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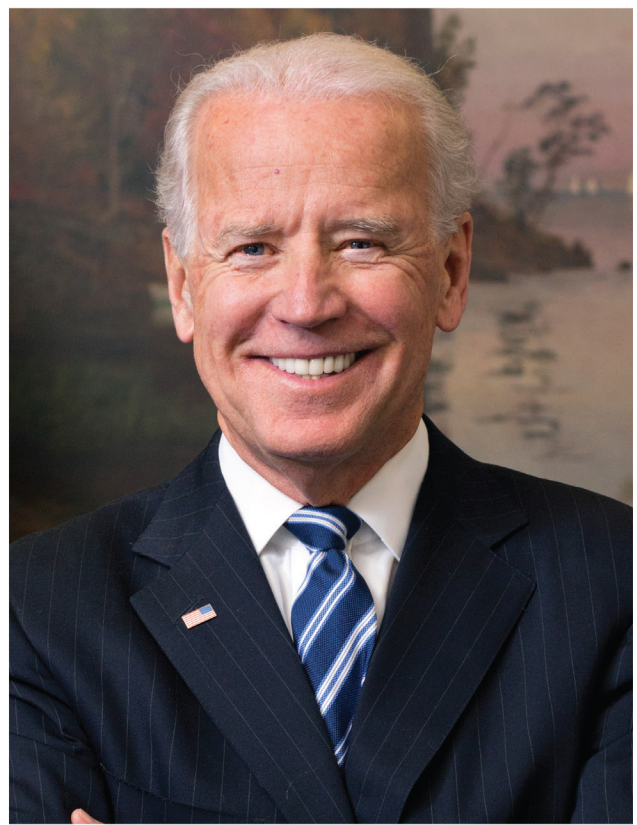
BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

SHOULD CHRISTIANS VOTE?



Donald Trump

2020 Republican US Presidential Candidate



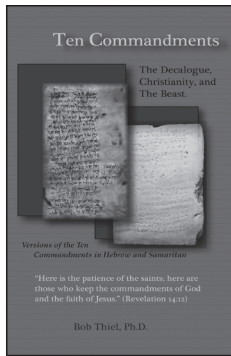
Joe Biden

2020 Democratic US Presidential Candidate

**Catholic Encyclopedia
on Christmas**

The Ninth Commandment
Do not bear false witness.

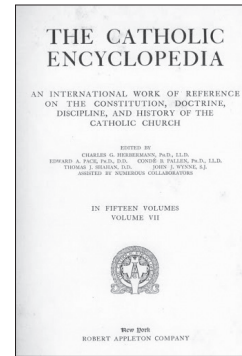
BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY



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Back Cover: Internet and Radio This shows where people can find the messages from the *Continuing Church of God*.

About the Front Cover: Artwork developed for the *Continuing Church of God* featuring one Republican (Donald Trump) and one Democrat (Joe Biden) declared candidates for the US presidency.

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Should Christians VOTE?

The world is a complicated place with many types of problems. In the world's so-called democracies, politicians campaign to persuade us to vote for them so that they can help solve these problems.

Around the world, election issues and problems usually include matters like the economy, environment, crime, international leadership, defense, and a host of social concerns. Community leaders with different ideas wish to persuade us that their group's choice is the one that will be best for the country.

Many of these leaders bring religion into the campaign.

Should Christians vote?

The Bible teaches that Christians should follow Jesus' example (Philippians 2:5). So, if Jesus was an American citizen, would He actually vote for president? In countries with parliamentary systems, would He vote for a certain party to get a particular prime minister?

In the USA, some seem to think that Jesus would vote for members of the Democratic party, because Democrats are perceived by some to be more compassionate than Republicans. Others feel certain that Jesus would vote for Republicans because Republicans are perceived by some to be more "pro-life" (anti-abortion) than Democrats. Some others, noting hypocrisy in both major parties, feel that Jesus would vote for the candidates offered by the smaller political parties due to their personalities or views on different subjects. But would Jesus go to a polling place and vote for anyone?

Democracy is Not New

Democracy was known before the time of Christ. In ancient Greece, all the male citizens were expected to vote on the issues facing their society. The Greeks introduced the concept of democracy to the Romans. The Romans (who were somewhat skeptical of the Greek model) set up a modified form of democracy called a republic. In a republic, elected representatives

are supposed to vote for their interpretation of the will of the people. The U.S., other "democracies" of the world (with Switzerland as perhaps the most notable exception as it is more patterned after the Greek model), and even many churches are patterned after the Roman model.

Most people in western societies seem to feel that some form of democracy is the best form of government. Would God agree?

The Bible warns us, "there is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 16:25). It also warns us, "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

In Genesis 2:17 God warned Adam and Eve to not partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam and Eve did not listen to God. After listening to Satan, they decided that they did not need to listen to God but that they should decide for themselves (Genesis 3:1-6). This is the first recorded act of human democracy in action.

Nowhere in the entire Bible do we see God sanctioning democracy.

The Bible shows that God appointed His leaders and made them known to His people. From Enoch to Noah to Moses to David to the Prophets to Jesus and even to the Apostles, we read nothing about God encouraging democracy.

Actually, according to the Bible, democracy is condemned. When Samuel was God's appointed leader/judge, the majority of the people wanted a king like the rest of the world. Even though there appeared to have been legitimate criticisms of Samuel's leadership, God told Samuel that the people had rejected God and not Samuel (1 Samuel 8:1-9). The Bible says it was evil in the sight of God for the people to ask to have a government like the other nations around them (1 Samuel 12: 17).

The Bible teaches that God sets up as leaders whomever He wants, and this is the “lowliest of people” (Daniel 4:17, NIV). And in the case of the USA, whoever becomes the next president will be apocalyptic in the sense that the next president will take steps that will lead to the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecies.

The Bible records incidences of religious leaders who felt that they were as good as the leaders that God appointed, but God had other ideas. For example, Korah (who was a religious leader and a Levite) was apparently in favor of voting and a republican form of government (which is what, the United States, for example, claims to have). After assembling 250 supporters (who were community leaders/representatives) he said to Moses and Aaron:

3 You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? (Numbers 16:3)

God clearly did not agree with Korah’s assessment and God decreed death to Korah and his followers (Numbers 16:32). When some of the people thought that God’s punishment was excessive, God also severely punished them as well (Numbers 16:49). Thus, it should be clear that God did not sanction voting in a republican form of government.

The New Testament Does Not Sanction Democracy

If democracy was to be sanctioned in the Bible for Christians, most certainly it would be sanctioned in the New Testament. Greek and Roman ways were widely known. In the New Testament we read of Jesus appointing apostles. Paul writes that God first appoints apostles, secondarily prophets, etc. for the edifying the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11,12).

When Judas needed to be replaced (after his betrayal of Jesus and his suicide), the apostles did not have an election, they followed the Biblical example of seeking God’s will:

24 You, O Lord, who know hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen... 26 And

they cast their lots. (Acts 1:24,26)

Notice the apostles did not decide that they were qualified to see into a person’s heart.

Some have written that various forms of democracy are now acceptable because they believe certain scriptures in the book of Acts imply it. The primary verses appear to be in the story of Acts 15. In Acts 15 many of the apostles and elders met together to discuss circumcision and Gentile believers. A multitude of counsellors was used to discuss the matter. Some feel that using counsel is indicative of democracy. However, the fact that a multitude of counsellors was used does not change God’s form of government. In the Old Testament we read that not only has God always encouraged this practice (Proverbs 11:14), we also read that God himself engaged in it (2 Chronicles 18:18-21); thus the fact that some of the Church leadership followed this practice only shows that God’s governmental practices from the Old Testament were to be continued.

It is interesting to note something else mentioned in the Book of Acts. Notice the warning to religious people who thought that they were doing the right thing:

38 “And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God.” (Acts 5:38-39)

Those who vote in worldly elections apparently believe they know aspects of the plan of God that there is no human way they could know.

Yet, look at what God said to Samuel, one clearly called and appointed by God, when Samuel thought he knew who should be the next king over Israel:

6 So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is before Him.” 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:6-7)

Samuel was chosen by God, but did not know who God would pick. Are you sure that you know better than He?

Democracy is Not God's Form of Government

It is also interesting to realize that many who believe that the New Testament sanctions democracy also believe that God's future ruling government (in the Kingdom of God) will not be a democracy.

Jesus told the apostles that they would be rulers over the twelve tribes of Israel in his kingdom (Luke 22:30). Jesus chose the disciples; they did not get their positions from any form of democracy (John 15:16; 6:70). God, not man, chose David to be king over Israel originally (Acts 13:22) and has also chosen him to be king over all Israel in the world ahead (Jeremiah 30:9).

By the way, Jesus said that God the Father has reserved who will have certain positions of authority in the kingdom of God (Matthew 20:23). The rewards in the kingdom will be Jesus' to give (Revelation 22:12); they will not be for the people to take for themselves.

Democracy will not be God's form of government in His kingdom.

Why?

One of the many problems of voting is that no human thinks the way God does.

8 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways', says the LORD. (Isaiah 55:8)

When Jesus was on Earth, he proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God and told people to repent (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus refused to participate in even the most elementary governmental decisions while He was on the earth (Luke 12:13-14).

Although Jesus taught that we were to pay taxes (Matthew 22:17-21), He also taught that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). While taxes are required by nearly all governments, voting is not (note: if your government legally requires that you vote, pray and attempt to do the least voting you

are required to do and do not promote your voting preference to others).

Jesus taught His disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel to everyone (Matthew 28:19,20). Jesus said that His disciples were to be in the world, but not of it (John 17:16).

The apostle Peter clearly understood this. He wrote that being part of God's people made one part of a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). The apostle Paul wrote that this present world was evil (Galatians 1:4). The Bible warns of the consequences of being part of the world's systems and its governments and tells us to come out of it and to be separate (Revelation 18:2-5).

Look at what the Bible teaches will happen in the Last Days and what Christians are to do about it:

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, 3 unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

The aspects of the above remind me of various political leaders, including the leading two running for the office of the President of the United States. Notice that God's word does not encourage voting as the solution to those issues in the last days, but to turn away from such people.

Paul said that Christians are to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).

