. Rather than a burden, God’s law is the “law of **liberty**”! (James 1:25; Ps. 119: 44-45). It is the **way** to every *good* thing in life!

The Old Covenant

With the preceding discussion in mind, we can now more clearly understand the truth about the Old and New Covenants.

Let’s first ask the question... what *is* a “covenant”? “...a covenant, comments Webster, is a ‘mutual agreement, a legal undertaking to do or to refrain from some act; a document containing the terms of agreement.’ In biblical usage a covenant is a contract, or agreement, by which one party promises certain rewards or payments in return for certain stipulated performance by the other party.”³

So, simply stated, a covenant is a formal *agreement*.

What, then, was the *agreement* of the Old Covenant (more properly known as “the Sinai Covenant”)?

The *agreement* at Sinai was that **IF** the people of Israel would obey God—if they would obey His spiritual law—then God would bestow great *physical* blessings to that nation.

“Now it shall come to pass, **if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments** which I command you today, that the LORD your God will **set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these BLESSINGS shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:** Blessed *shall you be* in the city, and blessed *shall you be* in the country. Blessed *shall be* the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks... The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face... And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand...” (Deut. 28: 1-14).

Thus, the Israelites’ part of this agreement (or covenant) was to OBEY God’s commandments. In return, God would grant them **physical** blessings (*national* blessings and greatness).

God Himself, gave *to* Moses, the Ten Commandments and the statutes and judgments. Moses then relayed that information *to* the people. Thereafter, notice what Moses said: “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should **act according to them** in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding **in the sight of the peoples [that is, in the sight of the other nations]** who will **hear** all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this **great** nation *is* a wise and understanding people...’” (Deut. 4: 5-8).

The above passage of scripture (from Deut. chapter 4) actually reveals one of the major reasons *why* God **raised up** the nation of Israel! Israel was to **live God’s WAY of life—according to His spiritual LAW—and thereby serve as an EXAMPLE or “light” to the world!**

So, God was entering into an agreement (or covenant) with this nation which He was raising up. The agreement was that **if** the people would obey His law, then God would grant them—NOT salvation—but material and national blessings!

The people *agreed* to the terms of the Covenant. Yet, the people thereafter utterly *failed* to obey! They did not uphold **their** part of the agreement or covenant!

However, God knew *beforehand* that such would be the case! And this fulfilled *another* of God’s great purposes in raising up the nation Israel—to **demonstrate** that mankind **NEEDS** the Holy Spirit dwelling within him!

God never *offered* the Holy Spirit to those of Old Testament times... *only* to the prophets and patriarchs. Without God’s Spirit in them, the Israelites could **NOT** truly live God’s way. They

could **not** live by the spirit and intent of God's law... and oftentimes they did a very poor job of obeying even the *letter* of the law.

So, not *having* God's Spirit, they **proved** what we read in Romans chapter 8: "the carnal [natural] mind *is* enmity [hostile] **against** God; for it is **not subject to** the LAW of God, **nor indeed can be**" (verse 7).

Notice the following comment by Herbert W. Armstrong: "God gave PROOF, through Israel, that WITHOUT the Holy Spirit, MAN IS HELPLESS! They even had God to appeal to. But they did not have His Spirit *within* them... One of the *purposes* of this nation was to prove by human experience that man **without** the Spirit of God within him **cannot** be righteous." ⁴

This, then, was the *lesson* of the Old Covenant!

(For a more comprehensive discussion of the Old & New Covenants, see the article "The Old and New Covenants" on this website.)

The NEW Covenant

Let's now consider the New Covenant. We will see both similarities *and* differences between the Old and New Covenants.

First, let's ask the question... Why did God intend to **make** a *new* Covenant? "For if that **first covenant** had been **faultless**, then no place would have been sought for a second" (Heb. 8:7). So, there was a *fault* with the Old Covenant agreement. Was the fault with God's **law**? No! The fault was with the *people*! Continuing in verse 8: "Because finding fault with **them** [the people]..." The fault was **not** with God's holy and perfect law (Ps. 19:7; Rom. 7: 12,14). Rather, the fault was with the *people*, for not **obeying** God's law!

Let's continue... "Because finding fault with **them** [the people], He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a **new** covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah **not** according to the covenant that I made with their fathers... For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My LAWS in their mind and write them on their hearts...**" (Heb. 8: 8-10).

Also, notice this. Scripture tells us that Christ is "Mediator of a **better** covenant" (Heb. 8: 6). So, here we see that the New Covenant is a *better* covenant than the Old Covenant. In what **way** is it a better covenant? It "was established on **better promises**" (Heb. 8:6). What **are** those "better promises"?

The promise under the **Old** Covenant agreement was that of **physical** blessings (*national* blessings and greatness)—whereas the promises under the **New** Covenant agreement, are **spiritual** blessings! These spiritual blessings include (1) the possibility of eternal life, and (2) the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit—which **enables** the person to live by the spirit and intent of God's spiritual law.

Again, if God's Spirit dwells within you, then it is actually Christ living *His* life within you (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8: 9-10). And, to the extent that you *yield* your life to Christ's guidance, Christ

then lives **in** you, the **SAME** manner of **OBEDIENCE** to God's spiritual law which He lived 2,000 years ago (Heb.13:8).

So, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the **ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT** of the New Covenant! Having God's Spirit within you, **ENABLES** you to fulfill **your part** of the New Covenant agreement—to **obey** God's spiritual law—to obey not only the *letter* of the law, but also its spirit and intent.

Notice Romans chapter 8: "Because the carnal [natural] mind *is* enmity **against** God; for it is **not subject to** the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh **cannot** please God. But you are **not** in the flesh but in the Spirit, **IF indeed the Spirit of God dwells IN you...**" (verses 7-9).

The above passage plainly shows that it is only by having the Spirit of God **IN** you, that you **can** please God—that you **can** live a life of obedience to His spiritual law. **Without** God's Spirit in you, you are in the category of people spoken of in verse 7: you are "not **subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be**"!

Again, the Holy Spirit is the essential ingredient of the New Covenant. In fact, it is only **BY** the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, that we can begin a process of having God's spiritual law—**His WAY of life**—"placed in our minds and written on our hearts" (Heb. 8:10; 10:16).

