

A silhouette of a person sitting and reading a book, set against a warm, orange-hued sunset sky. The person is positioned on the left side of the frame, with their head bowed and hands holding an open book. The background is a soft gradient of orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is contemplative and spiritual.

MESSENGER

FULFILL YOUR DESTINY

*"I have set before you life and
death... choose life..."*

ETERNAL LIFE
IS OF GOD

April 2018

MESSENGER

Magazine

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From quests for the legendary fountain of youth, to modern genetic research, mankind throughout the ages has searched far and wide for ways to greatly extend the human lifespan – many have sought even for everlasting life. The idea of immortality, or a “death cure,” has fascinated mankind for centuries. Is there a way to achieve it? Does God have a plan for mankind to live forever, or is it His will for us to remain mortal? See what the Bible says about this fascinating subject and what it means for you!

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ETERNAL LIFE IS OF GOD

Rod Reynolds

From the beginning of human history men have desired eternal life. Humans have gone about seeking it in their own way. Adam and Eve were looking for it when they sinned. Satan told them, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). Yet they, and all humans who have ever lived prior to our time, have died (Hebrews 9:27), because eternal life is of God.

In ancient societies such as Babylon and Egypt men believed not only that fleshly works were necessary for eternal life but that eternal life depended on the continued existence of the flesh – that the flesh would somehow share in it. Thus for kings, especially, elaborate preparations were made for burial.

In Babylon and some other societies when a king died his riches were buried with him, also his wives, concubines, and servants, to serve him in the afterlife. Egyptians had similar beliefs and practices. They built elaborate tombs, and mummified the body to preserve it for the ba and ka (believed by the Egyptians to be spiritual aspects of existence which survived the death of the body, and which visited or inhabited the body after death). All kinds of charms, spells, and amulets were used to ensure eternal life.

A most sacred charm was the scarab heart. The heart was a symbol of what a person was – his emotions and character. The scarab beetle was a symbol of eternal life. The scarab heart charm supposedly made even the heart of an evil person weigh good.

God commanded his people each year to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6). One of the Lessons of unleavened bread is that we do not have in this flesh eternal life. The flesh is doomed to destruction. Leavening in this context represents corruption. Our flesh is cor-

rupt, mortal, and is in the process of perishing (1 Corinthians 15:50; 2 Corinthians 4:16).

There is no way we can save our own lives. Yet, though we cannot save ourselves, eternal life is possible for us, not through corruptible flesh, but through the Spirit of God. It's the same Holy Spirit that was given to the New Covenant Church of God in a special way on the day of Pentecost following Jesus' death and resurrection.

So how may we receive that Spirit, and the Eternal life that goes with It?

God purposes for us eternal life. He offered it to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:9, 16). But they wanted to have it by means of the flesh. They wanted to acquire it for themselves their own way. Whereas God offered it to them as a gift, but in order to receive the gift he required them to follow his instructions (Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24).

The Tree of life – representing the Holy Spirit – represents God's attributes of character – his nature planted in us which makes us a spiritual creation patterned after God. “But did He not make them [Adam and Eve] one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring [Hebrew: seed of God]” (Malachi 2:15).

God created mankind, Adam and Eve, and brought them together as one flesh for the ultimate purpose of reproducing himself, that is, in order to produce seed, or offspring, of God. That's the purpose of your existence, the existence of every human (Revelation 21:6-7).

God wants us to have eternal life (John 3:14-17; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). But there is a way that leads to life and a way that leads to death (Matthew 7:13-14). In giving Adam and Eve a choice he put before them two ways.

The tree of life representing God's nature showed also that God himself is the way – God

is the life – the source of eternal life. The way of eternal life and the source of eternal life as far as human beings are concerned cannot be separated.

“See, I have set before you today **life and good, death and evil**, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to **keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live....**”

....

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you **life and death**, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may **obey His voice**, and that you may cling to Him, for **He is your life...**” (Deuteronomy 30:15-16, 19-20).