What is an ambassador? Merriam-Webster has the following definition:

1 : an official envoy; especially : a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his or her own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment

2 a : an authorized representative or messenger

If you are a real Christian, you are an authorized, official envoy, for Christ!

Ambassadors often live in alien nations, some of which are clearly hostile to their beliefs. Ambassadors, though they live in other societies, do not involve themselves in the politics of the societies that they live in. There is a time for God's people to take over the governments of this world, but it is not yet (John 18:36, Daniel 7:17-18). It will be after the second coming of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 11:15).

To Christians, Peter wrote:

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. Honor Authority 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. (1 Peter 2:9-15, NASB)

Aliens and strangers in a land do not vote.

Now the Bible does mention one particular vote by the Apostle Paul (while he was still Saul and thus unconverted). Notice what he later said about it:

9 Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. (Acts 26:9-10)

And while the above is not of itself a blanket condemnation of all voting, it is the only time the word "vote" or "voting" is in the Bible. And it does show that even religiously zealous/conservative/liberal individuals do not always vote correctly and can do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Whose World is it Now?

Various ones claim that it is the duty of Christians to vote.

The Apostle John reminded Christians:

19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. (1 John 5:19)

Yes, Satan influences the whole world.

Most who profess Christ do not believe that the Kingdom of God is the answer for what is facing their nation or the world. Although the Bible says Christians are to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7), they reason that God would want them to do something God does not command.

Consider also the following scriptures:

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

The gospel is hidden to those who involve themselves in Satan's political world.

How? They are submitting to the devil's authority, not God's. They fail to take the following seriously enough:

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:2)

The Bible also teaches that the "serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan ... deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

The solution to the world's ills is the return of Jesus and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, not

political leaders.

When people get wrapped up in the world's politics and his governments, they are submitting to Satan's idea of how to run things apart from God. Many seem to place more hope in elections than the Kingdom of God.

Notice what Jesus prayed:

14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. (John 17:14-17)

True Christians are in the world, not of it. This age is Satan's according to the Bible. The biblical truth is that Christians are not to be partakers of Satan's worldly system.

Politicians are Not the Answer, the Return of Jesus Christ Is

Notice a secular view related to the 2012 USA presidential election as it has some ideas to ponder related to the 2020 campaign as well:

When confronted with the false dilemma of the democratic political process, many individuals settle for the "less of two evils" as a kind of compromise. ...

Contrary to the popular snipe that "only those who vote have the right to complain," common sense leads us to quite the opposite conclusion. It is only those who have not aggressed against others who have the right to complain when they are aggressed against. Those who, to invert a phrase, "feed the mouth that bites them," may stand firmly, but do so on shaky ground.

A vote for either evil is nonetheless a vote for evil. (Daily Reckoning, October 19, 2012)

It is interesting to see a secular source coming to similar conclusions regarding the 'democratic system' and the US presidential election. Of course, many professing Christians believe that they need to vote

even though that concept is not endorsed in the Bible. But notice two concepts that are:

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil. (Isaiah 5:20)

2 You shall not follow a crowd to do evil. (Exodus 23:2)

The "lesser of two evils" is still not good.

Let's look at some of what the scriptures teach are to be traits of godly leaders:

19 Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. 20 And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. 21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (Exodus 18:19-21)

2 "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. 3 The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God. (2 Samuel 23:2-3)

Few politicians endorse God's laws and statutes and do not possess covetousness. Hence they are not people that Christians should endorse.

Consider also the following:

14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

National repentance and prayer are what the USA needs or it is biblically-doomed (cf. Habakkuk 2:6-8; Daniel 11:39). The same holds true for its Anglo-Saxon descended allies such as the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The whole world needs to repent (cf. Acts 17:30).

Although many sincerely believe that it is their

“Christian duty” to vote (even though that “duty” is not specified in the Bible), some seem to have overlooked some prophecies related to political leaders in the end times:

12 As for My people, children are their oppressors, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, And destroy the way of your paths.” (Isaiah 3:12)

16 For the leaders of this people cause them to err, And those who are led by them are destroyed. (Isaiah 9:16)

It should be clear that Isaiah prophesied that there would be end time leaders that cause people to err. This is what many politicians, directly, and indirectly, do.

While it is true, that like the King of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-6), political leaders could call for national repentance after enough people began a fast, the reality is that this simply is not something that many of them ever seriously consider, let alone do. It seems that this will not happen (unless perhaps after the prophesied destruction).

God will decide who He wants in various offices, and that is not always the ‘best’ person:

17 This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men. (Daniel 4:17)

By voting, one could be voting against God’s will. God’s people do not want to be found fighting against God (Acts 5:39).

Once, in the 1970s, I actually voted in an election. But for no particular reason (other than perhaps being moved by God’s Spirit), I decided not to vote for attorney general. If I would have voted for that office, I probably would have voted for the man that won – a man that later was involved with a massive lawsuit against the Church of God I was part of in the late 1970s. Obviously, I would not have done that on purpose, but am glad that I did not accidentally assist in empowering one who was against the COG (and that was perhaps the only office I did not cast a vote

for then).

Notice also a disturbing comment from a secular source that generally supports democracy:

All political campaigns lie and mislead. We all know that, and that knowledge is “baked into the cake,” so to speak, when it comes to assessing candidates. (Bookman J. GM on Romney: ‘Campaign politics at its cynical worst.’ Atlanta Journal Constitution, October 31, 2012)

No candidate should lie or mislead. And while I am not agreeing with the statement that they all do, the reality is that it is not godly conduct to lie or mislead, and that not only reflects unfavourably on the candidates, but also the process of modern democracy.

The Bible is clear that humankind, apart from God, cannot solve its problems. Jesus will return and He will be the non-humanly elected King of Kings (Revelation 17:14). Problems all humans have faced will be solved by the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God:

3 “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” (Revelation 21:3-5)

No matter which politician gets elected in carnal governments, human political leaders will not bring this about.

What Should Christians Do About Leaders?

If Christians are not supposed to vote, what should we do about leaders?

Pray for them!

Notice what Paul wrote:

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications,

prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

Notice that we are to pray for worldly leaders and those that have authority over us so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life. Nothing like this is said for voting that many falsely claim is their “Christian” duty – prayer for leaders is.

We also are to pray:

14 The will of the Lord be done. (Acts 21:14)

Similarly, Jesus taught:

7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. 9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:7-10)

And that, I believe, should be the type of prayer that Christians have about elections. Followers of the true God are also told to:

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:5-7)

Voting for one promoting evil, like abortion (like nearly all Democrats) and “America first,” in violation of the first commandment, in the case of certain USA Republicans, is not a Christian thing to do.

Many people, however, apparently are not satisfied with the biblical admonitions to trust God to choose

political leaders. This is not new (1 Samuel 8:6-7).

And while I can certainly understand that people often feel that they should do more, people often forget that God inspired Jeremiah to write:

23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. (Jeremiah 10:23)

Also notice what Hosea was inspired to write:

6 Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually. (Hosea 12:6)

It may be of interest to point out that Jesus suggested that people would take matters in their own hands thinking that they are doing God a service (John 16:2). And while this referred to killing, the principle is still that one should not violate what God instructs and justify it by thinking that is what God wants one to do.

Should a Christian vote?

Christians are not to be part of this world (Revelation 18:1-4), but are to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). True Christians “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

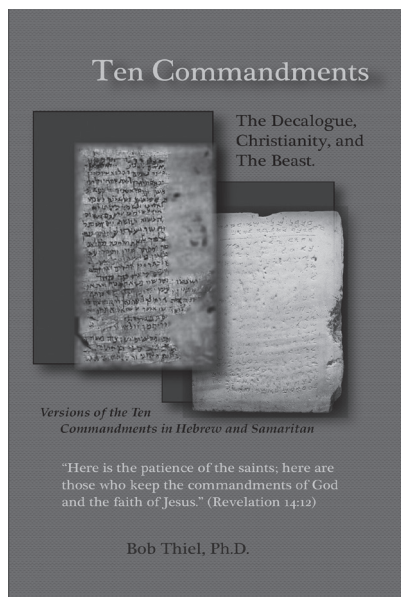
Jesus did not vote while He was on this earth. A Christian ambassador should follow the leadership of Jesus Christ and the Bible and not vote.

The Bible never enjoins voting or democracy. The Bible condemns both individual and republican voting.

The Bible teaches that Christians should pray about their governmental leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-3) – it never teaches that voting is a Christian duty.

Those truly concerned about the selection of leadership of their countries should pray (and if safely possible, fast) for “The will of the Lord be done” (Acts 21:14).

The NINTH Commandment



By Bob Thiel

Years ago, a minister gave an assignment about which commandment was the most important.

And while the first commandment actually is, from a physical perspective this author concluded that if the ninth commandment was obeyed, the world would be a much better and different place.

If people did not lie, the 'justice system' would be overhauled, politicians would have to change mightily, wars could be averted, relationships would be stronger, and less people would get hurt.

Satan is the father of deceit (John 8:44). That, as well as the violation of the first and seventh commandments, is why Christians do not go to fortune tellers, check their horoscopes, or other such things (cf. Leviticus 19:26, 20:6; Deuteronomy 4:19-20; Jeremiah 10:2).

Christians are to worship the "God of truth":

4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and

without injustice; Righteous and upright is He. (Deuteronomy 32:4)

It is because of deceit that Satan gets the world to go in the wrong direction:

9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. (Revelation 12:9)

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Satan broadcasts his deceitful attitude in ways that human beings, sadly, tune into. Christians need to resist Satan and draw closer to God (James 4:7-8).

Satan does not obey the ninth commandment and does not want you to either.

The ninth commandment, from the Book of Exodus, states:

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16)

Some have said the above does not specify lying, but the following does:

25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. (Ephesians 4:25)

Yet many who claim Christ seem to condone what they call 'white lies' as well as other forms of false witness. Christians are to TELL THE TRUTH!

If you are going to speak, always tell the truth. The truth and God's word sets Christians apart:

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your

word is truth. (John 17:16-17)

Keep Your Promises!

Do not overpromise. Jesus taught:

33 Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (Matthew 5:33-37)

Some people overpromise. Jesus said not to do that. Christians are not to swear oaths as that, as Jesus alluded to, is a form of false witness. While Christians can confirm/affirm their word is true, they cannot swear that they can make something happen, etc.

