

ALL ABOUT THE COVENANTS

Church of God, The Eternal

P.O. Box 775

Eugene OR 97440-0775

www.cogeternal.org

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Does the New Covenant abolish God's Law? Should Christians keep the Ten Commandments, or should they observe New Testament principles only? Are God's Holy Days obsolete? What is the relationship between the Old and New Covenants? Did Christ redeem us from the Old Covenant? Why did He establish the New? This article will explain what the Bible says about the covenants!

Why Concern Ourselves With the Covenants?

For many years, God's people lived "by every word of God." They understood that the sacrificial system was abolished, that Sabbath and Holy Day observance was predicated upon specific time commanded by God and that the sacrifices had no bearing on their sanctity. It was not until many became disillusioned with the church leadership that they began to ". . . heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (II Tim. 4:3).

These teachers (disillusioned, themselves, with church leadership) had previously taught obedience to God's Law, observance of the Sabbath and Holy Days, and that man should live by every word of God. They now teach there is no need to keep the Ten Commandments or the Holy Days. They tell us Christians should live by New Testament principles only and obey the so-called law of faith.

So-called higher criticism has been employed by these teachers in order to reject past teachings. Higher criticism can be summarized by the following: 1) The Bible is viewed as any other form of literature. 2) It is not one book, but a series of separate, unconnected books. 3) The New Testament must not be used to substantiate the Old. 4) Much of what was written applied to that time period only, and Biblical teachings have been tainted by the prevailing beliefs of the day. 5) It is up to each individual to judge the trustworthiness of the Bible record regarding miracles. 6) The Bible was not actually inspired by God. 7) The Bible is a record of religious evolution. 8) Its historical statements are not valid unless corroborated by secular history.

Arguments based on these premises have been applied to the Old and New Covenants, confusing many. They have been lead to believe there is a legitimate basis for abrogating the Ten Commandments, the Holy Days, and—for all practical purposes—the entirety of the Old Testament, as well as much of the New. By reverting to Protestant beliefs, many of God's people have abandoned the doctrine they once believed.

But did they really believe what they were taught in the Church of God? Or was the basis of their conviction the charisma of one or two men? After human frailties and sins of the church leadership were exposed, many began to doubt doctrine.

It is the teaching—by former ministers of the Church of God—of what many want to hear, which now lends credibility to the repudiation of God's Law.

But can Protestant arguments advanced by former ministers of the Church of God—arguments designed to reject God's Law—be substantiated? Is there Scriptural validity to their theology?

For those who have discarded their convictions, there is little which can be done to convince them otherwise. Those who are spiritually shipwrecked are beyond repair. But for those who are genuinely concerned and who want straightforward answers, this article will make that truth plain!

The lines are drawn; the issues are clear. Either Protestant theology, which by textual selectivity abrogates God's Law, is true and the Church of God is in error; or, Christians are to "live by every word of God," and Protestant theology is wanting.

It is one or the other.

Whether you are curious or a sincere seeker of truth, you are the one who must either accept or reject God's Law. If you desire to know the truth which will help you make the right decision, read on.

What Is a Covenant?

A covenant is a written agreement or promise, usually under seal, between two or more parties for the performance of some action (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*). A covenant, then, is that which binds together the parties. There are several varieties found in the Old Testament. Covenants between tribes are regarded as treaties or alliances (Gen. 26:26–31); between kings and subjects, as commands (Jer. 34:8–10); between individuals or groups, as agreements or pledges (II Kings 11:4–8). Also, marriage itself was regarded as a covenant (Mal. 2:14).

The elements include a statement of the terms agreed upon, an oath by each party to observe the terms, a statement of the penalty invoked by each for breaking the agreement, and the formal ratification.

In a covenant between God and man, it is God who takes the initiative. God's promises, relative to any covenant He makes with men, are predicated upon human obedience (Gen. 17:1–13). In this sense, the covenant is a divine ordinance. Therefore, any covenant between God and man is a solemn, mutual agreement, as well as an obligation imposed by the Superior upon the inferior.

What Was the Old Covenant?

The agreement between God and the nation of Israel is commonly referred to as the Old Covenant. The details are found in Exodus chapters 19 through 24. The terms of this covenant are found in chapters 20 through 24. The oath to observe the terms is found in God's promises to bless Israel in Exodus 23:20–23, 25–31 (compare Heb. 6:17–18)—and in Israel's reply, in Exodus 24:3 and Deuteronomy 5:27–28. The curses for disobedience are understood by the "if" in Exodus 19:5–6 and 23:22, 33—which makes the promises conditional. (The blessings and cursings are repeated in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27–28.) And the formal ratification is recorded in Exodus 24:4–11. Israel (the wife) agreed to obey God (the husband) in return for various blessings (Ex. 24:3; 19:5–6; 23:22–23, 25–31).

While this marriage is of course symbolic, it illustrates the general agreement which took place between God and the nation of Israel (Ezek. 16). Initially, any wife agrees to obey her husband in a general way. But, many circumstances—involving specific acts of obedience not written out at the time of the original contract—arise during the marriage.

The terms of the Old Covenant included a summary of the Ten Commandments, as well as various statutes and judgments which defined how the Ten Commandments should be applied in specific circumstances (Ex. 20–23; 34:27–28). These were the general terms of the covenant. They were not the covenant! The covenant was the agreement, between God and the nation of Israel, to observe the respective terms (obedience in return for specific promises).

Israel's Failure

But, as a wife who fails to anticipate—at the time of the marriage ceremony—what the promise of obedience to her husband entails, Israel soon fell short. This is why Jeremiah was later to write, "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices [compare Ex. 19–24]: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers" (Jer. 7:22–26).

A Law Was Added

Because of Israel's transgressions, a law was *added* (Gal. 3:19—a full explanation of this Scripture will be given later). This added law was a sacrificial law, intended to remind Israel of her failure to live up to the terms of the Old Covenant (Heb. 10:1–4). It involved not only laborious sacrifices but also various washings, rites, and ceremonies. It was intended for a limited time period (see Heb. 9:10, margin). This system did not begin until the second year after Israel left Egypt (Ex. 40:1, 17). This was when sacrifices were instituted (Jer. 7:22). There is no mention of sin offerings involving the people of Israel, until Leviticus 4:2–12. Thus, in logical sequence, the book of Leviticus follows the book of Exodus.

It was because of Israel's failure to live up to the requirements of the Old Covenant, that the sacrificial law was instituted. And though obedience to God was limited to obeying the letter of the law, Israel as a whole was incapable of even that limited obedience.

There were no spiritual promises attached to the Old Covenant. Salvation was not offered as a part of the agreement. Upon condition of Israel's obedience, the promises were physical blessings and national security only (Lev. 26, Deut. 28). The promise of salvation is found nowhere in the entire agreement. Nor is the forgiveness of sins. Paul says, in the book of Hebrews, that the sacrificial system did not serve as a method of expiating sins. It merely served as a reminder of sin, looking forward to the time when the spiritual promises would be given and individual sins could be forgiven (Heb. 10:1–10).

Israel, as a whole, did not have the heart or desire to obey God. The books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles attest to the fact there were few periods of time when the nation of Israel obeyed God. After Israel's revolt from the House of David, there was never a time the northern kingdom ever attempted to obey. In Judah there were a few righteous kings who effected reformations for limited periods of time, but Judah also proved incapable of obedience. Both nations were driven into national captivity (II Kings 17:18; 25:24) and were divorced (Jer. 3:8–11). Yet, the covenant (agreement) between God and Israel was never intended as an end in itself. Rather, it was a forerunner of what was to follow. It was the steppingstone God was to use in accomplishing His purpose for mankind. It was to be the foundation for the New Covenant!

The New Covenant

The promise of the Messiah (Gen. 3:15), later confirmed to be a descendant of Abraham (Gen. 22:18, Gal. 3:16), foretold the establishment of the New Covenant. Had the Old Covenant been the summation of God's intention, it would have encompassed the fullness of the spiritual blessings and promises found in the New. But Christ did not appear

until approximately fifteen hundred years after the establishment of the Old. Although only a handful of the covenant people continued to maintain a semblance of the Old Covenant relationship, it was their own prophets whom they neglected to hear. For their prophets said, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that 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 in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:31–33).

An Israelitish Covenant

The New Covenant, like the Old, is an Israelitish covenant. Its final confirmation was established with Israel and Judah. But to this day, the people of Israel—as a whole—have not yet entered into the New Covenant relationship (Rom. 11:25). It is given only to those who are called and have become the Israel of God (Acts 2:38–39, Gal. 6:16). It did not include Gentiles until years after its establishment (Acts 11:18; 10:45). It was given to Israel first (Acts 10:36–37), then later made available to the Gentiles. But even then, Gentiles must become spiritual Israelites before they can be included (Rom. 2:28–29; 11:13–24, Gal. 3:27–29, Eph. 2:11–14, 18–19).

