

FOCUS ON   
**TRUTH** SERIES

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE  
**TEN**  
COMMANDMENTS



**DANNY SHELTON**



The Focus on Truth series explores important Bible topics that impact our present well-being and our eternal destiny. In a world of disinformation and conflicting opinions, only the Bible stands as a sure beacon of light, hope, and truth.

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# THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

I had just finished a Sunday morning service at a large church in Knoxville, Tennessee. The pastor, whom I had met only that morning, invited me to come back to the deacons' room where they were counting the money from an offering—a love gift for my ministering there. The deacons were also counting the money from the usual tithes and offerings taken during the worship service.

After we conversed for a few minutes, the pastor told me he believed that the old covenant, including the Ten Commandments, had been done away with, nailed to the cross when Jesus shed His blood as a remission for our sins. He asked me if I was one of those Christians who lived under the old law, or if I live under the law of Christ, the new covenant.

I explained to him that I believed that although the ceremonial laws were nailed to the cross, the Ten Commandments are everlasting. They are a transcript of God's character; they are who He is! In other words, God wrote them with His own finger in stone, and they represent attributes of His character of love.

The pastor disagreed. "The Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross," he said firmly.

Well, I was a visitor at his church so I replied, "OK, I won't argue with you!"

The deacons had just finished counting the offerings. The stack

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of money taken up for the Sunday-morning tithes and offerings was a lot taller than the stack of money from my love offering.

Without hesitating, I picked up the Sunday-morning tithes and offerings still in the offering plate, including a receipt for the total amount, and started walking out of the church toward my car! The pastor called out, “I’m sorry, Brother Shelton, but that is our church’s Sunday-morning tithes and offerings. Our church treasurer is writing you a check for the amount taken up for you from the freewill offering.”

I assured him I knew that but that I preferred the tithes and offerings since they were a lot more money than the other offering. He became even more worried as I was about to exit the church. “I’m sorry,” he insisted, “but you can’t take that offering. It is *not* yours!”

“Why not?” I replied. “You’re convinced that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross. So if there is no Ten Commandment law, then I’m not breaking the eighth commandment—the one that says, ‘Thou shalt not steal!’ ”

The pastor immediately blurted out, “I get your point. Would you now give my offering back to me?”

“Absolutely!” I replied. I knew he had gotten the point I was making.

### ARE YOU A NEW COVENANT CHRISTIAN?

Many modern evangelical and other Protestant Christians, consider themselves to be new covenant, New Testament, Christians. In other words, they believe it is necessary to live only by the New Testament covenant that was ratified, or completed, by the blood of Jesus on the cross of Calvary. What about you? Are you a new covenant Christian? Before you answer, let’s examine the term. Wikipedia defines “New Covenant” like this: “New Covenant Theology (or NCT) is a Christian theological position teaching that the person and work of Jesus Christ is the central focus of the Bible. One distinctive result of this is that Old Testament Laws have

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been abrogated or cancelled with Jesus' crucifixion, and replaced with the Law of Christ of the New Covenant. It shares similarities with, and yet is distinct from, Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology."<sup>1</sup>

I praise God that Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb to take away the sins of the world! I'm thankful that the new covenant did away with the earthly sanctuary service and placed it in the heavenly sanctuary. Now Jesus Christ, Himself, can take our confessed sins to the Father and plead for forgiveness on our behalf. No more shedding the blood of innocent lambs. We now can come to the foot of the cross of Jesus, confess our sins to Him, and He alone can save us from our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness!

My question to you is this: If the new covenant did away with the old covenant laws, does this mean that the Ten Commandments were done away with as well? Most modern-day Christians will tell you that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross since they were part of the old covenant.

I, too, believe we are living under the new covenant that Jesus ushered in at the cross of Calvary. But, as we will see, not all of the Old Testament laws were nailed to the cross, namely, the Ten Commandments! Thus, this is the reason for this book. One of Satan's greatest deceptions is targeted at millions of Christians who call themselves new covenant Christians! When we focus more closely on the popular New Covenant Theology we find the problem is not with the new covenant itself. The problem lies in a misunderstanding of the new covenant by a majority of today's Christians.

### **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS EXISTED BEFORE MOUNT SINAI**

So, if you are ready for Bible truth concerning the Ten Commandments and the new covenant, let's not focus on tradition;

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let's focus on the Word of God. The Bible says:

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth** (2TIMOTHY 2:15).

In order to know truth, we have to focus on truth. Some time ago I read an article about detecting counterfeit currency. It stated that in order to differentiate a counterfeit note from a real one, federal government agents spend their time studying the genuine note—not the counterfeit. They learn to recognize the counterfeit note by mastering knowledge of the genuine. In this way, they can immediately distinguish between the two. If you know the real, you cannot be tricked by the counterfeit. So to determine the truth about the Ten Commandments, perhaps we should read them, just as they were given to Moses on two tables of stone. The Bible says God wrote these Ten Commandments with His own finger. There is no other record in the Bible of God hand delivering a message to His people that He personally wrote in stone.

When Moses climbed Mount Sinai to receive the written record

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of God's great moral law, he witnessed God's finger carving His perfect commandments on the stone "tablets of the Testimony" (Exodus 31:18). Many Christians think this event was the first introduction of God's commandments to humanity. They mistakenly believe that Abraham, who lived four centuries before Moses, served only as an example of salvation by faith, rather than as an example of obedience to God. God indeed made an everlasting covenant with the patriarch Abraham, a covenant of grace—righteousness by faith and not by works (see Romans 4:3–8). In vision, Abraham saw Christ's day find its fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus Christ, and he placed his faith in God's plan of salvation at Calvary.

God credited Abraham's faith to his account as righteousness. What does it mean to be made righteous? To be righteous represents a condition of "right standing" with God. Still, was God's promise of grace conditional upon obedience? Listen to God's words when He confirmed the oath of the covenant with Abraham's son, Isaac:

**"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (GENESIS 26:4, 5).**

Does righteousness by faith require obedience—a "work"? The apostle Peter said, "God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34, 35). And John wrote, "Let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He [Jesus] is righteous" (1 John 3:7). Righteousness is defined as practicing God's right way of doing all things. The Bible clearly records that Abraham obeyed God's commandments and laws. Blessings came as the result of obedience. God confirmed the covenant with Abraham's descendants because the patriarch put the righteousness he received from God into practice.



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By his obedience to God's commandments Abraham blazed the trail to blessings for all his offspring! "Therefore know that the LORD your God . . . keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9; see also Daniel 9:4; Nehemiah 1:5).

What laws of God did Abraham obey centuries before God delivered the Ten Commandments to Moses on tablets of stone? Did human beings understand God's moral law before the time of Moses? In order for us to answer these questions, we must review the history of humanity recorded prior to God speaking His commandments to the desert exiles (Exodus 20).

