

The
New Covenant
and the
Law of Christ



A Biblical Study Guide

The New Covenant and
the Law of Christ:
A Biblical Study Guide

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Preface

The purpose of this study guide is to glorify Jesus Christ.

My intent is that this study will bring you a richer understanding of, and a closer relationship with, the Savior and that *He* receive the glory. My goal is that the concepts and terms in this book be *scriptural*, that is, in agreement *with* Scripture and *from* Scripture.

You may find ideas here that are different from some of what you have previously learned. If some of the ideas here seem *too* different, I can only suggest that you prayerfully take your questions to Scripture. I believe that Scripture will answer them. I also suggest that you keep a notebook for your thoughts and your answers, for later review and reflection.

You may wish to begin by reading the Introduction and the Summary several times. As you do so, write questions and mark any passages with which you may disagree or that seem puzzling. Discuss your questions with other believers and look for *scriptural* answers to your questions as you progress through this study.

I wish to express my appreciation to John Reisinger. His clear and cogent teaching introduced me to the glory of the New Covenant. Much of what is in this book I learned from him.

All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version and when capitalized in this study guide, the word “Law” refers to the Law of Moses.

Chris Scarborough

Introduction

For the Law came through Moses; but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

The Bible describes numerous covenants, but two of them are paramount- the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Each has its own characteristics and its own law. Each covenant's law is appropriate to the spiritual condition of the people living "under" the covenant and each covenant's law fulfills a specific purpose in God's historical plan of salvation. The law of the Old Covenant (the Law of Moses) was for the nation of Israel; the law of the New Covenant (the Law of Christ) is for those who are in Christ by virtue of God's sovereign grace, those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The Old Covenant and its law condemned the sinner and gave to him no power or ability to obey; it was a ministry of condemnation and death. But the grace of the New Covenant gives spiritual life and a joyful desire to love and obey Christ and his commands, and more importantly, it gives the *ability* to do so. Under the Old Covenant, God's blessing was conditional and required perfect obedience; under the New Covenant God's blessings to his people are unconditional. The Old Covenant was temporary and its law, the Law of Moses, was temporary; the New Covenant is everlasting. The Old Covenant and its law are "promise;" the New Covenant is the fulfillment, in Christ. The Old is shadow; the New is reality.

*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to **him**.*
(words of Moses)

Deuteronomy 18:15

*“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.
Listen to **him!**”* *Matthew 17:5*

*“If you love me, you will obey what **I** command.” (Jesus)
*John 14:15**

God commands us to be holy and we strive to live in obedience to God’s standard of righteousness. Unfortunately, there is confusion about which covenant (and which biblical law) applies to believers today. Each believer must understand what God’s standard is, and where it is found in the Scriptures. One of the main points of this study is that, as believers, under the New Covenant of Christ, we find God’s standard of holiness in the Law of Christ and the *New Testament* Scriptures. To do otherwise, to pursue standards of righteousness as expressed under the Old Covenant, as given in the Old Testament Scriptures, leads to problems and confusion.

If believers in Christ, living in the New Testament era, use the Old Testament Scriptures as a guide for holy living and ethics, they are, in effect, simultaneously trying to serve the Lord under two vastly different covenants, the Old and the New. However, the Bible teaches that believers today are “in” the New Covenant *only* and that the New Covenant is fully sufficient and complete to meet our spiritual need, including standards of holiness.

*For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also
be a change in the law.* *Hebrews 7:12*

The Old Covenant was a ministry of condemnation; it demanded perfect obedience to its commands but did not empower or enable the individual to meet its rigorous demands. In addition, the Old Covenant could not clear the conscience of the worshiper. Only in Christ are our consciences cleansed “from acts that lead to death.” The Law of Moses promised curses to those who violated its

commands. Those living under it lived in fear and at least part of their motivation to obey God's commands was the fear of God's curses. Moses and the giving of the law at Sinai is described this way:

a mountain that...is burning with fire...darkness, gloom and storm...a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded...The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

Hebrews 12:18-21

And the Jews are described this way:

But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

2 Corinthians 3:14-16

But, for the Christian, living under the New Covenant, there is *no* fear and *no* condemnation- now or ever. When the Old and New Covenants are confused in the believer's mind and heart, confusion and a sense of guilt and condemnation can result. And motivations other than love can taint the purity of Christ's grace in a believer's heart and mind.

The perfect and complete atonement of Christ, on behalf of his people, makes us guiltless before God. But if we misunderstand the great and wonderful differences between the Old and the New Covenants, feelings of guilt can result anyway. Such a pattern of unscriptural thinking can lead some to fall into legalism, and possibly quench true Christian joy.

This is why all believers must firmly and fully grasp the fuller revelation of the New Testament Scriptures. We must understand well that the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament prophets and Scriptures are a radical change from the Old Covenant, its law, and its ministry of condemnation.

The Bible is one revelation and there is continuity between the testaments because all of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, speaks of Jesus Christ and his work.

*He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said **in all the Scriptures concerning himself.***
Luke 24:25-27

*"If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote **about me.**" (Jesus)*
John 5:46

But there are differences and discontinuity between the Old and New Testament Scriptures as well, as we should expect because of the great differences between the Old and New Covenants. The New Covenant is truly and wonderfully new and different- it is not merely an extension of the Old. The glorious New Covenant, ratified with the blood of the spotless Lamb of God, requires from us a holiness that is *greater* than that required by the Old Covenant but, unlike the Old Covenant law, *it provides the believer with the power to be holy.* And all of this is guaranteed by his indwelling Spirit who gives life, teaches, and powerfully enables each and every Christian for a life of progressive holiness.

*"Run, run, and work," the law commands;
Yet finds me neither feet nor hands.
But sweeter news the gospel brings;
It bids me fly and gives me wings.
(Berridge)*

An understanding of the New Covenant results in a more complete life in Christ. It gives a greater and more mature appreciation of his grace. It leads to richer and more joyful obedience to *his* commands- obedience with love, gladness, and freedom. These New Covenant blessings and forgiveness of sin were purchased for us, by him, on Calvary.

