

Abraham Observed the Law, Commandments and Statutes of God

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It has been taught that the law, commandments, and statutes given to Moses at Mt. Sinai were done away after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It has also been taught that the law, commandments, and statutes given to ancient Israel were not known, or observed, prior to their introduction by Moses.

However, if Holy Scripture were to reveal that another human being kept the law, commandments, and statutes prior to the time of Moses it would be difficult to support the latter teaching. Even if one individual kept the law, commandments and statutes of God prior to the time of Moses, it would prove that they were instructed to do so by one of Almighty God's heavenly servants because no mortal being would be able to create these same laws, commandments and statutes.

Prior to God's laws, commandments and statutes being given to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai, Almighty God made a clear connection between His example of a Sabbath rest in the Genesis account of creation, and the fact that this example was to serve as a constant reminder for those He had created,

And the Lord said to Moses (prior to the law being given at Mt. Sinai; cf. Ex. 20), "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days" (Ex. 16:28-29a).

Almighty God did not introduce the Sabbath commandment shortly before Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai. Instead, He gave it to all of mankind following their creation (Mk. 2:27). The fact that individuals and nations neglect, forget to keep, or just ignore the law and commandments of God, is not proof that they are no longer in effect,

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. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (set it apart for a special purpose), because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (Gen. 2:2-3).

It is important to note that the weekly Sabbath always falls on a Saturday using the current secular calendar (see study – The Weekly Sabbath). Sunday is a high day in the pagan system of worship and was introduced into Christianity some time after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see study – Pagan Practices). The Sabbath commences at dark on a Friday night and ends at dark on Saturday night (see study – How to Determine the Beginning and End of the Day).

As Abraham was regarded as a friend of God (2Chr. 20:7; Jas. 2:23) and the father of those who are faithful to Him (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7-9), it should not come as a surprise if he knew about the law, commandments and statutes of God,

Then the Lord appeared to him (Isaac) and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn (reside temporarily) in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will perform the oath (promise) which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (prophetic promise regarding Jesus Christ); because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments (SHD # 4687), My statutes (SHD # 2708), and My laws (SHD # 8451). (Gen. 26:2-5).

It is important to note that when some of the writings in the Second Covenant appear to say that God's law and commandments are of little significance, the context needs to be examined closely because they refer to the animal sacrificial system and/or the Levitical priesthood (see study – What Was The Change In The Law That Paul Referred To In Hebrews 7:12?),

In Genesis 26:5, the Hebrew words translated into the English words, "commandments", "statutes" and "laws" are the same as those used during the time that Moses was given God's law, commandments, and statutes at Mt. Sinai. Ancient Israel was reminded that disobedience to the same laws, commandments and statutes that Abraham obeyed would result in national captivity (Deut. 28:15-68). Upon repentance for breaking these, God said that He would forgive their sins,

The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body (offspring), in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments (SHD # 4687) and His statutes (SHD # 2708) which are written in this Book of the Law (SHD # 8451), and if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut. 30:9-10).

As Almighty God does not change (Mal. 3:6), the same punishment that was prescribed for ancient Israel will apply to those who persist in disobeying God's law and commandments today. It should be noted that there were approximately seven hundred years between the time that Moses gave God's law, commandments and statutes at Mt. Sinai, and the captivity of Jerusalem (588/587 BCE). Therefore, the scriptures that attest to God's patience and longsuffering are confirmed (Ex. 34:6; Nu. 14:18; Ps. 86:15; 2Pt. 3:9). Unfortunately, most people interpret God's patience as a license to disobey His law and commandments. In other words, "we haven't gone into captivity; so this is proof that our conduct is acceptable to God." It is clear that God's people will again be taken captive by foreign nations because they are gathered from these countries after the return of Jesus Christ (Isa. 11:11-12; 66:20). This gathering is

not limited to those of the tribe of Judah (the Jews) who comprise only a small portion of the twelve tribes of Israel. This gathering will include many non-Jewish people from the other tribes of Israel who are now living in nations around the world (see study – Messiah’s Message to the Jewish People).

