

# Why First Covenant is Obsolete and What That Means for Christians

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Any covenant is based on conditions that both parties agree to. Should either party fail to fulfill one or more of the conditions, the agreement becomes null and void. If this occurs, depending on how the covenant is worded, there may be a transition period allowing one or both parties to continue honoring the agreement until other arrangements are made. This mitigates any damages that may occur in the event of a sudden termination of the covenant.

The conditions of any covenant are not necessarily the reason for terminating it. Instead, it can end because someone at some point disagrees with one or more of the terms, or they reach a point where the entire covenant is rejected. This does not mean that there is anything wrong with the covenant. Instead, it simply means that one of the parties reaches a point where they are unwilling to continue honoring the requirements that were originally agreed upon.

The first covenant, or agreement, mentioned in the Bible was between the Lord God and Adam. The condition was not difficult to understand, or hard to comply with. Adam was simply told to avoid contact with a spirit-being that was described, in symbolic language, as the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17a). If Adam obeyed this condition, he would be permitted to fellowship with all the other spirit-beings, described as “trees”, that were located eastward in Eden (Gen. 2:8; cf. 2:16). If Adam disobeyed the one condition of this agreement, he would be guilty of breaking this covenant and sinning. The penalty for doing this meant that Adam could no longer fellowship with the other spirit-beings, and he would die (Gen. 2:17b).

The second covenant, or agreement, mentioned in the Bible was between God and Noah. The conditions required that Noah fulfill the following; first, Noah was commanded to be fruitful and multiply, which has both physical and spiritual implications,

So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’ (Gen. 9:1; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Next, Noah and his descendants were not to eat meat until the blood was drained out, which pointed forward in time to Jesus Christ who would shed his blood so that every sinner could have their sins forgiven upon repentance (Heb.9:22),

But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood (Gen. 9:4; cf. Lev. 17:12).

In addition to the above terms, Noah and his descendants were to comply with the condition that an animal who kills a human being is to be killed (cf. Ex. 21:28), and a human being guilty of murder is to be executed,

Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.<sup>6</sup> Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed (Gen. 9:5-6a; cf. Nu. 35:31).

It is important to note that the conditions of the covenant between Noah and God reflected some of the same conditions that would comprise the agreement between an entire nation of people and God at Mt. Sinai many years later.

God then gave the conditions that He would fulfill as part of this covenant,

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:<sup>9</sup> As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you,<sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth.<sup>11</sup> Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth (Gen. 9:8-11).

Jesus Christ confirmed that Noah's descendants would continue to benefit from the promise contained within the covenant made shortly after the Flood, in the sense that all human life would not be extinguished from the earth,

I (Christ) will build my church, and the gates of hades (the grave) shall not prevail (be victorious) against it (Mt. 16:18b; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Unlike a later covenant between God and Abraham, the sign of Noah's covenant did not involve circumcision. Instead, the sign was a rainbow,

And God said: '**This is the sign of the covenant** which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:<sup>13</sup> I set My rainbow in the cloud, and **it shall be for the sign of the covenant** between me and the earth.<sup>14</sup> It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud;<sup>15</sup> and **I will remember My covenant** which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh (Gen. 9:12-15; emphasis added).

Generations after Noah, God made a covenant with Abram. Part of this agreement involved Abram leaving his country and family, making him a pilgrim in a foreign land,

Now the Lord said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you' (Gen. 12:1).

In order to comply with these conditions, Abram had to trust God and confirm this faith by his actions of leaving everything that was familiar to him, including family, friends, and country (cf. Jas. 2:20-22). In return for obeying these conditions, God promised him the following,

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you (one of Abram's descendants; Jesus Christ) all the families (inclusive of Gentiles) of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. 12:2-3; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Later, God provided more details related to this covenant with Abram. Based on correctly understanding what God was now saying to Abram, this covenant would go beyond a simple physical explanation because a population that equaled all the dust particles on this earth could not be contained within the geographical region being shown to Abram. Therefore it was prophetic, pointing to the number of Abram's descendants that would eventually inherit the kingdom of God,

And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift up your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward, and westward; <sup>15</sup> for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. <sup>16</sup> And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered' (Gen. 13:14-16).

