

# MESSENGER

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FULFILL YOUR DESTINY



*"I have not come to destroy,  
but to fulfill."*

Were the

COMMANDMENTS

*nailed to the cross?*

# MESSENGER

## Magazine

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Christ died to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind. The apostles afterwards spoke of how Christians must accept God's grace, freeing them from the penalty for breaking the law.

However, were does this leave the commandments? Are Christians today still required to follow them, or is attempting to do so showing a lack of faith? See what the Bible says and decide for yourself!

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# WERE THE COMMANDMENTS NAILED TO THE CROSS?



Rod Reynolds

**It's frequently taught that the ten commandments were "nailed to the cross," and so are not obligatory for Christians. Yet, the Bible plainly states that individuals who insist on violating these very commandments -- lying, stealing, committing adultery, etc. -- will NOT inherit God's kingdom, unless they repent. This article will open your eyes to the real truth about this question -- IF you're willing to believe it!**

The New King James Version of the Bible translates Colossians 2:14 as follows: "...having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." And Colossians 2:16-17 is translated: "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

These verses are often wrenched out of context and cited as proof that the ten commandments, other of God's commandments, and the Sabbath especially, were "nailed to the cross," and are not obligatory for Christians.

For example, the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (JFB) *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* comments on verse 14 as follows: "The law (including especially the moral law, wherein lay the chief difficulty in obeying) is abrogated to the believer..." And further, "'The handwriting' (alluding to the Decalogue [the ten commandments], the representative of the law, written by the hand of God) is the whole law...." It goes on to remark that the law, hence the ten commandments, "was against us," an "adversary to us." And it, the law, the commandments of God, was "taken ... out of the way ... by 'nailing it to the cross.'"

Is that really what Paul is teaching?

Important keys to understanding the Bible include: (1) Examine any Scripture in light of its immediate context, and (2) in light of the context of the entire Bible. Nearly anything can be "proven" by taking a statement out of context and applying one's own interpretation to it.

So let's begin to see if we can really understand the meaning of these verses by reviewing the immediate context:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. (Colossians 2:11-17).

## What Is Sin?

Above I quoted verses 11 – 17 to get a sense of the context in which verses 14 and 16 appear. In verse 11 we see that Paul is addressing a Gentile church, not literally circumcised in flesh,

but in spirit and heart by “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” What is sin, that which the Colossians had put off? “...sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV). So sin is the transgression of the law, and the Colossians had put off the “body of the sins of the flesh.” The idea is that they were living lives of repentance, no longer disobedient to God’s commandments.

If, as we’ve seen, sin is the transgression of the law, what are sins of the flesh? Paul lists some of them, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Notice that in this list are included sins which are direct violations of some of the ten commandments. Included are adultery and fornication (*porneia*, sexual sin), either of which violates the seventh commandment (Exodus 20:14). Idolatry is certainly a violation of the first commandment, and often several other commandments as well, especially the second and third (Exodus 20:3-7). Murder violates the sixth commandment, as does hatred (Exodus 20:13; 1 John 3:15). In principal, all the works of the flesh that Paul mentions in the passage quoted violate one or more of the ten commandments. And note that Paul said if you make a practice of committing these sins, i.e., breaking these commandments, you will not inherit God’s kingdom. It’s obvious, then, that these commandments have not been “done away” or “nailed to the cross.”

Moreover, Paul also wrote, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor

drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Besides the commandments specifically alluded to earlier, Paul here states that making a practice

### A License to Sin?

of violating the eighth commandment (stealing, Exodus 20:15), and the tenth commandment (covetousness, Exodus 20:17), would keep you out of God’s kingdom. Liars, too, shall be excluded from the kingdom (Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15). But those who keep the commandments will have right to the tree of life (eternal life), and will enter in (Revelation 22:14).

Note that Paul said the Colossians to whom he was writing had been baptized (verse 12). Did Paul believe that baptism gives us license to sin, i.e., break God’s commandments? In the context of discussing baptism, Paul wrote to the Roman church, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans

6:1-2). He went on to say that baptism symbolizes, “... that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Romans 6:6). And further, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (verses 12-13). So baptism clearly does not mean we are given license to sin, i.e., break the commandments.

In Colossians 2:13 Paul told the Colossians that they were previously “dead” in their trespasses. In other words, they were condemned, under the penalty of death due to “trespassing,” or breaking, God’s commandments (John 3:18; Romans 6:23). If God’s commandments had been “nailed to the cross” and hence “done away” there

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would have been nothing to transgress, hence no sin, and no condemnation, nothing to be delivered from or forgiven of.

In Colossians 3 Paul warns them about falling into sin. “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his

## What was Blotted Out and Nailed to the Cross?

deeds” (Colossians 3:5-9). Again we see several of the ten commandments specifically alluded to in this warning of God’s wrath as a consequence of disobedience.

Whatever was “wiped out” and “nailed to the cross,” as Paul put it in Colossians 2:14, it was not the ten commandments or similar laws. This will become even more clear as we proceed.

In analyzing Colossians 2:14 it’s important to pay attention to the number (singular or plural) of the words used, because that is a key to understanding the verse. Note the New King James translation of the verse above. Now following is my own translation of the verse. “Having blotted out the bond of debt that was against us from ordinances, which was contrary to us, and took it away, nailing it to the cross.”

Note that what was expunged or blotted out was a “bond of debt.” Verse 14 is a continuation of the thought carried over from verse 13 concerning the forgiveness of trespasses. The Greek word *cheirographon* found in verse 14 was commonly used of a note or bond of debt (*Greek – English Lexicon, Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich*). “The late

compound χειρογραφον [*cheirographon*] (χειρ [*cheir*], hand, γραφω [*grapho*]) is very common in the papyri for a certificate of debt or bond” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A. T. Robertson, on Colossians 2:14). When we sin by breaking God’s laws we incur a debt, which under certain circumstances may be forgiven, or blotted out (compare Psalm 51:1, 9; Isaiah 44:22; Matthew 6:12; Luke 11:4; Acts 3:19). The word εξαλειφω (*exaleipho*) means wipe away, expunge, blot out. The King James Version has “Blotting out” where the New King James reads, “having wiped out.” So it was the “bond of debt” that was blotted out through God’s forgiveness, not the laws that were broken to incur the debt.

