



# Truth For These Times



## 16. THE LAW OF GOD

It is commonly believed by many Christians today that God's commandments were meant for those who lived in Old Testament times, and do not apply to Christians who are under grace in the New Testament. The Bible has much to say on the subject of law and grace, but even though it is true that Christians are saved by faith in Christ, nowhere does it say God's laws are not binding upon humanity. Keeping the commandments is not the method of salvation, but the fruit of it. Obedience to God is the test of the genuine Christian.

1 John 3:4                      Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and **SIN IS LAWLESSNESS.**

Some say that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross of Christ: but this cannot be so. This text defines sin as the "breaking of God's law". You see, if the law is abolished, then so is sin and if sin is abolished, then the need of a Saviour becomes unnecessary. Why did Christ die on the cross? To save us from our sins, which are transgressions of God's law. If it were possible to do away with the law, Christ need not have died, but the fact that He was prepared to make this supreme sacrifice proves the unchanging character of God's law.

Romans 3:20                      Therefore **BY THE DEEDS OF THE LAW NO FLESH WILL BE JUSTIFIED** in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

We are saved because of our faith in Jesus Christ, and not because we keep God's law. This text does not say it is unnecessary to keep the law, but it says we are not justified by keeping it. We are justified by the blood of Jesus. This text in no way says it is unnecessary to obey God's requirements.

Romans 6:14,15                      For sin shall not have dominion over you, for **YOU ARE NOT UNDER LAW BUT UNDER GRACE.** What then? **SHALL WE SIN BECAUSE WE ARE NOT UNDER LAW** but under grace? **CERTAINLY NOT!**

We are not under the condemnation of the law because of the grace (unmerited favour) of Christ. His blood covers our sins so that the law cannot condemn us. The question is asked by Paul; "Shall we sin (or break the law) because we are not under the law but under grace?" and the reply is most definite – "God forbid – certainly not". God's forgiveness to us does not give license to sin.

Romans 3:31                      Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, **WE ESTABLISH THE LAW.**

Genuine Christians will not seek to break God's law, instead they establish it; uphold it and keep it. It is only as we break the law that we come under the condemnation of it. For example, we are not affected by the speed limit law while driving, until we exceed it – then we are condemned by it. Simply because we are under grace, does not give us free rein to break the law, rather we are under greater obligation to keep it. We are only under grace so long as we keep the law. For example, if a prisoner is given a pardon and is released from prison, does his freedom allow him to break the law? If he does he is no longer free – the law of the land condemns him and he goes back to prison. In the same way, God's law will condemn us when we break it.

Romans 7:7

What shall we say then? *IS THE LAW SIN? CERTAINLY NOT!* On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”

Paul is emphatic. There is nothing wrong with the law. In fact he says that he would not be conscious of sin without the law to show him his errors. Here he quotes from the 10th commandment. The commandments can be likened to a mirror. If a boy with a dirty face looks in the mirror, then the mirror tells him his face is dirty – but it won't clean it for him, he needs soap and water. As we look at the commandments they show us our sins, but they do not cleanse us. We need the blood of Christ to make us clean. When we are cleansed and look into the commandments, they no longer condemn us.



Moses receiving the Ten Commandments.

Romans 7:12

Therefore *THE LAW IS HOLY*, and *THE COMMANDMENT HOLY* and just and good.

God's law is perfect – it cannot be faulted.

What change did take place at the cross concerning the law?

Colossians 2:14-17

*HAVING WIPED OUT THE HANDWRITING OF REQUIREMENTS* that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, *HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS*. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in *FOOD* or in *DRINK*, or regarding a *FESTIVAL* or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.



The sacrificial ceremonies were fulfilled at the cross and blotted out.