Remember, if there is no commandment in place, there is no sin (see Romans 4:15). With that in mind, let's look at each of the Ten Commandments and see if the patriarchs preceding Moses were aware of God's laws. We find the Ten Commandments recorded in Exodus 20. "And God spoke all these words, saying: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (verses 1, 2).

### COMMANDMENT I

**"You shall have no other gods before Me" (VERSE 3).**

The first commandment is about loyalty. The Creator of the universe declares He is our God and our Deliverer. He asked us to demonstrate our love for Him by having no other gods. Jacob, who lived long before Moses, proved he understood this commandment. He told the people to put away their foreign gods and purify and cleanse themselves from this sin (Genesis 35:2–4).



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## COMMANDMENT II

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (EXODUS 20:4–6).

The second commandment is about worship. God prohibits the worship of images or bowing before a carved statue. When Jacob put away the foreign gods in his family, it was because Rachel, his wife, had stolen the graven images from the home of her idolatrous father (see Genesis 31:19–34). Genesis 35:2 gives evidence that the patriarchs knew idol worship was sinful and made a person unclean in the eyes of the Lord.

## COMMANDMENT III

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (EXODUS 20:7).

The third commandment is about reverence. God instructs us to respect His holy name and not to use it in vain. The Hebrew word translated “vain” has a broad meaning—“iniquity,” “falsehood,” “vanity,” “emptiness.” Simply summed up, it means showing disrespect.

There are many instances recorded before Mount Sinai of the sin of disrespecting the name of the Lord. When Moses relayed God’s

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instruction to release the people of Israel from slavery, Pharaoh scoffed at the authority of God's name (Exodus 5:1, 2). The Lord eventually destroyed him because of the hardness of his heart.

### COMMANDMENT IV

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (EXODUS 20:8–11).

The fourth commandment is about sanctification and relationship. In this commandment God instructs His people to remember the Sabbath and keep it set apart for holy purposes to draw nearer to Him. God initiated the Sabbath rest at Creation, blessing and sanctifying the seventh day (Genesis 2:1–3). It's clear He expected continued observance of the Sabbath. Well before the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai, the Lord ordered preparation for observing the Sabbath. The people were to gather a double portion of manna on the sixth day, so they could rest on the holy seventh day (Exodus 16:5, 22–26). Some did not heed the instruction, and God was displeased: “Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days.’ So the people rested on the seventh day” (Exodus 16:27–30).

## COMMANDMENT V

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (EXODUS 20:12).

The fifth commandment is concerned with respect for parental authority. God instructs us to show love for our parents by honoring them. Genesis 37:28–35 and 50:15–17 demonstrate that this commandment was also known before Mount Sinai. These two Bible passages give the account of Joseph and his brothers. They bring to light the sin of disrespect for our parents through dishonesty. In the first account, the brothers lied to their father about the death of Joseph. In the later account, the brothers ask forgiveness for their trespasses against their father. They knew they had violated the fifth commandment. Also, consider the record of Ham dishonoring Noah by exposing the nakedness of his sleeping father. Ham suffered under a lifelong curse for his sin (Genesis 9:22–27).

## COMMANDMENT VI

“You shall not kill” (EXODUS 20:13).

The sixth commandment is about respect for human life. God instructs us to demonstrate love, not hatred, toward others by not committing murder. The Bible records Cain’s guilt when he murdered his brother Abel. God punished Cain for breaking this commandment (Genesis 4:8–13). This law was obviously in force prior to Mount Sinai.

## COMMANDMENT VII

**“You shall not commit adultery”** (EXODUS 20:14).

The seventh commandment is about purity in relationships. God asks us to demonstrate our love by not committing adultery. Long before Moses' birth, the Bible identified adultery and sexual impurity as sinful in the accounts of Pharaoh taking Abraham's wife into his house (Genesis 12:10–20) and Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20, 21; 19:4, 5). The best example proving that God's commandment forbidding adultery was known before Mount Sinai is the account of Joseph, who refused to have an affair with Potiphar's wife saying to her, “You are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9).

## COMMANDMENT VIII

**“You shall not steal”** (EXODUS 20:15).

The eighth commandment deals with honesty. God instructs us not to steal. The Bible history of Joseph's reunion with his shifty brothers, records that Joseph devised the ultimate test before he revealed his identity to them. He planted a cup in the sack of his youngest brother, Benjamin, making it appear as if it had been stolen.

Joseph wanted to create a valid reason to keep his beloved brother with him as the others departed. His test was to see what kind of men the other brothers had become. Their horrified response showed that they associated stealing with sin; therefore, in their minds, deserving of death (Genesis 44:4, 6–10). They knew the commandment of God.

## COMMANDMENT IX

**“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”**

**(EXODUS 20:16).**

The ninth commandment is about truthfulness. The Lord instructs us not to lie or deceive others. Christ proclaimed Satan to be the “father” of lies (John 8:44). The first recorded lie on planet Earth is recorded in Genesis 3:4 when Satan contradicted God and told Eve, “You will not surely die.” The story of Jacob and Esau, told partially in Genesis 27, also demonstrates that lying and deceit were known to be evil.

## COMMANDMENT X

**“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (EXODUS 20:17).**

The tenth commandment is about contentment. God instructs us not to covet because He knows it can entrap us in even greater sin. There are many examples of this in early history, but I think one of the more striking accounts is the consequence Eve suffered for her sin. She coveted the forbidden fruit and fell into greater sin. Her coveting contributed to her expulsion from the Garden of Eden! And later, her son Cain copied her sin.

When Cain brought an unacceptable offering before the Lord, he did not receive God’s favor. In contrast, Abel brought the prescribed offering and received God’s favor. Cain was angry and downcast; he coveted the favor his brother had received (Genesis 4:3–5). His covetous condition caused him to commit murder!

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These Bible references are just a few of the many we could examine to understand that humanity was aware of God's law long before He wrote it in stone. A careful study of Scripture should correct the false theology that the Ten Commandments didn't exist before Mount Sinai. Centuries before Moses was born, God judged men and women by the standard of whether they "obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Genesis 26:5).

### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS REMAINED IN FORCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Ten Commandments are God's ten "life principles." The sins recorded in the Scriptures are the breaking of these Ten Commandments. God has never used another set of laws by which He judged His people. Throughout the Bible, He judged those who kept the Ten Commandments as "righteous," while those who knowingly broke His Ten Commandments He declared to be wicked sinners. The early patriarchs—including Abraham, the "Father of Faith," knew the requirements of God's Ten Commandment law.

Can we also find evidence that all ten of the commandments remained in force in the New Testament? Yes, we can! Most Christians readily agree that the New Testament accounts nine of the ten as binding today. Controversy seems to revolve around only the fourth commandment—keeping holy the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath of God.