“That was against us” refers to the bond of debt, not the ordinances, in this Scripture. “That” (Greek: *to*) in this clause is singular, referring to the bond of debt, also singular, not the “ordinances” (*dogmasin*, lexical form *dogma*), which is plural. Yet, many commentators try to make the case that the “ordinances” referred to here include the ten commandments and similar laws and that these commandments are “against us.”

Were God’s commandments “against us”? God urged Israel to keep his laws “that it may be well with you” (Deuteronomy 6:3; cf. 12:28; 28:1-14). “... the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes... for our good always... (Deuteronomy 6:24; cf. 10:13; 30:15-16; Isaiah 65:2; Jeremiah 5:25; 6:16; Micah 2:7). Paul wrote of God’s commandments that they “are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law [Greek: ‘therefore fulfillment of the law is love’]. And do this ...” (Romans 13:9-11; cf. Matthew 22:36-40). The commandments of God tell us how to love God and neighbor (1 John 5:3). So they are certainly not against us.

In Colossians 2:14 “it,” not “they,” was taken out of the way, and “it” was nailed to the cross.

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"It," singular, refers to the note of debt, not the ordinances, plural. With Christ, our debt, as it were, incurred by the sins and trespasses of those who believe, was "nailed to the cross," and taken out of the way (Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 53:4-6, 11; Matthew 6:12; 8:17; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24).

In Colossians 2:15 Paul tells us how Christ, through his death on the cross, thus removing

### Who's to Judge?

the guilt of sin from the faithful with its penalty, triumphed over the dark powers of this world, especially referring to Satan, our accuser, and his demonic horde (John 12:31; 14:30; Ephesians 4:7-8; 6:10-12; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:10-11). The "principalities and powers" also encompasses the panoply of false gods representative of Satan and the demons, and the human rulers subject to their influence.

Paul has up to this point told the Colossian brethren that Christ had removed from their charge the debt of sin, and triumphed over the spiritual powers that had held them enslaved in darkness and spiritual blindness. He now continues, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17).

The *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* is typical of the approach of many Protestant commentators on this passage, in commenting on verse 16 as follows, "Food laws and calendar observance were not required for the Gentiles' newfound faith" ("Philosophy," p. 613).

Oh? If "calendar observance" is no longer required, why then has the professing Church historically enforced Sunday observance? And why has it enforced rules setting the date for Easter? Why has it established a calendar replete with all sorts of religious "Saint's days," and holidays such as Christmas, All Souls day, etc.? Or is it just the calendar that God established in his word, with its

required holy days, that they object to?

If "food laws" are no longer in force, why has the professing Church often enforced eating or not eating certain foods at particular times, such as meatless Fridays, and Lenten "fasting." Or again, is it only food laws God ordained in his word that they object to? Why do some professing denominations use wine at the "Lord's supper," and others only grape juice? These Churches have not hesitated to set their own rules about food, drink and calendar observances, while they condemn the keeping of the laws God himself established concerning these things.

What is it that Paul is really saying in these verses?

Let's pick up more of the context in which Paul is writing by looking at verse 8. "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men,

according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." In this chapter Paul is addressing the danger of heresies arising from philosophical speculation based on human traditions and the underlying concepts that shape human society in this world. Specifically he is alluding to gnostic ideas that blended Christianity with pagan religion and philosophy. These ideas often viewed anything tangible (or material) as

evil. Hence some gnostics taught that the human Jesus Christ was not really God in the flesh. In writing of certain gnostics, Irenaeus, wrote, "... according to their hypothesis, the Word did not become flesh at all ..." (*Against Heresies*, 1.9.2 ; cf. John 1:14). And certainly God could not have a body. For example, in commenting on the teachings of the gnostic Marcus, Irenaeus writes, "He [God] whom thou maintainest to be destitute of body and form..." (*Against Heresies*, 1.15.5). But Paul assures the Colossians that "in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (verse 9).

Moreover, gnostic heresies conceived of a

*"Were God's commandments 'against us'? God urged Israel to keep his laws 'that it may be well with you' (Deuteronomy 6:3; cf. 12:28; 28:1-14)."*

panoply of spirits, or emanation, or “aeons,” often identical with the gods of paganism, that were lesser divinities. God could only be approached through association with these lesser deities (“principalities and powers”), of which, in their doctrine, Jesus Christ was one. These ideas eventually developed into the concept of approaching God through the mediation of dead “saints” or “Mary,” and similar practices and teachings. The Colossian heresy included the “worship of angels” (verse 18).

These heretics commonly rejected God’s commandments, but had their own rules of behavior based on various superstitions, the “commandments and doctrines of men” (verse 22). Paul warns the Colossians not to be judged by such impostors in respect to religious observances. “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,...” (verse 16). Note that he does not tell them they are not to keep festivals or sabbaths, anymore than he’s telling them not to eat or drink. He is saying let no one *judge* them regarding these things.

He goes on to say, “which are a shadow of things to come,...” (verse 17). Note the sabbaths are, present tense, indicative mood in the Greek (*esti*), which implies present and continuing action. The sabbaths are – now – and continue to be – shadows of things to come. That is, the sabbaths, and the annual festivals that accompany them (cf. Leviticus 23), have prophetic significance. Like a shadow provides an outline of an object which gives us an idea of what it looks like, so the sabbaths give us an outline of God’s plan, including the “things to come.” The weekly Sabbath, for example, points to God’s “rest,” when his kingdom will be established on earth (Hebrews 4:3-6, 8-11; cf. 2 Peter 1:10-11). Like the rest of the ten commandments, the fourth commandment is still in force. “Therefore sabbath observance remains [*sabbatismos*, sabbath rest, sabbath observance, *Greek-English Lexicon, Bauer,*

*Arndt, Gingrich; keep sabbath, Analytical Greek Lexicon*; often translated “Sabbatism,” meaning “keep the Sabbath,” *Webster’s Dictionary*, 1913] for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9; cf. Isaiah 56:2, 8; Ezekiel 45:17; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:42-44; 16:13; 17:2).

