



HOW DO WE KNOW WHICH OLD TESTAMENT LAWS STILL APPLY TO CHRISTIANS?

Do you still need to obey the letter of the Ten Commandments? Do we just pick and choose arbitrarily which laws are still binding on Christians? When religious liberals say the Old Testament's laws against gay sex are no more valid than the laws against eating shellfish, how you respond?

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"You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together"

(Deuteronomy 22:11).

This seemingly innocuous text and others like it are some of the main props in a routine argument that the Worldwide Church of God's present administration. It routinely uses this argument to justify its interpretation of the Bible that tithing, the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and clean and unclean meats are no longer binding on Christians under the new covenant. This reasoning goes like this: one cannot go through the Old Testament, picking and choosing arbitrarily which laws are in force and which ones aren't for Christians. For example, consider this reply that one member of the United Church of God (UCG) once received when he defended the festivals and Sabbath as still being in force:

Why do we not have to obey Nu. 15:38, 39 which requires tassels on garments? It's a clear command . . . and had a good purpose. This wasn't a ceremonial law or a sacrificial law for priests only. Rather, it was a statute for all Israelites . . . The law about tassels was given to ancient Israel through Moses, just as the festivals were. Is there any biblical reason we should designate one as eternal and the other as temporary?

One suggested solution to this dilemma is to say the Ten Commandments are the only Old Testament laws still binding on Christians, outside of the two great commandments (Matt. 22:36-40). A number of New Testament texts can be cited to prove that the Ten Commandments are still in force (Matt. 19:17-19; Romans 7:7; 13:9; Eph. 6:2-3; James 2:10-12). Hence, this solution maintains the Holy Days, tithing, and clean and unclean meats have been abolished for Christians as regarding sin they will be judged for. The Sabbath is still in force because it is part of the "whole law" that if a person "stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all" (James 2:10; compare Gal. 5:3--there the "whole law" includes EVERYTHING). On the contrary, it shall be maintained here that Pasadena's principles of biblical interpretation, which lean heavily upon extreme dispensationalism, a radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity, and the argument from silence, are incorrect to begin with. Furthermore, figuring out which Old Testament laws which are still binding on Christians and which ones aren't can be deduced by a broader spiritual application of the literal letter of the Ten Commandments to determine what still is in force, and by deriving from what clearly has been abolished in the New Testament.

SOME PROBLEMS WITH EXTREME DISPENSATIONALISM

First, let's survey briefly some of the problems with extreme dispensationalism, which maintains God works with human beings very differently in different time periods in his master plan for humanity. This view draws sharp distinctions drawn between the Old and New Testaments, and says God worked with the Jews from the time of the giving of the law very differently from how He works with Christians today since the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The Old Testament is seen as a period dominated by law, obedience, and (in some versions) salvation by works, while the New Testament is characterized by grace, love, and faith. Hence, this doctrine sees a radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity, with the latter said to be very different from the former. Based upon these premises, the argument of silence becomes very powerful: It maintains that unless an Old Testament command is repeated in the New Testament (or, especially, Paul's letters), it is no longer in force. This school of Biblical interpretation assumes that all Old Testament commands are abolished, unless specifically repeated in the New. Because the evangelical/fundamentalist Protestant Christian world's theology oozes with

these kinds of notions, and the world as a whole is not set up to obey God's Old Testament commands, mentally resisting against this school of thought is very difficult. You could be called a cultist, a Galatianist, a Judiazer, or at least odd, for resisting it. Many who fought against it, or the children of those who did, in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) have fallen back into what they (or their parents) came out of.

While this is not the place for a lengthy, full-fledged attack on the teachings of extreme dispensationalism, an alternative school of biblical interpretation actually makes more sense. Here it shall be maintained the differences between the two Testaments have been exaggerated, that God has always saved people in the same way in both periods, and that Christianity grew out of Judaism. Even supposedly "anti-law" Paul felt the need to engage in purification rituals because he had to accommodate many in the early church who had believed were "all zealous for the Law" (Acts 21:20). The early church was almost entirely Jewish, up until after Cornelius and his gentile family were converted to Christianity (Acts 10). As has been documented in Samuele Bacchiocchi's From Sabbath to Sunday, gentile Christians (in particular) in the Roman empire largely abandoned the Sabbath, the Passover, and other hallmarks of Judaism heavily due to a wave of anti-Semitic persecution under the emperor Hadrian early in the second century A.D. in response to the second major Jewish revolt (A.D. 132-135). Hence, traditional Christianity, whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant, came to accept Sunday and Easter as replacements for the Sabbath and Passover, the former two plainly coming out of the paganism of the of the Roman empire. Naturally, the gentiles who came to increasingly make up the bulk of the membership of the church found these customs easy to accept. After all, when the Roman government came looking for those practicing the Sabbath, the Passover, etc. to punish them, not keeping them was an asset: "We aren't Jews! We're Christians!" The dispensationalist school of Biblical interpretation's largely unacknowledged foundation is to explain, accept, and justify such an Biblically unauthorized substitution of pagan customs for Old Testament observances. It uses a preconceived interpretation of Paul's letters to interpret the Gospels, and the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament, while denying any significant feedback interpretation going the opposite way.