Yes, **BOTH the Old and New Covenants require God's people to OBEY—to live BY—God's spiritual law!!** The New Covenant does NOT do away with the law! Rather than doing *away* with the law, the New Covenant actually *validates* God's spiritual law! How? By putting God's *laws* right into the minds and hearts of those who enter into that Covenant!

Those who enter the New Covenant—at baptism—enter an *agreement* with God to **strive** to live by His spiritual law, summarized by the Ten Commandments! (Also see Section I of this paper.)

An Example (or "Light") Unto the World

As mentioned earlier, one of the major reasons why God **raised up** the nation of Israel was so that they would **live God's WAY of life—according to His spiritual law—and thus, serve as an EXAMPLE or "light" unto the world!** (Deut. 4: 5-8). However, not **having** God's Spirit... ancient Israel **failed** to obey God's law, and thereby **failed** to serve as a proper **example!**

Christians, as we know, are **also** to serve as an **example** of God's way of life. In fact, what did Christ say? He said, "You are the **light** of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so **shine** before men, that they may **see** your good works and **glorify your Father in heaven**" (Matt. 5: 14-16). Christ also said that He Himself is "**the LIGHT** of the world" (John 8:12). And, we are to **imitate** Jesus Christ (I John 2:6). So, **like** Christ, Christians are to be **lights** unto the world.

Christians, *unlike* the people of ancient Israel, **have** the Holy Spirit dwelling within them... and are therefore **ABLE** to obey God's law! They are able to obey it, not *only* in the letter, but

also in its spirit or intent. Christians, therefore, are fully **ABLE** to be proper **examples** of God's WAY of life!

MARRIAGE Agreements!

The Old Covenant was, symbolically, a MARRIAGE AGREEMENT. Under the Old Covenant, God (more specifically, Jesus Christ in His pre-human existence) *married* the nation of Israel. "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am **married** to you" (Jer. 3:14). "Yes, I swore an oath to you and you became Mine," says the LORD God" (Ezek. 16:8). "My covenant which they broke, though I was a **husband** to them, says the LORD" (Jer. 31:32).

Furthermore, not only was the **Old** Covenant a *marriage* agreement, the **New** Covenant is **likewise** a marriage agreement! Yes, *both* Covenants are, symbolically, marriage agreements... marriage agreements *between* Christ and the Church. In the Old Covenant, Christ married sinning, physical Israel—"the **church** in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38, *KJV*). Yet, Christ's death on the cross freed Him *from* that marriage. Therefore, the last remnant of the Old Covenant contract **ended** at Christ's crucifixion!

Christ's death on the cross enabled Him to be in a position where He could eventually RE-marry. This time He will marry **spiritual** Israel, a cleaned up and converted wife, as stated in the 19th chapter of Revelation: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage** of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints..." (verses 7-9).

Right now, Christians are the *affianced* bride of Christ—not yet married, but **preparing for** that marriage. We are *beginning* to have God's spiritual laws written in our hearts and minds. Then, after Christ's return, we, as glorified, spirit beings ("spiritual Israel") will *marry* Christ.

New Covenant FOR GENTILES?

A common belief is that the Old Covenant was for the Israelites, whereas the New Covenant is for Gentiles. Actually, however, the New Covenant is **not** for Gentiles! The covenants and the promises pertain **to Israel**, said Paul (Rom. 9:4). Yet, Gentiles *can become* partakers of the promises! All *true Christians are* Israelites—that is, *spiritual Israelites*—Israelites by *grace*, not necessarily Israelites by race. It is only *through* Christ that a Gentile can become a spiritually *adopted* Israelite, and thus become a seed (child) of Abraham. Abraham was the *father* of Israel, and it was to *him* whom the promises of God were made.

Notice what the Apostle Paul said about this, as he spoke to *Gentile-born* Christians in Galatia. Paul said, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). "...those who are of faith [in Christ] **are sons** of Abraham" (verse 7).

Paul likewise had this to say: "...that he [Abraham] might be the **father** of all those who believe" (Rom. 4:11; cf. verse 16). "Therefore remember that you, once [formerly] Gentiles in

the flesh... that at that time you were without Christ, being **aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel and **strangers** from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now **in Christ Jesus** you who once were far off have been **made near** by the blood of Christ... Now, therefore, you are **no longer** strangers and foreigners, but **fellow citizens** with the saints and members of the household of God” (Eph. 2: 11-13, 19).

Yes, *through* Christ, Gentiles can be “grafted in” and become *spiritual* Israelites (Abraham’s *spiritual* seed). As Romans chapter 11 shows... spiritually-speaking, “Israel” today means the Church: “... For I speak to you Gentiles... And if some of the branches [Old Covenant Israel] were broken off, and you [Gentiles] being a wild olive tree, were **grafted in** among them... [it was] Because of unbelief **they** were broken off, and you stand by faith... And they also, if they do **not continue** in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again...” (verses 11-25).

A Jew—even today—*can become* a converted Christian. Indeed, the *early* New Testament Church was nearly altogether Jewish! God does not have two *kinds* of Christians! “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile]... for you are all **one** in Christ Jesus. And **if** you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3: 27-29).

NOTE: For a more detailed discussion on the subject of the Old and New Covenants, see the article “The Old and New Covenants” located on this website.

Also, see the article “Salvation: One Way for Us and ANOTHER Way for Old Testament Israel?”

Furthermore, for a better understanding of this entire issue of whether Christians need to keep God’s spiritual law, it is very helpful to understand the issue of whether this is the *only* day of salvation. For an eye-opening answer to that question, read the following booklet: *Is This the ONLY Day of Salvation?* Request your *free* copy, or read it online, at www.tomorrowworld.org/booklets

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Section #3

Law of Sacrifice & Rituals: A Set of SEPARATE & TEMPORARY Laws!

GodsLawToday.com

The Old Testament law of rituals and animal sacrifice is *no longer* in effect. It does not apply to Christians. Yet, does that mean that God's *spiritual* law—the moral law, as summarized by the Ten Commandments—*likewise* does not apply to Christians? No! The Ten Commandments **does** apply to Christians! God commands that Christians *live BY* His spiritual law!

Yet, many will argue that the *termination* of the law of rituals and animal sacrifice, meant a *corresponding* termination of the Ten Commandments. However, we will see clear proof in this article that the Ten Commandments was a SEPARATE law from the law of rituals and sacrifice ... and that, **unlike** the Ten Commandments, the law of rituals and sacrifice was given by God as a TEMPORARY law!