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Jesus said, in a metaphorical sense, “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54). He was not speaking literally of flesh and blood, but of eating and drinking in of his word and Spirit. “It is the Spirit who [or which] gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

We eat and drink of Christ through eating and drinking of his word and his Spirit. If Christ lives in us we have life. If he lives in us, his way, expressed by his words, dwells in us also. “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you.... so you will be My disciples” (John 15:7-8). If Christ’s life is in us, his words are in us, and the fruits of living God’s way are born, but not of ourselves, not of our flesh. “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Our fleshly bodies are mortal. We cannot inherit immortality through the flesh. “...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corin-

thians 15:50). Yet it is natural for man to seek to please his flesh – to follow fleshly impulses, and when his thoughts turn to eternal life – to seek it by fleshly means. Our flesh is unfit for eternal life. It is perishing. It is not suited by character or its nature for eternal life.

Yet it is typical and natural for humans – unless they overcome that tendency – to be consumed with pleasing the flesh, pursuing fleshly desires, making provision for the flesh (Luke 12:16-21). But we are counseled to be mindful of the fact that this life is fleeting (Psalm 90:12; 1 Peter 1:24).

“God purposes for us eternal life. He offered it to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:9, 16). But they wanted to have it by means of the flesh. They wanted to acquire it for themselves their own way. Whereas God offered it to them as a gift, but in order to receive the gift he required them to follow his instructions (Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24).”

While enjoying life in the proper balance is not wrong, our attention should be centered primarily not on pleasing the flesh – not on this earthly realm, but on the realm which is the abode of those given immortality – the Kingdom of God. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” (Matthew 6:33). “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right

hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1-2).

Upon initial repentance and baptism we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, given a down payment on eternal life (Ephesians 1:13-14). However, to attain eternal life in its fullness we must continue in the faith (Colossians 1:21-23). To avoid falling we must be growing the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:17-18). Those who overcome in this life will be given eternal life in God’s Kingdom (Revelation 2:7).

Therefore we must mortify the fleshly nature and walk after the Spirit. “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:5-6). “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk

in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24-25). “...he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Galatians 6:8).

It is God’s will to give us character fit for life. It is his gift to those who walk after the Spirit (Philippians 2:12-13; Proverbs 16:3 2 Peter 1:1-11).

Eternal life is what God wants us to have and to seek, but we must realize it does not come from our own flesh, or from our own strength. It is the gift of God to those who walk after the Spirit, who partake of the Spirit of God, who are spiritually minded. Let’s allow God to create in us his righteous character so that we may fully attain eternal life in his glorious kingdom.

*Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good,
for his loving kindness endures forever.
Let the redeemed by Yahweh say so,
whom he has redeemed from the hand of the adversary,
And gathered out of the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.*

*They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way.
They found no city to live in.
Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.
Then they cried to Yahweh in their trouble,
and he delivered them out of their distresses,
he led them also by a straight way,
that they might go to a city to live in.
Let them praise Yahweh for his loving kindness,
for his wonderful deeds to the children of men!*

THE TWO COVENANTS

Part III

— Rod Reynolds —

As we've seen in previous installments of this series, the overall reason for the giving of the Old Covenant was because of transgressions – sin – lawlessness (Galatians 3:19). “Why then was the law [the Old Covenant] made? God gave it... because so many people were doing what was wrong” (Galatians 3:19; Bible in Worldwide English version).

But within that overall framework, there are at least five major reasons for the institution of the Old Covenant that we find in Scripture. Let's examine these five reasons now one at a time:

The Separation and Preservation of a People for God

We have seen that the earth was almost totally corrupt by Moses' time. Had God not intervened when he did it would have soon been too late. But it was not yet time for a general revelation of God's law in full spiritual application and force. God therefore chose out Israel and gave them a limited version of his Law that could be applied to a large extent in a physical manner. We are told in Galatians 3:23 one of the major reasons for the giving of the law in such a manner “But before faith came, we were **kept under the law**, shut up unto **the faith which should afterwards be revealed**” (KJV). Let's analyze this verse and understand precisely what it says.