It is terrible how easily people these days lie, and how often even Christians do not follow through with their promises!

God's people keep their word, even when it is difficult:

1 Who may worship in your sanctuary, Lord? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill?
2 Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts.

3 Those who refuse to gossip or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends. 4 Those who despise flagrant sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the Lord, and keep their promises even when it hurts. (Psalm 15:1-4, New Living Translation)

Because the leadership of this author's former church association would not keep various specific promises, even when reminded, it was clear that the Philadelphia work (Revelation 3:7-13; Hebrews 13:1; Psalm 33:4) could not be led by them. Thus, the Continuing Church of God needed to be formed.

Notice also that in Psalm 15 it shows that God's people are to be careful about gossip. We are not to bear

false witness against our neighbor, yet gossips often do that. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves (cf. Matthew 19:19).

Two Trees

There were two trees of import in the Garden of Eden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9).

It is bad to mix good and evil. The Pharisees did it and were repeatedly called hypocrites by Jesus (Matthew 23:13-29). They were teachers that tried to look good to others, but were actually lawless:

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:27-28)

But this problem was not limited to the Pharisees of old. Notice also:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. (Romans 1:18-19)

Many false religious leaders have read much or all of the Bible, but refuse to teach it properly. Even the two-horned beast of Revelation 13:11-16 will apparently be like that. As prophesied, false teachers have affected many (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Pride

The Bible warns a lot against pride, haughtiness, and hypocrisy. All are basically forms of false witness against oneself and often others.

Lucifer had pride. Eve had pride. It is a lie to trust oneself above God. Vanity is a lie.

But the "pride of life" (1 John 2:16) affects everyone to one degree or another. Pride puffs up (1 Timothy

3:6). Furthermore, consider that “every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psalm 39:5, KJV). Vanity is the quality of being worthless or futile. Pride and haughtiness lead to destruction (Proverbs 16:18). Vanity is a common form of false witness.

Trust God and do not lean to prideful wrong understandings (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Ninth Commandment Before Sinai, from Jesus, and After Jesus’ Death

The Bible shows the ninth commandment was in place before Mt. Sinai:

“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). “Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die” ... The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’. So the LORD God said to the serpent: ‘Because you have done this, You are cursed’” (Genesis 3:4,13-14). “But you forgers of lies, You are all worthless physicians” (Job 13:4). “Now if it is not so, who will prove me a liar, And make my speech worth nothing?” (Job 24:25). “My lips will not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit” (Job 27:4). “Should I lie concerning my right?” (Job 34:6). “For truly my words are not false” (Job 36:4).

Jesus taught and expanded the ninth commandment:

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord. But I say to you, do not swear at all” (Matthew 5:33-34). “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts ... false witness ... These are the things which defile a man” (Matthew 15:19-20). “You shall not bear false witness” (Matthew 19:18). “Do not bear false witness” (Mark 10:19). “You know the commandments: ... Do not bear false witness” (Luke 18:20). “And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Revelation 2:2).

After Jesus was resurrected, the New Testament taught the ninth commandment:

“You shall not bear false witness” (Romans 13:9). “Therefore, putting away lying” (Ephesians 4:25). “Do not lie to one another” (Colossians 3:9). “the lawless and insubordinate ... liars ... perjurers” (1 Timothy 1:9,10). “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy” (1 Timothy 4:1-2). “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be ...slanderers” (2 Timothy 3:1,3). “God, who cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). “it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18). “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie ... You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3,4). “They also set up false witnesses” (Acts 6:13). “having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who defile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (1 Peter 3:16). “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber” (2 Peter 2:3). He who says ‘I know Him’, and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). “I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:21). “And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Revelation 2:2). “But ... liars... shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). “But outside are ... whoever loves and practices a lie” (Revelation 22:15).

The world would be a so much better place if people did not lie and would keep their word.

More on the Ten Commandments can be found in our free online book, available at www.ccog.org, titled: ‘The Ten Commandments: The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast.’

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE

Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

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Preface: *This course is highly based upon the personal correspondence course developed in 1954 that began under the direction of the late C. Paul Meredith in the old Radio Church of God. Various portions have been updated for the 21st century (though much of the original writing has been retained). It also has more scriptural references, as well as information and questions not in the original course.*

Unless otherwise noted, scriptural references are to the NKJV, copyright Thomas Nelson Publishing, used by permission. The KJV, sometimes referred to as the Authorized Version is also often used. Additionally, Catholic-approved translations such as the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) are sometimes used as are other translations.



Why Misunderstood

“OLD TESTAMENT,” “NEW TESTAMENT” – DO these words MEAN anything to you?

You have probably heard these two terms often during your lifetime. But as far as YOUR life is concerned, they haven’t meant very much to you, have they?

Yet the Bible, the very revelation of God to man, is composed of two great parts – which uninspired editors have labeled the “Old Testament” and the

“New Testament.” And under these two headings ALL the books of the Bible are contained. Almost everyone knows that.

But few understand that these two divisions have great significance! God has permitted them to be the two GREAT DIVISIONS of His book, the Bible! The very Book which reveals His will to man.

Some ministers of this world do not understand the REAL meaning God intends these two parts to convey. This is the reason you probably have not understood them. These “ministers” cannot tell you what they themselves do not know!

But God’s Book, the Bible, DOES reveal the true meaning and importance of these two divisions to YOU. They are not difficult to understand. And there is NOTHING more important in your life than that you do understand them FULLY. Your salvation is closely linked with how well you understand them (cf. Revelation 22:14-15).

THE “OLD TESTAMENT” and THE “NEW TESTAMENT” represent the very essence of the plan whereby God is fashioning in man His supreme creation – very Sons of God to be BORN into His own Family!

Man Created Incomplete

God created man in the clay image of Himself, from the DUST of the ground.

THE OLD COVENANT – CHRIST’S FIRST MARRIAGE

Many have been taught that the Old Covenant was the ten commandment law, and that the New Covenant contains only grace and promises – but certainly no law!

Hence, runs the argument, since the Old Covenant has been abolished, God’s law has also been abolished.

This teaching would lead you to believe that the law of God was harsh, cruel, and enslaving – that the FAULT of the Old Covenant was with the law. And since GOD gave the law, the FAULT must have been His!

Later, according to this common teaching, Jesus came with a new covenant which had no law – only promises and LIBERTY TO DO WHATEVER YOU PLEASE.

Certainly, there is something terribly WRONG with this concept!

But God DID NOT, at the time of Adam, FINISH HIS CREATION of man! God only created Adam PHYSICALLY COMPLETE at that time. He did NOT, at that time, carry out the second step in His creation of man.

God did NOT complete man SPIRITUALLY!

Man will be God's supreme SPIRITUAL creation only AFTER He has FINISHED creating him spiritually into the very CHARACTER "IMAGE" of God.

Exactly what was lacking in Adam? What is needed to COMPLETE man spiritually?

Let's understand!

God did NOT place within man the loving SPIRITUAL attitude that He has – the ATTITUDE characteristic of His HOLY SPIRIT. God's Holy Spirit imparts the SPIRITUAL love and power man needs to develop God's character and fulfill His royal, SPIRITUAL law of love – the Ten Commandments.

But our loving and gracious God has promised that He will begin to SHARE His very own divine nature with us. He has PROMISED to do this by BEGETTING US with His Holy Spirit – PROVIDED that we will TRULY REPENT of disobeying His laws, completely SURRENDER OUR OWN WILLS to the will of God, have FAITH in the cleansing blood of Christ and are baptized. Then God will place His Holy Spirit of LOVE and POWER within us, thus making it possible for us to BEGIN living by the eternal, royal law of love and BEGIN DEVELOPING the very CHARACTER of God!

"God IS Love" – that is, His very NATURE IS LOVING! (1 John 4:8).

We are actually to PARTAKE FULLY of His divine NATURE at the resurrection – "by which have been given to us exceedingly GREAT and PRECIOUS promises, that through these you may BE PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE," (2 Peter 1:4). THINK OF THAT!!

How marvellous!

We may now be begotten of the Spirit of the Father. And when we are later "BORN AGAIN," then we will be COMPLETELY composed of spirit – the HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD. We will then be Gods – members of the God Kingdom – COMPOSED of God's SPIRITUAL substance and nature by a new (our second) birth.

Yes, "GOD IS LOVE" (1 John 4:8). At the resurrection WE ALSO WILL BE LOVE. We will then be the very PERSONIFICATION of love. We will then LIVE love – live by the royal law of love perfectly forever! (1 John 3:9). Then all our heartaches, sorrows and tears will be over.

God is now fashioning His spirit-begotten children for "good works" in preparation for that glorious event (Ephesians 2:10).

But fashioning us for good works is NOT EASY!

Our Nature Must Be Changed

Two thousand years after the time of Adam, God made this statement concerning His people Israel, and all mankind: "Oh, that they had such a heart [such a NATURE] in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them" (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Notice that God says carnal man, of himself, does not have the ability – the character – to obey Him. WHY?

"Because the carnal mind [the mind with which we are born] is enmity against God [it HATES God's law]; for it is not subject to the law of God ..." (Romans 8:7).

The carnal mind with which we are born REFUSES to keep God's LAW. This is the REASON why man does not keep the royal law of love. His HUMAN nature REBELS against it. But the Scripture goes even further!! Notice the words "NOR INDEED CAN BE" at the end of this same verse.

It is utterly IMPOSSIBLE for the CARNAL mind of man, of itself, to be subject to God's Supreme SPIRITUAL law of love!

Do you understand?

It is only by the MIRACLE OF SPIRITUAL BEGETTAL that one can BEGIN to keep God's law! But even then we still have to FIGHT against the evil pulls of our carnal natures.

The apostle Paul, who was begotten by God's Holy Spirit, recognized the continual evil pulls of his carnal nature. He wrote: "So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but

I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate" (Romans 7:14-15, NLT).

Finally, Paul cried out, "O WRETCHED man that I am! Who will DELIVER me from this body of death?" (Verse 24). Paul knew that it would take a MIRACLE – direct FROM GOD HIMSELF – to COMPLETELY CHANGE his human NATURE so he could keep the law of God PERFECTLY! Paul knew that he was "WRETCHED" in his present carnal state. And then Paul, in exultation, ANSWERED his OWN question, "Who will DELIVER ME?" with the words, "I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (verse 25).