When the prophets spoke of the New Covenant, they foresaw its spiritual expansion relative to the law. Isaiah wrote, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isa. 42:21). Both terms and promises of the New Covenant are greatly expanded. The terms, or requirements, are summarized in the Sermon on the Mount. No longer is one held accountable for breaking the letter of the law only. One is now held accountable for violating the intent of the law (Matt. 5:21–32). The promises given to Israel under the Old Covenant were physical, but the promises under the New Covenant go far beyond that and include eternal life (Matt. 5:3–10).

Given to Correct the Old

Israel of old could not keep God's Law, even in the letter. But the fault was not with God or with the covenant. The fault was with the people (Heb. 8:8). The New Covenant was given to correct that fault. The inability of physical Israel to keep the law has been rectified by the addition of God's Holy Spirit to spiritual Israel (Gal. 5:22–24, Heb. 8:10). Those converted have the capability of obeying not only the letter of the law, but also the spirit of the law (Gal. 4:24–25, Rom. 8:1–2, 4, 14). This is why the prophets wrote, ". . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33, II Cor. 3:3).

The purpose of the New Covenant, then, was to magnify the Old. Jesus came to "fill it full." ('Fulfill' in Matt. 5:17 is the Greek *pleroo*, meaning to bring to full expression—*A Greek-English Lexicon*, by Arndt and Gingrich, p. 677).

Jesus said, "... except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). The scribes and Pharisees observed the letter of the law. They did not have the capability to keep the law spiritually. Jesus expounded how the law must be kept, spiritually, in order to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment [the Old Covenant did not impute a penalty for anger]: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause [Greek: 'lightly'] shall be in danger of the judgment. . . (Matt. 5:21–22).

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery [the Old Covenant did not impute a penalty for lusting]: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:27–28).

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement [the Old Covenant did not impute a penalty for divorce]: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Matt. 5:31–32).

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy [the Old Covenant did not impute a penalty for hating]. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. . . (Matt. 5:43–45).

The entire Sermon on the Mount clearly shows Jesus did "magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isa. 42:21). He brought it up to the spiritual level which God intended from the beginning. He "filled it full." And now, with the help of the Holy Spirit, man is capable of obeying it in its spiritual intent (Heb. 8:10, Gal. 5:24). The New Covenant indeed magnified the Old!

Jesus Came to Confirm, Not Abolish

There were two covenants only (Heb. 8:7). The New Covenant was the one Jesus spiritually confirmed (Dan. 9:27). He specifically stated, in Matthew 5:17–18, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law [Torah], or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill [Greek means 'bring to full expression']. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be *fulfilled* [*ginomia*, 'until all has taken place,' *A Greek-English Lexicon* by Arndt and Gingrich, p. 157]." Jesus said nothing in the law would be abrogated, as long as heaven and earth stood! He added that anyone who teaches otherwise shall be regarded as the least of men! (v. 19).

Jesus, Our Example

Jesus came not only to expand God's Law—to illustrate its full, spiritual intent—but also to set an example! Nowhere does the Bible state Jesus came to live a perfect life in our stead. Rather, the Bible says He is our example (I Pet. 2:21, I John 2:6, I Cor. 11:1). By obeying God's Law perfectly, Jesus took upon Himself the penalty we have incurred for our sins (I Pet. 1:18–20; 2:22, Rom. 3:23–24; 5:8). Not only, then, do we have Christ's teaching which magnifies the spiritual intent of God's Law—we have His perfect example, also. This is the reason Jesus tells us, "Be [become] ye therefore perfect . . ." (Matt. 5:48). Jesus knew that by the addition of God's Holy Spirit, we could keep the spiritual intent of God's Law—and by the example He set, we would know how! Jesus was the personification of God's Law! (John 1:1, 14; 6:48–58). Of Him alone, God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). Man's only hope is Christ—the unchanging God—in us (Col. 1:27, I John 5:11–12).

The gospel accounts give us the record of that conduct. Jesus lived a perfect life. Those who follow Christ continually purge themselves of those things, in their lives and character, which do not meet that perfect standard (I John 3:3). Without the law which defines that standard, and without the example Jesus set, man could not know. Accountability to that spiritual law comes as a result of Christ's teaching—His example—and the gift of His Holy Spirit!

The New Covenant and God's Law

As previously stated, Christ came to magnify the law. The portion of the Bible called the Torah (the first five books of Moses) details that law. The law Jesus referred to in Matthew 5:17 was the Torah. The *Living Bible* correctly renders the meaning of Matthew 5:17, "Don't misunderstand why I have come—it isn't to cancel the laws of Moses and the warnings of the prophets . . ." It is clear, the law referred to in verse 17 must mean all Old

Testament law, including the Law of Moses. With the exception of the sacrifices (including the washings and ceremonies), it was God's Law Jesus came to expand—to "fill full." There is no limitation placed on the word "law" in Matthew 5:17.

Man to Live by Every Word of God

Jesus said, ". . . Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). The Old Testament is God's Word. Paul wrote Timothy, ". . . from a child thou has known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation. . . . All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:15–16). The New Testament was not canonized when Paul wrote Timothy (about A.D. 65–66), so the inspired Scripture Paul referred to was the Old Testament! Not only does the New Testament teach Christians to live by what was written in the Old Testament (Matt. 4:4, II Tim. 3:15–16); the Old Testament taught Israel to live by what was to be written in the New (Deut. 8:3; 18:15–19). It is the entirety of God's Word which is incumbent upon mankind today. Those who dissect God's Word, in order to justify living by New Testament principles only, had better realize they will be judged by the words of Jesus (John 12:48). Jesus said, ". . . Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"! (Matt. 4:4). To whom will you listen—to scholars or to Jesus Christ?

God's Law in Heart and Mind

Consider the consequences of obeying God's Law in so-called principle only. The idea that the Law of God is done away cannot be sustained in application. Spiritual-sounding phrases may appeal to many, but the consequences resulting from obedience to principle only would soon lead to disaster.

It is not possible to obey principles of God's Law only, while disobeying the letter of the law.

If the Ten Commandments are done away, it is permissible to commit idolatry, to take God's name in vain, to break the Sabbath, to dishonor parents, to kill, to commit adultery, to steal, to lie, to covet. Yet, to keep the Commandments in principle only means we should *not* commit idolatry, take God's name in vain, break the Sabbath, dishonor parents, kill, commit adultery, steal, lie or covet. How contradictory! Either we obey God's Law, or we do not. We cannot, at the same time, both obey and disobey. We cannot keep God's Law in the letter and disobey it in principle. Neither can we disobey God's Law in the letter and keep it in principle. We either keep it in letter and in principle, or we disobey it in letter and in principle. We cannot both keep it and not keep it.

Consider the fifth, seventh and eighth commandments, for example. If we obey them in principle while disobeying the letter, this means we may kill as long as we do not hate. We may commit adultery as long as we do not lust. And we may steal as long as we do not covet!

In Jesus' day, many of the Jews tried to keep God's Law according to the letter, although they utterly failed to keep it in the spirit. They understood the technicality but could not grasp the principle. However, it is impossible to keep the principle while repudiating the letter!

Consider, next, the statutes and judgments as written in the terms of the Old Covenant. Verse 18 of Exodus 21 states, "And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed" (Ex. 21:18–19).

If the letter of the law is done away, then there is no responsibility for some type of restitution. Yet, according to the teaching of Jesus, one should love his neighbor as himself (Matt. 22:39). If one loved his neighbor as himself, he would not injure him in the first place—but if he failed to express the proper love and did injure him, he would not be free from the moral obligation to make proper restitution. Today, this legal obligation is not enforced because there is no nation of Israel under God to enforce it.

Many of the statutes and judgments were legal obligations under a civil government. For example, "If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow [no injury]: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief [any injury] follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Ex. 21:22–25).

According to the letter of the law, there must be restitution. And if serious injury occurred which led to dismemberment or death, the penalty was retaliation. But who set the penalty?

God did!

The law of retaliation was not given to appease the wrath of the injured wife's husband, but to guide the judge in making the proper decision. There is no civil government of God extant today, so the legal requirements and penalties are not exacted—but the moral obligation is. And any modern civil or criminal court would readily concur.

The spiritual principle of God's Law—to love one's neighbor as himself—if practiced today, would prevent such incidents. But since it often isn't, the moral obligation to make restitution remains (Matt. 5:38–42; 22:39). How can one observe the moral obligation to make proper restitution for his mistakes—and yet refuse to carry it out in practical application?

Those who insist the Law of God, as recorded in Exodus 22, is done away—are really saying there is no moral obligation to pay for damages done to a neighbor's crop (vv. 5–6), no obligation to make restitution for that which was stolen (vv. 7–9), no obligation to restore borrowed goods which have been destroyed or damaged (v. 14). There should be no penalty for those who commit bestiality (v. 19). One should take usury of the poor (v. 25), and it is permissible to revile the judges (v. 28). As recorded in Exodus 23, it is permissible to follow a multitude to do evil (v. 2), one can wrest judgment from the poor (v. 6), one can take bribes (v. 8) and one can oppress the stranger (v. 9).