The Greek word translated “faith” in this verse is *pistin* (accusative singular of *pistis*). It is a noun form of a Greek verb which means essentially **to persuade**. The Greek word *pistis* means faith, belief, firm persuasion (Consult the *Analytical Greek Lexicon*). In Galatians 3:23 it is **the faith**, emphatic in Greek, meaning a specific faith or persuasion of mind.

It is speaking of **the faith**, the persuasion of

mind -- the actual change of mind and heart -- that comes with true spiritual conversion. Until this total faith -- embracing the very mind of God -- was plainly revealed by Jesus Christ -- and given to those under the New Covenant by the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension into Heaven -- we, says Paul, meaning Israel primarily, were kept, that is **preserved** under the law.

Physical Israel was shut up -- that is “banded under a bar of disability” (see the *Analytical Greek Lexicon*) -- from the faith of a converted mind. Remember that we are speaking of Israel as a whole. We will go into the matter of individual spiritual conversion during that period later. But Israel as a whole did not have converted minds under the Old Covenant. They were, quite simply, a physical nation of fleshly, physically, carnally minded people. The “bar of disability” that “banded” them from the full spiritual faith of God was a lack of conversion (lack of faith and hence a lack of God's Spirit and mind). They **had not genuinely repented** of their sins and had not received the Spirit of God.

They were limited by their carnal minds -- therefore they were given God's Law in a **limited form** to preserve them from total corruption until the time came for the faith to be more fully and clearly revealed, and a spiritual Israel raised up as the next big step in the working out of God's plan (Ephesians 3; Galatians 6:16).

The Old Covenant encoded a system of law and a way of life that God expected the Israelites to follow.

Within that context the knowledge of God's plan was revealed in a seed like manner in the Pentateuch. But much of that was communicated in an enigmatic way, through, for example, types in the ritual ordinances associated with the Old

Covenant.

These things were “symbolic” as it says in Hebrews 9:9 (NKJV). But the full meaning behind the symbols remained largely hidden during the era of the Old Covenant.

With the prophets more was revealed over the centuries, yet the full meaning of what was revealed from a prophetic standpoint remained mostly hidden to the people of Israel. Even the prophets themselves often did not have full understanding of what was revealed to them:

“Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, ‘My lord, what shall be the end of these things?’ And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand’” (Daniel 12:8-10).

Although many details remained to be revealed, yet, **much was made known** during the Old Covenant era. It was understood, for example, that a Messiah would be sent from God for salvation, and to establish a literal kingdom of God on the earth. The commandments that were given **revealed a standard of behavior** that God expected mankind to live by.

With the coming of Jesus Christ, and the establishing of the Church of God under New Covenant, much was plainly revealed that had been at least partially hidden prior to that time.

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles -- if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was **not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed** by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 3:1-5).

Understanding of the things of the spirit, even that which had been made known through the prophets, was to a large extent lacking in the minds of most of the Israelites under the Old Covenant, due to their carnality. Nevertheless, they had been chosen as God’s people in a special way. The law – the Old Covenant – was given to “keep,” or preserve them. “But before faith came, we **were kept** under the law” (Galatians 3:23).

With the giving of the Old Covenant Israel was called out to be separate from other peoples. They entered into a relationship with God through which they would be an example to the other nations of mankind. The Law separated the physical nation of Israel from heathen nations, and made them God’s nation -- with whom God would now deal and in whose affairs He would intervene.

“For you are a **holy people** to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6).

“But I have said to you, ‘You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples” (Leviticus 20:22-24).

So God separated unto Himself a people, and by the law -- the covenant agreement with that people -- preserved them until the time came for the next great step in the restoration of His

Government. Although the nation as a whole remained mostly corrupt, among them were always some who were faithful.