Paul knew that the MIRACLE of COMPLETELY CHANGING his carnal human nature so he could keep the spiritual law perfectly would be accomplished BY the Father's Spirit THROUGH CHRIST, our Savior, at the resurrection.

But many argue that God did away with His law, so that man could NATURALLY – by his PRESENT CARNAL NATURE – do "good." But God did no such thing!

We know from our previous lesson that God gave man His supreme spiritual law from the beginning. It has existed no later than Adam. God personally instructed the first man and woman in His law. And it was His desire that humans live in accordance with it from the beginning.

But it takes God's Holy Spirit to obey His spiritual law! Paul knew that. And PAUL KNEW IT TOOK THE POWER OF GOD'S SPIRIT TO COMPLETELY CHANGE MAN'S NATURE!

God's Holy Spirit Needed

Man must LONG for this complete change WITH ALL HIS HEART. He must come to the point of being willing to sacrifice EVERYTHING if only this change would BEGIN to take place within him. He must come to the point where, like Christ, he will say to the Father, "NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS YOU WILL" (Matthew 26:39).

MAN'S WILL MUST SURRENDER TOTALLY AND UNCONDITIONALLY TO GOD'S WILL!

Man must SURRENDER himself to God so he can receive the LOVING NATURE of His Holy Spirit.

Man must be brought to the point where he can see

he must VOLUNTARILY SURRENDER HIS OWN WILL SO that God can begin to COMPLETE man's spiritual creation by placing His Holy Spirit within him. Then man will have the SPIRITUAL EQUIPMENT to be able to begin living by the royal law of God – the royal law of LOVE.

And when man is "born again" at the resurrection, it will be perfectly NATURAL for him to live by his new SPIRITUAL nature – just as it is NATURAL for unconverted people today to follow the dictates of their carnal natures.

THEN the creation of man will be COMPLETE! Man will be God's FINISHED SPIRITUAL creation. Then he will HAVE all that he has longed for – true happiness, contentment, peace – for he will be living COMPLETELY within the law of love, and LOVE brings all these things and MORE!

But the carnal mind, with which we are born, is enmity towards God. It REBELS at the thought of allowing itself to be crushed out! Each of us has to have it PROVED that our carnal, unspiritual mind, with its human nature, cannot bring us the lasting happiness we seek.

It must be DEMONSTRATED to humans that it is IMPOSSIBLE for them, OF THEMSELVES, to keep the royal law of love. God did NOT promise to give them His Holy Spirit of love and power at that time so they could keep His laws.

Never has God done away with His great SPIRITUAL law – the royal law of love. It is GOOD. The law stands fast FOREVER! It is the PEOPLE who have been WEAK, and therefore unable to keep God's Ten Commandments!

We are now about ready for the actual lesson. But first read the following instructions.

Before You Begin

This lesson is intended to direct you to the BIBLE – to help you learn the truth of God's Word. Here is the method of study.

Is your Bible in front of you? If not, get your Bible – or Bibles, if you have more than one translation – BEFORE YOU CONTINUE WITH THIS LESSON! Have a good dictionary, a concordance if you own one, and your notepaper all placed in front of you on a desk or table.

Remember – you are to open your Bible to EVERY passage. Never say to yourself, “Oh, I think I know what the lesson is referring to” – and then pass over the scripture. You need to “KEEP YOUR NOSE IN THE BIBLE,” so to speak. You must read and reread and think out each passage. MEDITATE on the new knowledge you will learn during your leisure time, especially within the following twenty-four hours, and in your time of prayer – so you WON’T FORGET IT! Make God’s Word a PART OF YOU! Don’t forget that this is a BIBLE study course – not just a study of the lessons we send you.

Here is how to make effective notes: Write down neatly on your paper the title of the lesson and underscore it. Next write down the lesson number. Then as you come to each question section, write down its heading. Then, underneath, number each question as you come to it. For each question write down the answer from your Bible, together with any pertinent ideas that come to your mind.

Be SURE to WRITE OUT the scripture which answers each question. Writing down every word of each Bible passage, and any comments you wish to make as you go along, will help you in REVIEWING and remembering later on.

This lesson, like all others, is extremely important to you. Have you PRAYED to God for understanding? If not, go now to a private place, kneel down, and ask Him for spiritual UNDERSTANDING and wisdom. Ask God to HELP YOU GRASP and APPLY the knowledge this lesson will reveal to you in the Bible!

And now for the lesson itself.

LESSON 18

Difference Between a Covenant and a Testament

1. What is a covenant?

Consult your dictionary, noticing in particular whether there are two (or more) parties involved, and if each agrees to do (or refrain from) something. Is it an AGREEMENT? Death of one of the parties is not mentioned as a requirement of a COVENANT, is it?

COMMENT: A covenant is an AGREEMENT. Death of

one or the other parties does NOT enter into the terms of a covenant.

2. Did God make a COVENANT with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 7)?

COMMENT: In verse one we see that God did make an agreement with Abraham. “Get out of your country” was the requirement Abraham had to fulfill as his part of the covenant. IF Abraham would obey, then God, in turn, bound Himself to make of Abraham’s seed – Abraham’s descendants – a great nation (Genesis 12:2). No DEATH had to take place to make this COVENANT binding. It was a COVENANT – an agreement – pure and simple: “You do this and I will do that.”

3. Now what is a TESTAMENT? Again consult your dictionary.

COMMENT: We find that a TESTAMENT IS A TYPE OF COVENANT OR WILL. A will declares a person’s WILL as to the disposal of their POSSESSIONS after their DEATH. So, note that a DEATH IS INVOLVED in a WILL, but NOT necessarily in a COVENANT. Christ left, at His death, a will – a TESTAMENT – in which all people may become beneficiaries or heirs of His possessions. For it was to the ONE seed – CHRIST – to whom this earth was given as an inheritance (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16-19).

Christ was the only One who ever obeyed God’s Law perfectly and could claim the earth as an inheritance. So it was He who could, and did, leave a TESTAMENT or WILL at His death so that we may also receive, through Him, eternal inheritance of the earth (Hebrews 9:15-16).

Review in Lesson 13, the sections “How Christ Made Our Inheritance Possible,” and “What We Must Do.” These show how we may become Abraham’s heirs through Christ.

Some (like the Jehovah’s Witnesses and many Protestants) teach that the old covenant was the Ten Commandments, and that the new covenant means that those same commandments are done away or obsolete based on their interpretation of Hebrew 8:13. Yet, look at the verses that immediately follow Hebrews 8:13 as they show what the Bible states was the first (the old) covenant:

1 Then indeed, even the first covenant had

ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. 2 For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; 3 and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, 4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; 5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. 6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. 7 But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; 8 the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. 9 It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience – 10 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. (Hebrews 9:1-10)

The old covenant, then, consisted of the ordinances of the Levitical priesthood, washings, and fleshly ordinances like animal sacrifices. While it did include the words of the ten commandments (Exodus 34:28), they were not the part that Hebrews 9 discussed were abolished.

God's Covenant with Ancient Israel

1. God promised to make of Abraham's offspring a great nation (Genesis 12:1,2). God also covenanted with Abraham that if he and his offspring would be obedient, they would have the land of Canaan (Palestine) for an EVERLASTING possession (Genesis 17:8-9). What was the name of one of Abraham's sons (Genesis 21:2-4)?
2. Was one of Isaac's sons named JACOB? (Genesis 27:22). Was his name changed to ISRAEL? (Genesis

32:28). Did Israel have many sons (1 Chronicles 2:1, 2)? Were these therefore the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL (same verses)?

COMMENT: Israel (Jacob) and his twelve sons and their families journeyed down into Egypt. THERE God multiplied them and made of them a GREAT NATION, just as He had promised (Genesis 46:1-3; 47:27). They became the "nation of Israel."

The Egyptians, among whom the original family of Israel had sought refuge from famine, gradually became their captors and the Israelites became their slaves. By many miracles of God, they were finally set free, and God made them a pathway through the Red Sea so that they could escape the Egyptians who suddenly pursued them (Exodus 14:21-31).

3. Did God, after leading the Israelites out of Egypt (the land typical of sin and evil) and starting them toward the "Promised Land" of Palestine, bring them to Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1, 3, 11)? Did God there offer to make a COVENANT with them (verses 3-6)?
4. Did God, THROUGH MOSES, tell the people of Israel what their part of this AGREEMENT must be (Exodus 19:5)? Did He say that they would have to be OBEDIENT (same verse)? And if they would thus keep their part of this COVENANT, what did He promise them they would become (last part of verse 5 and all of verse 6)?

COMMENT: This covenant proposed by God to the Israelites is the most well-known covenant before the time of Christ. Its terms and conditions extend from Exodus 19:1 through Exodus 24:8.

When the Bible was translated into Latin, the Latins used the word "testamentum" which, in LATIN, means either a covenant or a testament. Later, the Bible was translated into English, and the Latin word "testamentum" was UNFORTUNATELY continued as the English word TESTAMENT – which in ENGLISH often only means a WILL. And that is part of why the part of the Bible containing the Old Covenant is NOT titled THE OLD COVENANT as perhaps it could be called today.

Did God make the conditional promise that Israel would be a "peculiar treasure" to Him, and be "above

all people” (Exodus 19:5)? And that they would be a “kingdom of priests” and a “holy nation” (verse 6)? Aren’t these very desirable promises?

COMMENT: The ancient Israelites desired to be God’s “kingdom of priests” and “a holy nation.” But THEY NEVER RECEIVED THESE PROMISES because they did not obey God! Instead, we find that these promises will be fulfilled in the Millennium in the SAINTS who will have been born of the HOLY SPIRIT into God’s Kingdom – with the POWER and NATURE by which they will keep the law PERFECTLY. (Review in Lesson 5, the section titled “Duties of the Saints”).

God simply did not make the HOLY SPIRIT of POWER and LOVE available to the WORLD in Old Covenant times (John 7:38-39)!

Israel Thought They Could Keep the Covenant

1. WERE THE ISRAELITES so certain of their OWN ABILITY to do all God required of them, that they immediately promised Moses that all the Eternal had spoken they would do (Exodus 19:8)?