*But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the **new** way of the Spirit, and **not** in the old way of the written code.*

Romans 7:6

A thorough study of the New Covenant will address many issues, such as Lord's Day observance, baptism, the church, leadership roles, the relationship between church and state, legalism, and Christian giving. Our understanding of these issues, and more, is dependent upon our understanding of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant and the relationship between them, *as described in Scripture*. My intention is that this study guide will provide a beginning. It is my hope that your study of the New Covenant will go well beyond this guide and will bring you richer spiritual blessings in Christ.

1

The Old is in the New Revealed

“...Moses...wrote about me...” (Jesus) John 5:46

There is one Bible and all of it is special revelation from God. Both testaments are holy and true, but the truth expressed in the Bible is progressive. This means that the more recent New Testament Scriptures explain more clearly what was not clear in the Old Testament Scriptures- the “mystery” of salvation in Christ and all the blessings that come with it. Jesus Christ is the main theme of the Bible, the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.
Acts 10:43

With the teachings of Christ, his apostles, and the New Testament prophets and Scriptures came complete revelation of truths that were only implied in the Old Testament

Scriptures. What is “shadow” in the Old Testament writings, is “reality” in the clearer light of New Testament writings. And this is not all. Our understanding of the Scriptures is greater because of the teaching ministry of the indwelling Spirit of God, which he gave to every true worshiper fifty days after our Lord’s resurrection.

God’s revelation, over time, through the Scriptures, is progressive.

1. Read Hebrews 1:1-3 (all Scripture references are from the New International Version). According to these verses, whom has God spoken through “in these last times?” Why is Christ superior to the prophets?
2. Read Romans 16:25-27 and Colossians 2:2-3. Define the “hidden mystery.” When was it revealed? By whose command was it revealed and for what purpose? To whom is it revealed?
3. What do you think was God’s purpose in not revealing the “mystery” of Christ during the long years of Jewish history, prior to Christ’s advent?
4. Read Romans 15:4. Even though “everything that was written in the past” did not fully reveal the “hidden mystery” (Romans 16:25-27), it had a purpose. What was that purpose?
5. According to Luke 16:16, when were “the Law and the Prophets” proclaimed?
6. Read Ephesians 2:19-22. Who is the “foundation” and who is the “chief cornerstone” of “God’s household?” (The word “prophets” is after, not before, the word “apostles” because it refers to the New Testament prophets, not the Old Testament prophets.)

7. What does every believer today know that the Old Testament prophets searched intently for? Why do we have a clear understanding of these things now, but they did not and could not in their times? (See 1 Peter 1:10-12.)

The Old Testament Scriptures are more correctly understood when interpreted with the light of the fuller revelation of the New Testament Scriptures. Here are three examples.

Example one: the Sabbath

8. What did the Old Covenant law command in Exodus 20:8 and 23:12?
9. But, when we use the New Testament Scriptures for our understanding of spiritual truth, we begin to see something very different about the real meaning of “Sabbath.” How does Galatians 4:8-11 describe the practice of observing “special days” by Christians?
10. And according to Colossians 2:16-17, in whom is the reality of the **true** Sabbath found?

Example two: John the Baptist

11. Read and summarize the prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6.
12. Read Matthew 11:11-14; 17:1-13 and Luke 1:17. What did the disciples misunderstand? (See Matthew 17:10-13.) What did Jesus say to help them to correct understanding? Why had they misunderstood?

Example three: Philip and the Ethiopian

13. Read Acts 8:26-40. Which testament and what book was the Ethiopian reading? Did he understand the passage he was reading? What news did Philip tell to the Ethiopian to bring light to the Old Testament passage he had been reading?

14. How is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian similar to what is described in Matthew 17:1-13?

15. Based on these examples from Scripture, why is it important for us to use the fuller revelation and clearer light of the New Testament Scriptures, to understand and interpret the Scriptures of the Old Testament?

16. Write a few sentences summarizing what you have learned in this lesson.

2

The Old and New Covenants

1. Read 2 Corinthians 3 and fill in the blank spaces in the chart below (Hoch, p. 115).

<u>Old Covenant</u>	<u>New Covenant</u>
Fading	Lasting
_____ (v. 3)	Written on Hearts
Letter	_____ (v. 6)
Kills	_____ (v. 6)
Brought Death	Gives _____ (v. 6)
_____ Glory (v.7)	_____ Glory (vv.8, 11)
Ministry of Condemnation	Ministry of _____ (v. 9)

Moses	_____ (v. 14)
Veil Put On	Veil _____ (v. 16)
	_____ (v. 17)
Impotent to Transform	_____ (v. 18)

- Summarize the above chart in your own words.
- Read Hebrews 3:3, 3:5-6, and 8:6-8. Which covenant is better and why is it better according to these verses?
- Read Hebrews 8:9-13. Which prophet is being quoted in verses 8-12? What does verse 13 say about the relationship between the Old and New Covenants?
- Read 1 Corinthians 11:25. When and where did the apostles hear that Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming New Covenant, that had been prophesied in Jeremiah 31? As Jewish men who were familiar with what we call the Old Testament Scriptures and the writings of Jeremiah, the apostles would have immediately recognized the term “New Covenant” spoken here by Jesus. They would also have understood, either right then or later, that Jesus was saying to them that **he** would be the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy of the New Covenant. What emotions do you imagine that apostles felt when they heard this?
- Read Romans 10:4, Galatians 3:23-25, Ephesians 2:15, Colossians 2:14, and Hebrews 7:18. What do these verses say about the law of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses?

7. Read Matthew 5:17, Romans 10:4, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and Hebrews 4:15. What does it mean that Jesus “fulfilled” the Law? (Use a dictionary to find the appropriate meaning of “fulfill.”)
8. How do we fulfill the Law? (See Matthew 7:12; Romans 13:8,10; Galatians 5:14.)
9. Read Hebrews 10:1-22. Find and list the reasons why Christ’s blood, the blood of the New Covenant, is better than the blood of bulls and goats, the blood of Old Covenant sacrifices.
10. The Old Covenant was based on certain conditions- it was conditional. Look at Exodus 19:5, which indicates that the promises of God to bless the Jews were based on their obedience to the legal code of the Old Covenant. What one word in Exodus 19:5 makes the promise *conditional*?
11. What do the following verses indicate about the success of the Jews in obeying the Mosaic Law (Isaiah 43:24; Daniel 9:4-14; Hosea 8:1; and Hebrews 8:9)?
12. Read Galatians 4:21-26, 31; 5:1. What is Paul saying about the differences between the Old and New Covenants?
13. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34, 2 Corinthians 3:7-18, and Hebrews 7:21-22. Find and list as many of the promised spiritual blessings of the New Covenant as you can.
14. Every New Testament-era believer possesses these spiritual promises and their partial fulfillment, as well as the indwelling Holy Spirit, *now*. This was not true for the Jews living under the Old Covenant before Christ. According to 1 Peter 2:9, believers are a “priesthood” and a “nation.” What kind of “priesthood?” What kind of “nation?”