SOME PROBLEMS WITH RADICAL DISCONTINUITY BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

If indeed the New Testament writers were making such a drastic break with their Jewish past, why is the New Testament so full of Old Testament citations and allusions, which are made to justify Christian theology, especially the identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah? Why does not Jesus hardly hint at such a radical change soon to come concerning the Old Testament law during His public ministry? Instead, he specifically denied an anti-Old Testament law interpretation of his ministry in Matt. 5:17-19:

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called [""]least[""] in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called [""]great[""] in the kingdom of heaven.

Why should he tell the disciples to "Go and make disciples of all the nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" when most of what he had spoken was irrelevant because the old covenant was still in force while he was in the flesh? Turning to Paul, the clear implication of his citation of Genesis 15:6 and Hab. 2:4 (such as in Gal. 3:6, 11) is that humans are saved the same way under both the Old Covenant and the New. He noted that "David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works" (Rom. 4:6) before citing from Psalms 32, which implies the salvation theology (soteriology) of the Old Testament was like that of the New Testament. The role of the law or obedience relative to salvation or justification was the same for the Jews before the crucifixion as it is for Christians today in God's sight, even if Jewish tradition and the oral law saw it otherwise. Consider that when Paul wrote this to Timothy that parts of the New Testament did not yet exist, or at least had not been likely all gathered together: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness . . ." (II Timothy 3:16). Having made in the preceding verses a reference to Timothy being raised a believer in the true God through the "sacred writings," Paul obviously primarily had the Old Testament in mind when he wrote this. If the Old Testament is so largely irrelevant to Christians, why would Paul say this, after citing the Exodus and Israel wandering in the wilderness: "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (I Cor. 10:11; compare I Cor. 10:6 and Rom. 4:23-24). Of course, citing such points in rebuttal against extreme dispensationalism and its offspring, a presupposed radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity, hardly scratches the surface of such a vast subject. However, such points show how the "new covenant" teachings of the WCG presupposes a fundamentally flawed general school of Biblical interpretation which should be rejected at its foundation.

DID THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL (ACTS 15) ABOLISH

THE WHOLE LAW OF MOSES?

Of course, a number of texts have been cited to attempted to prove that the whole Old Testament law was done away with, such as in Galatians 3 and 4 and II Cor. 3. These texts, and others like them, were dealt with in length in my earlier essay critiquing the doctrinal changes of the WCG concerning the law, "Does the New Covenant Do Away With the Letter of the Old Testament Law?" So, that ground is not covered again here. However, what the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 decided concerning circumcision and the law of Moses needs some repetition. Wilf Hey and John Meakin in their truly brilliant essay, "Acts 15 The Jerusalem Conference," describe that the ONLY issue under discussion was circumcision, not the whole law of Moses, when considering what was made no longer binding on the gentiles. Acts 15:1 states the issue thus: "And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" This same subject is repeated periphrastically (which means a roundabout or indirect expression is used to mean the same thing) in Acts 15:5: "But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.'" At the council, Peter got up and discussed the gentiles having been justified by faith, and mentioned (v. 10) that a "yoke" should not be placed on the gentiles that the Jews could not bear. From the context of the verses right around it (v. 9, 11), the immediate issue that turned circumcision into the yoke was a false approach to how a person was justified and saved which had grown up in Jewish tradition, not the content of the Torah itself. The whole law was not the subject here, but circumcision was in particular, as Bacchiocchi noted (Sabbath in NT, p. 32), since the context

was a general discussion of circumcision and its justifying role. (Compare Peter's language with Paul's in Gal. 2:3-4). In verse 24 (NKJV), the Greek not only implies a periphrastic construction (i.e., makes a rather convoluted reference to circumcision), but that it is a one-time act. The standard WCG interpretation of this verse is to say "circumcision" and "the Law of Moses" are basically separate entities, with the former just one law out of the latter, and that the conference abolished both, excepting the still binding regulations found in verse 29. However, the construction of the Greek is points to to a periphrastism, as Hey and Meakin note:

The argument in v5 is surely not that the Gentiles 'must be circumcised AND required to obey the law of Moses': The Greek actually has three verbs, all infinitive [a verb, in the form of "to run," "to jump," "to laugh," that has not been conjugated yet, which means to be given a subject and changed in form, such as "I run," "He jumps," "she laughs"--EVS]: 'to be circumcised', 'to charge' and 'to preserve'. The last two are shorn of modifiers and joined together with 'and'. This is periphrastic: The first is accomplished with a view to the second. In effect a rewording can be that the Gentiles are 'to be circumcised, charged [thereby] with a view to preserving the law of Moses'. Note that the 'and' is actually placed between the second and third verbs (in the original Greek text), very much suggesting a periphrastic interpretation.

This argument is quite technical, but--alas!--very important when considering how to interpret Acts 15. For if the main subject was circumcision, and how the gentiles were to be considered Christians, then interpreting this conference to mean almost the whole law of Moses was abolished is incorrect.

A further, important issue is to realize that when the four still remaining stipulations from the law of Moses are singled out by the conference, this does not mean they are all that is left. As Hey and Meakin, as well as Bacchiocchi noted in The Sabbath in the New Testament answers to questions, p. 29-34, 101-102, 163-164, the gentiles felt the need to become part of the covenant community of Israel to be saved. Here, the council considered the church (Bacchiocchi) "not as a new Israel arising out of the rejection of the old, but as the 'old Israel' being restored according to God's promise," especially as shown by James' citation of Amos 9:11. Among the Jews themselves they had disputed over which laws the gentiles who wished to obey God had to observe (compare Isa. 56:3-8). The standard, more liberal Jewish interpretation of the law said the gentiles needed only to observe the same four laws that the Jerusalem Council eventually selected, which all come from Lev. 17-18, because (gentile) foreigners were specifically mentioned in them. The competing Jewish interpretation of what the gentiles had to do said they had to perform the circumcision as well. What happened at the Jerusalem conference was that latter rabbinical view, which the Christians who were Pharisees had accepted, lost out to the former, more liberal interpretation, when both had had significant followings in Judaism. The important, bottom-line point of this discussion is that the four laws the Jerusalem conference listed were not arbitrarily or randomly picked out of the Torah, nor should they be seen as all that is still binding from the Torah (or the law of Moses) upon Christians, but rather what in particular allowed the gentiles to be grafted into spiritual Israel, the church.