Those who tell us the Law of God is done away would most likely deny the above allegations. They probably would agree all these laws should be observed in principle. But how do we observe them in principle and violate them in practical application?

The answer is, we cannot! What is not practiced today is their legal enforcement, but the moral obligation defined by principle requires individual obedience.

What is meant by those who reject the necessity of obedience to the Law of God, today, is this: We keep the principles of the Ten Commandments, but we should not keep them literally! Especially, the Sabbath should not be observed, nor the feasts of God (Ex. 23:12, 17).

But does anyone have the right to dissect God's Word to suit himself? Consistency demands the observance of all of God's spiritual law. This is the reason Christ and the New Testament church kept God's Law, including the Sabbath and Holy Days!

The Israel of God

It is the Israel of God who is obedient today. Those who are led by the Spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). They live by the faith of Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20). This faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). The law defines sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7, I John 3:4). The law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12); it is spiritual (Rom. 7:14).

Is it possible, then, for the unconverted to observe the spiritual intent of God's Law? The Bible says no! (Rom. 8:5–7). While there is a measure of goodness in men, there is also

evil (Jer. 17:9, John 2:24–25). All primitive tribes knew it was wrong to murder fellow tribal members, but did not hesitate to murder those of other tribes. Understanding one commandment, in a community relationship, does not make one able to obey "the essential things found in the law." One cannot obey the law unless he knows what the law states (Rom. 3:20). If he keeps one or two commandments, he is still guilty before God because he must not offend in any command (Jas. 2:10).

Apart from a knowledge of God's Law, and without the gift of God's Spirit, one cannot obey the spiritual intent of God's Law! He may keep a principle or two, but that does not make him a Christian. It is those who are led by the Spirit of God, and who obey Christ's words to "live by every word of God," who are "the Israel of God."

Righteousness Today

Righteousness, in the spiritual sense, was not generally possible during the Old Testament period. Few were able to obey God from the heart. Some of the patriarchs, prophets and righteous men did—but Israel as a whole did not. The sacrificial system was added as a reminder of sin—and to point to the Savior who alone could expiate sin (Heb. 10:1–14). Israel was required to keep the letter of the law only, yet they could not perform even that. The New Covenant was made to correct the Old. Why? Because the fault was with the people, not with the terms of the Old Covenant. God, through Christ, now makes it possible for man to attain righteousness according to the spiritual intent of His Law.

The law defined sin. It made man aware of his shortcomings—his missing the mark (Rom. 7:7–9). Yet, under the Old Covenant there was no expiation or forgiveness in the spiritual sense. There was only the constant reminder.

But the time came for man to be justified, to be forgiven, and to be reconciled to God. This could not come through law (Rom. 3:28). It could come only through faith in Christ's sacrifice—in the firm belief that Christ died in man's stead and that, through belief in that sacrifice, man could be forgiven—justified to begin anew (Rom. 3:23–26; 5:8–10, II Cor. 5:21). There is no cause to "boast in the knowledge of the law," for those who knew the law failed to keep it. Human deeds could not produce righteousness. Only the law of faith could (Rom. 3:27 ['law' in Greek is *nomos*, meaning 'principle, rule, norm'—*A Greek-English Lexicon*, Arndt and Gingrich, p. 544]). This is why Paul said, ". . . the righteousness of God without [Greek: 'apart from'] the law is manifested. . . . Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified [made right] by faith without [apart from] the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:21–22, 28).

The principle of faith points to Christ as the propitiation for sins (I John 2:1–2). It is not possible to be justified by the deeds of the law, for the law defines sin. Justification

relates to past sins (Rom. 3:25), so present obedience to the law cannot absolve past guilt. Only those who turn to God, accept Christ's sacrifice, repent of sin, are baptized and receive God's Spirit, are reckoned as righteous (Rom. 8:1–4). Since the past is obliterated, they are no longer under (the penalty of) the law (Rom. 8:1). But does their acceptance of Christ and the law of faith (principle, rule) void God's Law?

Let Paul answer.

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). The law Paul refers to, in this chapter, is the entirety of God's Law recorded in the Old Testament!

The legal enforcement of that law is not imposed upon Christians. Those who live by the principle of the law will not repudiate the letter of the law. While many specific circumstances relative to the application of statutes and judgments may never arise, there will be no time when the application of New Testament principles will violate the letter of the law. Those who cite Exodus 21:24—the obvious antithesis of Matthew 5:38—as the excuse to repudiate the statutes and judgments, need only recognize that the responsibility of retaliation is no longer in the hands of men. It is in the hands of God (Rom. 12:19, Heb. 10:30–31). That law will be enforced by Him alone!

What Is Christianity?

It was Christ who revealed the complete way of God (Isa. 42:21, John 1:17). That way, hidden from man for generations, was revealed to the apostles (Eph. 3:1–5, Rom. 16:25–26, Col. 1:26–27). Those who follow Christ are Christians. Christianity is a way of life (Acts 24:14), and those who follow Christ imitate Christ (I Cor. 4:16–17; 11:1, I John 2:6). They imitate Christ because they have the spiritual capability. Paul said, ". . . Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Christianity is the way of life lived by the power of the Holy Spirit, which inspires the individual Christian to do the same things Jesus Christ did (I John 2:6).

Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament (I Cor. 10:4). It was He who gave the "lively oracles" (Acts 7:38). He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). He does not change (Mal. 3:6). With God, there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning (Jas. 1:17).

The basis for the New Covenant relationship was the expansion of the terms of the Old (Isa. 42:21, Matt. 5:17–18). To repeat, Jesus did not come to abrogate God's Law—but to

set the example, to die in our stead and to make available the gift of the Holy Spirit. Man could then live up to the terms of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:10).

Christianity is the way of life which expresses the terms of the New Covenant in daily relationships. It is the way of life which truly exemplifies love to God and love to fellow man. The Ten Commandments are the expression of the great commandment (Matt. 22:36–39, Gal. 5:13–14). Living the Law of God in principle harmonizes with what was written in the letter. Christianity represents the spiritual intent of God's Law, in harmony with what was written according to the letter of the law. There is no contradiction between the two—only agreement.

Jesus said the profitable servant goes beyond what is commanded of him. Compliance with Old Covenant legislation was physical. Israel was not required to go beyond that (Matt. 5–7, Deut. 5:27–29, Josh. 24:14–25).

But Jesus changed this. He said the man who did only what was required was unprofitable. Israel, as a whole, was not able to go beyond what was physically required. Christians are expected to go far beyond what was required of Israel. Righteousness today must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. They obeyed the letter of the law only, but Christians must live by even the spiritual intent of the law. Obedience must be from the heart.

There is no legal requirement, today, which demands penalties for imperfect compliance. There is forgiveness for those who fall short (I John 1:9).

Fall short of what?

Who fall short of obeying the spiritual intent of God's Law. This frequently includes falling short of the letter of the law, as well!

Christianity is expressed by the attitude of willing obedience to the spiritual intent of God's Law—and the determination to live by every word of God. It never expresses itself by the attitude of reluctant compliance with New Testament commands only. Christians readily obey all of God's Word, unless specifically instructed otherwise.

Paul and the New Testament Church

Paul stood before the Sanhedrin and said, ". . . Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). He told the Philippians, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do . . ." (Ph'p. 4:9).

Note the following example of Paul's preaching to the Gentiles: "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23). Paul did not exclude Old Testament law when it came to preaching Jesus. He knew the foundation for the New Covenant rested on the Old. And, at that time, the only inspired Scripture from which Paul could preach was the Old Testament.

Relative to what he practiced, Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). Paul imitated Christ. Christ said man was to live by every word of God (Matt. 4:4). Paul taught Sabbath observance (Heb. 4:9, margin—"rest" means 'keeping of a Sabbath'). Paul, like Christ, observed the Holy Days (Luke 2:42–43, Matt. 26:18, John 7:10, 37, Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 18:21; 20:16, I Cor. 16:8). Paul knew the basis for Christian conduct, under the terms of the New Covenant, was the same law recorded under the Old Covenant (Heb. 4:2). He understood the spiritual expansion of that law. Christians are to live according to the "desire of the heart," not by legal legislation (Rom. 6:17). New Testament passages presuppose a concept easily understood by first-century Christians—that they were to live by every word of God. Unknown to them were the third and fourth-century concepts, which abrogated large sections of the Bible and perverted grace into license by obeying only what one dissected from God's Word.

What Observed After Everything Done Away?

According to some, God's Law was done away when Christ died. But what was observed by the New Testament church after everything was done away? Let us examine what Christians and the New Testament church did after the crucifixion.