15. Read Hebrews 12:18-21, which describes the Old Covenant, and Hebrews 12:22-24, which describes the New Covenant. What is the author's point?
16. Write a few sentences summarizing what you have learned in this lesson.

3

The New is Superior to the Old

But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. Hebrews 8:6

This important verse of Scripture spells out three vital truths: Jesus' ministry is superior to the ministry of the Old Covenant priests. The covenant of which Jesus is the mediator, the New Covenant, is superior to the Old Covenant. The promises of the New Covenant are better than the promises of the Old Covenant.

1. Why is Jesus' ministry superior to the ministry of Aaron and his descendents, the priests of the Old Covenant? (See Hebrews 7:23-28.)

Read Hebrews 9:9 and Hebrews 9:14. These verses offer a specific comparison between the Old and New Covenants, a

comparison of the way each covenant deals with the conscience of the believer.

2. Why is the New Covenant superior to the Old, as regards the conscience?
3. What are the “better promises” (Hebrews 8:6) of the New Covenant. List, in your own words, as many spiritual promises as you can find in Hebrews 8:10-12. In what ways do these promises make the New Covenant superior to the Old?
4. The Old Covenant was conditional. Note the small, but highly important, word “if” in Exodus 19:6. Read the description of the New Covenant, as prophesied by Jeremiah, in Hebrews 8:8-12. Identify the conditions (“if” statements) that are part of the New Covenant, if any. What is the significance of this to the New Covenant and what is the significance of this to you in your relationship to God? How does this help make the New Covenant superior to the Old?
5. The Old Covenant worshiper was not, and could not be, justified (Acts 13:38-39) or sanctified (Philippians 3:5-9) by the Law. How is the New Covenant superior to the Old regarding justification and sanctification? (See Romans 3:21-22 and Romans 8:30 [justification] and Romans 6:22; and Titus 2:11-12 [sanctification].)

The supernatural indwelling of the Holy Spirit for *every* believer is a *New Covenant ministry* because the Spirit did not come upon *all* believers (Acts 2) until after the blood of the New Covenant had been shed by Christ on the cross and after his ascension, just as he had predicted. Only *certain individuals* living under the Old Covenant were given the Spirit. Under the New Covenant, *all believers* have the Holy Spirit.

6. What advantages does this give to you, as a believer under the New Covenant?
7. Under the Old Covenant, the individual was condemned (Deuteronomy 27:26; 2 Corinthians 3:9). What part does condemnation play in the spiritual life of believers under the *New Covenant* (Romans 8:1)?
8. Which covenant is eternal? (See 2 Corinthians 3:11 and Hebrews 13:20 which speak of the New Covenant and see Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:19 and Hebrews 8:13 which speak of the Old Covenant.)
9. Review Genesis 16 and 21:1-21 and read Galatians 4:21-31. Galatians 4:21-31 compares the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The slave woman, Hagar, Mount Sinai, and the “present” city of Jerusalem all stand for the Old Covenant. The free woman, Sarah, and the Jerusalem “that is above” represent the New Covenant. According to Galatians 4:24, which covenant “bears children who are to be slaves?” According to Galatians 4:31, which covenant bears children who are *free*? Why is this significant?
10. Read Matthew 6:9, Mark 15:38, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 2:13, Hebrews 7:19, and Hebrews 10:19-22. What do these verses teach us about the relationship that believers have with God under the New Covenant? How is this different from the relationship that worshipers had with God under the Old Covenant? (See Exodus 19:12; 20:18-19, 21; 24:1-2; and Hebrews 9:6-8.) In particular, compare Hebrews 9:6-8 (describing the Old Covenant) with Hebrews 10:19-22 (describing the New Covenant).
11. Both of these covenants have glory (2 Corinthians 3:7-8, 18) but what is the difference between the glory of the Old Covenant and the glory of the New?

12. Who was permitted to serve as a “minister” under the Old Covenant (Hebrews 7:5) and who is permitted to serve as a “minister” under the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6 and 1 Peter 2:9)?
13. Review this lesson and summarize it in your own words. Describe why the New Covenant is superior to the Old. Be sure to explain the spiritual blessings that are unique to the New Covenant, that were not part of the Old Covenant experience.
14. What is your personal reaction to the concepts in this lesson? Do these concepts seem to be supported by Scripture? Does this lesson challenge anything you have learned in the past? If so, what?

4

The Law of Moses, Part 1

The Law of Moses is the first five books of the Bible. The Ten Commandments are the core, crystallized form, of the Law of Moses. They are found in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5. Contrary to what many Christians believe, the Bible teaches that the Ten Commandments do not have an eternal purpose in God's eternal plan, and for that reason, they should not be viewed as being the eternal "Law of God."

All of the Law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments, had a specific purpose in God's plan of redemption. But that purpose was completed and the Law of Moses became obsolete when the Law was nailed to the cross and the New Covenant was put into effect with the blood of Christ.

As we shall see in this lesson, the authority of the Mosaic Law and the authority of the Ten Commandments over true worshipers had a definite historical beginning and a definite

According to the Pharisees, the Old Covenant contained 613 stipulations (Hoch, p. 85). **All 613 stipulations, including the Ten Commandments comprised the Law, the Law of Moses.**

3. There are many names for the Law of Moses and the Old Covenant in the Bible. Write the name given for the Law on the lines next to the verse references below.

- a. Luke 24:44, 1 Cor. 9:9 _____
- b. 2 Cor. 3:3 _____
- c. 2 Cor. 3:6 _____
- d. 2 Cor. 3:7 _____
- e. 2 Cor. 3:9 _____
- f. 2 Cor. 3:15 _____
- g. Rom. 7:6, Col. 2:14 _____
- h. Gal. 3:2 _____
- i. Gal. 3:10 _____
- j. Heb. 8:13 _____
- k. Exod. 31:18 _____
- l. Exod. 34:28 _____

4. Read Exodus 34:27-28. What are the “words of the covenant?” What is the relationship between the “Testimony” (the “Ten Commandments”) and the Old Covenant?