Did you know that the New Testament actually declares that there remains a Sabbath keeping of God's holy day after the Resurrection? Let me show you. It's found in Hebrews 4:8, 9.

For if Joshua had given them [the Israelites] rest [Greek, *katapauo*], then He [God] would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest [Greek, *sabbatismos*] for the people of God.

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Joshua led the stiff-necked people of God into the Promised Land, but they still didn't realize the physical rest (*katapauo*) God intended for them because of their unfaithfulness. So the Bible tells us that there remains a *sabbatismos* rest for the people of God. The literal translation of the Greek word, *sabbatismos*, is "Sabbathkeeping."<sup>2</sup> To "remain" implies that this Sabbath-keeping rest existed before. There remains a Sabbath-keeping blessing for Christians today—a day when we cease from all of our works, as God did from His.

God planned for the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath to be both a physical and a spiritual rest—a day to focus entirely on Him, trusting in His salvation. God intended His weekly Sabbath to be a blessing in our lives, a time when we could come apart and be exclusively with Him. He desired and designed our weekly Sabbath observance to be our delight (Isaiah 58:13, 14).

It amazes me how mixed up our thinking has become. Many people today consider keeping all of the Ten Commandments to be living under bondage to the law. That certainly wasn't the apostle Paul's attitude. He wrote, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. . . . I delight in the law of God according to the inward man" (Romans 7:12, 22). It wasn't the psalmist's state of mind either. He wrote:

"Great peace have those who love Your law,  
And nothing causes them to stumble. . . .

I long for Your salvation, O LORD,  
And Your law is my delight" (Psalm 119:165, 174).

And James referred to the Ten Commandments as the "law of liberty," saying that if we continue in keeping them, we will be blessed in whatever we do (James 1:25).

Think about this: Where there is no law, there is no sin (Romans 4:15). Genesis records many accounts of individuals breaking the principles of the Ten Commandments. It also records God's



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judgments on those who committed these sins. Do you recall the Bible's definition of sin? Sin is "lawlessness," the transgression, or breaking, of God's law (1 John 3:4). The New Testament makes it clear that to avoid sin we should avoid breaking the Ten Commandment law of God:

**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** (JAMES 2:10, 11; EMPHASIS ADDED).

The New Testament establishes that Abraham's true descendants are those who belong to Christ. As Abraham's descendants, we are heirs according to the covenant made with him (Galatians 3:29). Our belief and faith in Christ as our Savior credits us with His righteousness. Hallelujah! Does this mean that God does not expect us to conform to His divine will and the pattern of Christ's obedience in order to maintain our upright relationship with Him? "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29). God warns us not to be deceived, because only "he who practices righteousness is righteous" (1 John 3:7). The righteousness of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit within us empower us to walk according to God's commandments.

God inspired David to write "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). It was an awe-inspiring event when the Lord spoke His perfect Ten Commandment law to the assembly of Israel! You might want to review Exodus 19 and 20 to contemplate what the people experienced.

If God intended to alter His perfect law, He certainly would not have done it in an understated manner. Jesus would have proclaimed it loud and clear for the world to follow. Instead, this is what Christ said:

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“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” (MATTHEW 5:18, 19).

Jesus also said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Love compels Christians who learn the truth about God’s law to keep all of the Ten Commandments. We don’t keep them to be saved. We keep them *because* we are saved. Faith and works are not at odds with each other; they go hand in glove together.

If we search the Scriptures, rightly dividing the Word of God, we’ll find God’s Ten Commandments in force from Genesis to Revelation. The law of Moses was the temporary old covenant God made with the children of Israel. The eternal Ten Commandment law was included in both the old and new covenants. God’s law served as His standard of judgment before Mount Sinai and continued to do so after the Resurrection.

Beyond question, the Christian community at large supports most of the Ten Commandments. Still, some questions need answering. It seems to me there is some double talk going on.

### TEN COMMANDMENTS, OR NINE?

If you remember, a few years ago a great many Christians engaged in the battle to stop stripping public displays of God’s Ten Commandments from government buildings in Alabama. Christians all across America were displaying signs in their yards, showing their support of the Ten Commandments, while at the same time they were clinging to the belief that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross!

Here are a couple of questions I would like to ask them: Why is it

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important for our government to display the Ten Commandments if you believe they were nailed to the cross? If the Ten Commandments are so important to society, why do you keep only nine? If you, too, believe the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross of Jesus, let me ask another question: Have you ever performed an exhaustive study of the Ten Commandment law of God? Perhaps you are a knowledgeable Bible student or even a pastor. But have you ever carefully searched the Scriptures on this particular subject for yourself?

I hope my questions don't appear rude. I don't intend to be offensive. I ask this simply because I've met so many Christians who once held to that belief until they actually searched the Bible for a definitive answer.

It's my conviction that we must trust that God knew exactly what He was doing when He packaged all of the Ten Commandments together. Yes, He made them one package! In the New Testament book of James, we are warned that if we break one commandment, we are guilty of breaking them all (James 2:10). And let's not overlook the counsel of Christ. He said if we break one of the least of the commandments, or teach others to do the same, we'll be called the "least" in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19).

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Should we conveniently sweep His instruction under the rug and forget about it?

Most Christian churches today do not teach or keep the Ten Commandments as a combined unit. At best, they adhere to only nine. My question is this: Do we have the authority to choose which of the Ten Commandments we want to keep?

Sadly, most Christians ignore the one commandment that God established for our joy at the beginning of time. The forgotten commandment is the very one God calls us to “remember” and keep holy (and wholly) as sacred time with Him. I’m speaking of God’s seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath. To you, this may seem to be an insignificant matter right now, but it looms large on the horizon of the immediate future. Bible writers prophesied about a power that would establish its own agenda and “think” to change the immutable law of God, the Ten Commandments. We are living in the fulfillment of that prophecy now.

For this reason, don’t you think it’s crucial to examine Scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to unveil God’s truths?

Whose agenda controls the Christian majority today? There’s no doubt in my mind that the agenda blindly followed today did not originate with God or with man. The archenemy of Christ propelled this plan into practice. Satan is not only succeeding in his bid to remove the Ten Commandments from our government institutions, he also has already succeeded in removing them from the hearts of most Christians today. Since the Ten Commandment law of God is a package proposal, and since breaking one commandment makes us guilty of breaking all, then we must conclude that the Ten Commandments have been twice removed—not only from the government but also from most of our Christian churches as well!

Let’s examine Scripture together to determine what the Bible has to say about this important issue. What was the “written code” that Christ nailed to the cross? Have we, as some believe, been released from keeping all Ten Commandments because we have found “rest” in Jesus and no longer need a Sabbath rest? Did God

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transfer His sanctified Sabbath day from Saturday to Sunday at the resurrection of Christ? Do we know why most Christians go to church on Sunday instead of Saturday?