USING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AS A GUIDE TO WHAT IS STILL IN FORCE

So now--getting back to mixed fibers and tassels--how do we know what has been abolished and what has not been? The best approach is to draw upon Christ's example in the Sermon on the Mount, and how he expanded the meaning of two of the Ten Commandments (Matt. 5:21-30).

The law against murder became a prohibition of hating or even insulting our fellow men. The law against adultery applied also to men lusting after women in their heart. Therefore, the basic solution to knowing what still is in force is whether it can be derived directly or indirectly from the Ten Commandments, since we know they are still in force. The parts of the Old Testament law which expand upon the general meaning of each of the Ten Commandments are still in force. For example, the commandment against adultery means the laws against homosexual sex (Lev. 20:13), bestiality (Lev. 20:15-16; 18:23; Ex. 22:19), incest (Lev. 20:17,19; 18:6-14), and fornication (Lev. 22:28-29; Ex. 22:16) are still in force. One important exception exists to this process: The two Great Commandments (Matt. 22:36-40), which are to love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself (Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18), can be seen as condensations of the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments state how you are to love God, and the last six how to love your neighbor, in more specific forms (compare Rom. 13:8-10). However, the fact one can summarize the law this way does not mean its specific points have been abolished, for "love" needs to be defined as God would have it, not as we humans might want it. Although there is the exception of the two Great Commandments, the Ten Commandments still can be used to figure out what other, scattered laws in the Torah are still in force, by seeing if they amplify their the spiritual meaning. This combination of the Ten Commandments, the two Great Commandments, and the various scattered laws of Moses that can be derived from them I call the moral law, because it expresses God's will for mankind for any place and time.

USE WHAT HAS BEEN CLEARLY ABOLISHED AS A GUIDE TO FINDING OTHER ABROGATED LAWS

On the other hand, we know what laws in the Torah are gone by referring to where the New Testament clearly abolishes some law. Then, in turn, we can figure out which laws indirectly were abolished from the ones which plainly have ended. For example, notice Hebrews 9:9-10: "... Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation." This scripture, along with Heb. 10:1-18, show that the animal sacrifices were abolished. Notice in particular verse 18: "Now where there is forgiveness of these things ['sin' and 'lawless deeds'], there is no longer any offering for sin." The reference to "washings" is particularly noteworthy, because it means all the laws tied to ceremonial cleanness were ended. Thus, such laws as those that excluded women from Israel's assemblies due to their menstrual periods and childbirth are no longer binding (Lev. 12:4-8; 15:19-33). Corresponding to the end of the animal sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood which offered them also has been abolished (Heb. 7:12, 18-19):

For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. . . . For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Furthermore, Paul and the Jerusalem Council plainly say that circumcision is not a requirement for Christians (Gal 5:2, 11; Gal. 6:15; Rom. 2:26-29; Col. 3:11; Acts 15:1, 5, 7-11, 23-29). Hence, knowing clearly what is still in force (the Ten Commandments), and what is not (the animal sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, and the laws of ceremonial cleanness), in principle Christians can work through the Torah's 613 laws, and figure out which ones are still in force and which ones aren't by a process of extrapolation (as aided by the Holy Spirit).

THE IMPLICATIONS OF MMT, A DOCUMENT DISCOVERED AMONG THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

However, before turning to do some such derivation and extrapolation, let's notice the implications of a document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls called MMT and its relationship to interpreting Eph. 2:11-19 when compared to Gal. 2:11-16. MMT stands for (in Hebrew) "Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah," which has been translated "Some important [or 'pertinent'] works of the law" by Biblical scholar Martin Abegg. In his article, "Paul, 'Works of the Law,' and MMT" in the Biblical Archaeology Review (November/December 1994, pp. 52-55, 82), he discusses how in MMT for the FIRST time a contemporaneous use of the Pauline term, "the works of the law," was found outside the New Testament. Paul uses this term in Gal. 2:16; 3:2,5; Rom. 3:20, 28. The big question had been what did he designate by this term, for it is absent from first and second century Jewish rabbinical writings. But now, with MMT, there exists a contemporaneous use of "works of the law," which helps greatly in defining its meaning. It is important to note that MMT does not use this term to refer to the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, etc., nor does it refer to the Ten Commandments. Nor does it refer to such spiritual duties as caring for the poor, visiting widows and orphans, or any other "good work." (Here, it deals a potential death blow to the basis of Martin Luther's reformation teaching of "salvation by grace through faith alone"--but that's another subject). Instead, it refers to a number of (for twentieth-century Christians) very petty laws that separate Jew from gentile. The document chiefly consists of a long list of rules or laws that compose "works of the law," with the Qumran author towards the end concluding that, if you obey these laws, "you shall rejoice at the end of time when you find the essence of our words true" and (important for our purposes) "you will be reckoned righteous, in that you have done what is right and good before Him." So, Paul must have been refuting the theology of documents such as MMT in Romans 3-4 and Galatians 2-3 by referring to Abraham being reckoned righteous by faith (Gen. 15:6), not by works. So now, what exactly are some of the laws listed in MMT? Abegg (p. 53) gives this list, although it isn't exhaustive because he says about 20 separate "religious precepts" are listed in it altogether (the all capitals are mine):