In Acts 2, the New Testament church observed Pentecost. There is a reference to the Feast of Unleavened Bread in I Corinthians 5:7–8. Some attempt to spiritualize away its observance—but if it were fulfilled in Christ, why does Paul say to keep it as late as A.D. 55, when the book of Corinthians was written?

To say the Corinthians were already unleavened in a spiritual sense may well be true, but does this text say the Feast is done away? Of course not! Verse 8 says, "Therefore let us keep the feast. . . ." The Feast symbolizes an action all Christians (present and future) must accomplish—ridding sin out of individual lives by keeping God's commandments!

In Acts 18, Paul said, ". . . I must by all means keep [Greek: 'celebrate'] this feast that cometh in Jerusalem . . ." Bible chronology indicates this was the Feast of Tabernacles, A.D. 52. Paul kept God's Holy Days. Note Acts 20:16: ". . . he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be [Greek is 'celebrate'] at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."

Paul preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 17:2; 18:4). What was Paul's purpose for attending the synagogue on the Sabbath? The Jews could only construe this as Paul's intention to worship. If the Sabbath was done away and Paul attended the synagogue on the Sabbath, he most certainly set the wrong example. Christians are not to give offense ". . . neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (I Cor. 10:32). If the Sabbath was done away, Paul offended the Gentiles as well as the Church of God by attending the synagogue. But if the Sabbath was not done away, it would have been perfectly logical to attend the synagogue. Neither the Jews nor the Gentiles, nor the Church of God, would have been offended.

These texts clearly demonstrate New Testament Christians knew the New Covenant required obedience to every word of God—and that the Sabbath, Holy Days, and all of God's commandments were to be kept!

Christ's Death Abolish Spiritual Things?

The Bible says "the law is spiritual" (Rom. 7:14). The Psalms tell us, "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness" (Psa. 111:7–8). How, then, could Christ's death abolish spiritual things? Spiritual things are eternal. They do not pass away. Paul wrote, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:18).

God's Law is an invisible, inexorable, spiritual law. To understand, let us consider the physical law of gravity. We cannot see the law of gravity, but we can see its effects. We know that if we violate the law of gravity, the penalty can be disastrous. Likewise, God's spiritual law cannot be visibly observed, but it is equally in force and the consequences of violating it can be comparably disastrous. In fact, more so! Why? Because the penalty for violating God's spiritual law is eternal death! (Rom. 6:23).

Sin is defined as breaking God's Law (I John 3:4). Those who say, "Sin is the breaking of God's New Covenant laws of love and faith," should realize the "New Covenant laws of love and faith" are the spiritual magnification of the laws written in the Old Testament (Heb. 8:10; 4:2, II Cor. 3:3). Christ's death did not abolish God's Law! God's Law is spiritual. And spiritual things cannot be destroyed.

Nowhere does the Bible imply Christ's death abrogated God's Law (or any part of the Old Testament, except those portions specifically stated as being done away). Jesus came to confirm the Covenant, not to abolish God's Law. He specifically stated, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law . . ." (Matt. 5:17). God's Law is an inexorable, spiritual law,

designed to protect man by teaching him the physical and spiritual consequences of sin. Of this David said, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Psa. 119:60). David knew that by keeping God's commandments, statutes and judgments, happiness and security could be assured. He wrote, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul . . . The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes . . . the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold . . . Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psa. 19:7–11).

It is those who appreciate and love God's eternal, spiritual law (Psa. 111:8) who truly understand the New Testament application of the "law of the Lord," the statutes and the judgments.

God's Law Before Old Covenant

The annulment of the Old Covenant cannot abolish what it did not institute. The statutes and judgments were elaborations and applications of the Ten Commandments—the law which existed from the creation of man. What is catalogued, in Exodus 20, is merely the codified form (Rom. 5:20). Violations of the first and second commandments (against idolatry) are found in Genesis 35:1–4 and Joshua 24:1–2, 14. To take God's name in vain was regarded as a serious sin long before Israel left the land of Egypt (Lev. 18:1, 21, 27). The Sabbath was given at creation—before the Old Covenant was proposed (Gen. 2:1–3, Mark 2:27)—and to prevent Israel from violating it, God revealed which day was the seventh day of the week (Ex. 16:4–5, 22–30). Dishonoring parents was an evil in the days of Noah (Gen. 9:21–26). Murder was prohibited at the time of Cain (Gen. 4:7–9). Adultery was a sin even at the time Joseph was in Egypt (Gen. 39:7–9). Stealing was regarded as wrong in the days of Jacob (Gen. 30:33). Bearing false witness was considered evil in the days of Abraham (Gen. 20:1–9). Coveting was forbidden in the days of Job (Gen. 6:1–3, Job 31:19, 24–25).

None of these violations could have been considered evil unless there had been a previous law which revealed sin (Rom. 4:15; 5:13–14; 7:7). Abraham, "the father of the faithful" and the friend of God, knew God's Law (Gen. 26:5). He taught his children that law (Gen. 18:19). The Ten Commandments did not originate with Moses, at Mount Sinai. These are God's inexorable, spiritual laws which were revealed at creation. They existed from the beginning. The statutes and judgments were specific applications of that law, as applied to human relationships with both God and man (Ex. 34:27–28).

Those who assume the judgments recorded in Exodus 21 through 23 originated with Moses need only examine the following:

He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death (Gen. 9:5–6, Ex. 21:12)

If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit (Gen. 9:5, Ex. 21:28).

And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof (Gen. 31:39, Ex. 22:12).

And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins [This judgment was understood and practiced in the days of Jacob (Gen. 34:1–12).] (Ex. 22:16–17).

Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death [This was one of the terrible sins practiced by the Canaanites before Israel entered into the Holy Land (Lev. 18:3, 23, 27).] (Ex. 22:19).

Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause [This statute was known in the days of Job (Job 31:13–14).] (Ex. 23:6).

Those who assume the judgments and statutes originated with Moses, had better take another look. These statutes and judgments detail the application of God's great, spiritual Law—the Ten Commandments—with respect to human relationships. One who keeps the spiritual intent of God's Law, could not violate the letter of the law and be guiltless before God. While it is true many of the statutes could be practiced only in the civil system Israel embraced, it is a mistake to assume none should ever be applied today. Many of the provisions found in Exodus 21 through 23 are practical, honorable, equitable and fair—they simply make common sense, apart from any legal requirement or enforcement. Other statutes, if practiced by society today, would make the world decent, safe, and moral. It is because many of these judgments are not practiced that evil is so rampant in today's society.

What Was Done Away?

It is clear the sacrificial law was not a part of the original Old Covenant. It was added in the second year (Jer. 7:22, Ex. 40:2, 17). The New Testament states there was a law which was to be done away (II Cor. 3:11). Was this the sacrificial law?

Of God's spiritual law, we read, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Psa. 119:160). Psalm 111:7–8 (quoted

earlier) says: "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." The last chapter of the Bible records this inspired statement: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). Nowhere does the Bible state God's spiritual law is done away.

So, what then—specifically—was abrogated?

Let Paul tell us.

Referring to the sacrificial system, he says: "Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances [margin: 'rites, ceremonies'], imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building [creation]; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:9–12).

There is no problem understanding what is meant by meats, drinks and divers washings. The problem is understanding the phrase "carnal ordinances." The margin correctly translates the meaning to be "rites" or "ceremonies." *A Greek-English Lexicon*, makes the meaning more clear. It translates the Greek *dikaiomasin sarkos* (carnal ordinances) in Hebrews 9:1, 10 as "regulations for the body." What was abrogated was the sacrificial meat and drink offerings, various washings and the rules which regulated ceremonial cleanliness. Many ceremonies and rites were involved in this system. They no longer apply. But those rites and ceremonies have no bearing on the validity of holy time set aside for worship, nor on obedience to the commandments, statutes and judgments, which regulate conduct between men and conduct between God and man. The Bible must interpret the Bible. The only text in all the Bible which reveals what was terminated is Hebrews 9:10. Any interpretation which does not agree with Hebrews 9:10 is pure assumption.

What Was Fulfilled in Christ?

The assumption that Christ came to live a righteous life in man's stead, thus fulfilling the law, is not substantiated by Scripture. Christ specifically said He did not come to destroy the law (Matt. 5:17)—but rather to "fill it up," to magnify and expand it into its true spiritual dimension. But He did fulfill something.

It was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Heb. 10:4). Only the death of a perfect Savior, who had not sinned, could do that. Only a perfect Savior could pay the penalty for all mankind. Only a perfect Savior could die in man's stead (Heb. 10:9–14). This is why Peter wrote, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain course of life received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world. . ." (I Pet. 1:18–20).

It was the perfect sacrifice which was fulfilled in Christ. "For he [God] hath made him to be sin ['sin-offering': *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 43] for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). Paul explained: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works [works of death] to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament [same Greek word used for 'covenant']. . ." (Heb. 9:14–15). Christ did not come to live a perfect life in man's stead. Rather, He came to set the perfect example—to live a sinless life—and to die in man's stead. The perfect sacrifice for sin was fulfilled in Christ!