### A DEEPER LOOK

Would you agree with me, that if a person's actions reflect a glaring disregard for God's commandments, it indicates that they are separated from Jesus? The Bible labels such a person as lost, spiritually dead. John wrote:

By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 JOHN 2:3, 4).

Can anyone know Christ without obeying His commandments? Read that verse again. Then consider how John tells us to identify those who are the children of God: "If you know that He [Jesus] is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29).

The Bible defines many things as sin. Backbiting, boasting, unbelief, and blasphemy are categorized as sin. Paul tells us that anything that is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23). James warns that if we know the right thing to do and refuse to do it, we are sinning (James 4:17), while John states that all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17). These verses explain attitudes and actions that fall into the sin category, but they do not provide a clear definition of sin.

How do we know what is the right thing to do? How do we recognize what is unrighteousness? Disobedience to God's commandments is the opposite of practicing righteousness. In fact, did you know that is how the Bible defines sin? "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). There you have it—the only clear definition of sin in the Bible. Sin

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is lawlessness, the breaking of God's law, through doubt, disbelief, apathy, or rebellion.

The standard by which our actions are judged is the Ten Commandments, which constitutes God's right way of thinking and acting. Even faithlessness violates His commandments because we have made an idol of human reasoning, elevating our opinion above God's Word. "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning." (1 John 3:8). Sin separates us from God. Separation from God robs us of eternal life with Him. Satan is the master separator. His objective is to cause separation between God and us through the introduction of sin.

Why do Christians consider actions, such as taking God's name in vain, serving other so-called gods, dishonoring parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, and coveting, to be sinful? Because we know these acts break the law of God.

But there's more to God's Ten Commandment law. How would you react if I used the fourth commandment to illustrate "lawlessness" that could separate you from a loving Savior? When I suggest that ignoring God's seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath is breaking God's law, many Christians change camps. The same people who were saying "Amen!" to the list of sins reviewed above hop to the other side of the aisle when the fourth commandment is introduced and say, "Wait a minute! The commandments were nailed to the cross! They're no longer valid." It seems as though people in this camp choose to believe that the only commandment nailed to the cross is God's holy Sabbath, the day God set aside for developing an intimate relationship with Him.

I'm glad the Bible declares the "handwriting of requirements" (Colossians 2:14; "handwriting of ordinances," KJV) was nailed to the cross. We will talk more about this. Scripture will show us that this verse refers to the law of Moses. But for now, let me toss out a few "teasers" for those who think God's seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath was canceled at the cross.

Speaking of a time of tribulation coming after His death, Jesus

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warned His followers, “Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. . . . And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath” (Matthew 24:16, 20). If Jesus knew the Sabbath would no longer be in effect after His resurrection, why did He instruct His followers to pray they would not have to flee on the Sabbath?

Another time, Jesus said, “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” (Matthew 5:18). We know Christ was referring to the Ten Commandment law here. In the context of this passage, Christ was amplifying the commandments, expanding them from the mere “letter” of the law to include the “spirit” of the law. He identified spewing anger and abusive language with the spirit of murder (verses 21–23). He labeled lust as adultery of the heart (verses 27, 28). Don’t you think that if Jesus intended to abolish the Sabbath commandment at His resurrection, He would surely have testified that the law of God would be changed before heaven and earth passed away? The Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah and the end of the world will not be completely fulfilled until God’s people finally put on immortality at the “last trumpet” (see 1 Corinthians 15:50–58). Also, the Lord says,

“For as the new heavens and the new earth  
Which I will make shall remain before Me . . .  
It shall come to pass  
That . . .  
From one Sabbath to another,  
All flesh shall come to worship before Me” (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

If the Sabbath was removed at His resurrection because we have found rest in Christ, why would God reinstate it in the new heavens and the new earth? For all of eternity, God’s redeemed people will gather every seventh-day Sabbath to observe a time of special worship and fellowship with our Creator God.



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“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). Do you think God had a reason for beginning the fourth commandment with the word, “remember”? I do. He obviously knew people would forget.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STONE

Maybe this would be a good time to discuss why many Christian people, including pastors, choose to “forget” the Sabbath commandment. Let’s just talk common sense for a moment. Question: If God gave us Ten Commandments to keep, why would any human try to do away with any one of them? Do we really think the Creator God of the universe made a mistake by adding the fourth commandment to the other nine? I’m sure you remember the Scripture so often used in weddings: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:9, KJV). I think that Scripture would also apply to His commandments, don’t you?

God wrote all ten commandments with His own finger on two tables of stone, yet man wants to separate and negate God’s law. Heaven help us! Do you think that there is any connection between God writing the Ten Commandments on stone and Jesus Himself being referred to as the “chief cornerstone” (Acts 4:11)? Could it be that when we reject the Ten Commandment law of God that we reject Jesus Christ Himself? You may want to do your own biblical study on the significance of the many references made to the meaning of the word “stone.” I’ll give you a couple of examples. You will find that in the Bible the imagery of “stone” represents longevity, including eternity. Let’s notice how the word, “stone,” is used when it comes to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the cornerstone that the builders rejected (Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17). The cornerstone is not a stone that is to be done away with or destroyed! The Bible says,

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Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily” (ISAIAH 28:16).

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord (EPHESIANS 2:19–21).

God didn’t write the law of Moses in stone. He wrote only the Ten Commandments in stone because they were not to be done away with at the cross.

### THE SABBATH IS THE LORD’S DAY

As I mentioned earlier, the principles of the Ten Commandments are eternal. God rested from all His work at the end of Creation week. Now, I think you’ll agree with me that God was not so tired after creating the world that He had to take a day to rest—right? Why did He rest then? He set aside every seventh day for His creation to spend time with Him on His special day. Yes, the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath is God’s holy day. Let’s read it in Isaiah 58:13, 14.

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,  
From doing your pleasure on My holy day,  
And call the Sabbath a delight,  
The holy day of the LORD honorable . . .  
Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD.”

Did you notice that God claims the seventh-day Sabbath as

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“My holy day . . . the holy day of the LORD”? We are stepping on the authority of the Lord when we do not turn away our feet from trampling His holy day.

It's not my Sabbath or your Sabbath or even a Jewish Sabbath. *God* claims ownership of the Sabbath! “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God” (Exodus 20:10). It is the Lord's Day! According to the Bible, all things were created through Christ—nothing was made without Him (John 1:3).

We've learned that God set apart the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) as a day of rest at the end of Creation week. The Bible says,

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (GENESIS 2:1-3).

We have learned that the patriarchs, including Abraham, who is considered the father of the Jews, worshiped God every seventh-day Sabbath long before Moses and the Ten Commandments. “Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Genesis 26:5).