COMMENT: God had just finished informing the Israelites, through Moses, what He would require of the people, in a broad sense. And they readily affirmed that they would do THEIR PART of this covenant.

2. Did God inform Moses that He Himself would come down to the people on the third day (Exodus 19:11)? Did God at this time inform them that they would have to keep the Ten Commandments in order to fulfill THEIR PART of His covenant? Note Exodus 20:1 especially. Read also verses 2 through 17. Read of the same event in Deuteronomy 5:4-22. And did God, with His own finger, write these commandments on tables of stone for the people (Deuteronomy 5:22 and Exodus 31:18)?
3. After God had spoken the Ten Commandments which they were to obey as a DISTINCT part of this covenant, did He instruct Moses to set before the people the various civil statutes and judgments as another DISTINCT PART of this same “Old Covenant,” which they also had to follow? Exodus, chapters 21 through 23. Skim RAPIDLY over these three chapters to get the GENERAL trend.

COMMENT: The eternal, spiritual law – the royal law of love WHICH IS COMPOSED OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS was clearly laid out for the Israelites, consistent with what God had revealed from the beginning. The Ten Commandments comprised a DISTINCT PART of the Old Covenant which God made with Israel at that time. The old covenant did not establish the spiritual laws.

In Exodus 16:28 we read that the Eternal, when speaking about Israel to Moses, said: “How long do you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?” Israel could not refuse what did not exist! Now turn to Exodus 18:16. Moses told his father-in-law that when the people have a dispute, “I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.”

After writing the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone in Exodus 20, in Exodus chapters 21 through 23, God revealed to Moses the various APPLICATIONS of the Ten Commandments. These were in the form of civil statutes and judgments which were to be another distinct part of, and included in, the Old Covenant which the people had agreed to obey. God had Moses write these civil statutes and judgments in a book called the “Book of the Covenant” (Exodus 24:4, 7).

4. Were the people any less certain of being able to fulfill, BY THEIR OWN POWER, all the laws revealed by God? – did they agree to this covenant (Exodus 24:3, 7)? Was it ratified, or sealed – made binding – with blood (verse 8)? COMMENT: The Old-Covenant Israelites had no promise of receiving the Holy Spirit – the very POWER and NATURE OF GOD which would have enabled them to keep the law. They did not REALIZE THEIR LACK OF THIS POWER when they agreed to the terms of the Old Covenant. THEY NEEDED HELP, BUT DIDN’T REALIZE IT!

AND PEOPLE TODAY DESPERATELY NEED HELP! But they don’t realize this fact EITHER!

The HOLY SPIRIT of POWER IS NOW available! It is time that the world WAKE UP to this truth!

Notice how God began to impress this fact upon THE WORLD.

The “Ministration of Death”

1. Among the judgments in the Old Covenant, was there a set that called for an “eye for an eye,” and a “tooth for a tooth,” and a “life for a life” (Exodus 21:23, 24, KJV)? COMMENT: The judgment in verse 23 was especially designed to protect pregnant women (verse 22). A man who had caused the death of a pregnant woman had to pay for it with his own life. So if the judge required the killer’s LIFE, then the judge was ADMINISTERING a penalty of DEATH, wasn’t he? And isn’t this therefore a MINISTRY OF DEATH? Of course it is!
2. What was the penalty for a person who had committed a murder (Exodus 21:12)? Again, the judge had ADMINISTERED DEATH. Does the New Testament call this same set of judgments the “ministry of death” (2 Corinthians 3:6-8)?
3. Does the Bible say the “ministration of death” was glorious (2 Corinthians 3:7, KJV)? WHY was the “ministration of death” glorious (1 Corinthians 10:11)?

COMMENT: Because the principles of the TEN COMMANDMENTS formed the basis of the civil statutes and judgments, a violation of these PRINCIPLES WAS punished by Old Covenant civil authority.

The administration of death was the civil execution of punishment for violation of certain laws in the civil law code which Moses spoke to the people. Such sins as murder, kidnaping and adultery were punishable by DEATH.

Sinners were thus made to REALIZE FULLY that they had TRANSGRESSED the law of God. THEY WERE MADE TO REALIZE HOW WOEFULLY THEY HAD FAILED TO MEASURE UP TO THE KEEPING OF THE LAW. Thus THEIR OWN WEAKNESS WAS IMPRESSED UPON THEM AND ALL ISRAEL!

Israel sinned constantly, and was constantly reminded of it! Their history is a LESSON to us, today (1 Corinthians 10:11), to make us also REALIZE our weakness and need of DIVINE power in overcoming our NATURES. THIS IS why the ministry of death was GLORIOUS. It accomplished a GLORIOUS purpose.

Old Covenant Israel did not have God’s Holy Spirit of love with which to keep the law of God in its SPIRITUAL intent. All they could possibly do was TRY to keep the law in the LETTER by their OWN HUMAN power.

Had the Israelites kept the law in the letter, God would have fulfilled His part of the Old Covenant and given them all the MATERIAL promises of this MATERIAL covenant. But they would never have received eternal life by keeping this covenant. One would still ultimately die eternal death because there was ABSOLUTELY NO PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE IN THE OLD COVENANT! For it is only the Spirit – the HOLY SPIRIT of God – that will give “life” – ETERNAL life (2 Corinthians 3:6)!

The “ministry of death” was a TEMPORARY administration – it existed only “till the seed [Christ] should come” (Galatians 3:19). At this time God sent Christ to introduce a NEW ADMINISTRATION of these same laws – THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT (2 Corinthians 3:6-8).

Why? Because the first administration gave only severe penalties and even DEATH for disobedience. Human judges could not impart eternal life; they could only administer death. What was needed was a new administration of the SAME LAWS – an administration which could give pardon and eternal life to those who repented of breaking God’s laws and wanted to obey.

The promise of the Holy Spirit – the only hope of eternal life – was given to all believers for the FIRST TIME on the Day of Pentecost, c. 31 A.D. (Acts 2:1, 38). Instead of administering the death penalty for sins, Christ, the apostles, and HIS MINISTERS TODAY TEACH THE PEOPLE THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE. Thus, Christ’s ministers “ADMINISTER” LIFE to mortal man.

Now let’s look at some of what the Apostle Paul wrote:

4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not

look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. (2 Corinthians 3:7-9)

Someone referring to that made a false claim:

Reference is made here to a code that was “engraved in letters in stones” and it is said that “the sons of Israel could not gaze intently at the face of Moses” on the occasion when it was delivered to them. What is this describing? Exodus 34:1 shows that it is the giving of the Ten Commandments; these were the commandments engraved on stone. Obviously these are included in what the scripture here says “was to be done away with.”

Two points: First, there was a change from the Levitical ministry and its animal sacrifices. Second, the ministry of death included the written death penalty, which was NOT listed on the tablets engraved with the Ten Commandments. The administration of death was inscribed on large stones after crossing the Jordan (Deuteronomy 27:2-8). As far as engraving or inscribing the laws, commandments, statutes, and judgments goes (Deuteronomy 26:16-18), this was basically done on large stones that had a type of white plaster on them (cf. Deuteronomy 27:2, KJV).

A Marriage Covenant

Many have asked: “Why didn’t Jesus Christ ever marry?” The fact is He did marry! Your Bible says so! The Bible even names His wife. It tells us when and where and why He married!

Surprising? Yes! But it has been in your Bible all these years! It has DIRECTLY to do with the two covenants!

Let’s understand.

Jesus Christ is the Father’s Spokesman – the “Word” of the God Family. Remember that Jesus is the “LORD” of the Old Testament – the One who did the speaking at creation. God the Father planned the universe and Jesus – before His human birth – spoke, and the creation was done by the power of the Spirit of God.

Jesus – the Word – therefore created everything (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). He made the first man and woman. And He established the MARRIAGE relationship (Genesis 2:21-25).

Many years later this same Jesus Christ – who ordained marriage in the beginning – WAS HIMSELF MARRIED!

Here is what happened!

1. Was it Jesus Christ, the “LORD,” who spoke the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai? Exodus 20:1-2. It could not have been the Father who spoke these words, could it? Didn’t Jesus say no man had ever heard the voice of God the Father (John 5:37)?

COMMENT: The Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai by Jesus Christ. And Israel entered into a covenant with Jesus Christ before His human birth.

2. Did the LORD Jesus Christ consider this covenant between Himself and Israel a MARRIAGE CONTRACT, OR AGREEMENT? Ezekiel 16:8. Read also Jeremiah 31:32. Note the word HUSBAND. Notice the “I do” agreement made by the “wife” – Israel – to her “Husband,” Christ, in Exodus 19:8 and Exodus 24:7.

COMMENT: Now you see that the Old Covenant was TYPICAL of a marriage contract between a man and woman. It was, SYMBOLICALLY speaking, a MARRIAGE agreement between the Lord of the Old Covenant and the nation – the ancient church – of Israel. The people of Israel ACCEPTED the terms that God gave them. They bound themselves by the Old Covenant to refrain from any ADULTEROUS or WHORISH RELATIONS with the false “gods” of other nations – and to remain chaste and acceptable to their own “husband” – Christ (Exodus 34:12-17).

In other words, Israel agreed not to WORSHIP the false gods of the Gentiles and to be OBEDIENT to the Lord Christ!

3. In the space of at least nine short months after Israel had agreed to the covenant, the people had failed so badly to live by the conditions of the covenant that the LORD Christ, her “husband,” found it necessary to CORRECT His “wife.” What did He say? – did He first remind Israel of the

covenant they had agreed to keep (Leviticus 26:1-3)?

"If you will not obey the voice of the Lord ... Cursed shall you be in the city, and the field ... The Lord will smite you with drought ... and with ulcers of which you cannot be healed" (Deuteronomy 28:15-16, 22, 27, RSV).

4. Then did He point out the BLESSINGS that the congregation of Israel, His wife, could have IF they would live by the law they agreed to keep? (Read Leviticus 26:4-13). But if they would not obey, what did He warn would happen to them (read verses 14 through 39)?

COMMENT: Notice also in Jeremiah 3:14 that the LORD Christ commanded Israel, His wife: "Return, O backsliding children, ... for I AM MARRIED TO YOU!"