The issues including bringing Gentile cord into the Temple, the presentation of Gentile offerings, and the cooking of sacrificial meat in unfit (impure) vessels. Other rulings concern cleansing of lepers, admitting the blind and the dead into the Temple; and permitting intermarriage with Ammonite and Moabite converts . . . the transmission of impurity by a flow of water (musaq), THE INTERMIXTURE OF WOOL AND LINEN (sha'atenz), plowing with diverse animals (qilayyim) and perhaps the climax of the discussion: the intermarriage of priests with the common people.

The implications of this list of the works of the law are enormous, for in conjunction with Eph. 2:14-15 when compared to Gal. 2, these texts show these laws are no longer binding on Christians.

Consider Paul's statement in Eph. 2:14-15: "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups [Jews and gentiles] into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace . . ." Paul uses a very convoluted expression here--"the Law of commandments contained in ordinances"--so what is he exactly referring to? Clearly, it can't be he meant the entire Old Testament law was abolished. The context of the discussion here was Paul saying the gentiles had not known the true God at

all. They had been condemned to spiritual death but by being enlightened by the death of Jesus, who united them with the Jews into one body, the church. The parallels to Gal. 2:11-16 are remarkable, for here Paul attacked Peter for suddenly choosing to eat separately from the gentiles when certain Jews arrived from James in Antioch. Paul condemned him, saying (v. 16): "[N]evertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." Evidently, what happened was that these Jews associated with James believed in some theology similar to that found in MMT--that one is "reckoned righteous" by obeying "the works of the law" that kept Jew and gentile separate. They influenced Peter to stop eating with the gentiles by persuading him that it was a sin or otherwise undesirable based on these views. Paul condemned Peter as well as this kind of theology, saying one is made righteous with God by faith, not by obeying these petty laws that separate Jews from gentiles. When comparing this discussion in Gal. 2 with that in Eph. 2, a safe conclusion is that the laws in the Old Testament that separate Israelite from gentile, or those which symbolize this separation, have been abolished for Christians.

WHY THE LAW AGAINST WEARING MIXED FIBERS IS NO LONGER IN FORCE

Now this brings us to the subject of mixed fibers (Deut. 22:11; Lev. 19:19) and whether this law is still binding on Christians. Remarkably, since this law was included in "the works of the law" found in MMT, Christians need no longer obey it any more than they have to be circumcised. Although on the surface this law does not seem to have anything to do with separating Jew from gentile, it may have symbolized this separation. Just as two types of fibers were not to mix, neither should Jew or gentile mix through marriage or religion. On a personal note concerning this issue, I remember hearing one WCG evangelist who was sent to the Lansing area to argue in favor of the doctrine changes that had been made concerning the law and the Sabbath. He heavily used the example of mixed fibers to show that the authority of the Old Testament law was not binding on Christians, otherwise we could not wear clothes that had (say) cotton and polyester in them. At that time, I could not really refute that argument. But now, knowing the implications of MMT from this article in the Biblical Archaeology Review, this claim can be successfully rebutted. This situation shows that sometimes we need to go in faith, putting some of the more difficult problems found in Scripture "on the shelf" to deal with later, when then God may eventually lead us to a solution. For it was obvious that the general premises of biblical interpretation upon which the WCG bases its doctrinal changes were very dubious, so I rejected them, even if not all "the problem scriptures" for my alternative view had been worked out at that time. To conclude, the other laws that evidently symbolize the separation of Israelite and gentile, such as the one against sowing two different kinds of seeds on the same piece of land or plowing with two different animals together (Lev. 19:19), have also been abolished for Christians.

DO CHRISTIANS HAVE TO WEAR TASSELS AND PHYLACTERIES

AS REMINDERS OF THE LAW?

Now--what about the laws that require physical reminders of it? Are they still required of Christians? For example, note Deut. 6:8-9: "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Are the phylacteries that ultra-orthodox Jews wear on their

foreheads, which often look like small wooden blocks with Hebrew writing on them, required for Christians because of this scripture? Or, consider the requirement to wear tassels on clothing, which had the same function (Num. 15:39-40): "And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, in order that you may remember to do all My commandments, and be holy to your God." Must Christians wear tassels or special fringes on our pants, suits, or dresses to physically remind us of the law?