And we know that Jesus kept the seventh-day Sabbath while He was on the earth, as did all His disciples and all the Bible writers. Luke wrote, “He [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read” (Luke 4:16).

And last, we have learned that the Sabbath will be kept in heaven.

“For as the new heavens and the new earth  
Which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD,  
“So shall your descendants and your name remain.  
And it shall come to pass

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That from one New Moon to another,  
And from one Sabbath to another,  
All flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

### WHAT MAKES SATURDAY SO SPECIAL?

Now, let's set the fourth commandment of God on the shelf for a moment. Without this commandment to remember the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath and keep it holy, there is no earthly reason to set Saturday apart as special. Actually, without that commandment, there is no earthly reason for our weekly cycle of time! Unlike the day, the month, or the year, the week has nothing to do with the positioning of the sun or moon or with the orbit or rotation of the earth.

From the physical perspective, why don't we have five or ten days in our week? Why does the whole world keep a seven-day weekly cycle? There's no earthly reason I can think of. Ah . . . but there is a heavenly reason! God established and set apart the weekly cycle of time by the authority of His Word alone. Just after He created human beings, God decreed a seven-day division of time.

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

It was God who inspired Moses to write “seventh day” in that passage of Scripture, not once—but three times. Why is the seventh day the last day of our weekly cycle? Because God determined it to be a day of rest, a holy intermission.

There is only one reason the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath is holy. God blessed and sanctified that particular day and called it “My holy day.” That's reason enough for me. How about you?

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So why do many Christians today claim that the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath was nailed to the cross and worship instead on the first day of the week? There is no command anywhere in the Bible to change God's holy seventh-day Sabbath or to do away with it. (I am not able in this little book to go into much detail about the fourth commandment, but there is another book in this series titled, *The Truth About the Lord's Day*. That book focuses on the fourth commandment, often called the "Forgotten Commandment." Contact 3ABN to obtain any or all of the other books in the Focus on Truth series).

### TWO GREAT LAWS OF THE BIBLE

Many Christians think that the Ten Commandment law of God was nailed to the cross. They base this belief on Colossians 2:14 where Paul writes that Jesus has wiped out "the handwriting of requirements ["ordinances," KJV] that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

It's critical to determine the exact nature of this "handwriting of requirements," this written code with all of its regulations and ordinances that was nailed to the cross. Is Paul referring to the Ten Commandment law of God? Or was he really referring to the Book of the Law, written by Moses? The Bible speaks of two great laws:

1. *The Law of God*—the "Ten Commandments," or the "Two Tablets of the Testimony," also known as the Moral Law, the Law of Love, and the Decalogue

2. *The Law of Moses*—the "Book of the Law," or the "Book of the Covenant," also known as the Ceremonial Law or the Mosaic Law

God uniquely calculated the marvelous purposes that He wanted each of these two laws to serve. But many sincere-hearted Christians don't clearly understand the differences between the two. This has led to confusion, particularly in interpreting New Testament references to "the law."

Bible writers often use the singular word, "law," to refer to either

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the law of God or the law of Moses. If we don't have a clear understanding of their different purposes, it's easy to miss which law a particular Bible text is talking about and thus arrive at misguided conclusions.

For example, Paul wrote,

**For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. . . . No one is justified by the law. . . . The law is not of faith. . . . Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (GALATIANS 3:10–13).**

Yet, he was also inspired to write this:

**Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. . . . Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good (ROMANS 3:31; 7:12).**

Can you identify which of the two laws Paul was referring to in these passages? By the end of this study, you will know that in Galatians 3:10–13, he is referring to the law of Moses. In Romans 3:31 and 7:12, he is referring to the Ten Commandment law of God, established in our hearts by faith. Have you ever felt there was a cloud of confusion that overshadows Paul's writings? I think this cloud will evaporate as we examine the differences between these laws.

With increased understanding, we can come to the New Testament and rightly divide the Word of truth. When we read the apostle Paul's writings on "the law," we will be able to search the context and determine whether he was referring to the law of God or the law of Moses.

Under divine inspiration, Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossae that Christ nailed to the cross the "handwriting of requirements" (Colossians 2:14) which stood against us. A misguided interpretation of this text has some people claiming Paul taught

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that the law of God is obsolete. You can be certain that God never contradicted Himself when He shared His divine thoughts with the many writers of the Bible. Do you see why there can be no disagreement between the writings of the Old and New Testaments? If we're puzzled by what appears to be contradictory, we must search the Scriptures of both testaments to overcome our limited understanding. New covenant Christians rely on the New Testament alone for their teachings. Unfortunately, someone has persuaded these well-intentioned believers that the New Testament cancels the teachings of the Old. Paul disagrees. He said God inspired "all Scripture" to equip us for good works (2 Timothy 3:16).

We've already learned that the Old Testament reveals God's law was in force before He handed it down in stone on Mount Sinai. If we throw out the Old Testament, we can't know that Moses wrote the



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Book of the Law (the “Law of Moses”) or that he recorded approximately 640 separate ordinances in his own handwriting. Without this understanding, how could we begin to appreciate that the “hand-writing of requirements” nailed to the cross was the law of Moses?

How could we learn that God’s moral law, the Ten Commandments, is eternal and that breaking it is connected to the only definition of sin in the Bible? Remember, where there is no law, there is no sin (Romans 4:15). And if there’s no sin, there’s no need of a Savior. If there’s no need of a Savior, then there’s no need for churches or preachers! But thanks to our heavenly Father there is an everlasting moral law called the Ten Commandments for humans to live by. Here’s what Charles Spurgeon, the popular nineteenth-century Baptist preacher, said regarding God’s commandments:

The law of God is a divine law, holy, heavenly, perfect. Those who find fault with the law, or in the least degree depreciate it, do not understand its design, and have no right idea of the law itself. Paul says, “The law is holy, but I am carnal; sold under sin.” In all we ever say concerning justification by faith, we never intend to lower the opinion which our hearers have of the law, for the law is one of the most sublime of God’s works. . . . There is not a commandment too many; there is not one too few; but it is so *incomparable*, that its *perfection* is a proof of its divinity. No human lawgiver could have given forth such a law as that which we find in the decalogue [the Ten Commandments]. It is a perfect law; for all human laws that are right are to be found in that brief compendium and epitome of all that is good and excellent toward God, or between man and man.<sup>3</sup>

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul” (Psalm 19:7). Can mere mortal humans afford to change, delete, or ignore even one of God’s perfect set of Ten Commandments?

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## TO KEEP OR NOT TO KEEP?

The Ten Commandments—to keep or not to keep? This is a serious question. To find the answer, I think we owe it to ourselves to examine this important topic in the light of God’s Scriptures. It’s imperative for us to know the truth.

Now let’s focus on Colossians 2:14–16. New covenant Christians point to these verses in Colossians to prove that the Old Testament laws, including the Ten Commandments, were nailed to the cross.