Prior to discussing the law of sacrifice and rituals, it is vital to first consider God's *spiritual* law.

God's Law ALWAYS HAS and ALWAYS WILL be in Effect

Most people think that God's law was not in existence *prior* to the time of Moses (at Mount Sinai). The fact is, however, that God's law was in existence (and in effect) long *before* that time! It has been in effect since the time of *Adam*—and even prior to Adam! The truth is that God's law *always has*—and *always will*—be in effect!

Yet, specifically, *what* law is being referred to? The law being referred to, is God's **spiritual** law—the law summarized by the Ten Commandments. It is the moral law—the law which tells us **how to live**.

When one understands the *nature* of God's spiritual law, then it makes perfect *sense* that this law has *always* been in effect!

The Bible states that “God **is** love” (I John 4:8). “Love” is the way that God lives... and it is the way that He commands *us* to live. The Bible is God's **revelation** of that way of life. And, in telling us how to live, God gives us **laws** which He commands us to live by.

Scripture says that love *fulfills* God's law (Rom. 13:10). And the **reason** that “love fulfills the law,” is because God's spiritual law is a law **OF** love. The first four of the Ten Commandments show the basics of how to love God, and the last six show the basics of how to love fellowman. The Ten Commandments are further magnified throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament. Christ said that “**All** the law” hangs on the two great commandments to **love** God and to **love** fellowman (Matt. 22: 36-40).

God's **love** runs down the channel or riverbed OF God's Ten Commandments!¹ "For this **IS** the **love** of God, that we keep His **commandments**" (I John 5:3). John also explained that "This **is** love, that we walk **according to** His commandments" (II John 6).

God's *law* is the very **reflection** of God's *character*! Accordingly, it only makes *sense* that God's spiritual law—His law of love—would have **always** been in effect!

Let's now look at the *Biblical evidence* that God's law was in existence **prior** to Mount Sinai.

Hundreds of years **prior** to the Ten Commandments being given at Mount Sinai, God said the following about His servant Abraham: "...Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My **commandments**, My statutes, and My **laws**"! (Gen. 26:5).

Furthermore, since the Ten Commandments were given in Exodus chapter 20, let's look *prior* to that time... in Exodus 16. Here, weeks *before* the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai, we read where God said this, in verse 28: "... How long do you refuse to keep **My commandments and My laws**?"

Likewise, in Exodus 18, Moses said that when the people came to him with a problem, he made known to them "the statutes of God and His **laws**" (verse 16). That was *prior* to the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai!

Some, however, might wonder: Since God's spiritual law was already in effect *prior* to Sinai, why did He *give* the law at Sinai? (1) The Israelites had been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years and had gotten far *away* from God, and had even *forgotten* God's law. And, that situation worsened under the heavy hand of the Egyptians, who *enforced* worship of *pagan* gods. (2) The *second* reason why the law was given at Sinai, was because ancient Israel was entering into a covenant or agreement with God... and, at the very center of that agreement, was the issue of obedience to God's law.

Consider now, the evidence that God's spiritual law was in effect all the way back to the time of the first man, Adam. In doing so, let's first ask the question, "what exactly *is* sin?" In I John 3:4 we are clearly told the *definition* of sin: "...sin **is** the transgression of the law" (*KJV*). That is, "sin" is the transgression of God's *spiritual law*. So, whenever the Bible says that someone "sinned," it is saying that the person transgressed God's spiritual law.

Now, did *Adam* sin? Rom. 5:12 says that "**through one man** sin entered the world." So, yes, Adam *did* sin... which means that he *transgressed* God's law. Therefore, God's law **was in effect** at the time of Adam!

In Gen. 4:6-9, we see that Cain likewise sinned (transgressed God's law), and that two of his "sins" (verses 8-9) were murder and lying—which are two of the Ten Commandments.

Likewise, "adultery," another of the Ten Commandments, is shown to have been a "sin" long *before* the time of Mount Sinai. When tempted to commit adultery, Joseph said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and **sin** against God?" (Gen. 39: 7-9).

Many *additional* examples can be found in the Bible where various points of the Ten Commandments were considered "sin" **prior** to the time of Sinai.

Furthermore, God’s word tells us that “where there is **no** law, *there is no* transgression” (Rom. 4:15). Yet, the Bible speaks of *many* transgressions **prior** to the time of Sinai. We have just examined several such instances. In fact, God sent the flood in Noah’s time, due to the earth being *full* of transgressions! (Gen. 6: 5-7). Likewise, notice I Tim. 2:14— “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman [Eve] being deceived, fell into **transgression**.” (The *same* Greek word for “transgression” is used here as in Rom 4:15 referred to above.)

Yes, “where there is **no** law, *there is no* transgression.” So, since there *were* transgressions prior to Sinai, there was a law *in effect* prior to Sinai! “Sin” is the transgression of the law!

Finally, consider the following two scriptures: In Ezekiel chapter 28, God told Satan, “... You became filled with violence within, and you **sinned**; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God...” (verse 16). “For if God did not spare the angels who **sinned**...” (II Peter 2:4).

The above two scriptures speak of “sin” [transgression of the law] by Satan and his angels **prior** to the time of Adam. So, here we see that God’s spiritual law existed even **prior** to the time of Adam!

King David, who was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22), said this: “all his [God’s] commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever...” (Ps. 111: 7-8, *KJV*). Yes, God’s law *always has*, and *always will*, be in effect! **It is the very reflection of God’s character!**

And, what about *after* the future return of Jesus Christ to this earth? “Now it shall come to pass **in the latter days** that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; And **all nations** shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the **law**, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2: 2-3).

This preceding passage plainly shows that God’s spiritual law is **NOT just for** the Jews! It is for *all mankind*... for **“all nations”!**

Yes, God’s spiritual law will still be in effect *after* Christ’s return, when God’s Kingdom is set up over all the earth. At that time, the glorified saints will *rule*—*BY* God’s spiritual law—with, and under, Christ (Rev. 2: 26-27; 3:21; 5: 9-10; 20:4, 6).