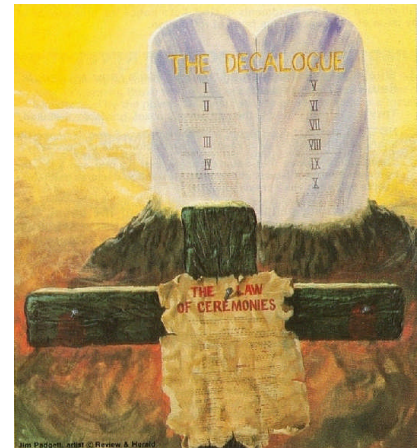
An ordinance is a rite or a ceremony. In Old Testament times animal sacrifices were made, symbolising the supreme sacrifice Christ or the Messiah would make one day. There were many ceremonies that revolved around these sacrifices, such as partaking of certain foods and drinks. Why do we not offer animal sacrifices today? Because this would show we have no faith in Christ's sacrifice. Just as it is no longer necessary to shed, the blood of animals, so it is unnecessary to partake in the ceremonial system associated with the killing of animals. Christ fulfilled the law of ceremonies. When He died, the temple veil tore in two as an indication that the temple

services had come to an end. Generally speaking, the Bible does not try to differentiate between the 10 commandments and the law of Moses. To the Jew there was one law of God, and all details of the law were important, whether ceremonial or moral. However, the New Testament in many instances mentions specific parts of the law. This text mentions the ceremonial system, and not the moral law. Even the sabbaths mentioned were not necessarily the 7th day Sabbath of the 4th

commandment. The Jews had several ceremonial sabbaths which fell on certain dates of the year, each one occurring once a year.

## THE TWO LAWS

When God led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, He delivered to them in fiery majesty the Ten Commandments. This holy law was spoken by God, written by God, recorded on tables of stone, and is of eternal duration. At the same time another law, of temporary usage, was also delivered to the children of Israel. This law dealt with the ceremonial rites of the Jewish sanctuary service, and concerned itself with a system of religion that passed away at the cross. Large sections of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy describe in detail this temporary ceremonial code. This Law can easily be identified in the Scriptures. It talks about circumcision (a religious Jewish rite), sacrifices, offerings, purifications, ceremonial holy days, and other rites associated with the Hebrew sanctuary service.



The 10 Commandments stand forever but the ceremonial law was nailed to the cross.

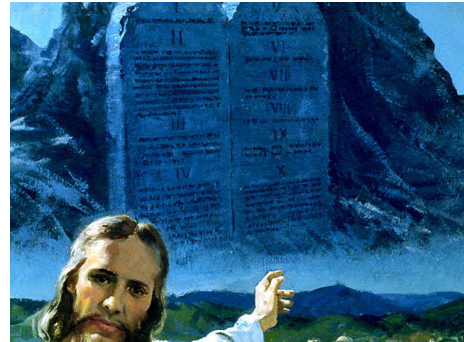
Let the Bible itself explain and clarify the differences between these two laws. Please notice each text carefully:

THE MORAL LAW (The Ten Commandments)	THE CEREMONIAL LAW (A temporary Jewish law)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Spoken by God Himself. Exodus 20:1,22.</li> <li>2. Was written by God. Exodus 31:18; Exodus 32:16.</li> <li>3. On stones. Exodus 31:18.</li> <li>4. Handed by God its writer, to Moses. Exodus 31:18.</li> <li>5. Deposited by Moses “in the ark”. Deuteronomy 10:5.</li> <li>6. Deals with moral precepts. Exodus 20:3 – 17.</li> <li>7. Reveals sin. Romans 7:7.</li> <li>8. Breaking of “the law” is “sin”. 1 John 3:4.</li> <li>9. Should “keep the whole law”. James 2:10.</li> <li>10. Because we “shall be judged” by this law. James 2:12</li> <li>11. The Christian who keeps this law is “blessed in his deed”. James 1:25.</li> <li>12. “The perfect law of liberty”. James 1:25 (Cf. James 2:12).</li> <li>13. Paul said, “I delight in the law of God”. Romans 7:22 (Cf. verse 7).</li> <li>14. Established by faith in Christ. Romans 3:31.</li> <li>15. Christ was to “magnify the law and make it honorable”. Isaiah 42:21.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Spoken by Moses. Exodus 24:3.</li> <li>2. Written by Moses. Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:9.</li> <li>3. In a book. Exodus 24:3,7; Deuteronomy 31:24.</li> <li>4. Handed by Moses, its writer to Levites. Deuteronomy 31:25,26.</li> <li>5. Deposited by the Levites “by the side of the ark”. Deuteronomy 31:26, ARV.</li> <li>6. Deals with ceremonial, ritual matters. (See parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).</li> <li>7. Prescribes offerings for sins. (See book of Leviticus).</li> <li>8. No sin in breaking, for now “abolished”. Ephesians 2:15. (Where no law is, there is no transgression. Romans 4:15.)</li> <li>9. Apostles gave “no such commandment” to “keep the law”. Acts 15:24.</li> <li>10. Not to be judged by it. Colossians 2:16.</li> <li>11. The Christian who keeps this law is not blessed. (See for example, Galatians 5:1-6).</li> <li>12. The Christian who keeps this law loses his liberty. Galatians 5:1,3.</li> <li>13. Paul called this law a “yoke of bondage”. Galatians 5:1. (See Acts 15:10).</li> <li>14. Abolished by Christ. Ephesians 2:15.</li> <li>15. Blotted “out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us”. Colossians 2:14.</li> </ol>

To the unbiased reader of God’s Word, it becomes more than clear that the Ten Commandments are binding upon all people for all time in every place, whereas no one is bound to keep the Ceremonial Law that was fulfilled in Christ. The Ceremonial Law with its sacrificial system pointed the people to the coming of Christ. Every time the blood of a beast was shed in the old Jewish temple, it was a



dramatic reminder to the onlooker that One would come and die for his sin. John the Baptist pointed to our Lord and declared the significant words, “Behold the Lamb of God”. When He died on Calvary’s cross, the veil of the great temple curtain was torn from top to bottom, to signify that the entire ceremonial system was forever finished. (See Matthew 27:50,51). No longer need the priests offer up sacrifices. The One great and perfect Sacrifice was offered that Friday afternoon, when the true Passover Lamb bowed His head and died. When He cried out, “It is finished”, the old Ceremonial Law that pointed the people to His sacrificial death was nailed to the cross. But NOT SO WITH THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. There was nothing temporary about them. They are to last as long as heaven and earth.



Jesus said – Don’t think that I came to destroy the law.

Matthew 5:17-19 **DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME TO DESTROY THE LAW or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore BREAKS ONE OF the least of THESE commandments, and teaches men so, shall be CALLED LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

Jesus certainly did not have any intentions of making any change, in fact, He condemned men who taught that it was in order to break God’s law, and commended those who taught the necessity of keeping it.

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Exodus 24:12 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the LAW AND COMMANDMENTS WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN, that you may teach them.”

Exodus 31:18 And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, TABLETS OF STONE, WRITTEN WITH THE FINGER OF GOD.



The Ten Commandments were written with God’s own finger. The only part of the Bible written directly by God!

The whole Bible has been written by dedicated people, who were inspired by God. The Ten Commandments, however, were written by God Himself. Surely He must have regarded them very highly.

Where were the Ten Commandments located?

Exodus 25:16 And you shall put INTO THE ARK THE TESTIMONY which I will give you.

A small box called the “ark”, which was situated in the sanctuary, was the resting place of the commandments. The law of Moses was placed in the “side” of the ark. The

Ten Commandments are often referred to as the “testimony”.  
 The Ten Commandments are recorded in full in Exodus 20:3-17. Briefly they are as follows:

1. You shall have no other Gods before Me.
2. You shall not make any graven image.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness.
10. You shall not covet.



The Ten Commandments were placed in the Ark.