Then he continues, “...but the body of Christ” (verse 17), an exact translation of the Greek: “το δε σωμα χριστου [*to de soma kristou*].” They are to let no one judge them concerning the things mentioned, but the body of Christ. The body of Christ is his Church (1 Corinthians 12:27). The true Church is made up of those who live according to the word of Christ, not the false traditions and commandments of men (John 8:31; Colossians 2:8, 22). Christ is the head of the Church, his body, thus those who are truly of his body will

*“If God’s commandments had been ‘nailed to the cross’ and hence ‘done away’ there would have been nothing to transgress, hence no sin, and no condemnation, nothing to be delivered from or forgiven of.”*

be ruled by him through his word (Matthew 4:4; Colossians 1:18; 2:19; 2 Timothy 3:14-17). God’s word, spoken by his own voice, is “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:1, 8). Jesus Christ is “Lord of the Sabbath,” and he guides and judges us in how to keep it through his word (Matthew 12:8; cf. John 5:22; 12:48). So we are not to let others judge us or condemn us in it’s keeping, as men will seek to do.

It’s ironic that men professing Christ -- claiming to be his Church -- have not infrequently judged and condemned those who would keep the Sabbath, and not infrequently murdered them.

Keeping the weekly Sabbath is a command of God, as is keeping the annual Sabbaths, and distinguishing between clean and unclean foods (Leviticus 11; cf. Revelation 18:2). These are Scriptural teachings practiced by Jesus Christ himself and the New Testament Church which he established. The gospel accounts of Jesus’ life include many examples of his instruction in how to properly keep the Sabbath, not according to Pharisaic rules which themselves are mere commandments and traditions of men, but in accordance with its true intent and purpose. And there is not one word

anywhere in the Bible telling us that the Sabbath was ever “done away.”

On the other hand, Sunday keeping, Easter, Christmas, Lent, and many other practices of the professing church are not Scriptural at all, were never commanded by God, but are merely the traditions and commandments of men, the very things Paul warns us in Colossians 2 to beware of and avoid.

*Open to me the gates of righteousness.*

*I will enter into them.*

*I will give thanks to Yah.*

*This is the gate of Yahweh;*

*the righteous will enter into it.*

*I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me,*

*and have become my salvation.*

*The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.*

*This is Yahweh's doing.*

*It is marvelous in our eyes.*

*This is the day that Yahweh has made.*

*We will rejoice and be glad in it!*



# Did Jesus Break

## IV

## the Sabbath?

Rod Reynolds

**It's been asserted that Jesus broke the Sabbath, and hence we are free to disregard it as well. But did Jesus break the Sabbath?**

The basis for the idea that Jesus broke the Sabbath is the accusations made by Jesus' enemies among the Pharisees and scribes. Because Jesus performed miracles of healing on the Sabbath, the Pharisees accused him of breaking the Sabbath (Matthew 12:10; Mark 3:2, John 9:14-16). John records a healing that Jesus performed at one of the festivals in Jerusalem. Because of this the Jews sought to kill him. John records that in a confrontation following the healing Jesus said to his enemies, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." Then it says, "Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:17-18). Hence the argument is made that Jesus worked on the Sabbath and broke the Sabbath, leaving Christians free to do so.

The Scriptures also record an incident when the disciples of Jesus plucked heads of grain from a field as they were walking and ate them on the Sabbath. And some of the Pharisees charged them with the question, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" (Luke 6:2). This Scripture is also used by some to assert that Jesus and his disciples did not honor the Sabbath.

In order to understand what is at issue in these accounts it is helpful to understand something of the rabbinical tradition which lay behind the charges laid against Jesus and his disciples for their conduct on the Sabbath. The pharisaic tradition, by the time of Jesus, had developed (one might say degenerated) into an array of petty rules having to do with the minutiae of the law. It

focused on physical works which had little to do with the spirit and intent of the law, and which in fact often violated the law (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13; John 7:19; Galatians 6:13).

The scribes among the Pharisees created and transmitted the pharisaic rabbinical traditions. The body of authoritative traditional law which they formulated, called the Halakah (which is the subject of and preserved in the *Mishnah*), is extra-biblical. Although authoritative for Jews who followed pharisaic tradition, much of the Halakah was not supported by Scripture, but was intended as a "hedge" about the law, to prevent any possibility of its being broken. Yet, in doing this very thing they were breaking the law, for God had said, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2; also Deuteronomy 12:32). In adding the weight of their tradition to the law of God they bound "heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:3).

They placed the authority of their traditions above that of Scripture itself, thus blaspheming the word of God. Joachim Jeremias is a late German scholar who authored an encyclopedic study of economic and social conditions during the New Testament period. He points out that the oral tradition was "above the Torah," and that the esoteric writings containing scribal teachings were regarded as inspired and surpassing the canonical books "in value and sanctity" (*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 1.3). Alfred Edersheim also points out that traditional law was of "even greater obligation than Scripture itself" (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1.8; also see his footnote).

What was the nature of these traditional

ordinances? Alfred Edersheim, born a Jew but later converted to Protestant Christianity, was a 19th century scholar who wrote extensively on Jewish doctrines and practices before and during the time of Christ. He summarizes the character of the traditional law as follows: "The Halakah indicated with the most minute and painful punctiliousness every legal ordinance as to outward observance.... But beyond this it left the inner man, the spring of actions, untouched."

.....