Christ Redeemed Us From the Curse of the Law

Some teach "Christ redeemed us from the Old Covenant, that we can even be redeemed from the law itself."

Does the Bible teach this?

Notice Galatians 3:10: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. . . ."

This text is interpreted to mean those who keep God's Law are under a curse. But is this true?

Note, specifically, *why* the curse: ". . . for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). The curse was not the law! The curse was disobedience to the law!

But what did Christ redeem us from?

Galatians 3:13 states: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Because Christ was perfect, He could die for mankind and, in dying, take upon Himself the curse for our disobedience to God's Law. Christ did not redeem us from the obligation to keep God's Law.

He redeemed us from the penalty of the law! If we accept Christ's perfect sacrifice and then obey His Law, the penalty for all our past sins has been paid (Rom. 3:24–25). Christians are then not "under the law," but under grace. But does this mean they are now free to break the law—to sin? (I John 3:4).

Notice Paul's answer: "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. 6:15). And again, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1–2). Sin no longer has dominion (rule) over those who have repented and turned to God. But if they return to sin, they will once again be under the curse for disobedience to God's Law (Rom. 6:13–14, 16, Gal. 3:10; 2:17–18). The curse was for continuing "not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Those who teach sin to be "the breaking of God's New Covenant laws of love and faith, as given by Christ and His apostles," had better realize those laws are the spiritual expansion of the same laws written in the Old Testament! James, the apostle of Christ, said those who break the Ten Commandments are guilty of sin (Jas. 2:8–11). James did not talk in vague generalities about "New Covenant laws of love and faith." He plainly said sin was the transgression of the law—the Ten Commandments! (Jas. 2:11).

Christ did not redeem anyone from the obligation to keep God's Law. Christ redeemed us from the penalty of the law—the curse, which is eternal death in the lake of fire (Rom. 6:23). Do not be misled by spiritual-sounding arguments which attempt to tell you otherwise!

Did Christ Die for What Was Abolished?

Christ died to redeem mankind from the penalty of sin (I Pet. 3:18, John 1:29). Sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4). Is it reasonable to assume that Christ died for that which He was to abolish? People were faulted during the Old Testament period because they could not live up to the letter of the law. But if God's Law is done away, people today are obliged to obey no law at all. The Holy Spirit was given so Christians could keep the spiritual intent of God's Law (Rom. 8:1–4). What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit if God's Law is done away? People were condemned *before Christ* for failure to obey the law—but now, after the coming of Christ, some believe God's holy law became unholy. Can a B.C.-A.D. line in time make something which is holy suddenly unholy?

It is that kind of reasoning [that a B.C.-A.D. line suddenly made unholy that which God made holy] which has confused many today. Christ did not die for that which was abolished! God's Law stands for ever and ever (Psa. 111:7–8). God's holy law did not become unholy by an arbitrary division of time. God's Law is eternal. Jesus Christ—the God of the Old

Testament—is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). He did not abolish that which is holy, and His death would have served no purpose if His Law were not in force today!

Arguments Used to Repudiate God's Law

Numerous arguments, involving covenant questions, have been advanced in order to justify disobedience to God's Law. These are, essentially, long-standing arguments. Most can be readily disproved. What has upset the faith of many, however, is that these arguments are now advocated by former ministers of the Church of God. Because of their support, these arguments are being given an air of respectability.

Let us therefore examine them in the light of all of God's Word, not on premises aimed at repudiating past doctrinal beliefs. Let us first examine the arguments advanced concerning II Corinthians 3:7.

II Corinthians 3:7

The following is a summary of the interpretation given for II Corinthians 3:7, as it is applied to repudiate God's Law.

The guideposts for the Christian are teachings ". . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart" (II Cor. 3:3). Indeed, Paul points out quite clearly that the Old Covenant and the Ten Commandments which headed it—no matter how excellent they were for ancient Israel—are no longer glorious, for their glory has been done away by the New Covenant glory which far exceeds (II Cor. 3:9). . . . The Ten Commandments was the only code that God engraved on stones with which one could associate the glory of Moses' face. . . . It was specifically the Ten Commandments, along with the other laws of Moses that represented "the ministration of death."

But is this true?

Note, specifically, what Paul says was written and engraven in stones. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious . . ." (II Cor. 3:7). Paul did not say the Ten Commandments—or even the statutes and judgments. He specifically said the ministration of death was written and engraven in stones!

After forty days and forty nights in God's presence upon the mount (II Cor. 3:7). Moses' face shone for glory. God wrote the Ten Commandments upon two tables of stone (Ex. 34:27–28, Deut. 9:9–11; 10:4). But the Ten Commandments were not the administration of death! The Ten Commandments are God's spiritual law, which existed from the beginning. The statutes and judgments were elaborations of that law, applied to human relationships. The administration of death was the civil penalty for various violations of the Ten Commandments and statutes. That civil law was written and engraved upon stones (Deut. 27:1–6, Josh. 8:30–35). When Israel entered Canaan, the law was read to the people, and the blessings and curses were pronounced. The curse for disobedience to that law was death! (compare Deut. 27:20–26 with Lev. 20:10–21).

It is the administration of death which was to be done away, not the Ten Commandments! Christians led by the Holy Spirit are not under the penalty of the law. They are under grace. With the help of "the spirit of the living God," they obey God from the heart. There is no longer a need for a civil law, written and engraved in stones, with its severe penalties. While the civil law served a glorious purpose, it has been superseded by the "ministration of the Spirit."

The Commandments are not done away. Paul taught Christians to obey them: Rom. 13:9, Gal. 5:19–21, I Cor. 6:9–10, Col. 3:5–9!

Arguments From Galatians

Arguments from the book of Galatians are often advanced to justify rejection of God's Law. Galatians is regarded as one of the most difficult of Paul's epistles to understand. Even Peter warned that Paul's writings were difficult to understand (II Pet. 3:15–16). Why should they be any different today?

The first of these arguments we need to examine is found in Galatians 2:16. It reads as follows: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." An interpretation of this text is that since man cannot be justified by the works of the law, the law is no longer valid. One author states: "The works of the law were not simply the sacrificial part of the law. This is impossible, because the Galatians were Gentiles, and no Gentile was permitted to sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem anyway. The works of the law were all those works of the Old Covenant legislation ordained in the time of Moses . . . circumcision, holy days, new moons, Sabbatical years and so forth."

Before we accept this idea, we should consider the following facts: Galatian converts were both Jewish and Gentile (Acts 13:14, 42–43; 14:1–4). This is clearly seen at Antioch,

Iconium, Derbe and Lystra, which were all considered to be in the province of Galatia (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, article "Galatia").

Furthermore, Gentile converts to Judaism were required to sacrifice (Lev. 17:8; 22:18, Neh. 10:28–33, see also *Intl. Standard Bible Ency.*, article "Proselyte").

The issue in Galatians 2:16 is not what the Galatians did or did not do, relative to "works of the law," but rather the reason behind such works. Paul simply states man cannot be justified (made right with God) on the basis of works. Justification can come only through faith and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice. Obedience to any law—whether sacrificial or legal—which excludes Christ's sacrifice, is of no effect. Man can be justified only by accepting, in faith, Christ's shed blood. Galatians 2:16 in no way repudiates God's Law!

Next, let us notice Galatians 3:19. "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." This text is interpreted to mean that since the law was added "till the seed should come" (Christ is the seed), the law is now done away.

It has already been proven that a sacrificial law was added because of transgressions. This text does not exclude the interpretation that the added law was the sacrificial law. But neither is it limited to it. The promise of salvation, through Christ, was given to Abraham 430 years before the codified law at Mount Sinai (v. 17). Therefore, neither the codified nor the sacrificial law has any bearing on the fulfillment of that promise.

Why was it given, then?

Paul said, ". . . because of [for the sake of] transgressions, till the seed should come . . ." (v. 19). The law defines sin (Rom. 3:20; 4:15). Its purpose then, in a codified form, was to impress upon man his need for a Savior (Rom. 7:7–13). The sacrificial law was added as a reminder of sin (Heb. 10:3).

Thus, both laws were given for the sake of transgressions. "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Gal. 3:22). The codified law defined sin and impressed upon man his need for a Savior. The sacrificial law reminded man of that sin and looked forward to that Savior.

The law, then, revealed the need for a coming Savior. Forgiveness could come only through the shed blood of Christ. Galatians 3:19 nowhere says God's Law is done away. It tells us what purpose the law served until the Savior came. The purpose of the law, in its codified form, was to impress upon man his sinful state and make him aware of the need for justification. It is the spiritual application of that law which is incumbent upon Christians today. There is no longer a need for a codified law, with its civil penalties. But this text in no way abrogates God's spiritual law!