Who was governed by the Law of Moses?

5. Whom did God make the (Old) Covenant with? See Exod. 19:3; Deut. 5:1-3; Ezekiel 20:10-11; Romans 9:4 and Malachi 4:4.

Did the Law of Moses, and its authority over God's people, as stated in the Old Covenant, exist from eternity, or did it have a historical time of beginning?

6. Read Exod. 19:1-6; Exod. 20; and Exod. 31:18. What event is described and when did it occur?
7. According to Galatians 3:16-17, was there a specific time in human history when the Mosaic Law was introduced or had it been in existence since creation?
8. According to the passages listed in questions 6 and 7, did the Israelites have the law of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, the "Testimony" while enslaved in Egypt or in the days of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)?

Does the Law of Moses continue to have authority over the people of God in the New Testament era, or did its authority over believers end with the revelation of Christ?

9. Summarize the point made in these verses: Luke 16:16; Galatians 3:16,19; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 7:12; 8:13; and 10:9.
10. Some Christians believe that the law of the Old Covenant is made up of three parts or categories: the "civil," the "ceremonial," and the "moral." Look up these words in a concordance to determine whether *Scripture* describes the Mosaic Law as being divided into these (or any) categories. Does *Scripture* use these terms to label supposedly different "parts" of the Mosaic Law?

11. Read Leviticus 19 and notice that different “types” of commands are all *grouped together* in the same chapter, not in separate categories. For example, there is a restriction on mixing seeds (v.19) and there is also a command to not hate a brother (v.17). There is a command about the sacrifice of a fellowship offering (vv. 5-8) and also a command to turn from idols (v.4). What does this mixed grouping suggest about the idea that there are separate categories of commands within the Law of Moses? Can you find scriptural support for the idea that there is a differentiated “moral” category of the Mosaic Law that still may apply to believers today, and “civil” and “ceremonial” commands that do not apply today?
12. Summarize when and how the authority of the Mosaic Law (including the Ten Commandments) began in human history, and when it ended in human history.
13. Based on the above questions, how would you respond if asked whether or not Christians today are commanded by *the Scriptures* to obey the Law of Moses, the Law of the Old Covenant?
14. Does this lesson on the Mosaic Law challenge or contradict what you have been taught previously?
15. If so, what is your response to what the Scriptures used in this lesson say about the Law of Moses?
16. Turn back to the introduction to this study guide and reread the verses printed in italics. Based on the four lessons you have completed, do these verses have a different or fuller meaning to you now? Explain your answer.
17. Write a few sentences summarizing what you have learned in this lesson.

5

The Law of Moses, Part 2

1. Use a concordance to answer the following: How many times is the term “Ten Commandments” used in the Old Testament Scriptures? ...in the New Testament Scriptures?
2. Do your answers to the previous question surprise you? If so, why? What do you think might be the significance of your answer to the second part of question one?
3. Without looking up any Scripture verses, what do you think was the purpose of the Law?
4. According to Romans 3:20 and 5:20 what was the purpose of the Law? What differences, if any, are there between what these verses say and what you said in answer to question three?

“Justify” is a legal term, it means “to acquit,” “to absolve from guilt,” or to “treat as righteous or worthy of salvation” (Merriam Webster).

5. According to Galatians 2:16, is it possible for a person to be justified by observing or obeying the Law?

The New Testament Scriptures make the purpose of the Mosaic Law clear. The Law did *not* have as its purpose to justify (or to sanctify) individuals before God. Obedience to the Law is a form of *works*, and it is faith in Christ only that saves sinners, not any kind of *works*.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9

However, many who truly love the Lord are confused about the relationship between the Law and their sanctification. To “sanctify” means to “free from sin” (Merriam Webster). Many mistakenly believe that their efforts to obey the Ten Commandments (the Law of Moses) make them holy and righteous in God’s sight. Just as the New Testament clearly indicates that we are not *justified* by the Law, it also clearly indicates that we are not *sanctified* by the Law or by any human efforts to obey the Law.

6. Read Philippians 3:5-10. In this passage Paul describes his pre-Christian life as a Pharisee, his “pre-Christian confidence, rooted in his Jewish pedigree, privileges and attainments” (NIV Study Bible, p. 1807). What word does Paul use to describe his “legalistic righteousness” in verse six? What does it mean that “in regard to the law” he was a “Pharisee?”
7. In Philippians 3:7-8, Paul describes his new viewpoint *after* his conversion, the new outlook he has as a Christian. What words does he use in verses seven and

eight to describe the very things he used to value, including his “legalistic righteousness?”

8. With Paul’s understanding of salvation in Christ alone, did he consider his “pre-Christian” obedience to the Law and his “faultless legalistic righteousness” of any *true* spiritual value? Where does he say that *true* righteousness comes from? (See Philippians 3:9.)

If Paul considered his (pre-Christian) “faultless” obedience to the Law of the Old Covenant as “loss” and “rubbish,” then why should any of *our* efforts of obedience to the Old Covenant, Mosaic Law on *our* parts be anything but “loss” and “rubbish” for *us* as well? If Paul could not be truly holy by *his* Old Covenant obedience, why should efforts at Old Covenant obedience make *us* truly holy? If obedience to the Law was not *true* righteousness for Paul, it will not be *true* righteousness for us.

Should we not then, as Paul did, seek *true* righteousness “which is through faith *in Christ*- the righteousness that comes from God and is *by faith*?” (Philippians 3:9).

We are not *justified* (acquitted) by the Law or any human efforts to obey the Law and we are not *sanctified* (made righteous) by the Law or any human efforts to obey the commandments of the Old Covenant. When a Christian believes that *obeying Moses* will make him more righteous, difficulties may arise and he will be robbed of Christian freedom and may be robbed of Christian joy. It is never appropriate for the Christian to pursue holiness through Moses.

(In a later lesson we will see that we are not without sin while in the body, even though we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. For this reason, we must strive daily to imitate Christ and obey *his* commands as we gradually conform to his likeness by his grace and through his Spirit.)

There are two common examples of this misunderstanding. One occurs when some believers feel they are under the compulsion of the Law to rigidly, and perhaps reluctantly, give exactly ten percent to the Lord, as stipulated by the Old Covenant Scriptures.

