

Understanding God's Commandments

Genesis 2:2-3 - 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Leviticus 23 Feasts of the Lord

23 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.

The Sabbath

3 ‘Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.

Matthew 12 Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

12 At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” 3 But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? 6 Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple. 7 But if you had known what *this* means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’^[a] you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord even^[b] of the Sabbath.”

Healing on the Sabbath

9 Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—that they might accuse Him. 11 Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift *it* out? 12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? **Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**”

Luke 4:16 "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom."

Luke 4:31 "Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people."

The apostle Paul followed Jesus' example as well and did the same kind of preaching in synagogues on Sabbath. Why? Because it was a God-given way to preach the gospel to a whole town, at a time when they would be paying close attention to what was said! Acts 18:4 "Every Sabbath he (Paul) reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks."

The Law of Moses

In Biblical times, the Law of Moses (also called Old Testament Law, Mosaic Law, or just The Law) regulated almost every aspect of Jewish life. The Ten Commandments and many other laws defined matters of morals, religious practice and government. It regulated the army, criminal justice, commerce, property rights, slavery, sexual relations, marriage and social interactions. It required circumcision for males, animal sacrifices, and strict Sabbath observance. It provided for the welfare of widows, orphans, the poor, foreigners and domestic animals. Ceremonial rules divided animals into "clean" and "unclean" categories. Clean animals could be eaten; unclean animals could not. The Law of Moses was given to the Israelites when they were still a band of ex-slaves struggling to survive. Many of the laws were specific for the worship system and agricultural life of ancient Israel (Exodus 12:14-16, Leviticus 1:10-13, 11:1-23, 15:19-20, 19:19, 19:27-28, 27:30-32, Deuteronomy 25:5-6). Like life in those times, many were harsh and cruel compared to the teachings of Jesus (Exodus 35:2, Deuteronomy 20:10-14, 21:18-21, 22:23-24). But there are also many moral teachings that form the basis of Christian morality (Exodus 20:1-17, 23:6-9, Leviticus 19:9-10, 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:5).

The Teachings of Jesus

By the time of Jesus, the great moral principles God had given to Moses in the Ten Commandments had been turned into hundreds of ceremonial rules. People thought they were living holy lives if they just obeyed all those rules. But Jesus disagreed. He said people found enough "loopholes" to obey all the rules and still live wicked and greedy lives (Matthew 23:23-28).

Jesus made one statement about the Law that often causes confusion:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (NIV, Matthew 5:17–18)

Christians have struggled to understand exactly what Jesus meant. At first reading, this seems to say that all the Old Testament rules and rituals must still be observed. But Jesus and His disciples did not observe many of those rules and rituals, so it could not mean that.

Jesus did not abolish the moral and ethical laws that had been in effect from the time of Moses. He affirmed and expanded upon those principles, but He said obedience must be from the heart (attitudes and intentions) rather than just technical observance of the letter of the law (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-42, 43-44, etc.).

However, Jesus and His disciples did not observe the strict scribal rules against doing any work on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-14, Mark 2:23-28, 3:1-6, Luke 6:1-11, 13:10-17, 14:1-6, John 5:1-18). Neither did they perform the ritual hand washings before eating (Matthew 15:1-2). In contrast to the dietary rules of the Law, Jesus said no food can defile a person; it is bad attitudes and actions that can make a person unholy (Matthew 15:1-20, Mark 7:1-23). Jesus frequently criticized the scribal laws (Matthew 23:23, Mark 7:11-13) and some aspects of the civil law (John 8:3-5, 10-11).

Therefore, Jesus may have been specifically teaching that the moral and ethical laws in the Scripture would endure until the end of time. That would be consistent with His actions and other teachings. Through His teachings and actions, Jesus revealed the true meaning and intent of the Law.

It is also pointed out that Jesus, Himself, is the fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 26:28, Mark 10:45, Luke 16:16, John 1:16, Acts 10:28, 13:39, Romans 10:4) The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross ended forever the need for animal sacrifices and other aspects of the ceremonial law.

Early Christians

The first Christians came from among the Jews. They continued to worship as Jews and continued to observe the **Sabbath** (Acts 13:14, 17:1-2, 18:1-4). They also regularly met on **Sunday** (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2).

The Council of Jerusalem

The first Christians came from among the Jews, and they continued to observe the Law of Moses as well as their new Christian faith. But as more and more Gentiles (non-Jews) converted to Christianity, there were disputes about whether or not these Gentile Christians must observe the Law. Issues of circumcision and diet were especially troublesome and threatened to split Christianity apart.

In about the year 49 A.D., Peter, Paul, Barnabas, James and other Christian leaders met in Jerusalem to settle the issue (**Acts 15:1-29**). It was agreed, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that nothing was required of the Gentile converts except faith in Christ; they were not bound by the Law of Moses. However, the council directed the Gentile Christians to abstain from certain things that were particularly offensive to their Jewish brethren - food sacrificed to idols, blood, meat of strangled animals and sexual immorality (**Acts 15:29**).

The New Covenant

With the coming of Christ, God has established a new covenant with mankind (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25, Hebrews 8:8-13, 9:11-15). Jesus and His apostles gave us a radically new understanding of the true intent of the Old Testament Law; they brought a new era of the rule of love for all people and spiritual truth instead of rule by law (Luke 10:25-28, John 13:34-35, Ephesians 2:14-18). However, God has not revoked His original covenant with Israel and the Jewish people (Luke 1:72, Acts 3:25, Romans 9:4-5, 11:26-29, Galatians 3:17). The New Covenant does not condemn the Jews, nor does it in any way justify persecution of Jews.