Further clarification and detail was provided following the sacrifice of some animals deemed "clean" by God (Gen. 15:9),

And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces (animal sacrifices). <sup>18</sup> On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates – (which will include the territory of <sup>19</sup> the Kenites, the Kenezites, and the Kadmonites; <sup>20</sup> the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Rephaim; <sup>21</sup> the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites' (Gen. 15:17-21; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The sign of this covenant was circumcision, and it continued to be the sign of other covenants that followed, until the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,

This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; <sup>11</sup> and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you (Gen. 17:10-11ff).

Because Abraham obeyed God's commands, others continued to be blessed and will continue to be blessed; just as Christ's obedience to his Father's commands resulted in the blessing of everlasting life for those who follow Christ's example of faith and obedience,

In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, **because you have obeyed My voice** (Gen. 22:18; emphasis added).

Hundreds of years after Abraham, some of his descendants still understood that obedience to God's commands was a condition of the covenant. They also knew that circumcision was the sign of that covenant, even before it was re-stated at Mt. Sinai. Zipporah, who was a daughter of Jethro, was taught by her father that circumcision was the sign of this covenant. However, her husband Moses was not inclined to act on this truth by circumcising his son. This inaction on the part of Moses almost cost him his life (Gen. 4:24),

Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet,

and said, 'Surely you are a husband of blood to me!' (Ex. 4:25).

Just because Moses was chosen to do God's work at the time of the Exodus, it did not mean he could ignore one of the conditions of the covenant made between God and Abraham. In the same manner, Jesus Christ could not trivialize any of his Father's law and commandments, and expect to fulfill the commission he was given (Mt. 5:18-19; cf. Dt. 10:17, Ac. 10:34).

Before the law and commandments were given at Mt. Sinai, God made a covenant with a nation consisting primarily of Abraham's descendants,

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth in Mine. <sup>6</sup> And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.... (Ex. 19:5-6a).

Almighty God regards His true servants in the New Testament era in the same way. They also must agree to obey His voice through His delegated leader and teacher, Jesus Christ,

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you (Jn. 6:44; 65) out of darkness into His marvelous light (Jn. 8:12); <sup>10</sup> who once were not a people but are now the people of God...(1Pet. 2:9-10a; cf. 1Pet. 2:5; Ed. notes in parentheses).

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. **Hear him!**' (Mt. 17:5; cf. 2Pet. 1:17; emphasis added).

So whether someone was born during the Old Testament or New Testament, the requirement to obey every word of God remains the same because the law that proceeds from Almighty God is first and foremost spiritual,

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; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I (Paul) am carnal, sold under sin (Rom. 7:14; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The law and commandments were ordained by Almighty God out of love for everyone He has created. By obeying these, His subjects will experience happier and more fulfilling lives,

Now by this we know that we know Him (Almighty God), if we keep His commandments, <sup>4</sup> He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup> But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God has been completed in him. By this we know that we are in Him (1Jn. 2:3-5; Ed. note in parenthesis).

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. <sup>3</sup> **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.** And His commandments are not burdensome (1Jn. 5:2-3; emphasis added).

The argument made by many so-called Christians is that Christ's death and resurrection made the Old Testament obsolete, including all the laws and commandments, and therefore irrelevant today. Besides, they claim that no one can keep them perfectly; so why bother trying. This is a deflection which the apostle Paul addressed. He pointed out that Jesus Christ our Mediator intercedes for God's true servants when they fall short and sin,

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death (as a result of the sins that so easily beset us; cf. Heb. 12:1)? <sup>25</sup> I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin (Rom. 7:24-25; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace (forgiveness) to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Modern Christianity, for the most part, “throws the baby out with the bathwater.” In other words, because the animal sacrificial system ceased to function altogether by 70 CE, and the authority of the Levitical priesthood with it, that does not mean all other aspects of Almighty God's legal system became obsolete. This is the reasoning of a carnal mind as confirmed by Paul,

Because the carnal mind is enmity (hostile) against God; for **it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be** (Rom. 8:7; Ed. note in parenthesis).

This is not a new phenomenon. Those who claimed to know God during the Old Testament had exactly the same mindset as the majority of Christians today, and this is what God said to them,

That this is a rebellious people, lying children (cf. 1Jn. 2:4), children who will not hear the law of the Lord; <sup>10</sup> Who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us right things; (instead) speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. <sup>11</sup> Get out of the way (i.e. don't tell us what we can, and cannot do), turn aside from the path (of righteousness; cf. Ps. 119:172), cause the Holy One of Israel (Jesus Christ) to cease from before us (Isa. 30:9-11; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The Holy One of Israel rejects lawlessness. Therefore, to Christians who reject the law and commandments of Almighty God, Jesus Christ says the following,

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in your name? <sup>23</sup> And then **I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’** (Mt. 7:21-23).