The Old Covenant

At Mount Sinai, God proposed an *agreement* (or covenant) with the people of Israel (Exodus 19: 3-6). This was “The Sinai Covenant,” often now referred to as “The Old Covenant.” The *agreement* at Sinai was that **IF** the people would **obey** God, then they would be a special people to God (Ex. 19: 5-6). In return for their obedience, they would receive great **physical** blessings from God (Deut. 28: 1-14). So, the **people’s** obligation in this agreement or covenant, was to OBEY God (Ex. 19:5). That, they **agreed** to do: “All that the LORD has spoken **we will do**” (verse 8). Thus, the people expressed their **acceptance** of entering into this agreement (or covenant) with God.

God then instructed that the people be gathered together at the foot of Mount Sinai on the third day (verses 10-18). Here, God would begin to instruct the people as to **what** they should obey. He would instruct them in the Ten Commandments (chapter 20:1-17) and in the Statutes and Judgments (chapters 21-23). The Ten Commandments, along with the Statutes and Judgments, were all a part of the Old Covenant... and were *what* the people agreed to obey!

So, on the third day, God **Himself** spoke, **directly to the people**, the words of the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5: 22-26, 4; 4: 10-13, 33, 36; 9:10; Ex. 20:22).

After the people listened to God speak the words of the Ten Commandments, they became afraid and asked Moses to have God *henceforth* speak **only to him** (Deut. 5: 23-27; Ex. 20:19). They said to Moses, “You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do *it*” (Deut. 5:27).

Consequently, “the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God *was*” (Ex. 20:21). Then, after giving brief instructions to Moses that he should build an altar (verses 24-26), God spoke the *Statutes and Judgments* to Moses (chapters 21 through 23). Immediately thereafter, “Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments [and statutes (Deut. 5:31)]. And all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the LORD has said we will do’” (Ex. 24: 3).

So then, after Moses had SPOKEN the Statutes and Judgments to the people, Moses then WROTE those Statutes and Judgments in a book—“the Book of the Covenant” (Ex. 24: 4,7).

Early the next morning, Moses built the altar which God had instructed him to build (verse 4). Moses then sent young men to offer burnt offerings to the LORD (verse 5). “And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant [i.e., the Statutes and Judgments which Moses had just written down] and **READ** in the hearing of the people [*again* relaying to them the Statutes and Judgments]. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient’” (verses 6-7). This was the **third** time the people had *agreed* to the terms of the Covenant. It was the third time that the people agreed to uphold *their part* of the Covenant—that is, to obey God—to obey the Ten Commandments, the Statutes and the Judgments.

Now came the official **ratification** of the Covenant. “Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD **HAS MADE** with you according to all these words’” (verse 8). Notice... the Covenant was now complete! With the sprinkling of the blood on the altar *and* on the people, the Covenant (or agreement) was now sealed and made binding! It had now been **RATIFIED!** The Israelites were now *contractually bound* to obey the Ten Commandments, the Statutes and Judgments.

Note this! “Once a covenant is signed, sealed or ratified—confirmed—it *cannot* be ADDED TO (Gal. 3:15). Anything appearing ‘beneath the signature,’ so to speak, is *not* legally any **part of** the covenant.”²

Now, continuing with the account of events. Immediately after this formal *ratification* of the Covenant, Moses then went up into Mount Sinai, where he stayed forty days (Ex. 24:18). While

there, he received **from** God two tablets of stone. These stone tablets had the Ten Commandments *written on* them written *by* the finger of God! (Ex.31:18).

After having remained in Mount Sinai for forty days, Moses then descended back down the mountain, and discovered that the people had committed a *great sin*—a sin involving the worship of a golden calf (chapter 32). Upon seeing this, “Moses’ anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and **broke** them at the foot of the mountain” (verse 19). Moses then fell down before God, and he fasted *another* forty days (Deut. 9: 17-18). Thereafter, God powerfully *punished* the people for this “great sin” (Ex. 32: 26-35).

The Ceremonial Laws (Laws of Sacrifice and Rituals)

As we have seen, at Mount Sinai, God entered into an agreement with the people of Israel. The people agreed to obey God’s Ten Commandments, as well as the Statutes and Judgments. Did God also, *at that time*, give them ceremonial laws of rituals and animal sacrifice? No!! “For I did **NOT** speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning **burnt offerings or sacrifices**. But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘**Obey** My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people...’” (Jer.7: 22-23; also see “Addendum” below).

The law of sacrifices and rituals was **ADDED LATER**, as explained in Galatians chapter 3: “What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It [the law of sacrifice and rituals] was **ADDED** because of **transgressions**, till the Seed [Christ] should come...” (verse 19).

Yes, it was added... *because* of “transgressions.” But “transgressions” of *what*? Obviously, there was *already* **another law in effect**, which was being transgressed—because “where there is **no** law there *is no* transgression” (Rom. 4:15).

The law that was *already* in effect and being transgressed, was the *spiritual* law of God—the law summarized by the Ten Commandments—the law which the people at Mount Sinai had agreed to obey.

Again, this *spiritual* law *always has* and *always will* be in effect. It is the law that *defines* what sin is. “...for **BY** the law *is* the **knowledge** of sin,” said Paul (Rom. 3:20). Paul also said, “... I would not have known **what sin was** had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the **law** had not said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7:7, *NIV*).

Plainly, the “law” being referred to here *is* the Ten Commandments!

It was *because* of the fact that this *spiritual* law was being so flagrantly **transgressed**, that God *temporarily added* **another** set of laws—the laws of animal sacrifice and the ceremonial rituals. God added these laws **AFTER** the Sinai Covenant had been ratified and made binding!!

“Animal sacrifices and ceremonial laws were **not** part of the original Sinai Covenant. These were added later, **after** the covenant was enacted by blood (Ex. 24: 8).”³

God’s Statutes and Judgments (Ex. 20:22 *through* chapter 23) were written down by Moses. He wrote them in a book, called the “Book of the Covenant” (Ex. 24: 4,7). “But this book did **not**, at first, contain the laws of *burnt offerings, sacrifices and washings*. God had these **added**

later— within a year— as a **separate part** of the civil statutes because the Israelites had transgressed his [spiritual] laws.”⁴

“Notice that these temporary **ritualistic** laws did **not define** sin. They were **reminders** of sin. God’s **spiritual** laws **define** sin. The laws that explain **what sin is** [God’s spiritual laws] are the ones we are to keep in the spirit as well as in the letter today.”⁴

Laws of RITUALS: These consisted of grain offerings, drink offerings, various washings, and physical ordinances (Heb. 9:10). They were things to do morning, noon, and night. What was the **purpose** of this law of rituals? It was to teach the people **the habit of obedience!**

Unlike Christians today, Old Testament Israelites (other than the prophets and patriarchs) did not have **access** to the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, once the Holy Spirit was made available (shortly after Christ’s crucifixion), this **ritualistic** law—the “tutor” spoken of in Gal. 3:24— was no longer **needed**. That system of laws had been “imposed [only] **until** the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10)— that is, **until** the time of Christ’s crucifixion. It served only as a **temporary** substitute.

