

## ***Biblical Misconceptions: The 10 Commandments***

Many think that to live a godly life one should believe in God and practice such things as the golden rule and the Ten Commandments. The commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai in **Exodus 20**, while being an important part of the Law, don't represent its entirety. One could consider the Ten Commandments as a preamble, or introduction to the Law. In addition to the 10 Commandments were numerous statutes, regulations and ordinances for the people to follow. The book of Leviticus is an instruction manual for the priests and Levites in making decisions, rendering judgment and governing almost every aspect of life for the children of Israel. The books of Law, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, detail these Laws and how they were to be applied. The problem for Christians in the first century, as it is for many today, is a failure to grasp the purpose of the Law. Paul states, "***Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.***" (**Gal 3.24-25**). Once the gospel was revealed, the Law or "***schoolmaster***" was no longer needed. Paul reminded the Galatian Christians that if they desired to be under the Law, they were indebted to keep the entire Law (**Gal 5.3**). Questions about Gentile Christians and the Law were a problem in the first century and caused controversy. It wasn't necessary for Gentile Christians to keep the Law. In **Acts 15** James sums up the things the Gentiles needed to abstain from during a conversation about this subject "***Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.***" (**Acts 15.19-20**).

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, speaks of the passing of the Law. He writes "***And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross...***" (**Col 2.13-14**). Judaizing teachers of the day sought to bind traditions of the Law on Gentile converts as well as Jews who had become Christians. The problem with this thinking is clarified in the New Testament which reveals that the Law wasn't able to bring about the full redemption of sin. That took place only when Christ died on the cross and was raised from the dead by God. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that the blood of Christ was applied to the sins of the faithful of all time. Comparing the sacrifices of the Law to the sacrifice of Christ the author states, "***How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.***" (**Heb 9.14-15**).

Paul states that holding to the Law rendered the sacrifice of Christ ineffective, writing, "***Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law***" (**Gal 5.4**). Christ stated that he had come to fulfill the Law (**Matt 5.17**), and in that fulfillment, the Law was taken out of the way. According to the writer of Hebrews, the Law was passing away at that time as the gospel of Christ was taught. After quoting the prophecy from **Jeremiah 31**, the writer states, "***In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth***

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*and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” (Heb 8.13).* A person who lives by the Ten Commandments will no doubt lead a good moral life and cultivate a belief in God, but won't be saved simply by following these “**principles**”.

Elements of the Ten Commandments that apply to us today can be found in the New Testament. Commands to worship God, avoid idols, and not commit adultery, are applicable and stated in the New Testament telling us how a Christian is to live. The Ten Commandments, however, contain things we can't observe as part of the new law. This includes keeping the Sabbath. Christians meet and worship on the first day of the week, not the seventh day as the Hebrews were commanded. Likewise, the priesthood, decreed in the Law of Moses, has been replaced by the great high priest, Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews states, “***Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.***” (Heb 4.14). Unlike the Levitical priests, Christ is sinless and eternal and his law, the New Testament or Gospel, serves as our guide today. Since the first century the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Gospel, or New Testament, has been a primary misconception in the minds of many believers.