There you have it. Jesus was SYMBOLICALLY married to the congregation of Israel – and the marriage covenant, or agreement, is known today as the "Old Covenant"!

Some ministers claim Israel was married to the Law! NOT so! Individuals don't marry a code of laws – individuals marry other individuals!

Based on Law

1. What, according to your Bible, brings the death penalty upon us? Is it the law – or is it SIN? (Romans 6:23). Who is responsible for sin? – the law, or the SINNER (Galatians 6:7-8 and Romans 6:16)?

COMMENT: The sinner is RESPONSIBLE. He earns the wages of sin – death! Those who hate God's law would have you think the law is IMPOSSIBLE to keep! This spirit of anti-Christ (1 John 4:1-3) would make Christians law-breakers! It denies that Christ kept the law perfectly when He came in human flesh! If this false notion is true – you have NO SAVIOUR!

2. How does the apostle Paul clarify the marriage relationship? (Romans 7:1-4). Is Paul explaining the law in regard to a marriage contract (verses 1-2)?
3. How are a husband and wife bound – isn't it BY THE LAW? Verse 2. When is a marriage contract

dissolved – at the DEATH of one of the parties? Same verse.

COMMENT: Notice: the wife is bound TO HER HUSBAND "BY THE LAW"! Only the death of her husband can dissolve the marriage contract which is governed by law. The law doesn't stop when the husband dies, but the marriage covenant which was based upon the law is dissolved.

Jesus Christ made a marriage covenant – the Old Covenant – with ancient Israel at Sinai. The contract was based upon and governed by the terms and conditions of God's law. When Christ – the "husband" – died at Golgotha, His marriage contract with ancient Israel was dissolved, but the law upon which it was based continues!

Obviously Jesus didn't do away with God's law at His death. It was our sins, the breaking of God's perfect law, that DID AWAY WITH HIM! He accepted the death penalty we incurred FOR us. And so OUR SINS TOOK HIS PERFECT LIFE!

4. Doesn't Paul say that Christians are to MARRY someone (Romans 7:4)? Who will converted Christians marry? – Jesus Christ who is now resurrected? Same verse.

COMMENT: Christ, who was "husband" to physical Israel under the Old Covenant before His death on the stake, will be "HUSBAND" to spiritual Israel (God's true Church "born again" at the resurrection) under the terms of the New Covenant. Both covenants are marriage agreements – both are governed by the same terms and conditions – God's spiritual law! (The New Covenant will be thoroughly explained in the next lesson).

'Rigmarole of Rituals' Added Later

1. The Israelites, being WITHOUT the Spirit of God, were constantly rebelling – sinning – against Christ, their husband, and the law He had given them (read Ezekiel 20:13). What did God do, because of this rebellion, to IMPRESS upon them the weakness of their own inherent nature in respect to keeping the law? – did He ADD TEMPORARY ritualistic laws for them to keep (Leviticus 1:1-9)?

COMMENT: These new laws WOULD HAVE BEEN

UNNECESSARY if Israel had obeyed. The Israelites brought these upon themselves because of their disobedience to God's Ten Commandments and His statutes. These rituals were added to TEACH them A LESSON AFTER they began to act DISOBEDIENTLY.

When a husband and wife perform their "vows" of marriage, the wife promises to OBEY her husband. But the SPECIFIC things she is to obey are not mentioned at the time of marriage. At that time she promises to have the ATTITUDE of obedience. As problems come up in their married life, the husband may tell the wife other things she must do.

The same is true of the marriage of God to Israel. God, the husband, ADDED these new TEMPORARY ritualistic laws in accordance with the terms of the original Old Marriage Covenant agreement AFTER ancient Israel had begun to transgress. And she, as a wife, was bound by her marriage "vow" to obey them as a wife is to obey her husband.

But ancient Israel continued to be disobedient and unfaithful to her husband. She broke her part of the marriage contract! She turned from worshipping God, and followed the customs of the heathen – serving other gods. She broke her part of the marriage covenant by committing SPIRITUAL "adultery."

2. What did all these NEW, temporary laws, which were commanded after the Israelites began to break the covenant they had made with God, command them to do? Skim rapidly over chapters 1, 2, and 3 of Leviticus just to get the GENERAL TREND of thought.

COMMENT: When God made His covenant with ancient Israel, He wrote the Ten Commandments on two tables of STONE. At that time He also had Moses write His civil statutes and judgments in a book. But this book did NOT, at first, contain the rigmarole of laws of burnt offerings, sacrifices and washings. They were ADDED LATER – within two years – as a SEPARATE PART of the civil statutes because the Israelites had begun to transgress God's laws.

The keeping of these ritualistic laws REQUIRED MUCH LABORIOUS WORK, as can be seen by the first three chapters of Leviticus. That's why it came to be known as "The law of WORKS" in New Testament times.

Man's Human Weakness Impressed Upon Him

1. Doesn't Jeremiah 7:22-23 also verify the fact that this rigmarole of ritualistic laws was added after the Israelites had begun to transgress the Ten Commandments and various statutes God gave them at Sinai? Doesn't Galatians 3:19 also prove this?
2. Then what was the PURPOSE of all the hard work of making burnt offerings, performing various washings, and making various other sacrifices (Galatians 3:24)? Was it a TUTOR? Same verse. How was it a "tutor"?

COMMENT: Remember that the law that is being spoken of HERE is the law that was ADDED (Galatians 3:19). It was the burdensome sacrificial law that God had Moses ADD AFTER the Israelites were beginning to show they could NOT keep merely the LETTER of the law. How WEAK they PROVED to be!

Each time an Israelite transgressed the law, his sin – if not punishable by death – now had to be acknowledged with BURDENSOME work. Yet, even this work could not forgive the sin, but served only to REMIND them of their transgression of God's laws and the penalty for sin – death. Paul refers to this added labor as "works" (Galatians 2:16). This consisted of a rigmarole of sin offerings, washings, and other laborious and time-consuming rituals so they would REALIZE their INHERENT WEAKNESS and inability to do what God's other laws required.

Each time an Israelite transgressed the law and his sin had to be atoned for by burdensome work, it impressed upon his mind that he had FAILED to keep the law. It acted as a "tutor" to teach and impress this upon him.

The sacrifices were also a "tutor" in that they pointed forward to the time when Christ would come to offer Himself once and for all time to atone for the sins of the world. The various washings pictured the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit which Christ would send to clean us up from sin. They pointed to the time when Christ would make it possible for all to have the love and POWER of God's Holy Spirit within them so they, unlike the ancient Israelites and others then and

today, can keep the spiritual law of God – the Ten Commandments.

Consider that when God brought Israel to the foot of Mt. Sinai, He gave the Ten Commandments to them. He allowed Moses to declare all the statutes and judgments to Israel (Exodus, chapters 20-24). These statutes and judgments MAGNIFY the Ten Commandments.

Now notice carefully. There is only one sacrifice mentioned in that book of the law-the Passover sacrifice (Exodus 23:18). God called it “MY sacrifice.” Next, turn to Jeremiah 7:22-23. Listen to what the Eternal inspired Jeremiah to write: “For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I DID NOT SPEAK . . . OR COMMAND them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this COMMAND I GAVE THEM: ‘Obey my voice . . . and walk in ALL THAT WAY THAT I COMMAND YOU, that it may be well with you.’ ”

God did not command these sacrifices to be offered originally. This explains why none of those temporary sacrifices were perpetuated by different symbols in the New Testament Church. ONLY THE SYMBOLS TODAY – because it began before the old covenant was made. (See its institution in Exodus 12 before the Israelites left Egypt).

The very fact that Jesus substituted unleavened bread and wine for the Passover lamb only, and not for the temporary offerings, is absolute proof that the ceremonial old testament offerings are not binding today! – but that the Passover is binding! Paul says (Gal. 3: 19) these temporary rituals and sacrifices were “added because of transgression” – because God’s spiritual law was being broken – until Christ should come. They foreshadowed the sacrifices of Christ and were a “reminder of sin” to teach people the need of the Messiah who would pay the penalty of human transgression (Hebrews 10:3).

Notice that these temporary laws did not define sin. They were reminders of sin. God’s spiritual laws define sin. The laws which define sin – which explain what sin is – these laws we are to keep today.

The old sacrificial laws, which were added to the other statutes God had Moses write, are NO LONGER required to be fulfilled by humans today. Instead,

Christ has become our sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29) as explained above.

Consider for a moment the New Testament instructions about sacrifices.

Today we have spiritual offerings and sacrifices: “Ye . . . are being built unto a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ,” wrote Peter (see I Peter 2:5 and 9). We are to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, your spiritual service” (Romans 12:1).

It is a spiritual principle to offer oneself in living obedience – to sacrifice the self – to God. God Almighty is worthy to receive such service from us.

The principle of offering sacrifices existed before Moses. Christ volunteered to offer Himself from the beginning to pay for the sins of mankind. In the period from Moses to Christ the practice of giving offerings was reduced to a physical plane. The children of Israel were a physical, carnal people without the promise of the Holy Spirit. They could not offer themselves in spiritual obedience to God (Deut. 29:4), so they performed ritualistic washings and offered animals and other physical types instead.

They also needed to be reminded of Jesus’ sacrifice, so God gave them physical types in the “law of Moses,” “until the seed should come.” But remember, the spiritual sacrifices of which those in the law of Moses were merely temporary types-are still to be offered up by us today!

“But,” many ask, “weren’t the Levitical sacrifices ordained forever?” Yes, the Bible does say that the Levitical priesthood and its sacrifices were to be perpetual or forever. But let us understand the real significance of the Hebrew word translated “forever.” It means continuous, so long as the factors involved exist.

Notice three scriptures where this meaning is made plain. Men could be the slaves of a master forever – meaning till the death of one of the parties (see Exodus 21:6; Lev. 25:46; Deut. 15:17).

What are the factors which may limit the offering of sacrifices? One, the need of a physical, human priesthood. Two, the need for sacrifices.

Now consider what is the purpose of a priesthood? To offer sacrifices and to act on behalf of people in relation to God (Hebrews 5:1 and 8:3). But how long do offerings as reminders of sin need to be made? Paul tells us: “Now where remission of [sins] is, there is no more offering for sin” (Hebrews 10: 18).