Laws of ANIMAL SACRIFICE: The system of animal sacrifices was, likewise, only a **temporary**, physical, substitute. It was a substitute for— and until— the Sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 7:27). This system was to be in force “till [yes, **only until**] the Seed [Christ] should come” (Gal. 3:19).

Unlike *Christ’s* sacrifice, these animal sacrifices could **not** “justify” or “take away” sin (Heb. 10:4). What, then, was the **purpose** of these animal sacrifices? **(1)** The sacrifices repeatedly **reminded** the people of their sins (Heb. 10: 3), and reminded them that the **penalty** of sin is **death** (Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23). **(2)** The sacrifices also served as a shadowy *type* of the **future** Sacrifice of a Savior (Heb. 10:1).

These laws of rituals and animal sacrifices served to teach them (and keep them mindful of) the need to **avoid committing** sin... and, the absolute **need** of a Messiah— a Messiah, who would eventually and truly **pay the penalty of sin**.

“For the law [the Mosaic Law of rituals and animal sacrifices], having a **shadow** of the good things to come, **and** not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those **sacrifices there is a reminder** of sins every year. For **it is not possible** that the blood of bulls and goats could **take away** sins” (Heb. 10: 1-4).

Preeminence of the Ten Commandments

- (1) The Ten Commandments were the very **core** of the Old Covenant! Accordingly, they were even referred to as “His covenant”: “So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, *that is*, the Ten Commandments...” (Deut. 4:13; cf. Ex. 34:28).
- (2) The Ten Commandments were placed **inside** the Ark of the Covenant (Heb. 9:4), whereas the Statutes and Judgments (the “Book of the Covenant”) was placed *beside* (“in the side of”—*KJV*) the Ark (Deut. 31:26).
- (3) The Ten Commandments were *written* **directly by God Himself** (Ex. 31:18), whereas the Statutes and Judgments were written by Moses, after God had spoken them to Moses (Ex. 24: 3-7).
- (4) The Ten Commandments were *spoken* **directly by God Himself** to all the Israelites gathered at Sinai (Deut. 5: 22-26), whereas the Statutes and Judgments were spoken *by Moses*, after God had spoken them to Moses (Deut. 5:31). (Although it may very well be that, if the people had not become afraid, God would likewise have spoken the Statutes and Judgments directly to the people, the fact remains that God saw to it that the Ten Commandments—the very *core* of the Old Covenant—were, in fact, spoken *directly* by God to the people.)
- (5) The Ten Commandments is the **spiritual law** of God (Rom. 7: 14, 7), whereas the Statutes and Judgments were part of the **civil law** that God gave to Old Testament Israel. Notice that *immediately* when God finished speaking the words of the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, we read this: “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly... and He added **no more**” (Deut. 5:22). The Ten Commandments is a **complete** law—the spiritual law of God. “He added no more—to THAT LAW! Any other laws are different, separate laws—NO PART OF THAT SPIRITUAL LAW! It is complete in itself!”⁵
- (6) Although God’s *Statutes and Judgments* were in existence *prior* to the time of Mount Sinai (Gen. 26:5; Ex. 18:16), **the Ten Commandments have ALWAYS been in effect!** Furthermore, they always *will be* in effect... because the Ten Commandments are a “summary statement” of God’s **way** of life—the way of love. Yes, they are an expression of God’s basic **nature**, and the nature of God does *not* change! (Mal. 3:6).
- [“Then why did God have to *reveal* his law to the children of Israel when establishing his covenant with them? Simply because the people had strayed so far from the truth by the time of Moses that God had to reveal his laws and statutes *anew* to the Israelites. Ancient Israel had lost much, if not most, of the knowledge of God’s ways while in Egyptian bondage.”⁶
- Additionally, although God’s spiritual law was *in effect* prior to Sinai—just as the law of gravity was *in effect*—only a select few, prior to Sinai, knew very much *about* God’s Laws, Statutes and Judgments. “God’s law was known by only a *special few* in ancient times. Those whom the Eternal individually called to perform a special work in His service—the patriarchs and prophets of old—*knew* and kept God’s Ten Commandments, statutes and other Laws (Gen. 26:5).”²]
- (7) The supreme importance of the Ten Commandments is clearly shown by Jesus Christ in the

New Testament. When asked, “What good thing shall I do that I may **have** eternal life,” Christ replied, “if you will enter into life, **keep** the commandments.” Christ then showed *which* commandments He was speaking of, by naming at least half of the Ten Commandments (Matt. 19:16-19). Regarding the ones He did *not* name, Christ showed elsewhere that *they* are even *more* important! (Matt. 22: 36-40). (Also see Rev. 22:14.)

Addendum:

Notice Jeremiah 7: 21-23: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel... ‘For I did **NOT** speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, **concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices**. But this is what I commanded them, saying, “Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.”””

Here, God says that He did **not** speak to the Israelites at Sinai concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. Yet, we know that God **did** speak to them of the following **specific** sacrifices which were to be made:

(1) The Passover lamb sacrifice is the one and *only* sacrifice mentioned in the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 23:18; 24:4,7). Yet, this Passover sacrifice had **already** been introduced by God to the Israelites back in Exodus chapter 12—weeks **before** Sinai! So, although this sacrifice was a *part of* the Sinai agreement, it was *not* originally instituted **by** that Covenant. It was *already* in effect!

(2) There were burnt offerings and peace offerings made *during the ceremonial ratification of the Sinai Covenant*, in which the blood was sprinkled both on the altar and on the people to formalize the agreement (Ex. 24: 3-8). This was in accord with the instructions given by God in Ex. 20: 24-26.