The ceremonial law of Moses defined the earthly temple services and all the special annual sabbaths. Everything contained within the ceremonial law was a shadow pointing forward to Jesus, the Substance.

*For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect (HEBREWS 10:1).*

The law of Moses prescribed sacrifices, festivals, and ceremonial ordinances that were symbolic of Jesus. Paul emphatically states that this law of ceremonies ended, nailed to the cross, when Jesus died.

*And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 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 (COLOSSIANS 2:13, 14).*

Be sure to note here that the Bible says it was the “handwriting of requirements” (the law of Moses) that was nailed to the cross—not the Ten Commandment law of God!

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## DIGGING DEEPER

Let's examine the evidence a bit closer. It's time for a detour, since it seems this term "handwriting of requirements" has been assigned a different meaning in some Christian circles. We will briefly review this issue from standpoint of the Hebrew and Greek languages. The next few paragraphs will get a little technical. Please don't give up on me. It's necessary to dive deep into Scripture here for those who are turning to "new interpretations." We'll come up for air in just a moment.

When Moses gave the people the words he would later write in the Book of the Covenant (the Book of the Law of Moses), the Bible records this statement:

So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the *judgments*. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do" (EXODUS 24:3; EMPHASIS ADDED).

The Hebrew word for "judgments" in Exodus 24:3 is *mishpât*, which is also translated "ordinance" and "law."<sup>4</sup> In Colossians 2:14, the Greek word for "requirements" ("ordinances," KJV) is *dogma*, which is also translated as "decree."<sup>5</sup> According to Strong's Greek dictionary, this word, *dogma*, refers to "the rules and requirements of the law of Moses; carrying a suggestion of severity and of threatened judgment."<sup>6</sup>

Many Bible scholars, as well as *Strong's Concordance*, equate the "handwriting of requirements" that Christ nailed to the cross with the law of Moses. However another teaching has surfaced which suggests that the Greek of Colossians 2:14 could be interpreted differently. The Phillips translation of the New Testament gives this text as:

Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over

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our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over his own head on the cross (COLOSSIANS 2:14).

According to this view, what Jesus nailed to the cross at His death was all the written record of our sins. Let's consider Paul's writings and see if we can determine a pattern of words that might better explain his meaning.

The phrase “the handwriting of requirements that was against us” occurs only once in the entire Bible. Although these exact words are not repeated, the concept appears a second time in Ephesians chapter 2. Let's take a brief look at this passage in its context.

For He [Jesus] Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity (EPHESIANS 2:14–16).

In context, Paul is referring here to the wall of separation between the Jews and Gentiles. Certainly, the law of Moses was a dividing factor between them! Paul explains that Christ abolished “in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” This is similar to the language he used in Colossians 1:20–22, referring to Christ's death on the cross. If we allow Paul's writings to interpret each other, it seems clear that what he is saying as we compare Colossians 2:14 with Ephesians 2:15. The “handwriting of requirements” (Colossians 2:14), which Christ nailed to the cross and the “law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Ephesians 2:15) that Christ abolished in His flesh are the same thing—nothing less than those things written in the law of Moses.

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Obviously, as the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus took our sins upon Himself on the cross. But, can we argue that our sin debt was blotted out at that moment? What about our need to confess and repent? How could wiping out “the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments” abolish enmity between Jew and Gentile? And how would that interpretation of Colossians 2:14 relate to Ephesians 2:14–16? What Christ nailed to the cross was our old nature (Romans 6:6) and the old covenant—“the handwriting of requirements that was against us,” the Book of the Law, placed beside the ark of the covenant as a witness against us (Deuteronomy 31:26). At the same time, Christ became the surety of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22) by shedding His expiatory blood for our atonement. It is the blood of Christ, the better Sacrifice of the better covenant, that blots out our sins as we confess and turn away from them.

Let’s return to our subject verse, Jesus “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” (Colossians 2:14). In this same passage of Scripture, Paul continues to write, “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” (verses 16, 17). All of the ceremonial ordinances, including the special annual sabbaths (not to be confused with the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath), were merely a shadowy symbol of the ministry of Christ.

Christ made it clear that the purpose of the law of Moses was to prepare the people for His arrival. He said, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44).

Paul wrote that Christ was the End—the aim or the goal—of the law. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, *‘The man who does those things shall live by them’*”

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(Romans 10:4, 5; emphasis added). We must carefully consider the context of Paul's writing here. Which law was he referring to? Notice that Paul clarifies that he is speaking of the law of Moses; he speaks of Moses' writing, and he quotes what the Lord said to Moses regarding the Book of the Law: "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them" (Leviticus 18:5). Can you clearly see what Paul is saying in Romans 10:4, 5? He is saying that Christ was the End—the aim or the goal—of the law of Moses, the old covenant that expressed God's commitment to rescue the world from sin.

Christ is our New Covenant with God! In a Messianic prophecy about Christ, God said,

"I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,  
And will hold Your hand;  
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,  
As a light to the Gentiles,  
To open blind eyes,  
To bring out prisoners from the prison,  
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house" (Isaiah 42:6, 7).

There's no doubt that the new covenant we celebrate in Jesus contains the Ten Commandments. Listen to what the Lord says:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant. . . . This is the covenant that I will make. . . . 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" (HEBREWS 8:8, 10, SEE ALSO JEREMIAH 31:31–33).

The Ten Commandment law of God is at the heart of the new covenant, just as it was in the old covenant. Paul plainly taught that the law of God was part of the new covenant. Notice how he describes the nature of both the law of Moses (which contained

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circumcision ordinances) and the Ten Commandment law of God in this side-by-side comparison: “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters” (1 Corinthians 7:19).

### THE REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW COVENANTS

The Ten Commandments are the heart of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:8, 10; Jeremiah 31:31–33). They are really ten wonderful promises of how the life of Christ in us will empower us to demonstrate our love for God and for humanity. God will work in us to cause us to desire His ways and to act according to His good purposes (Philippians 2:13).

Can you see that the difference between the time of Moses (old covenant) and the time of Christ (new covenant) is not the abolishing of the Ten Commandments? The real difference is the path to salvation. The old ceremonial law of Moses established a temporary set of symbolic acts that represented the ministry of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Under the ceremonial law, a sinner sacrificed an innocent lamb to cover his sin. Sin was symbolically transferred to the blameless sacrifice, pointing to Christ who would become our Substitute to pay the death penalty our sins required. “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Christ was the spotless Lamb of God. He became the Sacrifice for you and me. At the cruel cross of Calvary, God transferred the penalty of death, which we deserve to His precious Son. The power of Christ’s shed blood is sufficient to cover all our confessed sins. Unlike the priests of the old covenant, Christ doesn’t need to make repeated sacrifices. The Bible says He sacrificed “once for all” when He offered up Himself (Hebrews 7:27). “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split” (Matthew 27:50, 51).