Next, turn to Galatians 4:9–10. "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." This text is interpreted to mean the Galatians were desiring to keep the *Law of Moses*. According to this interpretation, the *Law of Moses* includes the Ten Commandments, statutes, judgments, Sabbath, Holy Days, circumcision, etc. This *bondage* should be regarded as the weak and beggarly elements of the law, and should not be done.

But what does this text really say?

Notice verse eight: "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." Here Paul is clearly addressing Gentiles, not Jews. The Jews were the ones to whom God committed the oracles (Rom. 3:2). It was the Gentiles who did not know God (Eph. 2:11–12). Both Jews and Gentiles were in bondage to the elements (rudiments) of the world, since salvation was not available until Christ (Gal. 4:4–5)—but verses 9 and 10 of Galatians 4 specifically address Gentiles. Verse 9 says, "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God [since being converted], how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" According to *A Greek-English Lexicon*, by Arndt and Gingrich, the meaning of "weak and beggarly elements" is much disputed. Some scholars prefer to take it to mean elements of learning, fundamental principles—applying it to elementary forms of religion, Jewish and Gentile (which have been superseded by the new revelation of Christ). Others take it to mean the elemental spirits which were associated with the physical elements. Still others take it to mean heavenly bodies (specifically, the signs of the Zodiac), since they were regarded as personal beings and were given divine honors (see *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 776). The truth of the matter is, no one completely understands what Paul meant by the phrase "weak and beggarly elements." In addition, verse 9 does not say "weak and beggarly elements of the law." It simply states, "weak and beggarly elements." And since the authoritative *Greek-English Lexicon* says the meaning is open to several interpretations, this text cannot be used to prove the idea Paul was referring to the law of Moses!

Notice the words, ". . . how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements . . . ?" Since these Gentiles did not know God, this could not be referring to the law of Moses! Only the Jews knew God. Yet, these Gentiles were turning again. To what? The law of Moses?

Of course not! They never knew the law of Moses!

What they were turning to was not God's laws, commandments, etc., but what they had formerly embraced—paganism!

Note verse 8 again. Paul says, ". . . when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." This clearly refers to their pagan state, prior to conversion. Verse 9 says, "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God. . . ." Paul is not talking about some of them, who accepted Judaism. He is talking about all of them, who accepted Christianity. This is made clear by verse 8, which refers to their pagan state prior to conversion. Therefore, the "weak and beggarly elements" of verse 9 could only be referring to pagan practices prior to accepting Christianity!

Paul says, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (vv. 10–11). Are these God's Holy Days and Sabbaths? Paul does not call them God's Holy Days and Sabbaths. He simply says "days, months, times and years." The meaning is open to interpretation! Note what *A Greek-English Lexicon*, says of *eniautos* (year) in Galatians 4:10. "The meaning of *eniautos* in the combination *kairoi kai eniautoi* Gal. 4:40 is not certain. It could be an allusion to the so-called 'sabbatical years' (Lev. 25), but it may also mean *certain days of the year* . . . as the New Year festival" (emphasis theirs, p. 266).

Those who say Galatians 4:10 refers to God's laws, Sabbaths and Holy Days, are simply interpreting. Not even the prestigious *Greek-English Lexicon* does that!

There is ample historical evidence supporting the fact that heathen nations observed many days, celebrations, special days set aside for this or that, etc. One-third of the entire calendar year was set aside by the Romans! Therefore, to assume that Galatians 4:10 refers to God's Sabbaths and Holy Days is one interpretation.

By assumption, Galatians 4:10 could refer to either God's Sabbath and Holy Days or to pagan days. But obviously, it cannot refer to both. Since the text is addressed to Gentiles (v. 8), we must correctly assume it refers to pagan days. This text in no way proves God's laws, Sabbaths and Holy Days are abrogated.

The next text to examine is Galatians 4:21–26. "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." This text is taken to mean those desiring to keep the law of Moses (which is interpreted to mean the Ten Commandments, statutes, judgments, Holy Days, Sabbaths, etc.) are under bondage. This bondage is represented by the Old Covenant (Agar in Mount Sinai) and should be cast out.

But what does this text say?

Verses 19–20 state, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you . . . I stand in doubt of you." Paul desired for these converts to fully comprehend the meaning of Christ. But there were some desiring to be "under the law."

Christ came to magnify the law, to expand its meaning, to teach men the spiritual application. In its codified form (including sacrifices), it was laborious. It was the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

But for what purpose?

". . . that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24).

But some Galatians desired to be justified by works of the law, rather than faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:11; 5:4). Those who placed themselves "under the law" were obliged to perform all of it (Gal. 5:3). Circumcision was, to them, the sign which signified righteousness. John McDonald states—in his book, *Theology of the Samaritans*, page 294—that the Samaritans, like the Jews, believed "He who cuts the foreskin possesses the faith and is saved from his evils." The problem with some of these Galatians was the desire to adopt Jewish (and possibly Samaritan) concepts of justification by works—namely, circumcision and works of the law.

Paul states, in Galatians 1:6–7, that another gospel was being preached. Judaism was not "another gospel"! The inference here is that some type of gospel, which included Jewish or Samaritan concepts of justification, was being preached. The truth—that justification comes through Christ only—was being set aside (Gal. 5:4–6). It was the attempt to be righteous by works, which Paul labeled as the yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1). Righteousness could not come by the law (Gal. 2:21). Righteousness could come only through faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16).

So Paul says, in Galatians 4:21–31, that those who attempt to be justified by the works of the law engage in utter futility. All who seek to be righteous by works are under a curse, because no one is able to do ". . . all things which are written in the book of the law . . ." (Gal. 3:10). A codified law is no longer necessary, since those who are Christ's have put on Christ (Gal. 5:24). It is through the power of God's Holy Spirit that they keep God's Law in heart and mind (Gal. 2:20, Rom. 8:1, 4). They—not those who attempt to gain righteousness by works—are the ones who are justified. The problem with these Galatians was not whether they kept the law, but what they were attempting to gain by keeping it. Their motivation was to attain righteousness by the works of the law, while rejecting the sacrifice of Christ. This was why Paul told them to reject this concept! Galatians 4:21–31 nowhere says God's Law is abrogated!

Colossians and the Law

Colossians 2:14–16 is another text often quoted to *prove* the Ten Commandments are abrogated. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days." This text is interpreted to mean Christ nailed the Ten Commandments to the cross. Therefore, Christians should not be influenced to keep the Sabbath or Holy Days, since these are shadows which have been fulfilled in Christ. All such ordinances are the commandments and doctrines of men (vv. 21–22).

Let us now carefully examine what Colossians does say.

Paul begins, in the second chapter, admonishing the Colossians to remain faithful and to walk according to what they had been taught (vv. 6–7). He then warns them to beware of philosophy and vain deceit ". . . after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world . . ." (v. 8). "Rudiments of the world" is the same Greek expression found in Galatians 4:3, where it is translated "elements of the world." Its meaning is obscure.

Then, in Colossians 2:14, we read that Christ blotted out ". . . the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

"Handwriting of ordinances" is the Greek *cheirotogon tois dogmasin*. A Greek-English Lexicon states it means, "a [hand-written] document, specif. a certificate of indebtedness, bond . . . the bond that stood against us. . ." (p. 889).

Note carefully, this text does not say the Ten Commandments or the Law of God was "*done away*." It says the bond or debt was nailed to the cross.

The bond or debt of what?

The debt of dogmas!

The word "ordinances" is from the Greek *dogmas*. It means "decree, ordinance, decision, command." What, then, was nailed to the cross? The debt of dogmas—that is, the debt owed due to or because of dogmas. But what dogmas? Verses 8 and 22 tell us: Philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, rudiments of the world, commandments and doctrines of men!

The meaning is clear. Because the Colossians had sinned in following human tradition and commandments of men (not the commandments of God), they had incurred the death

penalty (Rom. 6:23). What Christ nailed to the cross was not God's Law, but the debt (death penalty) incurred because of violations against God's Law!

That is why Paul says, in verse 16, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days." Christians should allow no one to influence their behavior relative to observance of the Holy Days or Sabbaths. These are shadows (forerunners) of things to come. They have not been fulfilled in Christ! Let the body of Christ (the entire Church) be a force of influence for your observance of the Holy Days and Sabbaths. Do not be concerned about the dogmas and commandments of men—"Touch not; taste not; handle not"—which are to perish (vv. 21–22). Rather, be concerned about obedience to the spiritual principles of God's Law and observance of the Holy Days and Sabbath.

Those who refer to Colossians 2:14–16 in an attempt to *prove* God's Law and commandments are done away, do so by interpretation only! This chapter nowhere says God's Law, commandments, Sabbath or Holy Days are done away.

Prophetic Texts and God's Holy Days

God's Holy Days will be discussed shortly. There are also several prophetic texts which have been quoted, proving God's Sabbath and Holy Days are done away. It would be profitable to discuss them, now, in the context of the various Scriptures used in a futile effort to make void God's Law.