And because of the remnant who were faithful, God preserved not only the peoples of Israel, but mankind as well, from destruction. Note the principle in how God dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah:

“And Abraham came near and said, “‘Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare

“The Old Covenant encoded a system of law and a way of life that God expected the Israelites to follow.”

it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ So the Lord said, ‘If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then **I will spare all the place for their sakes.**’ Then Abraham answered and said, ‘Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?’ So He said, ‘If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it.’ And he spoke to Him yet again and said, ‘Suppose there should be forty found there?’ So He said, ‘I will not do it for the sake of forty.’ Then he said, ‘Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?’ So He said, ‘I will not do it if I find thirty there.’ And he said, ‘Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?’ So He said, ‘I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty.’ Then he said, ‘Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?’ And He said, I will not destroy it for the sake of ten’” (Genesis 18:23-32).

“I say then, has God **cast away** His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has **not cast away** His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ‘Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life’? But what does the divine response say to him? ‘I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ Even so then, at this present time there is **a remnant according to the election of grace**” (Romans 11:1-5).

We find this same principle applied at the end of the age, as Jesus Christ returns to the earth to

save mankind from utter destruction. “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but **for the elect’s sake** those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22).

In the process of separating Israel with their deliverance from captivity in Egypt, and the establishing of the Old Covenant, God **broke** the power of the mightiest nations on earth. He humbled them and set Israel before them as a witness. Israel’s separation then served not only to preserve Israel, but also the other nations, from the total ruin toward which they were headed.

“Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!” (Romans 11:12).

The Law Given to Israel: Primarily a Teaching Device

Indeed, education is the all-encompassing reason for the giving of the law. It was designed to teach a multitude of things. We will discuss the most important of some of these one at a time. But first let’s establish that the Old Covenant was indeed an educational tool.

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [Greek: *paidagogos*; from which the English ‘pedagogue’] to bring us unto Christ...” (Galatians 3:24, KJV). Because Israel and the world were “banded under a bar of disability” with regard to the faith, previous verse, as explained earlier, the law was given as their “schoolmaster.” What does a schoolteacher do? Mainly he or she educates, teaches, instructs. We’ll see soon what the law was intended to teach. But the Greek word, *paidagogos*, (παιδαγωγός) implied not only a teacher but also a guardian of the children of a family, “whose duty it was to...exercise a constant superintendence over their **conduct and safety**” (refer to *Analytical Greek Lexicon*). So we see

“God separated unto Himself a people, and by the law -- the covenant agreement with that people -- preserved them until the time came for the next great step in the restoration of His Government.”

again that the law first preserved Israel and also was designed to teach.

What was taught by the Old Covenant? Essentially it was designed to teach the eternal principles of God's Spiritual law. But to describe exactly how this was done we must be more specific...

The Old Covenant: The Form of Knowledge and Truth

God is a master educator. One of the most effective ways of teaching is by the use of analogy. God uses physical analogies, or type and anti-type, to teach us eternal, invisible, spiritual truths. "... That which may be known of God is manifest in [or to] to them; for God has shown it to them. For the **invisible things** of Him from the creation of the world **are clearly seen**, being **understood by the things that are made....**" (Romans 1:19-20).

The principle expressed here is clear. Put concisely it is: **Spiritual, Eternal, Invisible Truths concerning God are made known and understandable to us by the physical, temporary, visible things originated by Him.**

This brings us to the very crux of the relationship between the Old and New Covenants. The Old Covenant was a **type** of the New. It was God's immutable system of law and government given in a limited, physical, temporary form and expression. But though the Old Covenant was temporary and physical in nature, it was the image, shape, form or pattern of the eternal, spiritual system of law and government to which it was analogous. In the words of the Bible: The Jews have "the form of knowledge and truth in the law" (Romans 2:20).