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At the crucifixion, God ended the earthly temple services prescribed in the law of Moses. On that day, when God ripped the veil that covered the entrance to the Most Holy Place, He demonstrated that Christ's sacrifice has given us direct access to His throne of grace. Before Christ's death on Calvary, only the high priest had access to the Most Holy Place, and he could enter only once a year. But when the veil was torn, God demonstrated that the symbolic ceremonies had met the substance, Jesus Christ, the new and living way to the Father.

### WHAT ABOUT GALATIANS 3:10–14?

The old covenant was the “Book of the Law” and contained the Ten Commandments. The new covenant is found in Jesus Christ and still contains the Ten Commandments. With this greater understanding, let's tackle a passage that many interpret to mean that God's commandments were done away with. It's a writing of Paul found in Galatians 3:10–14. I'll break it into bite-sized pieces as we go through it. “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, *‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them’*” (verse 10; emphasis added). Here Paul clearly states he is writing about the Book of the Law—the law of Moses. And he quotes from the Book of the Law: “Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them” (Deuteronomy 27:26).

Paul continues to write with the same reference to the Book of the Law in Galatians 3:11—“But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for *‘the just shall live by faith’*” (emphasis added). Some misguided souls use this scripture to try to argue that the Ten Commandments have been abolished, but we know Paul is referring to the law of Moses. Writing about the law of Moses, He goes on to say:

Yet the law is not of faith, but *“the man who does them*

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*shall live by them.*” Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (verses 12–14; emphasis added).

As we’ve already studied, the curses of the law were written in the Book of the Law—Moses’ book. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law of Moses.

Do you see how easy it is to understand Paul’s writings once you understand the difference between the law of Moses and the Ten Commandment law of God? With a little history on the nature and purpose of the two laws, and by examining the context of the passage, we can distinguish which law Paul was referring to and the exact intent of his writing. We can rightly divide and interpret Scripture.

### WHAT PURPOSE DOES THE LAW SERVE?

Within the same chapter and context, Paul explains that God’s plan of salvation has always been by grace, through faith. Then he explains why the law of Moses was instituted in the first place.

And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator (GALATIANS 3:17–19).

Since we just reviewed Galatians 3:10–14, you can be sure Paul

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is referring in verses 17–19 to the very same Book of the Law. The law of Moses was a temporary law, put into effect through angels by Moses, acting as a mediator between God and Israel. But there was no mediator when God spoke His Ten Commandments to the entire assembly.

The law of Moses did not set aside the promise to Abraham of salvation by faith. The Book of the Law was added because of transgressions (sin). Since God's Ten Commandments were in place before the law of Moses, we can conclude that Moses' law was added because God's moral law had been violated.

All of the ceremonial laws contained in the Book of Moses pointed to Jesus. They were only temporary, to serve until Jesus (the Seed of God) came to bring a time of reformation (Hebrews 9:10).

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). It is God's Ten Commandment law that is perfect! The hand-writing of ordinances in Moses' law could not "convert the soul." God's law is perfect because it reflects His perfect nature of love.

### WHAT WAS IN THE LAW OF MOSES?

We should be thankful that the law of Moses (the Book of the Law) is no longer in effect, since it demanded swift judgments and the death penalty for many offenses. For example, the death penalty was required for those who sacrificed to another god (Exodus 22:20) or even suggested serving other gods (Deuteronomy 13:6–9), for those who broke the seventh-day Sabbath (Exodus 35:2), for the adulterer and adulteress (Leviticus 20:10), for rebellious sons who would not heed the counsel of parents (Deuteronomy 21:18–21), and even for the owner of an ox who killed someone if the owner knew it was dangerous but had not confined it (Exodus 21:28, 29).

The law of Moses demanded "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Deuteronomy 19:21). Jesus clearly demonstrated that the civil laws written in the law of Moses were to be set aside when He

## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matthew 5:38, 39). Aren’t we glad that the civil and ceremonial laws of the old covenant are not in effect today? Still, as the saying goes, we should be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. Just as the Ten Commandments, which were the heart of the old covenant, are still binding today, there were other things mentioned in the Book of Moses which are principles God had given to His people before He spoke the terms of the old covenant to Moses. For example, tithing and unclean foods are mentioned in the old covenant, but like the Ten Commandments, they were mentioned long before Mount Sinai and Moses.

We can find the tithing principle—returning to God one-tenth of your increase in income—being practiced by Abram (Genesis 14:19, 20) and Jacob (Genesis 28:20–22). Christ clearly approved of this practice when He commended the Pharisees for paying tithe, while denouncing their lack of justice and love for God (Luke 11:42). Many Christians recognize that tithing did not originate with the old covenant and was never annulled by Scripture.

I don’t know about you, but I have yet to find a preacher of any church, regardless of the denomination, who will tell you that since tithing was part of the old covenant, it was therefore nailed to the cross! They easily and readily accept that tithing is still valid today. I’m sure it has nothing to do with needing finances to sustain their church and their own lifestyle! (*Smile.*)

We can use the same principle when it comes to marriage. Marriage was part of the old covenant. But like the Sabbath, marriage, too, was sanctified by God at Creation in the Garden of Eden. I don’t see Christians claiming that marriage between one man and one woman was nailed to the cross as part of the old covenant, do you?

## IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

I haven't been able to go into great detail in this little book, but I pray that God has spoken truths to you that you may have never seen before. Maybe a light bulb has come on for you. I realize that some of this has been a little technical, but I really believe that in order to understand truth, we have to focus on truth. The Bible is our only source to turn to in order to understand God's truth for our lives.

What is the purpose of this book? It is my prayer that it will lead people closer to Jesus by sharing a little about God's law of love and liberty. The Ten Commandments are indeed that law of love, a transcript of God's character! "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

The Ten Commandments express God's perfect will of love for His people. Christ's character of love is revealed in the law of God. Our Lord said all of His Ten Commandments are sustained by love. "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*" . . . *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37–40; emphasis added). The first four commandments (Exodus 20:2–11) define how we can develop an intimate love relationship with God, and the last six (verses 12–17) focus on loving our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10). Jesus obeyed the Father's commandments. He asks us to demonstrate our love for Him by doing the same.

Paul wrote that love is the fulfillment of the Ten Commandment law of God (Romans 13:10). The Greek of this verse means that love fills God's commandments to the fullest. How can we fulfill God's law of love? It's impossible if we depend on human nature. The action God requires of us is for us to open our hearts and allow Him to pour His love into us by the power of His Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). God's

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perfect law is filled to its fullest only by His love flowing through us.