(3) In Exodus chapter 29 (*after* the ratification of the Sinai Covenant in chapter 24), God gave instructions concerning certain animal sacrifices that would be carried out once the Tabernacle was erected. These sacrifices, described in chapter 29, were **not** for the sins *of the people*. Rather, they would be *for the purpose of sanctifying the priests and the tabernacle* (once the Tabernacle was erected). Chapter 29 begins by saying this: “And this is what you shall do to them to hallow them for ministering to Me as priests...” (verse 1). In the concluding statements of that chapter, God says, “So I will sanctify the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also sanctify both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests” (verse 44).

(4) Voluntary sacrifices: The principle of sacrifices being **voluntarily** offered by individuals, had existed all the way back to the time of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4: 3-4). Such *freewill* offerings are referred to in Exodus 22:20.

In consideration of the four sacrifices discussed above, **what did God mean** in Jeremiah 7:22, when He said that He did NOT speak to the Israelites at Sinai concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices? Here is the answer.

In the period from Moses to Christ, the practice of giving offerings was **commanded, made ritualistic and regulated in great detail**. Why?

“Simply because the children of Israel were a physical, carnal people *without* God’s Holy Spirit. They could *not* offer themselves in obedience to God, so God gave them ritualistic washings to perform and had them offer animal sacrifices as substitutes. The Israelites needed to be [*repeatedly*] reminded of Jesus’ then-future Sacrifice *and* of the Holy Spirit, which was *pictured* by the various ritualistic washings.

“These laws [the rituals and sacrifices] had *no further use* when the Lamb of God died for the sins of the world, and when the Holy Spirit became *available* for those God would call.”⁴

So, we now see what God was referring to in Jer. 7:22. He was referring to this **regulated and ritualistic system** of sacrifices—a system given by God, basically in the book of Leviticus.

Finally, consider this. Although the system of **regulated and ritualized** sacrifices was not begun until almost a year **after** ratification of the Sinai Covenant, God had given *instructions* for the institution of a tabernacle and a priesthood *during* Moses’ first forty days on Mount Sinai (presumably during the *latter* part of that forty day period). And, since the tabernacle and priesthood were largely instituted for the *purpose* of offering sacrifices and performing ritualistic ceremonies, it is obvious that God had already—*during* that forty day period—*decided to establish* a system of sacrificial offerings.

Yet, the **reason** that He decided to do this, was because of the *grievous sin* committed by the people while Moses was on Mount Sinai. And we can see how very **serious** God considered that sin, by reading the following: Ex. 32: 6-12, 21, 27-28, 31, 35.

Raymond F. McNair refers to “...the animal sacrifices, meat and drink offerings, carnal washings, rituals and numerous ordinances pertaining to the flesh which were added by God, later, to the covenant He had already ratified with Israel (Ex 24) *after the Israelites had sinned* by making an idolatrous golden calf (Ex 32)...”⁷

Yes, God added these sacrifices and rituals after—**and because of**—this great sin which the Israelites committed almost immediately after they had solemnly agreed to obey God!

Actually, the fact that the Israelites *committed* this grievous sin, was no surprise to God! Having created mankind as free moral agents, with the power to *choose* whether to obey God, He knew *from the beginning* that mankind would **need** a Savior—to pay the penalty of sin. Accordingly, scripture speaks of “the Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8).

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Section #4

Is God's Law "Bondage" and a "Heavy Burden"?

GodsLawToday.com

How do most people today view God's law? They view it as *burdensome* and oppressive. They view it as "bondage" and as a "heavy burden." Yet, *why* do people have that concept? Is that what God's word, the Holy Bible, teaches?

God's Spiritual Law

Only God, in His supreme wisdom, knows the **way** of life that *leads* to lasting peace, happiness and prosperity (Isa. 55: 8-9). The Bible is God's *revelation* of that way of life (Luke 4:4). In telling us how to live, God gives us **laws** that He commands us to live by.

The "law" being referred to, is God's *spiritual* law (Rom. 7:14)—the law summarized by the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments show the basics of **how** to show love to God and to fellowman (Matt. 22: 36-40). It is the way to every *good* thing in life.

What is it that people see so "burdensome" about having no other god before the true God? About having no graven images, and not using God's name in vain? Is it "burdensome" to honor one's parents, to refrain from murder, adultery, and theft? What is "burdensome" or "oppressive" about keeping those commandments?!

King David, who God called "a man after My *own* heart," certainly did **not** view God's law as a burden: "Oh, how I **love** Your law!" exclaimed David (Ps. 119: 97).

A young man once approached Jesus Christ and asked, "what good thing shall I do that I may **have** eternal life?" Christ replied, "If you want to **enter** into life, keep the commandments"! (Matt. 19: 16-17). And Christ then went on in verses 18-19 to show that He was referring *to* the Ten Commandments.

Jesus Christ lived a life of *obedience* to God's law. He said, "I have **kept** My Father's commandments" (John 15:10). Christ is to be *our example* (I Cor. 11:1; I John 2:6). Accordingly, He said that *we too* are to strive to live "by **every word** of God" (Luke 4:4). He 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. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I **never** knew you; **depart** from Me, you who practice **lawlessness!**'" (Matt. 7: 21-23).

When a person accepts Jesus Christ and truly repents, then—upon baptism—the person receives God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). When God's Spirit dwells within an individual, then it is actually Christ living *His* life within that person (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8: 9-10). To the *extent* that the

person yields his life to Christ's guidance, Christ lives **in** that person the *same manner* of life that He lived 2,000 years ago—a life of *obedience* to God's law. Yes, "Jesus Christ *is* the **same** yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

Accordingly, the individual then begins to take on the *mind* of Christ (Phil. 2:5)—a mind of humble *obedience* to God (verse 8)—an attitude of "not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

As the person matures spiritually, he increasingly has God's **laws** written in his mind and heart. Indeed, that is the very purpose and goal of the New Covenant! "This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put **My laws** into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them" (Heb. 10:16).

Rather than a burden, God's law is the "law of **liberty**"! (James 1:25; Ps. 119: 44-45). It is the **way** to every *good* thing in life!

The Apostle John, who was the last of the other apostles to die, wrote a great deal about "love." In fact, John is often referred to as "the apostle of love." Yet, notice what this "apostle of love" said about God's **LAW**: "For this **IS** the **love** of God, that we keep His **commandments**. And His commandments are **NOT** burdensome"! (I John 5:3).