"Israel had made void the Law by its traditions. Under a load of outward ordinances and observances its spirit had been crushed" (1.8). The rules of Sabbath observance are a good illustration of the absurdities and contradictions of the traditional law. Again summarizing, Edersheim writes concerning the rules of Sabbath observance, "On no other subject is Rabbinic teaching more painfully minute and more manifestly incongruous to its professed object." He charges the scribes with "terribly exaggerated views on the Sabbath" and "endless burdensome rules with which they encumbered everything connected with its sanctity" (3.35). "In not less than twenty-four chapters [of the Mishna], matters are seriously discussed [regarding Sabbath observance] as of vital religious importance, which one would scarcely imagine a sane intellect would seriously entertain" (6.16). Yet one would look in vain in these rules for a spiritually meaningful understanding of the Sabbath: "...in all these wearisome details there is not a single trace of anything spiritual — not a word even to suggest higher thoughts on God's holy day and its observance" (6.16).

I'll list a few details to give you the flavor of what he's talking about. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* provides a more detailed discussion of traditional Sabbath law in an appendix. The law included detailed regulations regarding what constituted carrying a "burden": Of wine, of milk, of honey, of water, of other fluids. Of dry

materials: Pieces of paper, horses hairs, wax, a piece of broken earthenware, animal food. Generally a burden was anything heavy as a dried fig, or a quantity sufficient to be of any practical use (a scrap of paper, for example, of enough size to be converted into a note or a wrapper). It prescribed what might or might not be saved if one's house caught on fire. Only clothes absolutely necessary, for example, could be saved. But one could put on a dress, save it, go back and put on another, and so on. One could not ask a Gentile to extinguish the flames. But if he did so voluntarily, he should not be hindered. One could eat food on the Sabbath lawfully only if it had been specifically prepared for the Sabbath on a weekday. If a laying hen laid an egg on the Sabbath, it could not be eaten. But if the hen had been kept for fattening and not laying, the egg could be eaten, being

considered a part of the hen that had fallen off! The study of the Mishna on the Sabbath was more important than that of the Bible. The *Hagiographa* (the Old Testament "Writings") were not to be read on the Sabbath except in the evening. And on and on it goes in like fashion.

Of special interest to us are the laws regarding harvesting and healing on the Sabbath. Even the

slightest activity involving picking grain, removing the husks, rubbing the heads, cleaning or bruising the ears, or throwing them up in the hand was forbidden. Yet if a man wanted to move a sheaf on his field, he had only to lay a spoon on it, then, in order to remove the spoon he might also remove the sheaf on which it lay! It should be noted that most of the Jews paid little attention to these petty rules, though the Pharisees (whose numbers were relatively few compared to the general population) did.

When the Pharisees took Jesus' disciples to task for plucking heads of grain from a ripe field and eating them on the Sabbath, Jesus (as he often did) turned the contradictions in their own traditional laws against them. He pointed out how

*"The pharisaic tradition, by the time of Jesus, had developed (one might say degenerated) into an array of petty rules having to do with the minutiae of the law."*

David and his followers, famished and fleeing for their lives, had, when no other food was available, eaten the shewbread, which ordinarily only the priests were allowed to eat (Matthew 12:3-4; Mark 2:25-26; Luke 6:3-4; 1 Samuel 21:1-6). Jewish tradition vindicated his conduct, on the premise that danger to life superseded Sabbath law, and all related laws (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 3.35). Jesus simply said, “Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:6-8).

Of course the Sabbath command is in a separate category from the sacrificial ordinances, yet if the work of feeding and watering animals could be done on the Sabbath (permitted by Jewish law), to relieve unnecessary suffering, logic would apply the same principle to humans, the disciples, who were partaking of the only food readily available at the time. None of this controversy would have occurred to begin with, however, except for the Pharisees terribly exaggerated views concerning what was or was not permitted on the Sabbath. The priests in the temple work on the Sabbath and are guiltless (Matthew 12:5). This the Scribes also knew, but apparently did not clearly understand why. Somehow they missed the point that the Sabbath was instituted not only to rest from one’s own physical labors, but also to devote the time to God by doing his works and service. As Edersheim observes, the disciples actions were “clearly not a breach of the Biblical, but of the Rabbinic Law” (3.35). Jesus said that the Pharisees — not understanding the law — had “condemned the guiltless” (Matthew 12:7). Clearly the disciples were not guilty of breaking the Sabbath as charged, and were falsely accused.

Healing, inasmuch as it might entail work, pharisaic law permitted on the Sabbath only if

necessary to save life or to prevent death. Thus a plaster might be applied to a wound if the object was to prevent it from getting worse, but not to heal it. Wadding to promote healing could not be put in the ear on the Sabbath, but could be worn if placed in the ear before the Sabbath. Yet, contrarily, a splinter might be removed from the eye, or a thorn from the body, though no immediate danger to life was perceived. Furthermore, an animal might be removed from a pit, or taken to water on the Sabbath. As we shall see, when Jesus was accused of violating the law by healing on the Sabbath, he used the Pharisees own contradictory rules to convict them of hypocrisy.

First let’s deal with Jesus’ statement that he had been working. The Sabbath law is, in part: “Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work...” (Exodus 20:9-10). Notice that the work forbidden by the Sabbath law is “your work,” the work of the people. The law does not forbid works of service towards

*“The Halakah indicated with the most minute and painful punctiliousness every legal ordinance as to outward observance.... But beyond this it left the inner man, the spring of actions, untouched.”*

-Alfred Edersheim-

God. Indeed, the very reason we are commanded to cease from our own works on the Sabbath is so we may devote the time to the work of honoring and serving God. Notice the words of Isaiah: “If you turn your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor

finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words...” (Isaiah 58:13). Here it is clear that it is our own works, the course of our everyday business, that we are to avoid on the Sabbath. On the other hand, we are to honor God on the Sabbath. Giving honor to God often entails work. As *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* points out, often “‘giving honor’ refers to doing something” (p. 115, Old Testament Section). For example, one way in which children honor their parents is by obeying them (Ephesians 6:1).