First, let us notice Isaiah 1:13–14. "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them."

There is no problem in understanding the meaning of these verses. The Scripture clearly states, "*Your* new moons and *your* appointed feasts my soul hateth. . . ." These were not God's feasts. These were the feasts Israel substituted in place of God's feasts. Notice I Kings 12:32. "And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. . . ." Israel substituted its own feast in place of God's feasts. She greatly polluted the Sabbath. This, God abhorred (Ezek. 20:21–24). Isaiah 1:13–14 is not talking about God's feasts and Sabbaths. Isaiah is talking about the substituted and polluted feasts and Sabbaths of Israel.

Next, notice Hosea 2:11. Here we read: "I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts." Note again what the Scripture says: "*her* feast days, *her* new moons . . . *her* sabbaths . . . *her* solemn feasts."

These are not God's Sabbaths, Holy Days or feasts. These are the same substitutions and pollutions mentioned in Isaiah 1:13–14.

Now to Amos 5:21: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies." The meaning is clear. The above explanation applies to Amos 5:21 also.

Finally, then, let us note Lamentations 2:6. "And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion. . . ." This text does not say the solemn feasts and Sabbaths are abolished. It says they are forgotten. During the captivity, the people will not be able to keep God's Sabbaths and Holy Days—but when God's truth is reestablished, they will (Ezek. 44–45).

The Problems of Galatians and Colossians

Most commentators recognize the specific problem confronting the Galatian churches. Some were attempting to turn the Gentile Christians from the truth taught by Paul. Paul's argument, throughout the book of Galatians, is that justification can come only through the blood of Christ. Justification first, by accepting Christ's sacrifice; then righteousness, by the Holy Spirit's inspiring and influencing the Christian to live a godly life. Justification cannot come through deeds of the law or through sacrifices. The law was given in a codified form to point out sin, and sacrifices were given as a reminder of sin. The "works of the law" included the sacrifices but probably were not limited to them. Apart from obedience to either a codified law or a sacrificial law, justification could come through faith in Christ, only. Paul did not preach against God's Law—or, for its abrogation. He simply stated that justification could not come through "works of the law." He specifically wrote, in Romans, that faith in Christ's sacrifice does not make God's Law void. Rather, it establishes it (Rom. 3:31).

Paul nowhere, in the book of Galatians, attempts to rescind God's Law. Rather, he shows the necessity to keep it through the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22–24). Paul's teaching was consistent. He was not the author of confusion. It is those who are led by the Holy Spirit who are not *under the law*. Galatians 5:18 cannot mean Christians are not under the obligation to obey God's Law, as some say. Those led by the Holy Spirit keep God's Law in its spiritual intent (Rom. 8:4). Those who are led by the Spirit are not under the penalty of God's Law (Rom. 8:1–2, 13).

The book of Colossians illustrates yet a different problem. Here, Paul shows the necessity of following Christ's example alone—not Judaism, Oriental theosophy, Greek philosophy, Gnosticism, angel worship or asceticism. These vain, philosophical reasonings

will perish—but the teachings of Jesus Christ will live forever. All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ, not in human reasonings. Colossians 2:14–16 does not nullify God's Law. It was the *bill of guilt*, or death penalty, which was nailed to the cross. Colossians 2:16 does not repudiate God's Sabbath and Holy Days. They are foreshadows of things to come. Foreshadows are not erased until the reality appears. Since the Holy Days reveal God's plan of salvation which is not yet realized, the Holy Days remain. It is the commandments and doctrines of men which will perish, not the commandments and doctrines of God!

Reasons Galatians and Colossians Do Not Abrogate God's Law

There are several reasons why Galatians and Colossians do not teach the abrogation of God's Law.

First, these books are epistles of Paul. Peter said, of Paul's epistles, ". . . Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Pet. 3:15–16). If Peter—a contemporary with Paul—said Paul's epistles are difficult to understand, how much easier could they be misunderstood two thousand years later?

Second, Galatians and Colossians are not the place to begin study in order to determine doctrine. If Paul's epistles are difficult and were wrested (perverted) in Peter's day, how much more is the likelihood in these times of *higher criticism*? The wresting of Paul's epistles becomes a distinct reality when scholars view them as separate books with their own messages. Or when scholars believe there is no continuity between the messages of the Old and New Testaments. Or when the prevailing belief is one of the following: 1) Each book of the Bible applies only to the time period in which it was written. 2) The writings of Paul should be considered near the end of an evolutionary change in doctrine. 3) The Bible is not actually inspired.

The third reason why Galatians and Colossians do not abrogate God's Law is that such a teaching contradicts the rest of the Bible. Jesus' statement, ". . . Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4), means nothing to modern critics. But if we believe Jesus' statement that man should live by every word of God, we must also believe His statement, ". . . the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). This means the Scriptures (Old and New Testaments) do not contradict. No single passage of Scripture can contradict another. If we say Paul teaches the abrogation of God's Law, we are not only saying Paul contradicts the other inspired writers (Psa. 111:7–8; 119:160, Matt. 5:17, Rev. 22:14) we are even saying he contradicts himself (Rom. 6:1–2, 12, 15)! This cannot be true!

The fourth reason is: If we say Paul taught the abrogation of God's Law, Sabbath and Holy Days, then Paul preached one thing and practiced another! Paul kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4, 21; 20:16). He told the Gentiles, "Be ye followers [imitators] of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). He said, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do . . ." (Ph'p. 4:9, I Thess. 2:13–14). Paul did not teach one thing and practice another. If he had done so, the Gentiles would have been utterly confused. God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). Paul believed, practiced and taught the same thing. Otherwise, the Gentile churches would have been hopelessly perplexed!

The fifth reason is: The Bible specifically states what was invalidated. What was invalidated does not include God's Law! Hebrews 9:10 clearly says, ". . . meats and drinks [offerings], and divers washings, and carnal ordinances [margin: 'rites, ceremonies'], imposed on them until the time of reformation." Nowhere does the Bible state the Ten Commandments, Sabbaths or Holy Days are done away! Much of the abrogated ceremony involved those rites which the priests performed and had no bearing on the observance of the Sabbath or Holy Days.

The sixth reason is: If Paul kept the Holy Days when he went to Jerusalem only, then he disobeyed God's Law! But Paul said, ". . . Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). Paul kept the Holy Days (Acts 18:21; 20:16). If he kept them only when he went to Jerusalem, then for many years he did not observe them. He could not both observe them and not observe them. He lived in good conscience before God. He could not have done so, had he been guilty of breaking God's Holy Days for years at a time. Those who say it is an assumption that Paul kept God's Holy Days every year, might as well be honest and admit it is a greater assumption that he didn't! One thing is certain: If he kept them only when he went to Jerusalem, then he lived a double standard—part Gentile and part Jewish! But he told Peter, at Antioch, this should not be done! (Gal. 2:11–14).

From these proofs, the books of Galatians and Colossians do not teach God's Law is done away!

Holy Days and the New Covenant

As previously stated, the Holy Days are shadows of "things to come" (Col. 2:17). If they are shadows of things to come (future events, even in Paul's day), then the primary meaning of the Holy Days is not represented by Christ. Christ had already come, more than thirty years before Paul made this statement! The Holy Days foreshadow God's plan of salvation. This plan is not yet fulfilled. Christ represented the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:3, John 1:29). The Days of Unleavened Bread represent putting sin out of each individual life.

This was not possible before Christ's crucifixion. The day of Pentecost represents the coming of the Holy Spirit. Individually, this transpires as each Christian is converted. The events which are represented by the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day have not yet occurred. The Holy Days are foreshadows of coming events. The same is true of the Sabbath. It foreshadows the Millennium (Heb. 4). The idea that the Holy Days are fulfilled in Christ cannot be substantiated by Scripture. The Holy Days "are a shadow of things to come" (Col. 2:16). The "is" in the phrase, ". . .but the body is of Christ" (v. 17), is not in the original Greek. The proper translation, ". . . but the body of Christ," refers to those who should "judge" you. The Greek for "judge" is *krino*. Besides meaning to judge, condemn or pass judgment upon, it means to separate, distinguish, select, prefer, consider, look upon, reach a decision, decide, propose, intend (*A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 452–453). The same lexicon (p. 453) says, of Colossians 2:16, "pass an unfavorable judgment upon, criticize, find fault with, condemn" This may be the meaning of "judge" in Colossians 2:16. On the other hand, Paul may have intended a softer connotation such as "prefer" or "distinguish." The meaning of judging would then be, "Let no man disregard you, or set you aside for meat and drink ['eating and drinking'—see margin] or for Holy Day observance . . . except the body of Christ [the Church]." Your conduct should be influenced by the body of Christ—the Church. There is no proof to support the idea Christians should be judged by a church hierarchy.