To do this in an effort to be “holy” before God is to contradict the New Testament Scriptures. Likewise, it is inappropriate to feel guilt and that one has sinned and grieved God if one does not give an exact amount or percentage of income. This type of thinking is clearly inconsistent with New Testament teaching (see 2 Corinthians 9:7).

The New Testament indicates that the *heart* and *attitude* of the giver is the essence of Christian giving, not the amount of money or percentage of income. True believers will *desire* to give and will do so generously and gladly. The only regret they may have is that they earnestly wish they could give *more*.

Another misuse of the Law by some Christians can be their effort to be “holy” by their "church attendance." According to the Bible, *attendance* is not the real issue; *motivation* is the issue. Here are some signals that the Law is being misused in this regard: Regular “church” attendance is viewed as an *obligation*. The individual is motivated by a sense of *compulsion* and experiences guilt when a worship service is "missed." The individual mistakenly thinks that by not “missing church” he is being *more* righteous than others who attend less regularly, because he is obeying the Old Covenant command to “remember the Sabbath.”

This pattern of thinking is inconsistent with the teaching of the New Testament Scriptures which teach that the believer’s “Sabbath” is not a special day or activity (or a *lack* of activity), but that our Sabbath is in Christ and in him *alone*. In fact, the New Testament Scriptures teach us to *not*

legalistically observe special days, including Sabbaths (Galatians 4:9-11).

Sabbath observance under the Old Covenant, according to the its commandments, was only a “shadow” of the reality to come. The New Covenant reality that replaced the “shadow” is *Christ* (Colossians 2:16-17).

9. In this lesson we have seen that it is inappropriate to mix or confuse the terminology and concepts of the Old Covenant with those of the New Covenant. How could it cause confusion or problems if a teacher uses the term "tithing" instead of the term “giving” or “Christian giving?” (You may wish to refer to Deuteronomy 14:22-29, Leviticus 27:30-34 [Old Covenant] and 1 Corinthians 16:2, and 2 Corinthians 9:7 [New Covenant].)
10. Based on what you have studied in this lesson, why is the Old Covenant “obsolete” (Hebrews 8:13)?

6

Jesus, Moses, and the Mosaic Law

Jesus respected the Law of Moses, but his teachings strongly indicate that *his* commands and teachings are radically new and different from it. They have a different emphasis than did the Law. His commands are superior to the Mosaic Law, as he is superior to Moses, and the New Covenant is superior to the Old. For believers, Christ's Law is our guide; the Law of Moses is obsolete.

For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change in the law. *Hebrews 7:12*

*"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to **him!**"* *Matthew 17:5*

1. How should we view Jesus, as compared to Moses, based on these verses: John 1:17, Hebrews 3:1-6, and Hebrews 11:26?

2. Read Matthew 5:20 and summarize Jesus' statement.
3. Read Matthew 5. What do the words of Jesus, in these verses, have in common: Matthew 5:20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, and 44? Repetition is a form of emphasis; what is Jesus emphasizing here?
4. What is being repeated and emphasized by Jesus, in Matthew 28:20; John 14:15, 21, 23, 24; John 15:10, 12, and 14?

Questions 5-11 below involve specific situations where Jesus' teachings deviated from, and even contradicted the Law.

5. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 from the Law and Matthew 5:31-32. In what way is Jesus' teaching different from the Law in this instance?
6. Read Numbers 30:1-2 from the Law and Matthew 5:33-37. Summarize the differences.
7. Read Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21 from the Law and Matthew 5:38-42. Summarize the differences between the Law and Jesus' teaching described here.
8. According to Matthew 5:44-45, how may we be sons of our Father in heaven? How does this command differ from Leviticus 19:18? How would you describe this difference, as just a "clarification" of the Law or a radical change from the Law?
9. How is Jesus' action, as described in Matthew 8:1-4, contrary to what the Law commands and teaches in Leviticus 13:3 and Leviticus 5:3, 5, and 6?

10. What did Jesus teach in Mark 7:18-19 and how does that compare to what Moses' Law stated in Leviticus 11:1-23? For 1500 years Jews had been forbidden to eat "unclean" foods (Hoch, p. 70). Do you think the Jews would consider Jesus' teaching about food to be merely a fuller explanation of Moses, or a radical change from the Law of Moses?
11. Read Deuteronomy 22:22-24 and Leviticus 20:10, John 8:1-5, and John 8:9-11. According to the Law, what punishment should have been imposed on the woman? What did Jesus do? Why did Jesus allow her to leave without punishment?
12. Why is it significant that Jesus contradicted the Law, as demonstrated in questions 5-11 above? What conclusions regarding the relationship between Jesus and the Law can be drawn from this?
13. Given Jesus' clear and repeated contradictions of the Mosaic Law in these passages, what do you think he meant by his words in Matthew 5:18? Does Jesus' statement that the Law of Moses will not "disappear" mean that believers under the New Covenant must obey the Law of Moses, or might it mean something else?
14. Why might it be necessary that the Law not "disappear" if it has been replaced by the Law of Christ, a law that demands much more from believers and has a much higher standard?
15. Review questions 1-14 above and write a few sentences summarizing what you have learned in this lesson.
16. Read the Summary following lesson 11 and underline statements that you think are *important* or any statements that describe something that is *new* to you or with which

you *disagree*. If you are studying with a _____, hare with
the others what you underlined and why.

7

The Law of Christ, Part One

*To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under **Christ's law**), so as to win those not having the law.*

1 Corinthians 9:20-21

*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the **law of Christ**.*

Galatians 6:2

1. The night before he was killed, Jesus commanded us to love each other (John 15:17) and to love each other as he loved us (John 15:12 and 13:34). Read the following verses and describe how much and how he loves us: John 15:13 and 10:11.

2. How is Jesus' love, which he demonstrated by his willingness to lay down his life for us, different from what the "world" usually means by the word "love?"
3. Jesus' "new command" is recorded in John 13:34-35. In one sense it is not new (see Leviticus 19:18). But there is a sense in which it *is* new. In what way is his command truly new?

The Law of Christ and the Law of Moses are very different and should never be confused or blended in the mind of the believer. One cause of confusion is the fact that there is some "overlap" between the two, as demonstrated in the previous question. The essence of Christ's Law is concealed in the Law of the Old Covenant, but it was obscured and overshadowed by the 613 different stipulations that were all part of the Mosaic Law (Hoch, p. 85).