Furthermore, John *wrote* that scripture almost 60 years *after* Christ's crucifixion!

WHY People Wrongly View God's Law as "Burdensome"

We have plainly seen that the Bible shows that God's spiritual law is *not* burdensome! Why, then, do people believe that it *is* burdensome? There are *three* basic reasons for this:

(1) Human Nature

Mankind has always wanted to go his *own* way—to live the way that he himself deems fit. "Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:2; cf. Prov. 16:2).

Accordingly, the *first* reason why people consider God's law as "burdensome," is clearly stated by the Apostle Paul. Paul speaks of the "carnal mind"—that is, the *unconverted* mind—the mind that each one of us is born with. He says that "the carnal mind *is* enmity **against** God ['hostile to God'—*NIV*]; for it is **NOT SUBJECT** to the **LAW** of God, nor indeed **can be**" (Rom. 8:7; cf. Rom. 7: 18-25; Jer. 17:9).

Paul continues: "So then, those who are in the flesh [i.e., those who do *not* have God's Spirit] **cannot** please God. But you are **not** in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if** indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (verses 8-9).

God **gives** His Spirit *only* "to those who **obey** Him" (Acts 5:32; Rev. 14:12). When a person accepts Jesus Christ **and** REPENTS OF LIVING A LIFE OF BREAKING GOD'S LAW, *then*—upon baptism—the person receives God's Spirit. He then begins to partake of God's divine nature (II Peter 1:4)—a nature that *wants* to live in obedience to God's law. Yet, the person continues to *also* have his own carnal, human nature—a nature which *hates* God's law. So, the person then has *two* natures... and those two natures are at constant *war* against one another (Rom. 7: 15-25).

The total *contrast* of these two natures was also spoken of by Ezekiel, as he foretold of a future “New Covenant”—under which, those *partaking* of that Covenant, would receive God’s Spirit: “I [God] will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the **heart of stone OUT** of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and **cause** you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*” (Ezek. 36: 26-27).

Yes, people, by nature, **hate** God’s law. They want nothing to do with it. Yet, God’s word long ago *predicted* that men would call that which is good “evil.” “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil” (Isa. 5:20). And, notice the *context* of that passage in Isaiah: Just four verses after Isaiah speaks of people “calling good evil,” he says that such people “have rejected the **law** of the LORD of hosts”! (verse 24).

Furthermore, consider this important fact: Not only is one’s **natural mind** *not subject* to God’s law, we are also influenced by **Satan the devil** to reject God’s law... just as Satan himself rejects it!

(2) A Second Reason

A second reason why people mistakenly view God’s spiritual law as “burdensome,” is due to their erroneously thinking that certain New Testament scriptures refer to God’s spiritual law—when those scriptures *actually* refer to Judaism!

Before citing some of those scriptures, let’s first understand this about Judaism. Judaism (both modern Judaism *and* the Judaism practiced by the Pharisees and scribes of Christ’s day) is a **corruption** of both God’s law and the teachings of the Old Testament. It is a corruption of God’s way of life.

One such corruption is that Judaism adopted a system of pagan “penance.” Still *another* major corruption surfaced after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Jewish religious leaders came to deeply realize that God had sent the Israelites into captivity *due to* their flagrant *breaking* of God’s laws. The realization of this fact, prompted the then-current religious leaders into the *misguided solution* of trying to “insulate and protect” God’s spiritual law.

They tried to build a “fence” *around* the actual law—so that the law would never be broken again. In their misguided zeal, they added more than 600 *man-made* laws, commandments, rules, regulations and oral law **to** the laws of God (and, in particular, to the Law of Moses).

Among these more than 600 “fence laws” were some 65 “do’s and don’ts” concerning Sabbath-keeping. When the entire compilation of the law of Judaism was made in the 3rd century A.D. (in a book called the *Mishnah*), this book was 800 pages long! What’s more, the Talmud (an authoritative commentary **on** the law) came to 12 printed *volumes*!

The people began fearing that any act they did, might in some way be contrary to one of these many do’s and don’ts. Jesus Christ saw this “fear of religion” as *bondage*. He referred to this legalistic adherence to the laws of Moses as “**heavy burdens and grievous to be borne**” (Matt. 23:4 *KJV*). Christ *condemned* this “straining at a gnat” (verse 24), legalistic attitude of the Pharisees. (Also, see Mark 7:7,13.)

Yes, Jesus Christ was very much against this man-made legalistic *corruption* of God's law. Christ was **NOT**, however, against God's law itself!

In *addition* to the two verses in Matthew 23 cited above, notice these other scriptures referring to the *bondage* of Judaism:

(Matt. 12: 1-2) "At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not **lawful** to do on the Sabbath!'"

(Matt. 12:10) "And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it **lawful** to heal on the Sabbath?'— that they might accuse Him."

(John 5:10) "The Jews therefore said to him who was **cured**, 'It is the Sabbath; it is not **lawful** for you to carry your bed.'"

(Gal. 4:3) "Even so we, when we were children, were in **bondage** under the elements of the world."

Furthermore, consider this. In addition to those scriptures referring to the heavy burdens of *Judaism*, there are *also* some New Testament scriptures referring to the system of **ritualistic laws** that God **Himself** imposed, *temporarily*, on Old Testament Israel. Such New Testament scriptures are oftentimes mistakenly thought to be referring to God's *spiritual* law—when those scriptures are *actually* referring to the system of *ritualistic* laws that God temporarily gave Old Testament Israel.

A prime *example* of such scriptures, is Paul's use of the phrase "works of the law."

Such New Testament scriptures referring to the *ritualistic* law, are simply addressing the fact that a person *never could* be justified—or gain salvation—**through** those rituals and animal sacrifices.

No, that temporary system of rituals and sacrifice **never was** a means to salvation! Judaism, however, came to erroneously view it as such. The fact is, Old Testament Israel was never *offered* salvation—*only* the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament were.

The ceremonial *rituals* were added temporarily by God, for the purpose of teaching and instilling within the ancient Israelites *the habit of obedience*. These rituals were things to do repeatedly—morning, noon and night. God intended that system of rituals to be only a *temporary* substitute until—in New Testament times—when the Holy Spirit would be made available. Once God's Spirit was made available to dwell within the members of the New Testament Church, those physical rituals were no longer needed! (Gal. 3:24).