Christians do not need such physical reminders of the law, and need not obey the Old Testament laws that require them, because the law is now written on our hearts. By contrast, ancient Israel mostly tried to obey the Ten Commandments and the law in general by their own physical strength (note Ex. 19:8; 24:3, 7; Gal. 3: 10, 12). Most of them never had the Holy Spirit, so God didn't help them to obey. However, for Christians, the situation is very different, for God helps us to obey the law through the Holy Spirit in us. The very foundation of the new covenant concerns God's law being written on our hearts (Heb. 8:10): "For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts." As Paul explains, what matters now is that the spirit places the law in our hearts (II Cor. 3:2-3): "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts." The old administration of the law has been abolished which placed a literal physical copy of the Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Covenant to serve (among other things) as a collective physical reminder to all of Israel to keep the law in exchange for promised physical blessings (II Cor. 3:7, 11):

But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was . . . For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

With the new covenant's arrival, God no longer requires worship focused upon the Ark of the Covenant and the sacrifices around it because of Jesus' death and the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11, 13-14). The physical objects in the temple and tabernacle which "serve[d as] a copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5), which included the Ark of the Covenant above all, are not requirements for Christian worship. Hence, if "spiritual Israel" (note Gal. 6:16) no longer needs the physical copy of the Ten Commandments found in the Ark of the Covenant as a reminder to it collectively to keep it, then neither do we individually need to use our own physical reminders of the law, such as phylacteries, doorposts with the Ten Commandments on them, or clothes with tassels and special fringes on them.

IS IT ALWAYS IMMORAL TO MENTION THE NAMES OF FALSE GODS?

Let's consider some other Old Testament laws to see if they are binding on Christians. For example, note Ex. 23:13: ". . . and do not mention the name of other gods, nor let them be heard from your mouth." Does this mean a Christian sins when saying worshiping Siva, Vishnu, and Brahma, the three chief Hindu gods, is immoral? After all, in order to condemn the worship of specific false gods, one has to mention them. Now, even for Old Testament Israel, this law should not be taken literally, as a total blanket prohibition against any discussion of false gods. If it was, any Israelite violates it when quoting certain scriptures. One has to use judgment based

upon the underlying principle of the law in question, a point made in this valuable article on the subject of which Old Testament laws are still in force: Ronald L. Dart, "The Law and the Christian: The Basics," Twentieth Century Watch, July 1995, pp. 17-21, 29. Dart uses the example of Deut. 22:8 to say that someone doesn't need to build a fence around a modern pitched roof where only workmen will ever walk on, but putting a fence around a deck near a sharp hill would be required, although it isn't actually a roof. Obeying the letter of this law is unnecessary often today, although obeying its spirit is necessary in other cases. Did Moses violate this law by writing Leviticus 18:21?: "Neither shall you give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the Lord." Did Elijah break this law when he said (I Kings 18:21): "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him"? Worse yet, did Luke violate this law by writing (Acts 14:12): "And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker"? Did Apollos (Acts 18:24; I Cor. 1:12) violate it every time he mentioned his own name? Obviously not. Here we face the need to probe the underlying principle of this law: There should be no favorable discussion about false gods, nor should Israelites share with one another details about how to worship false gods, instead of Yahweh. For the Bible itself demonstrates that following the spirit of this law does not mean it requires always a totally literal application.

GOD SHOWS NO PARTIALITY BASED ON PHYSICAL

CHARACTERISTICS TOWARDS CHRISTIANS

Consider these laws: "No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the Lord. No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the Lord" (Deut. 23:2-3). The latter law is now abolished because Israelite and gentile are saved the same way under the new covenant, as demonstrated by Eph. 2 and Gal. 2-3. The former law is equally done away with, because the physical descent of someone no longer matters. What matters is whether God has called them, and what personal relationship they have with God. God wants everyone to repent, bastards (ahem) and legitimate alike (Acts 17:30): "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent." All have sinned, but God will save all who are called, repent, are baptized, and continue to follow God lifelong (John 3:16; Rom. 3:23). Similarly, the law against allowing those "emasculated, or has his male organ cut off" to enter the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:1) obviously no longer applies to Christians today, as demonstrated by Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-39). Clearly, the Old Testament laws that restrict who could enter the assembly of the Lord by some physical characteristic have been abolished by the principle proclaimed by Paul in Gal. 3:28, Col 3:11, and I Cor. 12:13. Regardless of such physical characteristics such as nationality, gender, or condition of bondage, God is not partial to anyone under the new covenant (Acts 10:34-35; James 2:1-6).

THE END OF ISRAEL'S UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE

ALSO ENDS VARIOUS LAWS

Another category of laws, or (often) parts of laws, that are all abrogated for Christians in this age are those tied to ancient Israel being both a church and state united together under God as a theocracy where God directly ruled Israel. Today, God has authorized no human government to be His representative on earth, even if they may enforce laws that properly protect people (Rom. 13:1-7). Our citizenship is in heaven, and so our first loyalty is to God, not our country (Phil. 3:20). Jesus said his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). He refused to allow humans to make Him their king while He was in the flesh (John 6:15). Hence, all the death penalties scattered throughout the Torah certainly should not be enforced by Christians today, such as the one for defiantly breaking any law of God, like the Sabbath (Num. 15:30-36). One cannot argue that because the Sabbath was tied to a death penalty that has been abolished, it is gone also, without correspondingly admitting that adultery (Deut. 22:22), fornication (Deut. 22:20-21), rape (Deut. 22:25), sorcery (Ex. 22:18), bestiality (Ex. 22:18), and homosexual sex (Lev. 20:13) would be similarly legalized so far as this reasoning goes. Similarly, the laws regarding Israel's army don't apply to Christians today (such as Deut. 24:5), because we are to love our enemies, which simply can't be expressed by killing them on the battlefield, regardless of how much we may wish to twist Jesus' words so we can be patriotic during wartime (Matt. 5:38-47; 26:51-53). Again, since no nation is a theocracy authorized by God, no nation's army is authorized by God to kill others for any reason, except perhaps criminals in situations of martial law (re: Romans 13:1-7 again). Even in those situations true Christians should not be involved acting as police. Hence, all the aspects of laws that are tied to the state inflicting penalties on criminals and other violators of the law are abolished for the present time before Christ returns (at least), even if the law itself may still be a sin to violate, because no human government today is authorized by God to represent and enforce His will on earth, as ancient Israel's was.