The book of Hebrews was written originally to Jewish Christians in Palestine, to encourage them to stay the course, in part by showing how the New Covenant fulfills all that was foreshadowed in the Old Covenant -- thus linking what was sound in their ancient tradition with the future of God's Kingdom! In Hebrews Paul (it seems clear on close examination that Paul authored Hebrews) shows

how a number of specific aspects of the Law as expressed in the Old Covenant find full, complete, spiritual expression in the New Covenant.

Concerning the Levitical priesthood and the Tabernacle Paul said: "...There are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve unto the **example and shadow** of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, see, said He, that you make all things according to the pattern shown you in the mount" (Hebrews 8:4-5, KJV). The priesthood, as we are told, was a **prefiguring of something greater** -- and, as we shall see, the same statement applies to everything encompassed by the Old Covenant.

All of the laws given in the Old Covenant were founded on **spiritual principles**.

Every detail of the Old Covenant has its spiritual counterpart, application and fulfillment under the New Covenant. For the purpose of establishing this point, a few examples follow:

THE TABERNACLE

"...While as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a **figure for the time then present...**" (Hebrews 9:8-9). The tabernacle in the wilderness was a type of the Church -- the spiritual tabernacle

of God.

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

By studying the details of the tabernacle -- and the temple which replaced it -- we could learn much about God's intentions for the Church.

THE KINGDOM:

Israel was a nation established as a Kingdom.

"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:6).

The kingdom of Israel was a physical type of the spiritual Kingdom of God. The original and

"Indeed, education is the all-encompassing reason for the giving of the law. It was designed to teach a multitude of things."

rightful King of Israel was the Eternal. Yahweh, from a root word [hayah] meaning “to exist,” implying the ever-living, self-existing, Eternal God, is the name by which God made himself known to the Israelites, as his covenant, or “national” name, indicating his unique relationship with Israel (Exodus 3:14-15).

“Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, ‘Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.’ But Gideon said to them, ‘I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord [Yahweh] shall rule over you’” (Judges 8:23).

When later at the time of Samuel Israel demanded a human king:

“And the Lord [Yahweh] said to Samuel, ‘Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them’” (1 Samuel 8:7).

The same being -- Jesus Christ, whose name means The ETERNAL SAVIOR-KING-HIGH PRIEST-APOSTLE -- is and shall be the King over spiritual Israel.

“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14; cf. John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 7:14; 21:14; 22:3)

The Church is called the “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16. The things that happened to physical Israel were for the education and instruction of Spiritual Israel.

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. **Now**

these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted” (I Corinthians 10:1-6).

The name “Israel” means “Prince of God.” Those in the Church in this age are now, in a sense, princes of God -- and will, when Christ returns, become “Kings and Priests” in the God Nation.

“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests

to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:4-6; cf. Daniel 7:27; Revelation 20:4-6).

THE MEDIATOR

Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant.

“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).

“The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The Lord talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain” (Deuteronomy 5:2-5).

Inasmuch as Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, he was in that respect and others a type of Christ, as the scriptures show. Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant.

“...to **Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:24).

“...though the Old Covenant was temporary and physical in nature, it was the image, shape, form or pattern of the eternal, spiritual system of law and government to which it was analogous.”

THE PRIESTHOOD

The Levitical priesthood was a type of the Priesthood of Melchizedek. At the present time there is only one Priest of the latter Order. But in the future others will be added to the priesthood – as the saints are not only to be made kings (or rulers) under Christ, but priests as well (Revelation 20:6). Jesus Christ, however, will always remain the High Priest.

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated ‘king of righteousness,’ and then also king of Salem, meaning ‘king of peace,’ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually” (Hebrews 7:1-3).

.....

“(for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: ‘The Lord has sworn And will not relent, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek”’), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, **because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood**. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, ap-

points the Son who has been perfected forever” (Hebrews 7:21-28).

“Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man” (Hebrews 8:1-2).

THE SACRIFICES

The major sacrifices required by the law were types of the Sacrifice of the New Covenant -- Jesus Christ.