The first four deal with our love to God, and the last six deal with our love for our fellowman. They can be divided into these two sections. There is one underlying principle behind these commands – LOVE. In these commands we see a transcript of God’s character: “God is love”. At first they may appear to be a list of “don’ts, but when a Christian is motivated by love, he wants to please God and respect his fellow humans.

James 2:8-12

If you really fulfil *the* ROYAL LAW according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,” you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET STUMBLE IN ONE *POINT*, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL. For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be JUDGED BY THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

There is no virtue in keeping 9 commandments instead of ten. If a person is hanging from a great height by a chain with ten links, and only one link breaks, this person will fall. The strength of the chain is dependent on its weakest link. If we willingly break one of God’s commandments, we are as guilty as if we break them all. True, we are not saved by keeping the law, but this text shows we will be judged by it. If Jesus reigns within, He will give us the strength to keep it.

Psalms 111:7,8

The works of His hands *are* verity and justice; all His precepts *are* sure. THEY STAND FAST FOREVER AND EVER, *and are* done in truth and uprightness.



Revelation 14 says that God’s people in the last days will keep God’s commandments.

God’s commandments are eternal.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; HERE ARE THOSE WHO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD and the faith of Jesus.

God’s last people on earth before the end of time are commandment keepers. There is no thought that the law is abolished, instead they establish it.

Hebrews 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 IN THEIR MIND AND WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

In the New Testament age we no longer need the commandments on stone. We have something better. Those who are led by the Spirit have these laws written in their minds and on their hearts. This is the promise of the New Covenant. They are firmly established in the Christian way of life.

Hebrews 5:9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation TO ALL WHO OBEY HIM,



God will write His law on our hearts.

We are not saved because we are obedient – but because we are saved, we are obedient.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, FOR THIS IS MAN'S ALL.

John 14:15 **IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.**

The test of love is obedience. Friend, do you love Jesus enough to obey Him? Remember, He loved you enough to die for you. His plea to you today is to keep His commandments. They are not grievous – in fact to keep them, will keep you out of trouble in this life, and bring you happiness. God's way of willing obedience is the best way, and if Jesus is supreme in your life, He will give you the strength to keep the commandments of God.



Those who love Jesus will keep His commandments.

## Review Sheet – The Law of God

Assignment: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

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1. What is sin? 1 John 3:4  
Sin is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Can we be saved by keeping God's law? Romans 3:20  
By the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Does this mean that we don't have to keep God's law, seeing it is not God's way of justifying the sinner?  
Romans 6:14,15  
Shall we sin \_\_\_\_\_?  
\_\_\_\_\_!
4. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin – the law does not: but the law is God's standard of righteousness. In this study, this truth is illustrated by the example of a boy looking into a mirror.
  - a) What does the mirror represent? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b) What does the soap and water represent? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c) What does the boy with the dirty face represent? \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The laws referring to Old Testament sacrifices were nailed to the cross. What are these laws called?  
Colossians 2:14-17  
Having wiped \_\_\_\_\_ ... having nailed \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Was it the intention of Jesus to abolish the law of God? Matthew 5:17-19  
Do not \_\_\_\_\_ ... Whoever therefore \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ... shall be \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Who wrote the Ten Commandments on tables of stone? Exodus 31:18  
Tablets of stone, \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Does it matter if we disregard only one of the commandments? James 2:8-12  
Whoever shall \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_ ... will be \_\_\_\_\_.
9. How long will God's commandments last? Psalm 111:7,8  
they \_\_\_\_\_.
10. How do God's people at the end of time regard God's commandments? Revelation 14:12  
Here are those who \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Where are God's laws in the life of a New Testament Christian? Hebrews 8:10  
I will put \_\_\_\_\_.
12. What is the real test of our love for God? John 14:15  
If \_\_\_\_\_.

Do you desire, by the grace of God to keep all of God's commandments? \_\_\_\_\_.