A careful reading of Scripture reveals that we are to cease and rest from common or profane work on the Sabbath so that the time may be devoted to God's holy purpose. But implicit in the Sabbath command is work necessary to fulfill the spiritual aim and meaning of the Sabbath. On the first Sabbath, God ceased and rested from his work of physical creation, but he did the work of creating the Sabbath, blessing and sanctifying it (Genesis 2:2-3; Mark 2:27). The weekly Sabbaths and the annual Sabbaths were days proclaimed to be "holy convocations," or commanded assemblies for the purpose of gathering to hear God's word taught and for congregational worship (Leviticus 23:2,4). Here is implied the work necessary to travel to the place of assembly and of listening and learning and participating in the worship service. Those commissioned to teach did the work of reading and explaining God's word. And on such occasions the people customarily ate and drank, sharing and rejoicing in the holy day and in the truth of God's word (Nehemiah 8:1-12). And other work implicit in the command was done, too. Even on the most solemn day of the year, the Day of Atonement, the priests did the work of slaying animals and offering sacrifices before God according to the requirements of the law (Leviticus 16).

The work of honoring and worshiping God is not forbidden on the Sabbath. Indeed it is the object of the Sabbath. That's why the priests could work on the Sabbath and not be guilty. Their work was a necessary part of the congregational Sabbath duty of honoring and serving God. It was, in that sense, not their work but God's work that was being done. Early in his ministry Jesus, on a Sabbath day, announced in summary form the work he had been sent to perform. His work was preaching the gospel, healing [both physical and spiritual implied], and liberating from oppression (Luke 4:18-19). The works Jesus did were not his works, but God's works, that he had been sent to perform (John 4:34; 9:4; 17:4). Healing was an in-

tegral part of Christ's ministry. In perfect harmony with what the Sabbath rest pictures and with the gospel message, it typified the physical and spiritual healing that Christ will perform during the Millennium when the Kingdom of God is established on the earth (see Isaiah 35:5-6, 57:16-20; Ezekiel 47:8-10).

When Jesus healed on the Sabbath he was not breaking the Sabbath, but fulfilling it, because when one is afflicted, oppressed and bound by disease or infirmity, he is not at rest. As many Scriptures show, God delights in redeeming and restoring the afflicted, and giving them the rest exemplified by truly keeping the Sabbath according to God's will. "...he [God] heard [or hears] the cry of the afflicted. When he giveth quietness [or rest], who then can condemn?" (Job 34:28-29, ASV). But the Jewish leaders, bound by their false tradition, did condemn the Messiah for giving the

souls that he healed rest from their afflictions. Instead, they should have offered praise: Speaking of ones afflicted and at death's door, a psalmist wrote, "Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for

His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing" (Psalm 107:19-22).

Notice how the Millennial rest — typified by the Sabbath — and healing are placed together by the prophet Jeremiah. God speaks through the prophet of the yet future deliverance and restoration of Israel, "For behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return and have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid" (Jeremiah 30:10). The prophet continues, "For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds," says the LORD..." (Jeremiah 30:17). This prophecy for "the

*"...it is clear that it is our own works, the course of our everyday business, that we are to avoid on the Sabbath. On the other hand, we are to honor God on the Sabbath. Giving honor to God often entails work."*

latter days” (Jeremiah 30:24) continues, “‘At the same time,’ says the LORD, ‘I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.’ Thus says the LORD: ‘The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness — Israel, when I went to give him rest’” (Jeremiah 31:1-2). The prophet goes on to describe the even greater yet future blessings of Israel when God gathers them “‘from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame...” (Jeremiah 31:8). It’s in this same setting that Isaiah wrote, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5-6).

Jesus answered those who accused him of breaking the Sabbath, “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:23-24).

How was it breaking the Sabbath to heal on the Sabbath? Even the scribes recognized that certain kinds of work were necessary on the Sabbath. That of the priesthood for example. I’ve mentioned how work necessary to alleviate or prevent suffering, such as taking animals to water, was permissible according to Jewish law. Work necessary to save life, or even killing in time of war, was permitted by Jewish law. Healing, except as necessary to save life, however, was forbidden on the Sabbath by their law. Yet, there were exceptions to this prohibition as well, as discussed earlier. The laws the Jews added to God’s commandments were their laws, not God’s. Violating the traditional laws of the Jews was not sin. Sin is the transgression of God’s law (Romans 3:20; 7:7; 1 John 3:4). Jesus asked the scribes and Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” (Luke 14:3). He, Jesus Christ, God, the one who delivered the Sabbath law to Israel on Mount Sinai, pointed out the hypocrisy and error in the Jewish traditional law which permitted necessary work to relieve the suffering of animals on the Sabbath, and even to kill in time of war, but forbade the

relief of human suffering due to disease or debilitating infirmity (Matthew 12:11-13; Mark 3:4; Luke 13:15; 14:5).

When John wrote that Jesus “broke the Sabbath” (John 5:18), he was writing in the context of how the Jewish leaders viewed Jesus’ action of healing on the Sabbath (compare John 9:14-16). Those who say Jesus did actually break the Sabbath are agreeing with Christ’s enemies, his accusers, that Jesus’ miraculous works of healing were a breach of the Sabbath law. They are agreeing with Jesus’ accusers that he was a Sabbath breaker. To be consistent, they must also agree with the Pharisees when they said of Christ, “We know that this man is a sinner” (John 9:24). The blind man who had been healed knew better than that, saying, “we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31).

When Jesus healed on the Sabbath he was not violating the law of God. In the context of this controversy of healing on the Sabbath, Jesus said, “...it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:12). He only broke the Sabbath in the sense of violating a man made rule regarding its observance. Had he actually broken the Sabbath he would have been sinning. But the Scripture says he “committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:22). Had he sinned he could not be our savior. But he, being undefiled and separate from sinners, offered himself without spot and without blemish to God for our redemption (Hebrews 7:26; 9:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19). No, Jesus didn’t break the Sabbath. He spent the Sabbaths preaching, teaching, healing, honoring God, doing the good work of his ministry, the work of God.