Since the plan of salvation did not commence until Christ came to introduce the New Covenant relationship, it is clear the entire New Covenant is represented by the Holy Days. The Holy Days were not fulfilled in Christ. They are foreshadows of things to come—the yet unfulfilled plan of salvation, to be completed in a New Covenant relationship! How can the death of Christ nullify the Holy Days? On the contrary, the death of Christ substantiates them!

Holy Days Instituted Before Old Covenant

The Holy Days were introduced before the proposal and ratification of the Old Covenant (Ex. 12). Some may wish to argue this is true only of the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, if any Holy Days are kept, it should be Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread only. With this explanation, however, one is hard pressed to explain why Christ and Paul kept the other Holy Days. To get around that dilemma, some tell us Christ was under the Jewish law and what He did was not necessarily an example for us to follow. Such reasonings may salve the consciences of those determined to repudiate God's laws, but they are not Biblical!

The Holy Days stand or fall together. To observe one or two Holy Days, only, is completely meaningless. Either we keep all, or we keep none. The fact they were established before the Old Covenant shows their New Covenant intention and application.

They were ordained before the Old Covenant—and what the Old Covenant did not establish, it cannot abrogate.

Holy Days Observed After Everything Done Away

The fact that Christ and Paul observed the Holy Days is ample proof they were not abrogated by the New Covenant. They are an essential part of the New Covenant. Both Christ and Paul set an example for us to follow (I Pet. 2:21, I John 2:6, I Cor. 11:1, Ph'p. 4:9). Those who follow Christ will keep the Holy Days.

If, as some say, the Holy Days are no longer valid, we need only ask why Paul kept them after they were supposedly done away. It is Paul's observance of the Holy Days that presents the major obstacle to those who wish to repudiate them. They solve the problem, however, by quoting Acts 21:24 and telling us Paul also sacrificed. Acts 21:24 does not say Paul sacrificed. It says Paul defrayed the expenses for four men who were under a Nazaritic vow. This text does not say Paul was under a vow, nor does it say he sacrificed. It was considered an act of piety to defray the cost of a Nazarite's sacrifice, offered at the completion of his vow. This is exactly what Paul did, and Acts 21:24 has no bearing whatsoever on observance of God's Holy Days!

Holy Days in Millennium

If the Holy Days are done away, why do we find their observance commanded in the Millennium? (Ezek. 45:21–25, Zech. 14:16–19). The fact that sacrifices will also be observed in the Millennium has no bearing on the validity of God's Holy Days. Why? Because the sacrifices were imposed "until the time of reformation!" (Heb. 9:10). To use the argument that the sacrifices to be instituted in the Millennium void Holy Day observance now, is like saying that because we shall have peace then, war is proper now.

God has a specific reason for reinstating the sacrifices. That reason has to do with the Levitical failure to live up to what God originally told them to do. But no such circumstances apply to the Holy Days, and no text in the entire Bible speaks of their abrogation!

Seasons Designed for Holy Days

Leviticus 23:4 states, "These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons." Here, the possessive form clearly reveals the seasons belong to the Holy Days. This is illustrated in Genesis 1:14, where we read, "Let there be

lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years."

The earth revolves around the sun once each year. The change of seasons is due to the position of the earth in its elliptical orbit, and the tilt of the earth in relationship to the sun. The sun divides the day and night in conjunction with the earth's rotation. The moon, however, plays another role. Approximately each twenty-eight days, the moon revolves around the earth. Each revolution of the moon around the earth represents a month. The new moon, appearing as a sliver in the west, marks the beginning of each month. It is a sign the month has begun. Precise calendar calculations accurately determine the beginning of each month. The new moon of the seventh month is the point from which all the Holy Days are calculated for each year.

The Holy Days must fall in given seasons. The spring Holy Days (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost) must fall in the spring season. The fall Holy Days (Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, Last Great Day) must occur in the fall season. This is important, due to the agricultural harvest. The moon was given as a sign to distinguish the proper seasons for the Holy Days (Psa. 104:19).

At certain seasons, specific constellations appear. They can be seen only during their respective seasons. Some are summer constellations, not visible in the winter; others are winter constellations, not visible in the summer. They are lights in the firmament.

It is the moon, however, that is important as far as the Holy Days are concerned. The moon determines the months, and the months determine the seasons (see Lev. 23). The moon was placed in orbit at creation, in order to play an important role in the determination of God's Holy Days. It is for a sign and for seasons. God says it is impossible to alter His ordinance of the moon (Psa. 89:37, Jer. 31:35–36). The seasons were designed with the Holy Days in mind. Those seasons cannot be altered, and neither can God's Holy Days.

The faithful servant at Christ's return will be giving meat in due season (Matt. 24:45). The faithful servant of the household is likened to the faithful servant of God's Word. God's Word is to be proclaimed in its season (Lev. 23:4). The Holy Days are the particular seasons when this word is proclaimed!

Rites, Ceremonies, Sacrifices—Not God's Holy Days—Done Away

Hebrews 9:10 says it was the sacrifices, washings, rites and ceremonies which were to be done away. There were elaborate ceremonies on God's Holy Days. Some, confused over the distinction between a rite and a Holy Day, believe the Holy Days are abrogated. The offering of sacrifices, the ceremonial washings, the blowing of the shofar, the heaving

of the wavesheaf and the laying-on of hands on the Azazel goat are not Holy Days. They are rites or ceremonies. They are done away. But God's Holy Days are not!

What Remains of What Was "Abolished"?

Scripture tells us only two things are abolished. First, the death penalty is abolished for those who accept Christ, repent and with the help of God's Holy Spirit live by every word of God (Rom. 8:1–4). This debt is "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

Second, the sacrificial system—along with its various offerings, washings, rites and ceremonies—was abolished (Heb. 9:10). Christ became the perfect sacrifice who could atone for the sins of the world (Heb. 7:27; 10:12). The death of God [Christ was also God] was the death required to legally acquit mankind.

So, what then remains of God's Law?

The Ten Commandments were given to man long before the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant has no bearing on their validity. Many of the statutes were in effect long before the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant has no bearing on their validity. Jesus magnified God's Law and taught its application in heart and mind. The statutes and judgments were given in a codified form, under a civil jurisdiction. Today, New Testament Christians live under a spiritual jurisdiction (II Cor. 3:3). There is no civil government now, to regulate and enforce the statutes and judgments. They were given to expand the application of the Ten Commandments in human relationships. Christians who live by the "spirit of the law" perform deeds and works which go beyond the letter of the law. While the statutes and judgments are not enforced legally, they nevertheless are guidelines to illustrate a minimum effort of righteous living. Some of them are not feasible in today's society (for example, Ex. 21:1–6, 7–11)—but, for the most part, one could not apply the spirit of the law to various human situations without a realization of what the letter of the law required.

The Ten Commandments and the Holy Days are to be kept by Christians. The statutes and judgments represent knowledge of the minimum requirements in specific human relationships. The majority of the statutes would probably never apply to Christians who live by the spiritual intent of God's Law. None of them, *per se*, are enforced in the civil governments of this world. But if they were, society would be a happier and safer place in which to live.

God's spiritual law stands forever. Numerous texts decisively prove this! Israel's failure to live up to the terms of the Old Covenant did not invalidate God's Law. The Ten Commandments, statutes and judgments were not the Old Covenant. They were the terms of the covenant. The covenant was the agreement between God and Israel. Like any

businessman today who enters into a contract with another, the contract is valid upon the agreement of both parties. But any failure to live up to the terms does not void the terms of that agreement or any future contract the businessman may wish to make.

Thus it is with God's Law. When Israel failed to live up to the terms of the Old Covenant, that covenant was broken by Christ's death and the contract voided. But that had no bearing on the terms of the New Covenant. The terms—the Law of God—are eternal! Termination of the Old Covenant cannot void God's Law.

Noachian Covenant

Consider the Noachian Covenant. God promised, "I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you. . . . This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. . . . And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen. 9:9–15).

This covenant is not repeated in the New Testament. Does this mean it is invalid, no longer in force?

Of course not!

Let us not assume what is written in the Old Testament is no longer valid because it is not repeated in the New. It is only those laws which are specifically stated as being abolished which are abolished! All else remains as the living Word of God!

What Kind of a God Is God?

What kind of a God is God? Let the Bible answer:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent [change]: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

Is God reliable? Does His Word mean what it says? Does He alter or change His standard—His Law—to conform to man's vicissitudes?

James said He is the Father of lights, ". . . with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17). God says He does not change (Mal. 3:6). When God established His Law, that law was established forever (Psa. 111:7–8). One assurance man has, in his relationship with God, is the absolute reliability of God's Word. God means what He says! He is not inconsistent and changing. The law God gave mankind, at creation, is the law which will judge man in the day of judgment (Rev. 22:14). The New Covenant is the expansion of the law into its full, spiritual intent. It is those who love that law—and "live by every word of God"—who are "the Israel of God" today (Gal. 6:16).