## **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: GOD'S STANDARD OF JUDGMENT**

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, identifies the saints of God as those who are keeping the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). Revelation also points out Satan’s fury at them for doing so. “And the dragon [symbolic of Satan] was enraged with the woman [symbolic of the church], and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

What commandments are these true, end-time Christians keeping? We know these references are not to the law of Moses. If God abolished His Ten Commandments, why would the Bible point to these end-time people of God as those “who keep the

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commandments of God”? The apostle James clearly defines God’s standard of judgment as His Ten Commandment law:

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, *“You shall love your neighbor 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 (JAMES 2:8–12; EMPHASIS ADDED).

The “law of liberty” is this: Christ sets us free from sin and empowers us to walk in obedience to God. He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves, causing us to be all that He has called us to be! God’s Ten Commandments are really ten wonderful promises of what He will do in our lives if we abide in Christ. He came to destroy the works of the devil. He sends His Holy Spirit to give us power over sin.

Since we live in a world of sin, there has to be a law that defines sin. That law is God’s Ten Commandments. James’s counsel in the New Testament agrees with the wise counsel Solomon gave in the Old Testament. Their agreement testifies that God’s purpose for His Ten Commandment law is as constant as God Himself. Solomon wrote:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep His commandments,  
For this is man’s all.  
For God will bring every work into judgment,  
Including every secret thing,  
Whether good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).



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God cannot lie or contradict Himself. Sinners today still deserve the wages they have earned. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). The privilege we now enjoy is that when we recognize we have sinned, we can go directly to Jesus and ask Him for forgiveness. Christ understands! He lived in this sin-sick world. He understands our struggle with every temptation. As the one true High Priest, He now intercedes with His Father on our behalf, and He is able to save us completely (Hebrews 7:25). Instead of eternal death, we receive the gift of eternal life when we submit to God’s will and commit our lives to Him, walking in obedience to His commandments. “And having been perfected, He [Jesus] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:9). Christ walked in perfect obedience to the Father, not to become God’s Son but because He was the holy Son of God. He expects us to obey because He empowers us to obey.

True Christians don’t keep God’s commandments in order to be saved. We know salvation is a gift by grace, through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8). True Christians keep God’s commandments because we are saved, and love for the Lord motivates us to please Him by walking in obedience.

Obedience is the key factor here. One of the lies Satan has been spreading for hundreds of years is that God’s Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross. The great deceiver has caused many to believe that Christ sacrificed His life so that we would no longer have to walk in obedience to God’s perfect Ten Commandment law. Jesus said:

“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



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heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (MATTHEW 5:17-19).

Christ came to “fulfill” the law. The Greek word used here means “to fill full.” Christ came to reveal God’s fullest intentions regarding His law. Christ also declared that the Ten Commandment law of God would be in force “till heaven and earth pass away.”

Since God revealed His perfect will in His commandments, do humans have any right to divide it or delete any portion of it? Not even the smallest stroke of writing will be deleted until all is fulfilled at His second coming!

### THE BOTTOM LINE

In summary, what was nailed to the cross? When Jesus Christ offered Himself as God’s perfect sacrifice, He was wiping 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” (Colossians 2:14). Christ nailed the old covenant, the ordinances of the law of Moses, to the cross!

Christ is our New Covenant with God! As we partake of His divine nature, we are empowered to walk in His footsteps of obedience to God. The Ten Commandment law of God, written in our hearts and minds, is the heart of the new covenant just as it was with the old. The law of liberty is this: by the life of Christ working in us and through us, we are empowered to walk in obedience to God’s commandments.

Now that we have unraveled the truth about the two great laws of the Bible and the old and new covenants, we have every reason in the world to rejoice. The good news is that Christ will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, causing us to be all that He has called us to be. Hallelujah!

A chart is included on the next page comparing the Ten Commandment law of God and the law of Moses and identifying some of the differences between them.

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## A COMPARISON OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE LAW OF MOSES

The Ten Commandments	The Law of Moses
<b><i>Called “The Law of the LORD”</i></b> (Isaiah 5:24)	<b><i>Called “The Law of Moses”</i></b> (Luke 2:22; 1 Corinthians 9:9)
<b><i>Written by God on Stone</i></b> (Exodus 31:18; 32:16)	<b><i>Written by Moses in a Book</i></b> (Deuteronomy 31:24; 2 Chronicles 35:12)
<b><i>Placed Inside the Ark</i></b> (Exodus 40:20)	<b><i>Placed on the Side of the Ark</i></b> (Deuteronomy 31:26)
<b><i>Points Out Sin</i></b> (Romans 7:7; 3:20)	<b><i>Added Because of Sin</i></b> (Galatians 3:19)
<b><i>Not Burdensome</i></b> (1 John 5:3)	<b><i>Contrary to Us</i></b> (Colossians 2:14)
<b><i>Called “The Royal Law”</i></b> (James 2:8)	<b><i>Called “The Law . . . Contained in Ordinances”</i></b> (Ephesians 2:15)
<b><i>Judges All People</i></b> (James 2:10–12)	<b><i>Judges No Man</i></b> (Colossians 2:14–16)
<b><i>Is Spiritual</i></b> (Romans 7:14)	<b><i>Was Carnal</i></b> (Hebrews 7:16)
<b><i>Brings Blessings</i></b> (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2)	<b><i>Contained Curses</i></b> (Deuteronomy 29:20, 21)
<b><i>Is Perfect</i></b> (Psalm 19:7)	<b><i>Made Nothing Perfect</i></b> (Hebrews 7:19)
<b><i>Is Eternal</i></b> (Matthew 5:17–19)	<b><i>Was Temporary</i></b> (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:13)

1. Wikipedia, s.v. “New Covenant Theology,” last modified February 23, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Covenant\\_theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Covenant_theology).

2. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 1980), 422.

3. Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Curse Removed,” *Sermons of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon of London*, Second Series (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Company, 1857), 280.

4. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1890), s.v. “judgments.”

5. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1890), s.v. “ordinances.”

6. *New American Standard New Testament Greek Lexicon*, s.v. “dogma,” accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/dogma.html>.

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## What are the Ten Commandments?

- ◆ Where did they come from, and are they relevant for the times in which we live?
- ◆ Why were they written in stone?
- ◆ Were the Ten Commandments nailed to the cross?
- ◆ Are they still valid?
- ◆ Are you a new-covenant Christian?
- ◆ Can anyone really know Christ if they don't obey His commandments?

The answer to these questions and many more are found in this booklet. *The Truth About the Ten Commandments* walks you through each of God's ten "life principles," the Ten Commandments. The Bible teaches that they are a reflection of God's identity. With clarity and purpose, Danny Shelton explains the difference between the law of God, and the law of Moses. He uncovers the source of the confusion that many have regarding the interpretation of the New Testament's references to the "law." If you've ever wondered about the validity or perpetuity of the Ten Commandment law of God, this booklet is for you!

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