Conclusion

The teachings of Jesus, the Council of Jerusalem, and other New Testament teachings (John 1:16-17, Acts 13:39, Romans 2:25-29, 8:1-4, 1 Corinthians 9:19-21, Galatians 2:15-16, Ephesians 2:15) make it clear that Christians are not required to follow the Old Testament rules about crimes and punishments, warfare, slavery, diet, circumcision, animal sacrifices, feast days observance, ritual cleanness, etc.

Christians still look to the Old Testament scripture for moral and spiritual guidance (2 Timothy 3:16-17). But when there seems to be a conflict between Old Testament laws and New Testament principles, we must follow the New Testament because it represents the most recent and most perfect revelation from God (Hebrews 8:13, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, Galatians 2:15-20).

However, freedom from the Old Testament Law is not a license for Christians to relax their moral standards. The moral and ethical teachings of Jesus and His apostles call for even greater self-discipline than those of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-42, 43-48, 7:1-5, 15:18-19, 25:37-40, Mark 7:21-23, 12:28-31, Luke 12:15, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Galatians 5:19-21, James 1:27, 2:15-16, 1 John 3:17-19).

Jesus observed the Sabbath (Luke 4:16) and never suggested a change to Sunday. He did, however, reject a strict **legalistic interpretation** of the Old Testament commandment. He said Sabbath observance was not a duty that mankind owed to God. Rather, God made the Sabbath as a day of **rest for mankind's benefit** (Mark 2:27). Jesus and His disciples did not observe the strict Jewish rules against doing any work on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-14, Mark 2:23-28, 3:1-6, Luke 6:1-11, 13:10-17, 14:1-6, John 5:1-18).

²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the **true worshipers** will **worship** the Father in the **Spirit** and in **truth**, for they are the kind of **worshipers** the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is **spirit**, and his **worshipers** must **worship** in the **Spirit** and in **truth**." (John 4:23-24)

Worship - to obey | in Spirit – will be evident in (Gal. 5:22-23) | Truth - the word of God

Compare below Moses Law vs. God's Ten Commandment Law

MANY people often confuse Moses Law with God's Ten Commandment Law, but they are very different.

Moses' law was the temporary, ceremonial law of the Old Testament. It regulated the priesthood, sacrifices, rituals, meat and drink offerings, etc., all of which foreshadowed the cross. This law was added "till the seed should come," and that seed was Christ (Galatians 3:16, 19). The ritual and ceremony of Moses' law pointed forward to Christ's sacrifice. When He died, this law came to an end, but the Ten Commandments (God's law) "stand fast for ever and ever." **Psalm 111:7,8.**

There are two laws that are made crystal clear in the following verses: Daniel 9:10 is talking about God's law and verse 11 is talking about Moses' law:

10 "Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets." 11 "Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him." **Daniel 9:10, 11**

Special Note: Please note that God's law also called the 10 Commandments has existed at least as long as sin has existed. The Bible says, "Where no law is, there is no transgression [or sin]." **Romans 4:15.** So God's Ten Commandment law existed from the beginning. Men broke that law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." **1 John 3:4** Because of sin (or breaking God's law), Moses law was given (or "added" Galatians 3:16, 19) till Christ should come and die.

Moses Law	Ten Commandments
Called "Law contained in ordinances" EPH. 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances ; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.	Called "the Royal law" JAMES 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:
Written by Moses in a book 2 CHRON. 35:12 And they removed the burnt offerings, that they might give according to the divisions of the families of the people, to offer unto the LORD, as it is written in the book of Moses . And so did they with the oxen.	Written by God on stone EXO. 31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. EXO. 32:16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.
Placed in the side of the ark DEUT. 31:26 Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. (AGAINST US)	Placed inside the ark EXO. 40:20 And he took and put the testimony into the ark , and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark:
Ended at the cross EPH. 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances ; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace.	Will stand forever LUKE 16:17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.
Added because of sin GAL. 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions , till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.	Points out sin ROM. 7:7 What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law : for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ROM. 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there

	shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by <u>the law is the knowledge of sin.</u>
Contrary to us, against us COL. 2:14 <u>Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us,</u> and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.	Not grievous 1 JOHN 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his <u>commandments are not grievous.</u>
Judges no man COL. 2:14-16 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. <u>Let no man therefore judge you</u> in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:	Judges all men JAM. 2:10-12 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that <u>shall be judged by the law of liberty.</u>
Carnal HEB. 7:16 Who is made, not after the <u>law of a carnal commandment,</u> but after the power of an endless life.	Spiritual ROM. 7:14 For we know that the <u>law is spiritual:</u> but I am carnal, sold under sin.
Made nothing perfect HEB. 7:19 For the law <u>made nothing perfect,</u> but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.	Perfect PSALMS 19:7 <u>The law of the LORD is perfect,</u> converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Romans 3:20 (The purpose of God's law)

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

John 14:15 15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

James 2:19-20 (believing, righteousness and faith at work, example Abraham)

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

1 John 2:2-4 (truth is not in you if you don't keep the commandments)

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Hebrews 10:15-16 (If we love God, we are in His covenant)

15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Romans 6:14 (we are not under sin, we are dead to sin by grace, not the law)

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Revelation 22:14 (the commandment keepers)

14 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.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 (Out duty as we live)

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.