The record of Scripture is that Jesus kept the Sabbath faithfully, as it was intended to be kept from the beginning. In doing so he set us an example. “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6).



— Rod Reynolds —

**Why was the Old Covenant given? According to the Bible, because of sin. Find out what that means!**

The Old Covenant, we are told, was enjoined to Israel because of transgressions: “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator” (Galatians 3:19).

Note that this tells us the Old Covenant – termed here “the law” – was added – or enjoined – “till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” The seed being spoken of in this context is Christ. As Paul affirms: “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

So the “law” spoken of here, which is the Old Covenant (see Part 1 of this series), was intended from the beginning to be temporary, as having been “added,” or enjoined, to Israel alongside the covenant with Abraham. And why was it “added,” or enjoined? Again, “It was added because of transgressions” (Galatians 3:19).

But transgressions of what? To find out we must go back to the beginning -- the creation of mankind.

After God created Adam He set him in the Garden of Eden. “And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The **tree of life** was also in the midst of the garden, and the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**” (Genesis 2:9). God commanded Adam to eat of the trees of the Garden -- which included the **Tree of Life**, representing God’s Spirit by power of which Eternal life is given.

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat’” (Gen. 2:16). The Hebrew is more correctly translated “eating you shall eat,” as it is a command to eat of the trees of the garden, including the tree of life. “Lit. ‘eating thou shalt eat.’ an idiom constantly occurring, as again in ver. 17, ‘dying thou shalt die.’” (*Notes to J.N. Darby’s translation; see also Treasury of Scripture Knowledge on Genesis 2:16*).

While the trees of the garden apparently were literal trees, they were more than that. They had spiritual significance in what they symbolized. The “tree of life” is a symbol of eternal life, a gift from God which he was offering to Adam and Eve. They were not created immortal, but they could have been given the gift of immortality had they obeyed God’s commands.

Note that following Adam and Eve’s transgression: “Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and **take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever**’” (Genesis 3:22).

It is through God’s Holy Spirit that eternal life is made possible. Hence, the tree of life is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit: “But if the Spirit of the *One* having raised Jesus from *the* dead dwells in you, the *One* having raised the Christ from *the* dead will also make your mortal bodies live through the indwelling of His Spirit in you” (Romans 8:11, Green’s Literal Translation).

Eternal Life: a Gift for Those Who Obey

Having that gift requires **willing obedience** to God’s commandments. “And we are his witnesses of these things, and the Holy Spirit also, which God has given to those that **obey him**” (Acts

5:32; Darby translation). A better rendering of the aorist tense of the Greek verb *didomi* (give) in this verse is as follows: “We are witnesses to these declarations, as well as the holy spirit which God **gives** to those yielding to Him” (Acts 5:32; Concordant Literal New Testament).

That the gift of eternal life is contingent on obedience to God is confirmed also in the following: “Blessed are those who **do His commandments**, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

The other trees in the garden of Eden represented the prerogatives of and the benefits of living under God’s government.

Biblical prophecy informs us that at the end of this age Jesus Christ will intervene in the world’s affairs, to save mankind from utter destruction, and to bring peace and justice to the earth (Matthew 24:21-22, 29-30; Psalm 98:9; Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:4). Jesus Christ will establish his throne in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16). From his throne in Jerusalem living waters shall flow (Zechariah 14:8; Ezekiel 47:1-11). Alongside the river will be trees for food and healing: “Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine” (Ezekiel 47:12; cf. Revelation 22:1-2).

These are trees watered by living waters flowing from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and forming a river as it flows to the east. Trees are often used in the Bible as symbols of a government, or a kingdom, and its fruits:

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had a vision in a dream concerning a great tree: “These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, A tree in the midst of the earth, And its height was great. The tree grew and

became strong; Its height reached to the heavens, And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, And all flesh was fed from it” (Daniel 4:10-12).

Nebuchadnezzar, not knowing the meaning of the vision, sought the interpretation from the magicians, astrologers, etc. These demon influenced practitioners of the occult were unable to interpret the dream.

The king then called upon Daniel to interpret the vision. Daniel said: “The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under

which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home -- it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth” (Daniel 4:20-22). So we see here a kingdom, in this case a great empire, personified in its king, Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Daniel 2:37-39; 4:26; 7:17, 23), represented by the

symbolism of a tree, and its fruits.

We see a similar metaphor in relation to the New Jerusalem that will be the capital of God’s government after the Father himself comes down to earth to “tabernacle” with his family of human beings given eternal life in his family and kingdom.

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2).

God, as we read earlier in Genesis 2:16, commanded Adam to eat of **every tree** in the garden,

*“The “tree of life” is a symbol of eternal life, a gift from God which he was offering to Adam and Eve. They were not created immortal, but they could have been given the gift of immortality had they obeyed God’s commands.”*

which included the tree of life, representing the gift of eternal life. But **one tree** God preserved for Himself. The one forbidden tree represented an **office** and **prerogative** of God which He **alone** is qualified for and capable of filling.

### God's Purpose for Mankind

Before discovering what that OFFICE is Let's go even further back in history to review THE PURPOSE for which God made mankind in the first place.

Both Scripture and the discoveries of modern science reveal that the physical universe is not eternal, and that it came into existence at a point in time.

Before the universe existed, there was God. And the Bible reveals that in the godhead were two separate personalities, two beings were God (see "Origins of the Trinity," for more details), the Elohim, the Mighty Ones, who were Eternal -- having no beginning of life nor end of life.

"In the **beginning** was the **Word**, and the Word was **with God**, and the

**Word was God**. He was in the **beginning with God**. **All things were made through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1-4).