“Inasmuch as Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, he was in that respect and others a type of Christ, as the scriptures show. Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant.”

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to

serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:12-14).

All of the sacrifices under the Levitical priesthood, or the Old Covenant, have lessons to teach about the various aspects of Christ’s sacrifice. Some of the sacrifices in the Old Covenant teach lessons about the Church, or sacrifices required of God’s people. For example, the burning of incense was a type of the prayers of the saints.

“And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of **incense, which are the prayers of the saints** (Revelation 5:6-8).

Sacrifices are at least as much a part of the

New Covenant as they were of the Old Covenant. But the the sacrifices under the New Covenant are the reality which typified under the Old Covenant.

Just one example:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

THE LAWS

Is the law done away?

We will answer this question in detail later. But if you mean by the "law" the commandments and statutes given to Israel, the answer is this: they are, if anything, even more binding today

than before! In some cases, the application is different. But the laws given to Israel were based on spiritual principles (Romans 7:14).

The commandments and statutes given to Israel were generally speaking a limited, physical application of the spiritual principles of God's law. These spiritual laws were in force long before God made the covenant with Israel (Genesis 26:5).

Sin is the transgression of God's law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law**" (1 John 3:4, KJV).

Sin is not imputed when there is no law. "...until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13).

Yet Adam sinned. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

And sin was imputed to Adam, because he was judged for his transgression. "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned [Adam]. For the **judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation**, but the free

gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification" (Romans 5:16).

And Adam was punished for his sin -- receiving the death penalty. "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread **Till you return to the ground**, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

Cain sinned by murdering his brother, and was punished for it (Genesis 4:8-12).

The entire antediluvian world were judged by God and punished because of their sins. Noah preached righteousness to them: "And God spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:5).

But righteousness and sin are defined by the law. "...all Your commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). "... sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). Even before the creation of mankind the Bible says a group of angels sinned. "... God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).

Abraham was blessed in part because he kept God's commandments and statutes. "...Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Genesis 26:5).

Sodom and Gomorrah were punished for their **lawless** deeds. "... and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)" (2 Peter.2:6-8).

God's law -- as stated before -- consists of those spiritual principles that produce peace, joy,

"...in the future others will be added to the priesthood - as the saints are not only to be made kings (or rulers) under Christ, but priests as well (Revelation 20:6). Jesus Christ, however, will always remain the High Priest."

happiness, when obeyed. When disobeyed the result is confusion, suffering, poverty, war and other curses. Jesus Christ came to **magnify the law** -- to, make it applicable in the fullest, broadest and most meaningful way -- and to make it honorable. "The Lord is well pleased for His [the Messiah, Jesus Christ] righteousness' sake; He will exalt the law and make it honorable" (Isaiah 42:21)

Jesus said, "**Do not** think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. **Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;** but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-20).

Many who claim to be Christ's ministers, though, have degraded and belittled the commandments of God and made them seem contemptible in the eyes of the people. This was prophesied to happen, and notice God's condemnation of such apostasy: "... [you say], the table of the Lord is contemptible" (Malachi 1:7). This is a prophecy for our time, the priests of Malachi's day being typical of the ministers of our day (today's ministers are not priests -- but the priests were ministers). "'For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,' Says the Lord of hosts. 'But you profane it, In that you say, "The table of the Lord is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible."'" (Malachi 1:11-12).

The "meat" of God's table is His word, His Law. "For when for the time ye ought to be teach-

ers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the **oracles** [word] of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of **strong meat**. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the **word of righteousness**: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14, KJV).

Notice further: "...the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law..." (Malachi 2:7-8).