The Bible describes sin as the transgression of God's law. Therefore, whoever rejects the law and commandments of Almighty God is guilty of sin. By extension, Christians are living in sin if they do not repent for transgressing any law or commandment of God,

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness (1Jn. 3:4).

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,<sup>27</sup> but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.<sup>28</sup> Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.<sup>29</sup> (Therefore) of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified (set apart through the forgiveness of sins that were previously committed) a common thing (of little value), and insulted the Spirit of grace (forgiveness)? (Heb. 10:26-29; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Many who claim to be "Christian" insult the Spirit of grace, which is Almighty God's "forgiveness of sin" made possible through Christ's shed blood (Heb. 9:22). Using common sense, most people who are pardoned of a capital offense would not go back and commit the same crime again knowing it would result in the death penalty. Yet this is exactly what the teachers of Christianity preach to their followers, in one form or another, when they claim God's law and commandments were made obsolete by Christ's sacrifice. What they are actually doing is "bundling" God's law and commandments, with the covenant that was given at Mt. Sinai, and then claiming everything is now obsolete. This is a subterfuge used by leaders in the Christian world to justify their rebellious carnal nature.

At this point, we can examine more closely various laws, ordinances, and statutes that were introduced on a national basis during the time of Moses. This should help clarify Paul's writings which are often "twisted" by those who wish to do away with the law and commandments of Almighty God (2Pet. 3:16),

As mentioned previously in this study, the nation of Israel agreed to obey God's law and commandments even before they were proclaimed on Mt. Sinai. This is because the people had a "working knowledge" of them prior to arriving at Mt. Sinai, and the elders of the various tribes of Israel, had a basic understanding of how to apply God's law and commandments based on the instruction given to Moses by his father-in-law, Jethro. Moses was taught by Jethro during the forty years between leaving Egypt the first time and then returning to lead the nation of Israel out. It was Jethro who conducted the first national animal sacrifice, which would not have been allowed under the Levitical priesthood because Jethro was not born from the tribe of Levi,

Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God (Ex. 18:12).

The law involving offerings to God was known from the time of Adam and Eve as confirmed by Abel's offering. Abel was instructed to separate the fat of an animal as God's portion (Gen. 4:4; cf. Lev. 3:16). Noah offered animal sacrifices (Gen. 8:20), as did Abraham (Gen. 22:13) and his son Isaac and grandson Jacob (Gen. 28:18). However, after the proclamation on Mt. Sinai, it was explained to Moses that animal sacrifices at God's temple could only be performed by Levites. Although the ordinances associated with animal sacrifice were to continue, they were now administered through members of only one tribe. This was a centralization of God's law regarding animal

sacrifices in order to serve an entire nation. Therefore, the sacrificial ordinances that were practiced by individuals and their families now became a matter of national significance. The next major change to this system would not occur until after Christ's death and resurrection as explained in the book of Hebrews,

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.<sup>12</sup> Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he entered the Most Holy Place once for all (sinners), having obtained eternal redemption (reconciliation to Almighty God).<sup>13</sup> For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies (sets apart) for the purifying (cleansing) of the flesh,<sup>14</sup> how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit (of Almighty God) offered himself without spot (blemish) to God (Almighty), purge (cleanse) your conscience from dead works (sins that lead to death) to serve the living God?<sup>15</sup> And for this reason he is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of (his) death, for the redemption of the transgressors under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:11-15; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The spirit-being who gave the conditions of the national covenant at Mt. Sinai is described as the "testator" of that agreement (Heb. 9:16-22). When this "testator" died, that covenant with the physical nation of Israel would come to an end. This covenant is described as a marriage agreement between the "testator", who would later become known as Jesus Christ, and the people of Israel,

Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel (10 of the tribes that had come through Jacob) had committed adultery, **I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce**; yet her treacherous sister Judah (along with Benjamin; making all 12 tribes) did not fear, but went and played the harlot also (Jer. 3:8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Therefore, when the writer of Hebrews stated that the covenant made at Mt. Sinai is becoming obsolete, he is speaking about the marriage agreement between Christ and a physical nation of rebellious people who refused to obey the law and commandments of Almighty God. As a result of their disobedience, Israel as a nation never developed a relationship based on trust in Almighty God (Heb. 4:2). Consequently, they did not come to understand the spiritual significance behind the sacrificial system and how it pointed to the coming Messiah (Rom. 9:30-33). Therefore, the problem was with the people, and not the terms of the covenant they agreed to obey at Mt. Sinai,

For if that first (national) covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second (national) covenant).<sup>8</sup> **Because finding fault with them**, He says, 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah –<sup>9</sup> not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because **they did not continue in My covenant, and** (therefore) **I disregarded them, says the Lord**' (Heb. 8:7-9; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Paul mentioned that the spiritual nation of Israel is now espoused and ready to be married to Jesus Christ at his return. These are the people who have repented for sins they committed against God's law and commandments, and have been baptized and now are living a new life of willing obedience to every word of God (Rom. 6:4; cf. Mt. 4:4; 19:17),

For I (Paul) am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2Cor. 11:2; Ed. note in parenthesis).

This nation recognizes no bounds of race, position in society, or gender, and it claims the promise that God made with Abraham,

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>29</sup> **And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the (same) promise** (given to Abraham) (Gal. 3:27-29; Ed. notes in parentheses).

According to Paul's statement above, New Testament priests are heirs of the promises given to Abraham, not the promises between God and the physical nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai. Therefore, as Abraham obeyed God, so the people comprising God's spiritual temple will seek to obey God,

In your (Abraham's) seed all **the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice** (Gen. 22:18; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Because **Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws** (Gen. 26:5; emphasis added).

Because there will still be people obeying the law and commands of Almighty God up to the return of Jesus Christ, this planet will be spared from utter destruction,

And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but **for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days** (Mk. 13:20; cf. Mt. 24:22; emphasis added).

Nonetheless, the most important promise given to Abraham involved everlasting life for all repentant sinners through the shed blood of Abraham's Seed, Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 3:16). Therefore, God's people today need to reflect His will through their words and actions as they seek to obey Him. They cannot do this of and by themselves. Instead, they will need the help of His Holy Spirit, which God grants those who seek to obey Him,

And we are witnesses to these things, and so also is **the Holy Spirit which God has given to those who obey Him** (Ac. 5:32; emphasis added).

It is important at this stage to differentiate between the laws that Abraham obeyed and those given to the physical nation of Israel. For instance, when Abraham decided to offer a sacrifice to God he did not have to do this through the Levitical priests in a physical temple compound. Also, Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, king of Salem (Peace; cf. Isa. 9:6b) and not to a priesthood that descended from Levi,

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High (Gen. 14:18).

And he (Abraham) gave him (Melchizedek) a tithe of all (Gen. 14:20b; cf. Heb. 7:1-9; Ed. notes in



parentheses).

Although Abraham's descendants were to inherit large tracts of land, Abraham did not have to know the exact boundaries and how to divide these lands up among a nation of people because that nation did not exist yet. Instead, laws pertaining to the division of property and maintenance of the borders would be given to Moses (Nu. 34:1-29; 35:1-8; Dt. 3:12-20). Today, the same principles regarding land measurement, allocation, and maintenance of borders would be categorized as civil laws and would have penalties for infractions. This is why the word of God is the foundation of knowledge, and everyone should be familiar with it. However, because we live in a materialistic world, there is little respect toward Almighty God and His instructions. Sadly, many who claim to know Him reject His law and commandments despite the fact they were created for everyone's ultimate benefit,

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; **A good understanding have all those who do His commandments**... (Ps. 111:10a; emphasis added).