"Now this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him. To him also Abraham apportioned a tithe of everything. His name first means king of righteousness, then king of Salem, that is, king of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, **he has neither beginning of days nor end of life but is like the son of God**, and he remains a priest for all time.

.....

"and in one case tithes are received by mortal men, while in the other by him who is **affirmed to be alive**" [Hebrews 7:1-3, 8 (NET); cf. Psalm

110:4].

These two Beings each have perfect character. They live according to living spiritual principles which produce joy, peace and abundance of life. They enjoy life! Because of the joy these Beings possessed -- and because their minds were characterized by a Spirit of Giving -- they conceived a plan to **share** with others the life of supreme happiness and joy they were experiencing! They conceived a great master plan for the creation of a great family -- NATIONS -- of beings after their own image (Revelation 21:7, 24). Beings -- children of God, sharing their nature -- who would also share with them the joys of Eternal life lived according to the spiritual laws which govern intelligent living beings.

All that God has done in dealing with mankind has the ultimate aim of fulfilling this supreme Master plan for sharing the joy of Eternal life with His Family (cf. our article "Citizens and Sons of the Kingdom of God").

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

"But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13).

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17).

The fulfilling of **God's Plan** for mankind requires the development of perfect spiritual character in each one who is to share in the gift of Eternal Life. This involves willing submission to the Eternal Law of God and His Government. In terms of obedience to his laws, all members of the family and kingdom of God must be of one mind. All must come to willingly adhere to the same standard of love as expressed in God's law

*"That the gift of eternal life is contingent on obedience to God is confirmed also in the following: 'Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city' (Revelation 22:14)."*

and all must become totally subservient to the will of the Father -- the supreme Ruler -- as administered through His law and his Government. This is why Jesus Christ revealed to John that "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 [the New Jerusalem]" (Revelation 22:14). God's perfect character is expressed in His Spiritual Eternal Law -- which includes His commandments. Since the Law is **spiritual**, it must be **spiritually discerned**.

"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14).

"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Man, made of the dust of the earth in God's physical image, cannot fully discover this law or fully obey it of himself, in part because, as Paul said, man cannot of himself "know," or discern, the things of the Spirit of God, "because they are spiritually discerned." Without the Spirit of God, human beings are **incapable of properly discerning right from wrong**.

### God Is the Lawgiver

Because of this fact, and because the Father is the **Supreme Ruler**, sharing that Office with Jesus Christ, God reserved for Himself the OFFICE and PREROGATIVE of LAWGIVER.

Note that Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God [the Father], and **all things** are placed under him:

"...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And **He put all things under His feet**, and gave Him to be head

**over all things** to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Even so, the Father is ultimately supreme in authority over Jesus Christ, as well:

"Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For 'He has put all things under His feet.' But when He says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things

under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

As head over all things God is the supreme ruler of the entire creation, and he is the lawgiver.

Hence, the tree God reserved for Himself in the Garden of Eden represented the OFFICE of LAWGIVER. It was the tree of the knowledge (or designation) of GOOD and EVIL (Genesis 2:9, 17).

The root (יָדָע, yada) of the Hebrew word translated "knowledge," as in the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" includes the meaning of to "designate" or "appoint" (*Mickelson's Enhanced Strong's Dictionaries of the Greek and Hebrew Testaments*).

### God's Laws Define Good and Evil

The laws of God tell us what is good and what is evil:

Paul writing to the Jews said to them: "[You] and know His will, and **approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law**.

.....

"[And are] an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, **having the form of knowledge and truth in the law**" (Romans 2:18, 20).

Furthermore: "... by the deeds of the law no

*"All that God has done in dealing with mankind has the ultimate aim of fulfilling this supreme Master plan for sharing the joy of Eternal life with His Family."*

flesh will be justified in His sight, for **by the law is the knowledge of sin**" (Romans 3:20).

"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you **do well**; [could as well be translated 'you do good,' note the law tells us what is good].

.....

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law [the law tells us what is evil]" (James 2:8, 10).

"Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4; Updated King James Version).

Godly love is defined by his commandments: "For this is the **love** of God, that we **keep His commandments**. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

God, in the persons of the Father and of Jesus Christ, is the supreme lawgiver, according to Scripture.

"There is one Lawgiver" (James 4:12). While human governments may administer laws, no ruler or government has the authority to abrogate or nullify the laws of God.

The choice given to Adam and Eve, and the choice given to each of us, as far as God is concerned, is to obey or disobey his laws. And each will bear the consequences of his or her choice. But we are not given the authority to decide what the laws are. We are not given the authority to legislate in violation of God's laws, but only to carry out the principles of God's laws in accordance with his will.

### God's Office Usurped

But Adam and Eve, not being satisfied to **obey** God, and receive His blessings, lusted for His prerogative as Lawgiver, slandered God in their hearts

and usurped His Office as Lawgiver:

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?"

And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat

the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant

to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

.....

"Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know [designate – see explanation above] good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'" (Genesis 3:1-6, 22).

By his actions Adam rejected the opportunity for Eternal Life God had given him at that time – represented by the tree of life. He may yet have an opportunity in the general resurrection (Revelation 20:11-15) -- only God can judge.

In yielding to Satan, instead of obeying God, Adam and Eve earned the death penalty. And they also chose Satan's rule over that of God.

### Satan Is the God of This World

So Satan, for the time being, has remained the "god of this world," by the choice the progenitors of humankind made. Adam and Eve, had they chosen to obey God, and had they received the Holy Spirit and with it the gift of eternal life, may well have replaced Satan, ruling the earth directly under God's authority.

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the

*"As head over all things God is the supreme ruler of the entire creation, and he is the lawgiver."*



**ruler of this world** will be cast out” (John 12:31). Satan is the ruler of this world, the god of this world, or this age (Luke 4:5-7; 2 Corinthians 4:4).

It's God's purpose, however, in due time to remove Satan as ruler of this world, and replace him with a human being. One who is obedient to God and responsive to his will.