Therefore God pronounces judgment on such ministers: "'Therefore have I also made you con-

"The commandments and statutes given to Israel were generally speaking a limited, physical application of the spiritual principles of God's law. These spiritual laws were in force long before God made the covenant with Israel (Genesis 26:5)."

temptible and base before all the people, according as you have not kept my ways, but have lifted up the face against my law" (Malachi 2:9, as it is in the margin of my KJV Bible). Literally, it might be translated "accepted faces in the law." It could include showing partiality, which itself is a violation of God's law. "...if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 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" (James 2:8-11).

Jesus Christ did not diminish the laws of God -- but as stated before, made them even more completely applicable and binding in the full spiritual sense. Christ said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). He came with the full spiritual reality of what the law of Moses only prefigured. He went on to tell His people, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but

whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19).

He went on to teach that it was wrong not only to murder -- but even to hate another. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, **love your enemies**, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?" (Matthew 5:43-47).

He said that even to **look at a woman lustfully** was a breach of the seventh commandment. "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

He said we are to "become perfect" even as the Father is perfect. "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). "Be," from the Greek *ésomai*, is in the future indicative in this verse, and would be better translated "become." Perfection in the likeness of God is something we should be striving to grow into.

Notice the **two cardinal points** of the New Covenant: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days," says the Lord: 'I will put **My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them**,' then He adds, 'Their **sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more**'" (Hebrews 10:16-17).

The fact is **every one** of the Laws given under the Old Covenant has a spiritual application under the New Covenant. In many cases the law is applied differently under the New Covenant -- but it is nevertheless applicable. An example is

circumcision -- which was required literally and physically under the literal and physical Old Covenant. But God through a series of miracles finally showed his newly founded, spiritually begotten Church that a literal, physical application of this law was not necessary for Gentile converts under the New Covenant -- though a far more meaningful and far reaching spiritual application of the Law of circumcision was necessary. "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit**, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:28-29).

Many laws, of course, must continue to be applied physically as well as spiritually, for though the Gentiles were not required to be physically circumcised as a specific condition for entrance into the Church, they were required to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20).

All these things were practices related to the idolatrous customs common in gentile nations. And the **basis** for their prohibition under the New Covenant is to be found in system of law codified in the Old Testament as part of the covenant given to Israel. And all of these things were very physical and outward indications that they had indeed separated themselves from the idolatrous system of which they had been a part.

God is pragmatic. And His Law is pragmatic. What you do affects your mind. And conversely, the way you think affects your outward behavior. In the Old Covenant the emphasis was placed on deeds -- the outward man. Under the New Covenant the emphasis is placed on the mind and heart -- the inner man. But inasmuch as the two are intimately related, neither is by any means ignored in either covenant. Paul wrote, "...Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh

"Jesus Christ did not diminish the laws of God -- but as stated before, made them even more completely applicable and binding in the full spiritual sense."

and spirit..." (2 Corinthians 7:1).

One could go on and on describing the spiritual realities prefigured in the Old Covenant, but enough has been given that by now we should have the general idea. We will later discuss some questions that some consider "difficult" concerning the point made here. Did the law really teach us to "hate your enemy"?

We plan in the next chapter of this series to continue our discussion of some of the reasons for the giving of the Old Covenant, and how it relates to the New Covenant.

*Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,
being bound in affliction and iron,
because they rebelled against the words of God,
and condemned the counsel of the Most High.
Therefore he brought down their heart with labor.
They fell down, and there was no help.
Then they cried to Yahweh in their trouble,
and he saved them out of their distresses.
He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of
death,
and broke away thier chains.
Let them praise Yahweh for his loving kindness,
for his wonderful deeds to the children of men!*

*For he has broken the gates of brass,
and cut through bars of iron.*

IN THIS ISSUE

“Eternal Life is of God” – For centuries, mankind has searched for the secret to immortality in vain. Can one truly escape the grasp of death? See what the Bible says about this intriguing subject and how it relates to God’s plan for mankind!

“The Two Covenants - Part III” – In our previous two issues, we have ventured into the purposes of the two covenants that are deeply woven throughout the Bible. Join us as we continue on our journey of exploration of this critical subject!

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