Likewise, the system of *animal sacrifices* was only a **temporary**, physical substitute. It was a substitute for—and until—the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 7:27). It served to *remind* people of their sins (Heb. 10:3), and to remind them that the *penalty* of sin is death (Ezek. 18:4).

(3) A Third Reason

The third reason why people view God’s spiritual law as “burdensome” is, like the second reason, a misunderstanding of what certain scriptures refer to. Many people think that certain New Testament scriptures refer to “bondage to God’s *law*”—when those scriptures actually refer to people being in bondage **to sin and Satan**.

Let’s first look at some scriptures that are very *plainly* speaking of bondage to sin and/or Satan. Jesus Christ plainly stated that “whoever commits sin is a **slave of sin**” (John 8:34). Here, Christ was speaking of those who sin as a *way* of life—those who are unrepentant—those who have not surrendered their lives to God—those who are not *striving* to live by every word of God (Luke 4:4).

What does Peter say about such people? He says, “they themselves are **slaves of corruption**; for **BY** what a man is overcome, by this he is **enslaved** [‘brought into *bondage*’—NKJV]” (II Peter 2:19, NASB).

Now notice the 6th chapter of Romans, where Paul discusses what happens to a truly repentant person at baptism. Among other things, baptism pictures the “crucifixion” and *burial* of the old self—the *sinning* self. It pictures the coming up *out of* that watery “grave”—symbolic of a *changed* person, who is resurrected to a new, spiritual life in Christ. “...that our old man [our old self] was crucified with *Him* [Christ], that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be **slaves of sin**” (verse 6).

“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves **slaves to obey**, you **ARE** that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether **of sin leading** to death, or **of obedience leading** to righteousness? But God be thanked that *though* you **were slaves of sin**, yet you [now] **obeyed** from the heart... and having been set **free** from [slavery to] sin, you became **slaves of righteousness**... now having been set free from sin, and having become **slaves of God**...” (verses 16-22).

Yes, sin *enslaves* a person, and brings him into bondage. Yet, as we’ve seen, one can be set free *from* that bondage. But, such freedom has its price... the price of becoming a “slave of God”—a “slave of righteousness.” In other words, at baptism, we unconditionally *surrender* our lives to God—and, from then on, we become a living *sacrifice* (Rom.12:1-2).

We are then no longer “our own”! As Paul said, “do you not know that... you are **not** your own? For you were **bought** at a price” (I Cor. 6: 19-20). And, that “price” was the **supreme** price... Christ’s shed blood!

So, you then become “Christ’s slave” (I Cor. 7:22). And, Christ *does* require **obedience!** (Matt. 19: 16-19; 7: 21-23; Luke 8:21). Yet, obedience to Christ, *leads* to a life of lasting peace and happiness. Accordingly, Christ said, “Take My yoke upon you... and you will find **rest** for your souls. For My yoke *is* **easy** and My burden is light” (Matt. 11: 29-30).

Having examined the above numerous and *plain* scriptures about how a person can stop being a “slave of sin,” we can now understand the true meaning of certain other scriptures (especially in the book of Galatians) which people tend to misunderstand.

Notice Galatians chapter 5: “Stand fast therefore in the **liberty** by which Christ has made us **free** [from bondage to sin], and do not be entangled **again** with a yoke of bondage” (verse 1).

Likewise, in chapter 4, verses 6-11, Paul is addressing *Gentiles* who had converted to Christianity. Here, Paul said, “you are **no longer** a slave [to sin]” (verse 7). Yet, although these Gentile converts were no longer *slaves* to sin, they were beginning to resume their **former** pagan and sinful practices—including the observance of *pagan* holy days (verse 10). So, Paul warned them to not *return* to such sinful practices. Paul said, “But now after you have known God... how *is it that* you turn **again** to the weak and beggarly elements [‘weak and miserable principles’ —*NIV*], to which you desire **again** to be in **bondage**?” (verse 9).

Paul was **NOT** speaking of bondage “to God’s law”! *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* discusses what *type* of “bondage” that Paul was referring to in Galatians chapter 4: “He [Paul] would be thinking of a **demonic** bondage in which the Galatians had indeed been held *prior* to the proclamation of the gospel... The ultimate contrast to freedom in Christ is **bondage to Satan** and the evil spirits” (Vol. 10, p. 472).

God’s Law is NOT Bondage!

Let’s now summarize. There are basically *three* reasons why mankind mistakenly views God’s spiritual law as “burdensome” or “bondage”: **(1)** Human nature—with a mind which is “**not subject** to the **law** of God” (Rom. 8:7); **(2)** The failure to understand that certain New Testament scriptures are *actually* speaking of the burdens and **bondage of Judaism**; **(3)** The failure to understand that certain New Testament scriptures are *actually* speaking of being in **bondage to sin**.

God’s spiritual law is certainly NOT “bondage”! Rather than “bondage,” it is actually “the perfect law of **liberty**” (James 1:25). It is the way to every *good* thing in life. As the Apostle John stated, “His [God’s] commandments are **NOT** burdensome”!

APPENDIX

Other Pertinent Articles on This Website

What Does it Mean “Not Under the Law”?

The NEW Commandment of Christ

How Did Christ “FULFILL” the Law?

Was Christ “The END of the Law”?

WHAT Was Nailed to the Cross?

Does “Love” REPLACE God’s Law?

Did PAUL Do Away With God’s Law?

“the law was our tutor” (Gal. 3: 23-25)

Repentance

Is it “Pharisaical” to Endorse the Keeping of God’s Law?

Is the SABBATH Command in the New Testament?

Was the “Sabbath Shadow” REPLACED by the Coming of Christ?

Agape Love

Progressive Revelation and Dispensationalism

Does God Have One Way of Salvation for Those of Old Testament Times, and ANOTHER Way for Us Today?

Also see the following BOOKLETS:

[Which Day Is The Christian Sabbath?](#)

[The Holy Days: God's Master Plan](#)

[The Ten Commandments](#)

[Is This the Only Day of Salvation?](#)

[What Is a True Christian?](#)

[What Is the Meaning of Life?](#)

[Restoring Original Christianity](#)

[Where Is God's True Church Today?](#)

[John 3:16](#)

[The Bible: Fact or Fiction?](#)