DOES A CHRISTIAN WIDOW HAVE THE RIGHT TO

COMPEL ANYONE TO MARRY HER?

Another law to consider is that which required an (unmarried) man who had lived with his brother to marry his deceased brother's wife should his brother die without having a son first (Deut. 25:5-10). Using a case history based on this law the Sadducees once tried to trap Christ concerning His belief in the resurrection (Luke 20:27-38). Would this law still be binding on a Christian man who lived with his brother and his wife today, should his brother die? To answer this, let's note that not all marriage regulations found in the Old Testament are still binding today. Christ made that very clear to the Pharisees in Matt. 19:7-9: "They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?' He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.'" The same point is made in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:31-32). This regulation in Deut. 25 could be said to reflect "the hardness of heart" from the female view, for if the brother totally refused to marry his brother's widow, she was to pull his sandal, spit in his face, and say, "Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house" (Deut. 25:9). (Conspicuously, he was not put to death or fined for refusing, but instead was just publicly humiliated). The harshness of this attitude often was as bad as the man who divorced his wife for not-so-good reasons. Furthermore, much of this law involved the machinery of the state being used to enforce it, since the spurned widow went to the "elders of his city" (v. 8) to complain and enact this drama before. This means it (or much of it) may well have been abolished along with the death penalties mentioned earlier since no nation's government is a true theocracy today. Furthermore, for a Christian widow, she has full choice

about whom to marry, so long as he is a Christian as well (I Cor. 7:39). Correspondingly, wouldn't a Christian man have equal freedom, especially when Paul believes being unmarried is the spiritually superior state? (Note I Cor. 7:8-9, 32-38--I believe HWA was wrong on this score). Hence, by drawing upon the precedent of other scriptures, it's dubious to say this law is still in force today.

ARE THE HOLY DAYS STILL IN FORCE BY DERIVING THEM FROM THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT?

Of course, many other individual Old Testament laws could be analyzed in this piecemeal manner, but this is sufficient for now. Now, let's investigate whether tithing, the Holy Days, and clean/unclean meats are still binding on Christians. For, after all, since they are not mentioned in the Ten Commandments, one could argue that the Sabbath is in force, but these laws aren't. First, let's consider how the festivals are implicitly contained in the Sabbath commandment as annual Sabbaths, in contrast to the weekly Sabbath. In Leviticus 23, we find that "The Lord's appointed times" include the weekly Sabbath and the Holy Days together. While one could object that the time during which the annual Holy Days occur is never actually called "holy," the fact remains that the same regulations against work occur on them as concerning the weekly Sabbath. For example, for the Feast of Trumpets, we have this command: "You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord" (Lev. 23:25). Just as Moses was on holy ground when he saw God in the burning bush, and so he had to take off his shoes, we show that a given piece of time is holy by avoiding all unnecessary worldly work on that time by turning our own foot away from doing our pleasure on that day (Ex. 3:2-5; Isa. 58:13-14). When scripture, not just the Jews, calls the First Day of Unleavened Bread a "Sabbath" and a "high day" (John 19:31), which fell on a Wednesday in A.D. 31, why should we believe that the time is not holy also? To say they are only holy to the extent there is a "holy convocation" on that day--meaning because Christians gather on that day, when they could do so on any other randomly chosen day--reiterates a familiar WCG argument. But can this be true, when such a term as "Sabbath" is applied to the First Day of Unleavened Bread? Such days are holy independently of whether any human being recognizes them as such. Since the Holy Days can be subsumed under the fourth commandment, similar to the way the laws against fornication and bestiality are covered also by the seventh commandment, there's every good reason to believe they are still binding, so long as no clear abolition is found in scripture concerning them. Since both Christ and the early church observed these days, or made mention of them, they are still binding, when we reject dispensationalist principles of biblical interpretation (Acts 18:21; 20:6, 16; 27:9; I Cor. 5:7-8; Col. 2:16; John 2:13, 23; 5:1; 7:10; 7:37; Luke 2:41-43; 22:8).

IS TITHING ABOLISHED FOR CHRISTIANS BASED ON THE ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE?

But now, what about the command to tithe? Among the Ten Commandments, none look anything like it on the surface. However, note the implications of Malachi 3:8-9: "'Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you,' says the Lord of hosts." Since the eighth commandment prohibits stealing, the implications are clear: Since God owns the world, and owns us, whether we admit it or not, we are to "pay rent" to Whom we "lease" these physical things from, and pay tithe on our increase (earnings).