Abraham learned God’s law, commandments and statutes because he was taught by Almighty God’s servant, who would later become Jesus Christ (see study - Who Did The Early Church Think Jesus Christ Was Prior To His Birth As A Man?; cf. Heb. 13:9). Because Abraham was instructed in the ways of God, he acted as priest of his own household and was responsible for administering God’s law, commandments, and statutes,

So He (the Lord) said to him (Abram), “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Then he (Abram) brought all these to him (the Lord) and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two (Gen. 15:9-10).

This is My covenant which you (Abraham) shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised (Gen. 17:10ff).

And the Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice (cf. Ps. 119:142, 160, 172), that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him” (Gen. 18:17-19).

Although Abraham was priest of his own household, he recognized a higher priest who represented Almighty God and carried the title of king,

Then Melchizedek king of Salem (Peace; cf. Isa. 9:6) brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. And he (Melchizedek) blessed him (Abram) and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he (Abram) gave him (Melchizedek) a tithe (tenth) of all (Gen. 14:18-20; cf. Heb. 7:1-2).

Melchizedek, king of Salem, does not have a beginning of days like other human beings and remains a priest continually (Heb. 7:3; see study – Who Is Melchizedek?). As Abraham knew about Melchizedek and how he should relate to him, there would have been communication between the two of them on more than one occasion. It appears that Melchizedek continued as High Priest until the time of Moses and the institution of the Levitical priesthood. Among other responsibilities, the Levitical priesthood administered the animal sacrifices according to all the instructions in the law of God. This aspect of God’s law ceased after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the destruction of the temple in 70CE,

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law – regarding animal sacrifices) what further need was there that another

priest should rise (in a resurrection from the dead) according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? (Heb. 7:11).

Abraham and others, that God worked with prior to the time of Moses, were obedient to the law, commandments and statutes. From the very beginning the requirement for a sacrifice to cover sins was taught and possibly by the one who carries the title, Melchizedek king of Salem,

Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics (SHD # 3801 - coverings) of skin (SHD # 5785 – the hide of animals), and clothed them (Gen. 3:21).

As no human being has seen or heard Almighty God (Jn. 5:37), it is possible these coverings were made by Melchizedek through the sacrifice of some clean animals. This may be a summary example explaining how Cain and Abel understood the requirement for sacrifice and also to present offerings to God. Presumably, Adam would have taught his sons the importance of bringing an offering because of the instruction he received shortly after he and Eve had sinned,

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also (in addition to the fruit of the ground) brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat (Gen. 4:3-4a).

It is interesting to note that Abel obeyed the law regarding animal sacrifices in very specific details including the fat belonging to God and the use of the firstlings of the flock,

And the priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma; all the fat is the Lord's (Lev. 3:16).

All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to the Lord your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. You and your household shall eat it before the Lord your God year by year in the place which the Lord chooses. But if there is any defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God (Deut. 15:19-21).

It is highly unlikely that Abel came up with the idea of these offerings himself. They resemble specific instructions given to Moses too closely to be a coincidence. Therefore, Cain and Abel were instructed in God's law and commanded to obey. Apparently, Cain was reluctant to follow the instructions he was given, and this was reflected in his offering (Gen. 4:5).

Some Bible commentators claim that God's people learned about sacrificing animals through the Gentile, or pagan, nations and then adopted these practices. However, this cannot be correct if Genesis 3:21 is properly understood because Gentile nations did not exist at this time in human history.

Noah also sacrificed to God confirming that he was either taught by God's heavenly servant, or learned from a family member who understood the law, commandments and statutes of God. Not only did Noah sacrifice, but he also knew that only clean animals would be acceptable,

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar (Gen. 8:20).

Therefore, the claim that the law regarding clean and unclean animals came in with Moses and ended after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is false (Lev. 11:2-47; Deut. 14:1-21).

Again, because every detail of the law, commandments, and statutes given to Moses, is not mentioned prior to Moses, is not sufficient evidence to state these were not taught, understood, and obeyed by God's people prior to the time of Moses. The book of Genesis is a very brief summary of man's history covering thousands of years. Some claim there is proof of man's settlements dating back to 10,000 B.C., or even earlier. As the book of Genesis ends with the death of Joseph approximately 1780 B.C. (Gen. 50:26), it is possible that the history of Genesis spans over 8,000 years. As Genesis consists of fifty chapters, this would amount to one chapter covering one hundred and sixty years of man's history. In contrast, the combined books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy consist of 137 chapters covering the lifespan of the nation of Israel under Moses, who lived for one hundred and twenty years (Deut. 34:7). This would equal less than one year of history per chapter! Therefore, it should be no surprise that the law, commandments and statutes of God are recorded in greater detail in the four books just mentioned than in the book of Genesis.