To offer sacrifices as reminders of sins already paid for by Jesus, who gave His life in full payment for all sins, is needless. Moreover, SINCE THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS ALSO BEEN MADE AVAILABLE, PHYSICAL OFFERINGS AND VARIOUS WASHINGS WHICH ARE TYPES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ARE NO LONGER NEEDED. HENCE THE PHYSICAL LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD IS NO LONGER NECESSARY – the old testament washings and offerings are no longer binding. The factors involved in the law of Moses ceased to exist.

But the great spiritual law of God, THE ROYAL LAW OF LOVE – as given to Adam and Eve, with its ten points, and later repeated and amplified by civil statutes at Mount Sinai – stands fast forever (Psalms 111:7-8)!

But we desperately need God’s HELP to keep it! REMEMBER THIS! If Old-Covenant Israel had received the Holy Spirit which imparts the love needed to fulfill the law of God (Romans 5:5; 13:10), they would have been able to keep these laws. BUT nowhere in the Old Covenant can you find where God’s Holy Spirit of love and power was promised to these people (e.g. 1 Samuel 16:13; Jeremiah 1:5).

God asked the Old-Covenant Israelites to keep the law – the ten spiritual commandments He gave them – ONLY IN THE LETTER. He required no more than the fulfilling of the law in the LETTER to receive the material promises of the Old Covenant.

This Old Covenant contained only MATERIAL PROMISES. Promises of material blessings such as wealth, health, crops, etc. – IF they would obey God.

This Covenant per se was NATIONAL – to Israel only – no other nations were promised these blessings. It was TEMPORAL – there was NO promise of ETERNAL life if they obeyed God in the letter.

The Old Covenant, then, was NATIONAL, MATERIAL, and TEMPORAL.

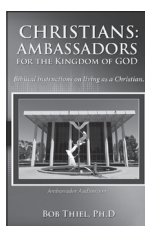
3. Did God offer the material benefits of this material Old Covenant to many succeeding generations of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:9)?
4. But to a new generation, 40 years later (Numbers 32:8-13), was God STILL FINDING IT NECESSARY to point out the blessings for being obedient to the law (Deuteronomy 28:1-14)? Did He still find it necessary to warn them of what would happen if they did not obey (verses 15-68)? Scan these verses and summarize.
5. Were other nations (the Gentiles) to rule over Israel if they broke their part of this covenant (Leviticus 26:14, 17, 33)?
6. Did the House of Israel keep the Old Covenant, or were the people scattered among the Gentiles as a punishment for not keeping the Old Covenant (Ezekiel 20:23, 24 and 11:16)? HOW LONG did God give the people of Israel TO LEARN to keep His law without His Holy Spirit, before He scattered them?

COMMENT: These people were given every incentive to live by the law. For over SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS they were given this chance. But THEY FAILED!

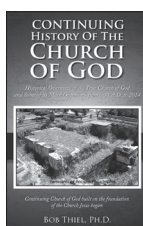
Their failure is a LESSON TO ALL PEOPLE. God wants us to learn from it.

They were NO different from people today. WE ALSO DESPERATELY NEED GOD’S MIRACULOUS HELP!!

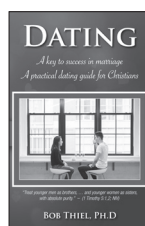
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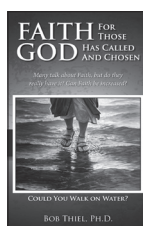
Christians: AMBASSADORS



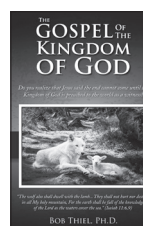
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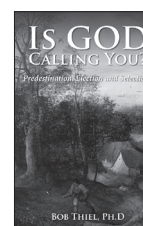
Dating: A Key to Success in Marriage



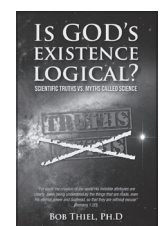
Faith for Those God has Called and Chosen



The Gospel of the Kingdom of God



Is God Calling You?

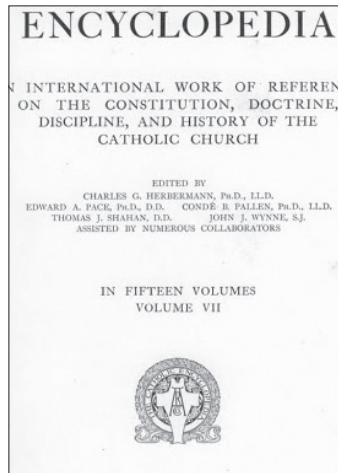


Is God's Existence Logical?

THE CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA ON CHRISTMAS

By Bob Thiel

Most who profess Christianity, as well as many who do not, now celebrate the holiday known as Christmas. It is a holiday endorsed and promoted by the Church of Rome. Since it is not enjoined in the Bible, do Roman Catholic scholars realize where it and many of its symbols came from?



Yes, they do.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches that:

Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church (Martindale C. Transcribed by Susanti A. Suastika. Christmas. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III. Copyright © 1908 by Robert Appleton Company. Online Edition Copyright © 2003 by K. Knight. Nihil Obstat, November 1, 1908. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York).

The above is true. Early Christians did not celebrate Christmas, and to this day those faithful in Church of God groups such as the Continuing Church of God still do not celebrate it.

Where Did December 25th Come From?

Since 25th is not specified in the Bible, where did it come from?

December 25th was observed as the birthday of the sun as part of the ancient Roman festival called Saturnalia. It was also the alleged date of the birthday of the pagan sun-god Mithras (sometimes also spelled Mithra).

Notice the following from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

Constantine the Great... Constantine can rightfully claim the title of *Great*, for he turned the history of the world into a new course and made Christianity...the religion of the State... it is easy to understand that many of the emperors yielded to the delusion that they could unite all their subjects in the adoration of the one sun-god who combined in himself the Father-God of the Christians and the much-worshipped Mithras; thus the empire could be founded anew on unity of religion. Even Constantine... cherished this mistaken belief... Could not *Sol Deus Invictus*, to whom even Constantine dedicated his coins for a long time, or *Sol Mithras Deus Invictus*, venerated by Diocletian and Galerius, become the supreme god of the empire? Constantine may have pondered over this. Nor had he absolutely rejected the thought even after a miraculous event had strongly influenced him in favour of the God of the Christians... It is true that the believers in Mithras also observed Sunday as well as Christmas. Consequently Constantine speaks not of the day of the Lord, but of the everlasting day of the sun. (Herbermann C., Georg Gp. Constantine the Great. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 4. *Nihil Obstat*. Remy Lafort, Censor. *Imprimatur*. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908).

Mithraism A pagan religion consisting mainly of the cult of the ancient Indo-Iranian Sun-god Mithra. It entered Europe from Asia Minor after Alexander's conquest, spread rapidly over the whole Roman Empire at the beginning of our era, reached its zenith during the third century, and vanished under the repressive regulations of Theodosius at the end of the fourth century... Helios Mithras is one god...Sunday was kept holy in honour of Mithra, and the sixteenth of each month was sacred to him as mediator. **The 25 December was observed as his birthday, the natalis invicti, the rebirth of the winter-sun, unconquered by the rigours of the season** (Arendzen J. Mithraism. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X. *Nihil Obstat*, October

1, 1911. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur.
+John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York.
New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

The birthday of the sun god Mithras was what Emperor Constantine observed and he wanted his followers to observe. And it ended up getting officially adopted by the Greco-Roman bishops.

Furthermore, here is even more that *The Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches about Christmas:

Christmas...Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists of feasts; Origen, glancing perhaps at the discreditable imperial Natalitia, asserts (in Lev. Hom. viii in Migne, P.G., XII, 495) that in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthday; Arnobius (VII, 32 in P.L., V, 1264) can still ridicule the “birthdays” of the gods.

Alexandria. The first evidence of the feast is from Egypt. About A.D. 200, Clement of Alexandria (Strom., I, xxi in P.G., VIII, 888) says that certain Egyptian theologians “over curiously” assign, not the year alone, but the day of Christ’s birth, placing it on 25 Pachon (20 May) in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus...

Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Asia Minor. In Cyprus, at the end of the fourth century, Epiphanius asserts against the Alogi (Hær., li, 16, 24 in P. G., XLI, 919, 931) that Christ was born on 6 January...

Rome. At Rome the earliest evidence is in the Philocalian Calendar (P. L., XIII, 675; it can be seen as a whole in J. Strzygowski, Kalenderbilder des Chron. von Jahre 354, Berlin, 1888), compiled in 354, which contains three important entries. In the civil calendar 25 December is marked “Natalis Invicti”...

By the time of Jerome and Augustine, the December feast is established, though the latter (Epp., II, liv, 12, in P.L., XXXIII, 200) omits it from a list of first-class festivals. From the fourth century every Western calendar assigns it to 25 December...

The Gospels. Concerning the date of Christ’s birth the Gospels give no help; upon their data contradictory arguments are based. The census

would have been impossible in winter: a whole population could not then be put in motion...

Natalis Invicti. The well-known solar feast, however, of Natalis Invicti, celebrated on 25 December, has a strong claim on the responsibility for our December date. For the history of the solar cult, its position in the Roman Empire, and syncretism with Mithraism, see Cumont’s epoch-making “Textes et Monuments” etc., I, ii, 4, 6, p. 355...The earliest *rapprochement* of the births of Christ and the sun is in Cypr., “De pasch. Comp.”, xix, “O quam præclare providentia ut illo die quo natus est Sol . . . nasceretur Christus.” - “O, how wonderfully acted Providence that on that day on which that Sun was born . . . Christ should be born.”... (Christmas, The Catholic Encyclopedia)

So, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches that early leaders did not observe Christmas, that it was impossible that the census of Luke was done in the winter (hence it is impossible that Jesus was born on December 25th), and that compromise with paganism is the strongest source for the date of December 25th being selected.

What About the Symbols Associated with Christmas?

While it is clear that December 25th came from paganism and not the Bible, what about the symbols associated with Christmas?

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches:

Cards and presents. Pagan customs centering round the January calends gravitated to Christmas...

The yule log. The calend fires were a scandal even to Rome, and St. Boniface obtained from Pope Zachary their abolition (Martindale C. Christmas, 1908).