The commands to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor were not emphasized over the other commands of Moses in the Old Testament Scriptures. So even though the essence of Christ's Law was in the Old Covenant, it was not understood by most of those living under the Old Covenant because it was obscured by the great number and by the complexity of the many demands of the Mosaic Law.

4. Summarize the greatest commandments, according to Jesus (Mark 12:28-31).
5. Do you think the teachers of the Law were surprised at the answer Jesus gave them when they asked him which is the most important commandment? Why?

(Hint: Many mistakenly believe that the commandments of the Testimony (the Ten Commandments) are the greatest and most important commandments. But, did Jesus include any of the Ten Commandments in his answer in Mark 12:28-31 when he taught which commandments are the greatest?)

6. Summarize the commands of Jesus, the Law of Christ, as recorded in John 13:34 and Mark 12:28-31. The Law of Moses can be summarized in statements such as “do or die.” How would you state the Law of Christ in just one word?

8

The Law of Christ, Part Two

Jesus' new command to love one another (John 13:34) and his teaching of the supremacy of love (Mark 12:28-31; see also Romans 13:8,10 and 1 Corinthians 13:13) are the foundation and core of the Law of Christ. Additional commands of Christ are found in chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew. This is a key passage of Scripture because it lays out many commands of our Lord, each of which is essential to an understanding of his law.

“But I tell you....” (Jesus) Matthew 5:22

1. Look at Matthew 7:28-29. How did the people react when they had heard Jesus teach? What was it about him that caused their reaction?
2. Read Matthew 7:24. How do the words “of mine” affect the meaning of Jesus' statement? (Hint: How would the

meaning of his statement been different if he had said: “of mine and of the Law” or “of mine and of Moses’ Law?”)

3. What do the following verses have in common: Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, and 44? What is the lesson of these statements by Jesus where he contrasts what *was* said “long ago” to what *he* says?
4. This question will require additional time for preparation and for discussion if you are part of a study group. Read and reread Matthew 5, 6, and 7. This passage may be one of the most important in the Bible.

Take notes or outline all three chapters. Be sure to pay particular attention to commands and include each command in your notes or outline. If you are part of a class or Bible study, set aside some time to compare your notes with others. Discuss any differences of opinion and try to resolve them *using Scripture*.

5. In what ways does Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 describe and demand a righteousness that “surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law?” (Matthew 5:20).
6. Does Jesus *command* us to be obedient to him? (See John 14:15, 21, 23-24 and John 15:14.)
7. Give the *biblical* response to this statement: “If Christians don’t have to obey the Law of Moses, then there is no law for them to obey and there is danger that they will live lives of sin.”
8. Summarize what you have learned in this lesson.

9

The Law of Christ, Part 3

We have seen that the Law of Christ is love. From him we have his law and his Spirit supernaturally helps us to live lives of progressive holiness as we grow in love for our Lord and our neighbor. The life of love that Christ has commanded us to live is based on his love, not love as the world defines it. In this lesson we shall begin to examine love as it is expressed by our savior. The love that he taught and demonstrated is *supreme*, it is *unconditional*, it is *sacrificial*, and it is expressed in *deeds*.

1. Write a brief definition of the following words: *supreme*, *unconditional*, and *sacrificial*.
2. Look up the verses and match them with the appropriate item in the left column.

Love always perseveres
and never fails.

1 Corinthians 12:31

Love is greater than tongues.	1 Corinthians 13:1
Love must be active.	John 13:15; 13:3
Love is unconditional.	1 Corinthians 13:2
Love is the most excellent way.	1 Corinthians 13:7-8
Love is greater than knowledge and prophecy.	1 John 3:18
Love is greater than faith and hope.	1 Corinthians 13:13
Christ is our example of how to love.	Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10
Love is sacrificial	Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3-4; 1 John 3:16

Self-Examination.

3. Circle *yes*, *no*, or *maybe* for each item below.

a. Based on observation of *my* deeds and speech, would my closest Christian friends say that Christ-like love is more important to me than...

...tongues and prophecy? **yes** **maybe** **no**

...biblical knowledge and doctrine?

yes **maybe** **no**

b. Would my closest Christian friends would say that I demonstrate love that is...

...unconditional?	yes	maybe	no
...active?	yes	maybe	no
...self-sacrificial?	yes	maybe	no
...Christ-like?	yes	maybe	no

Application.

4. How do you feel about your answers to question three?
5. Using your answers to the three preceding questions, can you identify areas of weakness?
6. What practical things can you do to improve your weakest area(s)?

10

How Can We Obey the Law of Christ? Part 1

How can we hope to obey the Law of Christ, the highest standard of righteousness and holiness ever known? The answer is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is our *motivation* and our *model* for love and obedience. Christian obedience is Christ-centered. Christ is the “focus of our obedience” (Zens, p. 12). As we look on Christ and grow in his grace, we experience a growing desire and ability to serve him by *imitating* him, by becoming more Christ-like. He provides the divine power each of us needs to be able to imitate him and live Godly lives.

1. According to Ephesians 5:21, how can we show love for each other? *Who* is our motivation for doing this?
2. How are husbands and wives to love one another? (Ephesians 5:22-25). How many times is Christ mentioned in this passage? Why do you think Paul

repeatedly mentions Christ here? *Who* is the motivation for husbands and wives to love one another to the extent these verses describe?

3. Read Ephesians 6:1,4. How are fathers (parents) to put their love for their children into action? According to Ephesians 6:5-6, who is our motivation for this obedience?
4. How are we to love within the “body of Christ?” (Philippians 2:1-5,8). Who is our *model* and our *motivation* for loving?
5. Read Romans 15:3, 5-7. How many times is Christ mentioned in this passage? Why do you think Paul repeatedly mentions Christ here? Who is the motivation for us to love one another the way these verses describe?

(Questions 1-5 were suggested by Zens, pp. 72-73.)

6. Read 2 Peter 1:3. Who’s “divine power” is described in verse 3 (refer back to the end of verse 2)? What has his divine power given to each and every believer?
7. Read 2 Peter 1:4. What does his divine power enable believers to do? Why is it essential that we have “knowledge of him who called us” (v. 3)? How important is it that this knowledge of Christ be extensive, not merely superficial? Why?
8. Review your answers to these eight questions and summarize this lesson in a few sentences.