Furthermore, Christ says, when rebuking the Pharisees for obeying minor matters of the law while neglecting the great ones like justice, mercy, and faith, that they should still have tithed (Matt. 23:23). The standard way for dispensationalists to evade such a text is to say it was spoken while the old covenant was still in force, and is therefore irrelevant to us today. Of course, such an argument invalidates virtually all the words of Jesus, including the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe red letter Bibles exist in order to know immediately what Christians can all the more safely ignore! Similarly, when examining the Letters (Epistles), no mention of tithing exists outside of Hebrews 7, such as in I Corinthians and II Corinthians. Therefore, using that old dispensationalist standby, the argument from silence, it is said this law has been abolished since no mention is made of it. After all, does not Paul say (II Cor. 8:8), "I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also"? However, since this text concerns famine relief for other Christians, not support of the ministry, tithing certainly wouldn't naturally come first in Paul's mind in such a situation. While Paul may not have explicitly mentioned tithing when saying he had a right to financial support from the brethren (I Cor. 9:4, 9-15), this is no proof of its abolition. As discussed above, when one rejects extreme dispensationalism and a radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity as principles of Biblical interpretation, we should assume a given Old Testament law is still in force, unless clearly abolished. The argument from silence--that because a certain Old Testament law is not mentioned in the New Testament or the Letters and Revelation, therefore it is abolished--assumes at the start that dispensationalism is true, and that the Old Testament is irrelevant as a guide to Christian conduct except so far as the New Testament or the Letters say otherwise. Therefore, unless one proves extreme dispensationalism and radical discontinuity to begin with, which certainly are problematic, we should reject the argument from silence as a means to abolish any Old Testament law.

IS THE LAW OF CLEAN AND UNCLEAR MEATS STILL

BINDING ON CHRISTIANS?

Now, are the laws concerning clean and unclean meat binding on Christians? It is said that all meat was made clean by Peter's vision in Acts 10, since one can't say the gentiles are literally clean without the animals in the vision having been made clean as well. However, this conclusion was not what Peter drew from his vision--all he mentioned when interpreting it for us was it concerned the gentiles being clean (v. 10): "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy [literally, 'common'] or unclean." Why should we read more into it? After all, God may have ordered Peter to "Arise . . . kill and eat!," but it is hazardous to take literally anything associated with a vision itself. (Furthermore, God ordered Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, but that was a command He did not actually wish to be fully obeyed). Above all, we know from elsewhere in the New Testament that not all the animals are now clean (Rev. 18:2): "And she [Babylon] has become a . . . prison of every unclean and hateful bird." Furthermore, when the Second Coming occurs, punishment comes upon those who eat unclean food, which shows these animals aren't clean now (Isaiah 66:16-17):

For the Lord will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all flesh, and those slain by the Lord will be many. Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go to the gardens, following one in the center, who eat swine's flesh, detestable things, and mice, shall come to an end altogether,' declares the Lord.

Therefore, good reasons exist to believe the law against eating clean and unclean meat is still binding today on Christians.

DID CHRIST ABROGATE THE LAW OF CLEAN AND UNCLEAN MEATS IN MARK 7?

Now, it will be objected that didn't Christ say that (Mark 7:18-19) "whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated"? Here, the context is crucial, and by looking at the parallel account in Matt. 15, we can know more clearly what is going on. First of all, the challenge to Jesus concerned eating food with unwashed hands, an aspect of the oral law that was out of the traditions of men. It was not a dispute over the matter of clean and unclean food, which is made clear in Matt. 15:20: "These [spiritual sins] are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man." One has to read into the discussion that Christ was nullifying the laws concerning clean and unclean meat. Evidently Peter himself, who listened and even participated in this discussion, did not interpret it in this manner, because even long after the crucifixion he had never eaten unclean or common meat (Acts 10: 14). True, in the Westcott-Hort/critical text that underlies most modern Bible translations we get (by changing a single letter of a single word in the Greek) the editorial comment "(Thus He declared all foods clean)" in Mark 7:19. However, this text type is defective, and the Received Text that underlies the KJV and NKJV is superior--but proving that point is way beyond the purpose of this paper. Suffice it to say, it's unwise to base a significant doctrine on whether one Greek word contains an omicron or an omega in it. Furthermore, let's not take Christ's use of the word "whatever" too broadly--it may have meant out of all the things the Jews, and in particular the Pharisees normally ate, not out of all possible animals that can be eaten by anybody. So, by comparing Mark 7 with the parallel account in Matt. 15, and by avoiding reading more into it than is already there, it appears that Christ did not mean to say the laws against clean and unclean meat had been abolished, but that the Pharisees' complaint about Christ's disciples not washing their hands before eating was invalid.

THE NEED TO USE A COMBINATION OF PRINCIPLES WITH THE ASSUMPTION OF CONTINUITY TO DETERMINE WHICH OLD TESTAMENT LAWS ARE STILL IN FORCE

To figure out which laws in the Old Testament are still in force before the Second Coming can't be done by any one principle of interpretation. The Bible does not tell us explicitly any systematic approach to this question. However, when we reject extreme dispensationalism, a radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity, and the resultant corresponding argument from silence, the presumption should be that a given Old Testament law is in force unless plainly or by deduction from what is plain we can know it has been abolished. True, some exception exists for each simple rule we can come up with to figure out what has been abolished. For example, suppose one says that if a law was obeyed before the old covenant was established, therefore Christians should obey it today. Then circumcision and animal sacrifices are binding (Gen. 4:3-5; 22:8, 13; Gen. 8:20; 17:10-14). Suppose it's said that a law which will be obeyed in the millennium is binding today. Then animal sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood are binding (Eze. 44:9-12, 27-31; Isa. 66:20-21). One could say that if Jesus and/or the apostles did it, then Christians should (re: I John 2:6; I Pet. 2:21). But then there's the