Hence it is clear that even early Roman writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen did not endorse Christmas, nor did Augustine even list it as an important holiday. And that even later Catholic sources recognize that it is not logical that a census (as shown in Luke 2:1) would be done during the winter—

making a December 25th date of birth unlikely (it was also too cold for shepherds to spend the night with their flocks out in an open field, as shown in Luke 2:8, making a December 25th birth basically impossible).

It should also be noted that wreaths, according to the one-time Roman Catholic supporter Tertullian, were part of pagan celebrations in the early portion of winter. He warned against their use, but they were adopted as well by those who observe Christmas.

Notice also something that Cesare Baronius, a 'venerable' Catholic of the 16th century, wrote:

If the candles which were formerly distributed at the Saturnalia are now identified with the feast of the Purification of our Lady? What, I ask, is there so surprising if holy bishops have allowed certain customs firmly rooted among pagan peoples, and so tenaciously adhered to by them that even after their conversion to Christianity they could not be induced to surrender them, to be transferred to the worship of the true God?" (Baronius, "Annales", ad ann. 58, n. 77). (as cited in Thurston, Herbert. "Lights." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 9. Nihil Obstat. October 1, 1910. Remy Lafort, Censor. Imprimatur. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.21 Dec. 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09244b.htm>>)

Thus, Baronius basically said that Saturnalia lights are a pagan practice, yet using them is acceptable. Christmas is basically a repackaged form of the pagan holiday called Saturnalia. It was adopted because of compromise with paganism.

Yet even the *Rheims'* version of the New Testament (a Catholic approved translation) states the following:

15. And what agreement with Christ and Belial? or what part hath the faithful with the infidel? 16. And what agreement hath the temple of God with Idols? For you are the temple of the living God. as God saith, Then I will dwell, and walk in them, and will be their God: and they shall be my people. 17. For the which cause, Go out of the midst of them, and separate yourselves. saith our Lord, and touch not the unclean: and I will receive you (2 Corinthians 6:15-17, The

Original And True Rheims New Testament Of Anno Domini 1582. Prepared and Edited by Dr. William von Peters, Ph.D. Copyright © 1998, Dr. William G. von Peters. Ph.D. 2004, copyright assigned to VSC Corp.).

Notice that unclean practices associated with idols are prohibited by God. Does not that include celebrating as the idolaters celebrate?

The Roman Saturnalia and the Persian Mithraism themselves were adaptations of an *even earlier* pagan religion – that of the ancient *Babylonian mystery cult*. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the reborn Nimrod as the newborn Tammuz by worshipping an evergreen tree. The Babylonians also celebrated this rebirth during the season of the winter solstice. Jeremiah condemns ancient Israel for copying this type of paganism, and condemned the pagan use of trees in Jeremiah 10:2-4 and the evergreen tree in Jeremiah 3:13.

To take this a step further, notice that using green trees as part of worship was condemned by God thousands of years ago:

2 'You must completely destroy all the places where the nations you dispossess have served their gods, on high mountains, on hills, under any spreading tree; 3 you must tear down their altars, smash their sacred stones, burn their sacred poles, hack to bits the statues of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. (Deuteronomy 12:2-3, New Jerusalem Bible, NJB, a Catholic translation)

2 Destroy all the places in which the nations, that you shall possess, worshipped their gods upon high mountains, and hills, and under every shady tree: 3 Overthrow their altars, and break down their statues, burn their groves with fire, and break their idols in pieces: destroy their names out of those places. 4 You shall not do so to the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 12:2-4, DOT, a Catholic translation).

16 Beware lest perhaps your heart be deceived, and you depart from our Lord, and serve strange Gods, and adore them (Deuteronomy 11:16, DOT).

9 When thou art come into the land which

the Lord thy God shall give thee, beware lest thou have a mind to imitate the abominations of those nations...12 For the Lord abhorreth all these things, and for these abominations he will destroy them at thy coming. (Deuteronomy 18:9,12, DOT)

24 God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24, NJB)

Catholic translations of the Bible show that spreading shady trees, like evergreens, were not to be part of the worship of the true God—and that people should not be deceived and serve such strange practice or other pagan practices. The truth is that Christmas reminds us that people are often unwilling to worship God as He intended, but instead often prefer pagan substitutes that they rationalize as somehow acceptable if they pretend the holiday is about Jesus.

Catholic Scholars Know

The modern Rheims Bible teaches:

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

(James 1:22)

Catholic scholars know that Christmas did not come from the Bible, that December 25th was an ancient pagan birthday celebration, and that many of the trappings associated with Christmas come from pagan sources.

But they and their church endorse its observance anyway. They are knowingly deceiving themselves.

Those who truly believe Jesus' words, "Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, NJB) will not celebrate a compromised pagan holiday such as Christmas because it contains practices and symbols warned against in the Bible and was never enjoined upon true believers to practice.

We in the Continuing Church of God do not celebrate Christmas.

Brief Answer to a Scriptural Question



Q. How was it possible for Noah to make a ship large enough to carry the many species of animals safely through the Flood?

A. Think for a moment. Would God assign a job like building the Ark to someone without being sure the person could get the job done?

Many people assume that the account of the building of the Ark is a myth. They conceive of Noah as a sort of old, bearded hermit who had little or no education, and who certainly must not have had proper tools to build a ship as large as the Ark.

True, Noah did not have computers, gasoline-powered saws, hydraulic lifts, rivet guns, or sophisticated micrometers. But to assume that Noah had no nails, bolts, saws, axes or hammers, along with other

needed tools and supplies and the necessary technical knowledge, is simply naive. And while building would have lasted a while (probably several decades), God knew that beforehand.

Most fail to grasp the tremendous size of Noah's Ark because they have not figured out its capacity based on the measurements given in the Bible (Genesis 6:14-16).

Bible commentators do not all agree as to the specific size of the cubit used in building the Ark. Some suggest an 18-inch cubit, others a 21-inch cubit. On the basis of a 21-inch cubit, Peloubet's Bible Dictionary states, "The ark would be 525 feet in length, 87 feet 6 inches in breadth and 52 feet 6 inches in height."

Some have calculated the displacement of the Ark would have been between 40,000 and 50,000 tons! It would have been the height of a 45-story building if it stood on end. Comparing this to the largest, most modern luxury liners of today, the Ark may well have been larger than Britain's Canberra, which has a displacement of 44,807 tons gross!

But there was an older Hebrew cubit that measured about 25 inches. This cubit would have made the Ark 600 feet long, 100 feet wide and 60 feet high. No small size! Its three decks (Genesis 6:16) would have contained an area of about 38 standard college basketball courts. Its volume would have been 3.6 million cubit feet. This is the carrying capacity of 25 trains, each one 52 freight cars long. Many think of the Ark as a small vessel, not realizing how large it really was.

How many animals were on the Ark? Notice that God told Noah there would be one male and one female of each unclean "kind" of animal and seven pairs of each clean "kind" of animal on the Ark (Genesis 7:2, 14). When the Bible speaks of a "kind" of animal, it is not speaking of what scientists today would identify as a "species."

Turn to Genesis 2:19-20 and notice an important point: "Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field."

The number of Genesis "kinds" were so few that Adam was able to easily give them each a name that day. This shows that the original Genesis "kinds" were relatively few in number.

With regard to the animals, the Bible definition of "kind" is much broader than the evolutionary concept of "species." The Genesis "kind" more nearly equates with the biological definition of a "genus." Notice the facts presented in The Genesis Flood, pages 67 and

69: "It is unwarranted to insist that all the present species, not to mention all the varieties and sub-varieties, were represented in the Ark."

God is a practical God. God's instructions to Noah were simple and left a lot of planning on Noah's shoulders. Noah may already have had some experience in building large oceangoing ships.

With regard to adequate supplies of food and potable water, Noah had received instructions from God (Genesis 6:21). Eggs, for example, may have been obtained from many birds, milk from the cattle and goats, fresh meat from a variety of sources. And Noah could easily have stored fresh water in advance.

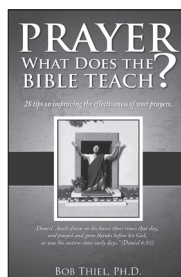
Remember also that plant life was reestablished quickly after the Flood (Genesis 8:11), and that Noah himself planted a vine yard (Genesis 9:20), indicating he had taken on the Ark cuttings and grains that could germinate with cultivation.

Most of those who scoff at the record of the Flood have never bothered to approach the problem as the Bereans did, willing to prove with an open mind "whether these things were so" (Acts 17:10-11). Had Noah assumed the task was impossible, and had he not worked for 120 years to accomplish it, where would we be today? The facts prove the task was not impossible, and that Noah succeeded as the Bible records.

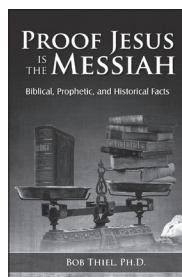
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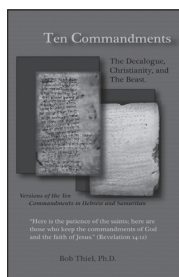
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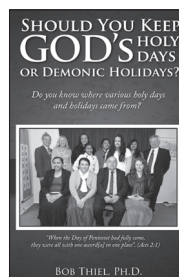
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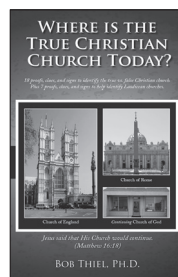
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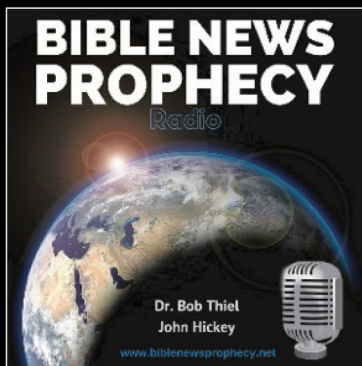
The Decalogue, Christianity, and the Beast



Should You Keep God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays?



Where Is The True Christian Church Today?



Fulfilling Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20



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The *Continuing Church of God* also uses books, personal visits, daily electronic newsletters, and weekly letters to the brethren to support Matthew 24:14, Romans 11:25, and Matthew 28:19-20.