11

How Can We Obey the Law of Christ? Part 2

In the previous lesson we saw that Christ is our *motivation* and our *model* for obedience to the Law of Christ, the law of love. In this lesson we will continue to examine Christian *motivation* for obedience and we will also examine how we *learn* to obey and how we can have the *ability* to obey.

Motivation for Obedience under the Old Covenant.

9. Read Deuteronomy 28:1-2 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68. What else, besides the promise of blessings for obedience, motivated the Jews to try to obey the Law of Moses?

Motivation for Obedience under the Old Covenant compared to Motivation for Obedience under the New Covenant.

10. Read 2 Corinthians 3:5-18. “The ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone” (v. 7) is the

Ten Commandments, the law of the Old Covenant. The “ministry of the Spirit” (v. 8) is a New Covenant ministry. How does this passage describe the Old Covenant, as compared to the freedom and glory of the New Covenant? How does this affect the Christian’s motivation and desire to be obedient to Christ and *his* law?

11. According to Romans 7:6, what are the *new way* and the *old way*? How does serving in “the new way of the Spirit” differ from serving in “the old way of the written code?”
12. Basing your answer on the three questions above, summarize how the desire to be obedient to the Lord is different under the Old and New Covenants. Which is superior? Why?

More on our Motivation for Obedience under the New Covenant.

The Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel described the glory of the New Covenant and described how worshipers under the New Covenant would be different from worshipers under the Old Covenant.

13. Jeremiah 31:31, 33 describes some of what God does for his people living under the New Covenant. What does God promise to do in our minds and hearts? Who will make this happen?

The phrase “write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33) means that the Law of Christ, under the New Covenant, will “effectively govern” the lives of his people, his true worshipers (NIV Study Bible, p. 1176). This is a significant contrast to what the Old Covenant, which merely presented its Law “inscribed on durable stone” (NIV Study Bible, p. 1176).

14. Read Ezekiel 11:19. This is taken from a passage that is also a prophecy of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. What three things are promised to us in this verse? What does God promise to remove? What will result from this, according to the next verse (Ezekiel 11:20)? How does this compare with the failure of the Jews to obey the Old Covenant law?

The “undivided heart” and “new spirit” promised to New Covenant worshipers in Ezekiel 11:19 describes an “inner spiritual and moral transformation that results in single-minded commitment to the Lord and his will” (NIV Study Bible, p. 1240).

15. Read Ezekiel 36:26-27. In verse 27, God promises to put his Spirit into New Covenant worshipers. According to the same verse, what will his indwelling Spirit “move” (motivate) us to *do*?
16. How is the motivation to obey Christ’s Law supernaturally brought about in the lives of his people, according to what we have seen in questions five through seven above?

The Holy Spirit was not given to *all* true worshipers until the time of the New Covenant. *Certain individuals* living under the Old Covenant were indwelt by the Spirit of God, but the ministry of the Spirit indwelling *each and every* believer is a ministry of the New Covenant, which came into effect only after Christ’s death and ascension and Pentecost (Acts 2).

17. What do we learn about the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 14:26 and John 16:13-15? How does this relate to the fact that the Law of Christ is written on the hearts of his people?

18. According to Galatians 5:22, what is the relationship between the Spirit of God and our ability to do that which the Law of Christ commands us to do, to love?
19. What is the relationship between the Spirit and our sanctification, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2? According to 1 Peter 1:2, what is the relationship between the Spirit and our obedience to the commands of *Jesus*?
20. Read Titus 2:11-14 and list two things to which God's grace teaches us to say *no*. What kind of life does grace teach us to lead "in this present age?" What is the "blessed hope" that motivates us to live "upright and godly lives?"

Sanctification is a continuous, progressive process over the lifetime of the believer (2 Corinthians 3:18) and it is not brought to perfection in this life (1 John 1:8). It is a joint effort, in the sense that a life of holiness requires the power of God *and* the perseverance of the individual believer. The Lord, through the Spirit, gives supernatural assistance but we are each responsible for our own effort, as well (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and Hebrews 12:1-4).

21. Review what you have studied in this lesson and summarize the main ideas in your own words.
22. Based on the information in this lesson, write a *scripturally based* response to this statement: "All Christians must obey the Law, as specified in the Old Testament Scriptures. If they do not, they will not live righteous lives."

Summary

God's Word is clear about what believers are to be. Christ commanded us to be obedient to *his* law and *his* teachings. Christ's law of love, his teachings presented in the gospels, and the teachings of his apostles as recorded in the other New Testament Scriptures are sufficient. The Law of Moses is not the believer's guide for how to live a holy life. Through Christ, we aspire to a standard that is infinitely *higher than the Law of Moses*, the standard established, taught, and modeled for us by Christ himself.

Would it not be inappropriate for a high school student to obey the rules of the first grade classroom? Would it not be likewise inappropriate for an American citizen to obey the laws of Great Britain that applied to the colonies before the American Revolution? In the same way, it is inappropriate for a Christian, one who by definition has been regenerated by the divine and sovereign power of God, to pursue obedience to a Law system that has been rendered obsolete by the completed work of Christ.

The Ten Commandments are the essence of the Mosaic or Old Covenant. They are not the essence of "all moral law." The Ten Commandments as a unit are inseparably tied to the Mosaic Law. Since the Mosaic covenant is no longer in effect, the Ten Commandments are no longer applicable as a unit to the people of God who are living in the New Covenant era (Volker).

According to Scripture, the purposes of the Law were to make sin known and point to Christ. These have been achieved in *every* true believer through God's grace and by his power. We each received both an understanding of our sinfulness, as well as the gift of repentance when we were regenerated by

the Holy Spirit. Likewise, every Christian *knows* the Lord Jesus and does not need to be pointed to him in the way that the those living under the Old Covenant needed to be directed to the Savior.

There is nothing left for the Law to do for us, or that the Law *can* do in the Christian's life. We are to leave Moses behind and be mature in Christ. We must look to Christ and the superior covenant (the New Covenant) and the greater law (the Law of Christ) and strive, by his grace, to be what *Christ* commands us to be.