“For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: ‘What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’ For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor” (Hebrews 2:5-9).

We're told that Adam is a type of Christ, in certain respects. Jesus Christ came, in a sense, to undo what Adam did by his wrong choice.

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

.....

“For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:14; 17-18).

Satan through deceit (it was through Satan's influence that Adam was led to reject God's government) retained his rulership over the earth. Under his rule “death reigned.” Satan's reign is a reign of death. Had Adam not sinned there apparently would have been no reign of death over mankind (Hebrews 2:14).

## Death Reigns

Adam, until he sinned, had access to the tree of life – immortality. Though not created immortal, he could have been given immortality like that of Jesus Christ when he was resurrected. But

because Satan overthrew Adam **death** has awaited every human being. Mankind for six thousand years has lived under a regime which produces death as its final reward. And the great ruler behind this regime is Satan.

Even those who have not sinned after the same manner as Adam -- that is, who have not rejected God's government as Adam did -- have had to succumb to death: “Nevertheless death

reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam” (Romans 5:14).

By one man -- the physical father of mankind -- death entered: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

So, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

**Death** is the **penalty** for breaking God's Spiritual law -- and God has allowed every human who's ever lived for the Last six thousand years to DIE -- to drive this lesson home!

After Adam was put out of God's presence

*“In yielding to Satan, instead of obeying God, Adam and Eve earned the death penalty. And they also chose Satan's rule over that of God.”*

in the Garden of Eden he began to sire sons and daughters. As mankind multiplied on the face of the earth, it became more and more corrupt. "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (Genesis 6:11-12).

Only a very few men chose to obey God. When God finally determined to destroy humanity 1656 years after He had created the first man, only one man was found faithful to Him and therefore worthy of salvation in His sight. That man was Noah.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. ...Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:8-9).

As through one man, Adam, humanity was condemned to death, so by one man was humanity preserved alive. The salvation afforded Noah and his family is a type the ultimate salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ.

"... when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..." (1 Peter 3:20-21).

After the flood mankind once again began to multiply and once again the great bulk of humanity became rebellious and corrupt, the various families of mankind refusing to separate themselves to their own habitations as God had ordained (Deuteronomy 32:8). God had to confuse their languages and force them to comply with His will.

"And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'

.....

"So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:4, 8-9).

As the years went by mankind as a whole became further and further separated from the knowledge of God and His way of life. As we read through Genesis we find glimpses of man's continuing degeneration. In chapter 20 we find a certain knowledge of God's ways still evident among the nations in Abraham's age. But by Joseph's time wanton murder, and birthday celebrations, a custom rooted in false worship and superstition, are accepted practices of rulers.

"Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them" (Genesis 40:20-22).

### Rampant Lawlessness

By the time of Moses all but remnants of the knowledge of God had been forgotten. The descendants of Israel were living under the oppression of slavery in Egypt -- serving strange gods in a foreign land.

"Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!" (Joshua 24:14).

The law of God -- those eternal principles which together comprise the Way of Life -- was being universally transgressed. Egypt, the most powerful kingdom in the world before the Exodus,

*"It's God's purpose. . .in due time to remove Satan as ruler of this world, and replace him with a human being. One who is obedient to God and responsive to his will."*

was typical of what was going on worldwide at that time, as was the land of Canaan.

Rank idolatry -- a way of life embracing every perversity and wicked evil under the sun -- was being practiced. Years before God had told Abraham that He would not give his descendants the land of Canaan as an inheritance *until* the iniquity of the peoples of that region had progressed to the extreme limit (Genesis 15:16; the word "Amorite" used here is in this case a generic term for all the nations of Canaan, the Amorites being the most powerful, and probably the most wicked, of them).

"Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve **I will judge**; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the **iniquity** of the Amorites is not yet complete'" (Genesis 15:13-16).

This indicates what conditions on earth were like by the time of the Exodus. Archeology and history, as well as the Bible record, teach us that such abominable practices as adultery, fornication, prostitution, sodomy, murder and cannibalism were all a part of commonly accepted customs of the day. All these things, interestingly enough, were being done under the guise of religion.

Why then was the law -- the Old Covenant -- given?

Because of universal TRANSGRESSION of those very principles given expression in the law. The giving of the LAW was a MAJOR STEP IN LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE RESTORATION OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT ON THE EARTH. God had determined to give man six thousand years in which to experience first hand the misery of living contrary to His law. The flood had demonstrated the ultimate end of man made society apart from any restoration of God's government. Now man had corrupted himself almost as much as he had before the flood.

The overall reason the "law," or Old Covenant, was given was because of transgressions:

"What purpose then does the law [the Old Covenant] serve? It was added because of transgressions..." (Galatians 3:19).

Or, as it is rendered in the Bible in Worldwide English version: "Why then was the law [the Old Covenant] made? God gave it... because so many people were doing what was wrong" (Galatians 3:19).

In order to deal with the circumstances at hand due to transgressions, God instituted the Old Covenant.

It was time for God to begin laying the groundwork for the restoration of His government by SEPARATING and PRESERVING A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF. This brings us to the first of FIVE MAJOR REASONS FOR THE INSTITUTION OF THE OLD COVENANT -- all related to the problem of sin.



## IN THIS ISSUE

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**"Were the Commandments Nailed to the Cross?"** – Most professing Christians agree that God's grace is absolutely necessary for salvation. The blood of Christ covers the sins of a true Christian. But where does this leave the commandments? Were they "nailed to the cross" with Christ, or are Christians still obligated to obey them? See what the apostle Paul wrote about this important subject!

**"Did Jesus Break the Sabbath?"** – Christ contradicted the pharisaic laws regarding how to keep the Sabbath. Where did He stand on the Sabbath and how – or if – it was to be kept? See Christ's example in this in-depth study!

**"The Two Covenants - Part II"** – In our previous issue, we introduced the purpose of the old and new covenants. Continue your exploration of this deep subject in this follow-up study!

### **Looking for Answers?**

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