problem of Jesus evidently wearing tassels (Matt. 9:20; compare 23:5) and Paul evidently observing a Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18--but compare I Cor. 11:14) and ritually purifying himself and visiting the temple (Acts 21:24, 26). Thus, no one rule can answer such a question for us. However, by using a combination of them, one can, especially in conjunction with the approach sketched above of extrapolating and deriving from the laws that clearly have been abolished and those which are clearly still in force to investigate those laws whose status has not been figured out yet. After all, if the Holy Days were commanded for ancient Israel, and the early church and Christ did observe and/or mention them, and that in the millennium they will be observed (Zech. 14:16-19; Eze. 44:24), then it's safe to say they are still in force today. If the patriarchs practiced at least some type of tithing (Heb. 7:4-10; Gen. 14:20; 28:20), God commanded it under the old covenant, and Christ said it should have been obeyed (Matt. 23:23), then it's safe to assume it is still binding on Christians. If the animals were clean and unclean before the old covenant was made (Gen. 8:20--at least for the purposes of sacrifice--note Gen. 9:2!), that they were under the old covenant, and that they will still be unclean shortly before the second coming (i.e., now!) (Rev. 18:2; Isa. 66:16-17; Hosea 9:3), and during the millennium (Eze. 44:23), it's unwise to consider this law abolished for Christians now. The continuity about certain of God's laws between various periods (or dispensations) points to the conclusion that those laws are still in force. It is absurd to see the Christian era after the crucifixion and before the millennium as presumably law-free unless we get a reconfirmation of some Old Testament law in Paul's letters (etc.), then note this era is bracketed on both sides by laws which were enforced under the old covenant and will be enforced during the millennium, and then claim Christians need not obey these laws when they have not been clearly abrogated in the New Testament. Silence should be taken to mean no change has occurred, rather than some change did happen, once we reject the extreme dispensationalist/radical discontinuity principles of biblical interpretation. In short, extrapolating and deriving what was required (or may have been) of people in other dispensations is still relevant principle to sorting out what is required of Christians today.

THE TWO LAW THEORY OF ALLEN WALKER RECONSIDERED

One way to come to the conclusion that only the Ten Commandments are still in force, but everything else is still in force, is found in Allen Walker's The Law and the Sabbath. Walker, a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist, wrote this work after years of debates with assorted Sunday observers. He maintained that two basic sets of laws were given to Israel, one of which was the Ten Commandments which were placed inside the ark. The other set was commanded through Moses, and so the book of assorted laws was placed to the side of the ark (see Ex. 24:12; Deut. 31:26; 10:4; 33:1-2, 4; 4:11-14; 5:22). So then--is everything inside the "book of the law" to be seen as the same as the "Law of Moses," and was discarded for Christians at the crucifixion? We know this isn't the case, for the two Great Commandments are found within it. "[Y]ou shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:18). "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5). Even such an innocuous law for late twentieth-century Christians in industrialized countries as not muzzling the ox as he treads out the grain has a basic principle that Paul cites concerning a paid ministry (see I Cor. 9:9). Furthermore, since much of the civil law of Moses are obvious amplifications of the Ten Commandments' basic principles, it is dubious to say the specific laws against (say) fornication, idolatry, bestiality, etc. have been abolished. Again, as noted against the dispensationalist assumptions listed above, it makes more sense to see the continuity between the different periods God is dealing with man, unless some specific abolition exempts Christians from a certain law in this day and age. Silence should not be taken as abolition. While this principle of saying "the law of Moses" is whatever was in this book of the law placed to the side

of the ark has been abolished for Christians is very neat and simple, it's obvious exceptions do exist. A number of aspects of the moral law are found within its pages. Even concerning things not so obviously moral in character, such as the Festivals and tithing, one is faced with the matter of the continuity between dispensations (or parts thereof) concerning their application. These laws don't point so obviously to Christ's death as the animal sacrifices do (except for the Passover/Days of Unleavened Bread). Like the other principles listed in the last section, discarding as being relevant to Christians all listed in the book of the law (seen as equal to the law of Moses), but keeping the Ten Commandments, has evident exceptions to it, and can't be employed uncritically by itself to answer our questions about what is still binding today.

IN CONCLUSION:

WHY STICKING WITH THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ALONE IS INCORRECT

While the principle that we should assume only the Ten Commandments are in force and nothing else contains an elegant simplicity worthy of English philosopher William of Ockham's "razor," it assumes certain principles of biblical interpretation that appear very questionable, such as extreme dispensationalism, a radical discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity, the argument from silence, and that the Bible should only be interpreted backwards, from the Letters to the Gospels, and the New Testament to the Old, without much or any interaction back and forth. True, the approach propounded above, that we can derive and extrapolate from the Ten Commandments and from what is clearly abolished, such as animal sacrifices, the Levitical priesthood, and circumcision to determine which other Old Testament laws are binding on Christians, is not a clear, clean approach from the point of view of human reason. It requires a lot more human judgment as guided by the Holy Spirit to perform. It needs more faith, because not all the "puzzles" posed by a given Old Testament law may be instantly resolvable, except upon further research or even discoveries by scholars (such as MMT). However, the "puzzles" posed by assuming Pasadena's (and evangelical Protestant Christianity's) principles of Biblical interpretation are much worse and more numerous. So, it's time to choose an overall set of principles of Bible interpretation that see the continuity between dispensations, that see how Christianity grew out of Judaism without a radical rejection of everything Jewish, and that we should assume that a given law is in force, unless we can figure out it has been abolished, rather than assume all Old Testament laws not repeated in some 12-13% of the word of God (the Letters and Revelation) are fundamentally irrelevant for Christian conduct. No need exists for Sabbatarians to accept these premises, and then use the Ten Commandments as a kind of "door stop" to prevent their full implementation.

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