We look to Christ, and not to the Law of Moses or anything else, for redemption and for righteousness. If you are in Christ, your standing before God is based on the righteousness of Christ *alone*. Your judicial standing before the Lord cannot be improved or increased by *anything* you do: meticulous external righteousness, acts of sacrifice and generosity, involvement in ministry (even "full-time" ministry), or wholehearted devotion to the Ten Commandments.

None of these will make you more holy than you already are in God's sight. He has already credited you with the righteousness and holiness of Christ- a righteousness that is complete and perfect. And because *God* has done this, and *he* is judicially satisfied with us (because he is well pleased with his Son's righteousness) there will never be condemnation for the Christian.

*It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, **our righteousness, holiness and redemption.** 1 Corinthians 1:30*

We desire to defeat sin in our lives and be holy, but should we ever dare to condemn ourselves when we fall short? No, we should not- but that is what the Law can do- it can take captive the conscience and condemn if we seek righteousness

by obeying the Law. Christ came to set captives free and he *has* set us free and we *are* free- dare we bind ourselves all over again?

The new system [the New Covenant] no longer counts my sins against me, because I am no longer under a law system that holds me accountable...I am now judged by who I am, not what I do...I am totally acceptable under this system...No sprucing up of behavior, and no long periods of prayer or Bible reading can improve my acceptance in Christ (LeFebre).

Prayer and Bible reading are excellent and believers do, and desire to do, these things- but the point here is that nothing one *does* can possibly “raise one’s standing” in God’s eyes. We already have been credited with the holiness of Christ. This is true for all Christians; but, do all Christians understand this and live accordingly? Or, is it true that “the full realization of grace- the grace of identity in Christ- is being ignored by a great number of Christians?” (LeFebre). Many Christian brothers and sisters seem to be unaware that the...

New Testament is clear in the teaching that the law given to Moses at Sinai has been abrogated. It was part of a temporary, conditional covenant whose purpose was fulfilled with the coming of Jesus Christ. Thus the law of Moses is no longer binding (Zaspel, p. 6).

This is a fundamental truth of the Bible- “the Covenant of Christ is complete and perfect without the Old Law, which has passed away” (Culp). Why is this a mystery for many Christians?

The following passage indicates that if one belongs to Christ, it is spiritual adultery to “belong” to the Law also.

*Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law--that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. So, my brothers, **you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another**, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.*

Romans 7:1-4

Later in the same chapter we learn that “we have been released from the law” and that “we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and *not* in the old way of the written code” (Romans 7:6). The “old way” is the “written code,” also known as the Testimony, the Ten Commandments, the Law of Moses. We are *dead* to the law, so that we might be alive in Christ- the mediator of a new and superior covenant. Praise God!

Perhaps one reason for the confusion and lack of understanding of the covenants among some believers is the “pull” of the old nature, a “pull” that draws us toward sin and the flesh. The old nature tries to drag us back into a “works mentality” and legalism, both of which are opposed to grace.

Perhaps another reason for confusion of the New and Old covenants may be that the freedom we have in Christ brings great responsibility. Do some *fear* freedom and the great responsibility that comes with it?

Confusion of the covenants may also exist because there are some similarities between the stipulations of the old and the new covenants. Most, but not all, of the stipulations of the

Testimony/Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant are also present in the New Testament Scriptures.

The Old and the New Covenants each set forth their own obligations, some of which are identical to each other...and some exclusive of each other...But the standard of conduct for today's believer is found in the framework of New Covenant teaching, not that of the Old Covenant (Zaspel, p. 17).

The Sabbath command, as expressed in the fourth of the Ten Commandments, is *not* restated in the New Testament Scriptures. In addition, the New Testament Scriptures clearly teach the *opposite* of what the fourth commandment demanded. The New Testament Scriptures say that Sabbath day observation, as described in the Old Testament Scriptures, is *not* required of believers (Galatians 4:8-11; Colossians 2:16-17). More importantly, the New Testament Scriptures teach us that the *reality* of the Sabbath is *not* a *day*, because the Sabbath day of the Old Covenant was only a symbol or a picture of the spiritual *reality* of salvation, spiritual rest in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 4:3, 9-11).

The Law did have a special purpose in God's historical plan. Its purpose was to make sin known (Romans 3:20; 5:20; 7:7-8) but *only until the coming of Christ*, the promised "Seed" (Galatians 3:19), and to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). The Law served its purpose, but we who have been saved by grace, through faith in Christ, fix our gaze on Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. We dare not fix our eyes on anything else, especially the law of the Old Covenant, a ministry of condemnation and death, because we who are in Christ are no longer under the supervision of the Law (Galatians 3:25). We have been set free from that so that we may have and enjoy the blessings of Christ. Let us fully delight in what we have in Christ, in the indwelling Holy Spirit, and in the blessings of the New Covenant.

The rich spiritual blessings of the New Covenant are ours, but we know that we do not yet have them *in full*:

Though believers in Christ are not yet made perfect in holiness as far as our experience is concerned, Christ has, by his perfect sacrifice, laid the sure foundation for our perfection (Seiver, pp. 119-120).

We marvel at the spiritual blessings we now have *and* we joyfully anticipate the fuller and even greater blessings to come!

Christ is sufficient- when true believers focus on him, and him alone, there will be righteousness and holiness plainly evident in their lives. In *him* is the *fulfillment* of what was promised long ago. In *him* we have the living *reality* of what was only pictured in the Old Covenant. The imperfect priesthood of Aaron was a picture of the everlasting and perfect priesthood of Christ. The Sabbath day was only a picture of the promise of rest that is *fulfilled* in the spiritual rest we have in Christ and his salvation.

Under the New Covenant, we have so much in Christ-wonderful spiritual blessings that are impossible for us to fully grasp now. Why would one go back to the mere picture of Christ that is the Law of Moses, when Christ *himself* is alive and real in our lives *now*? Lord grant us the wisdom to appreciate and remember that each of us who is born of the Spirit, by God's grace, has the *revelation* of Christ (Revelation 1:1), the *teaching* of Christ (2 John 9), the *blood* of Christ (Hebrews 9:14), the *peace* of Christ (Colossians 3:15), the *gospel* of Christ (Philippians 1:27), the *riches* of Christ (Ephesians 3:8), the *love* of Christ (Romans 8:35), the *mind* of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), the *Spirit* of Christ (Romans 8:9), the *righteousness* of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30), the *law* of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2),

and the *power* of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9). To God be the glory!

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

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