The next question that will arise is how God's people should observe the law, commandments, and statutes today when there is no Levitical priesthood and no animal sacrificial system. It is very important to note that this was a big issue in the early church of God following Christ's death and resurrection. The key that distinguishes the action of the early church, compared with the action Christianity today, is that those in the early church wanted to make sure they understood and obeyed God correctly. They certainly did not approach law-related issues by stating that Christ did away with the law, commandments and statutes of his Father in heaven. Instead, they examined and discussed each issue very cautiously and respectfully with the desire to please and obey God. One example was the subject of circumcision, which pre-dated God's law, commandments and statutes being given to Moses at Mt. Sinai (Gen. 17:10). The members of God's early church, along with the apostles and elders, assembled to discuss this matter because it was causing confusion with the potential for division within the body of Christ,

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that

Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question (Ac. 15:1-2).

And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses (animal sacrifices and associated ordinances) (Ac. 15:4-5).

As the temple in Jerusalem was still operating at this time, and would continue to do so until 70CE, it caused confusion especially for those early church members who were previously involved with officiating at the temple. This dilemma took on a sense of urgency because Gentile converts were coming into fellowship in large numbers, and in the First Covenant these people could not fellowship with Israel, or participate in God's festivals, unless they were circumcised,

And when a stranger sojourns with you and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who sojourns among you (Ex. 12:48-49).

In order to settle this dispute, the early church examined prophetic scriptures dealing with Gentile nations coming into a spiritual relationship with Almighty God. This relationship would not involve a physical temple, and it would not occur because Gentiles would offer their own blood, symbolically through the act of circumcision. Instead, it would be by God's action through the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:11-22). No other blood would cover the sins of the Gentiles. The main requirement would be repentance of sin (Ac. 2:38), which Paul described as a circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29) and abstaining from anything that God defines as contrary to His law and commandments (1Jn. 3:4). The apostle James pointed out that the Gentile converts would learn about sin in greater because it was still being defined and explained every Sabbath through readings in the synagogues,

And after they (all the brethren) had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me; Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up (cf. Heb. 9:8-15), so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things'"(Ac. 15:13-17).

"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols (including eating unclean meat offered to pagan deities), from sexual immorality (Nu. 25:1-15; cf. 1Thes. 4:3-5), from things strangled (Lev. 17:10-14), and from blood (Lev. 3:17). For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city being read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Ac. 15:19-21).

This is only one example of God's people working together to solve an issue that could end up causing division. The lesson for people today is to respectfully

approach God's law and commandments with a desire to understand how they should be observed,

But he (Christ) answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (Mt. 4:4; cf. Mt. 7:21-23)

Therefore, claiming that God's law and commandments were done away upon Christ's death and resurrection is a lie (1Jn. 2:4), and contrary to numerous scriptures that teach otherwise (Mt. 5:17-19; Mk. 10:17-19; Jn. 15:10; 1Cor. 7:19; 1Jn. 3:24; 5:2-3; 2Jn. 6; Rev. 12:17; 22:14). The job of anyone claiming to know Almighty God is to examine His word with the desire to obey it in the correct manner. It is clear that Abraham observed God's law, commandments and statutes before Moses gave them to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai. He also taught these to his family (Gen. 18:19),

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand (everything that you do), and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes (everything that you think). You shall write them on the doorposts of your house (foundation of the family) and on your gates (foundation of your community and nation) (Deut. 6:6-9; 11:18-21).

Abraham is regarded as faithful because he trusted God and his trust was proven by his obedience to God's law, commandments and statutes. Even when commanded to offer his son Isaac, Abraham obeyed (Jas. 2:14, 17-26). The majority of those, who regard to themselves as being Christian today, have a problem obeying even the most basic of God's commands and do not understand that they need to go above and beyond these as Jesus Christ stated (Lk. 17:10; cf. Mt. 5:41).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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