Abraham was instructed by the spirit-being that later became known as Jesus Christ,

Then the Jews said to him (Christ), 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?'<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, 'most assuredly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I am**' (I existed or I was) (Jn.8:57-58; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

So Christ's own words confirm he existed before Abraham was born. Therefore, it was the spirit-being who would become known as Jesus Christ that taught Abraham about Almighty God's law and commandments. He also taught Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc., which is confirmed by the correct understanding of the following scripture,

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday (during the entire Old Testament period), today (during the time of the early church), and forever (Heb. 13:8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Therefore, when Moses was dealing with disputes among the citizens of ancient Israel, he was using God's law and commandments as the standard by which judgments were rendered. Of note, Moses was doing this before the Lord announced the commandments at Mt. Sinai,

And Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to inquire of God. <sup>16</sup>When they have a difficulty (dispute), they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and **I make known the statutes of God and His ways**' (Ex. 18:15-16; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Why did the people agree to keep God's covenant prior to the official proclamation at Mt. Sinai? Because they experienced the law and commandments in action under Moses' direction, and the benefits these produced. Unfortunately, the majority of Christians today prefer to reject these entirely, which means they are living lawless lives and will not be of assistance to Jesus Christ when he returns (Mt. 7:21-23). Figuratively speaking, members of God's true church will be married to Christ at his return. Once this occurs, they will assist him as a wife would help her husband by teaching God's law

and commandments to this planet. How can this be fulfilled by Christians who have rejected them and have little, if any workable knowledge of them?

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain (symbol representing government authority) of the Lord's house shall be established on top of the mountains (all previous forms of governance; primarily of the fallen host), and shall be exalted above the hills (symbolic of human governance); and all nations shall flow to it. <sup>3</sup> Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For **out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem** (Isa. 2:2-3; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

A number of prophecies dealing with this future event indicate that mankind will return to an agrarian society (Mic. 4:4). If this is correct, many of the laws given to ancient Israel will take effect; specifically those dealing with national land Sabbaths, the Jubilee, and the redemption of property (Lev. 25:1-34). Today, property is under the control of human governments that do not acknowledge God's ownership of the land. In contrast, ancient Israel lived under a theocracy that recognized God as the sole owner of all the land,

The land shall not be sold permanently, for **the land is Mine**; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me (Lev. 25:23; emphasis added).

Three times a year, each coinciding with the annual harvests, ancient Israel was to bring its tithes and offerings to God's festivals (Ex. 23:14, 17). Although most people today are not earning a living from farming, these festivals are still to be observed. In fact, nations that ignore these Holy Days are guilty of sin according to the following section of scripture describing conditions on earth following Christ's return,

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16).

If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. <sup>19</sup> **This shall be the sin (Heb. *chattath*) of Egypt and the sin of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles** (Zech. 14:18-19; Ed. note in parentheses; emphasis added).

As mentioned previously, Almighty God created these laws for the benefit of mankind. Because they are ignored for the most part, mankind does not know the plan that God is working out to reconcile sinners to Himself. This plan is progressive as outlined in His Holy Day sequence (see studies: God's Holy Days). This is one of the main reasons that God commanded the observance of these Holy Days every year.

Suffice it to say, as the apostle Paul explained, the animal sacrificial system was fulfilled by Christ's sacrifice. As the Levitical priests administered this sacrificial system with its various ordinances and statutes, their services were no longer required (Heb. 7:12). When Christ died, the covenant that began with Abraham drew to a close. Therefore, the sign of that covenant, which is circumcision, was no longer necessary. By continuing

to participate in these practices no one could claim to be justified, even though many Jews did. This was the main reason that Paul “appeared” to make certain negative comments about God’s law. In reality, he was pointing out that obedience to the many laws associated with the animal sacrificial system would not lead to everlasting life. In fact, everlasting life was not promised at Mt. Sinai, which is the main reason that the New Covenant is based on better promises (Heb. 8:6).

The responsibility for everyone who claims to know Almighty God, and His son Jesus Christ, is to examine every word of God to learn the intended lessons and obey the law and commandments based on an understanding that some aspects have been fulfilled by the work of Jesus Christ, while many still apply today. Failure to rightly divide God’s word in these matters can lead to sin and death, as opposed to everlasting life (2Tim. 2:15; cf. Rom. 6:23a),

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction (training, discipline) in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2Tim. 3:16-17; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Simply taking the approach that everything contained within the covenant given to Abraham, and then the nation of Israel, is no longer applicable today, is ignorant. It also reflects the carnal mind, which is simply hostile to God’s law. It is because Almighty God loves His people that the law and commandments were given to mankind. Those who are spiritually immature cannot make this connection. The apostle Paul reminded Timothy that it was the scriptures of the Old Testament that provide enough information to make individuals “wise for salvation” through trust in Christ’s sacrifice to remove the sins of repentant individuals (2Tim. 3:15). Paul made this comment many years before the writings of the New Testament were even compiled.

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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