

## **The Christian Covenant**

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### ***The Law of the Covenant Given***

Exodus 19:16-25 records the famous event of Moses meeting God on Mount Sinai to receive the Law of the covenant. Chapter 20 records what is commonly called the Ten Commandments. Chapters 21 through 24 contain numerous other commandments regarding servants, violent crimes, property rights, various other crimes, etc.

Many further commands regarding the tabernacle and the priests are recorded in chapters 25 through 30. The book of Leviticus continues with laws regarding sacrifices and offerings. Altogether there were over 600 individual laws or commandments given to the people of Israel in connection with their covenant with God.

### ***The Covenant of Law was for the Jews***

In Deuteronomy 5:1ff, as Moses rehearsed the commandments given by God, he declared that that covenant was between God and the nation of Israel, not with other nations. That covenant was not intended for all people for all time. Exodus 20:12 commands, "Honor your father and your mother," and then gives the reason for the command: "that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord our God gives you."

God had specifically brought the people of Israel out of Egypt and would later bring them into the promised land of Canaan. Thus this command (and all the Law) was specifically intended for the people of Israel at that time until the coming of the Messiah and a new covenant.

### ***A New Covenant Foretold***

Jeremiah prophesied these words of God in Jeremiah 31:31-33: "Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord, I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

### ***Jesus Fulfilled the Law***

The gospels of the New Testament record the birth and ministry of Jesus, the Messiah. He lived under that Law of Moses, faithfully obeyed the Law, and commanded others of that time to obey the Law. But Jesus Himself said in Luke 16:16, "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it."

Jesus spoke of fulfilling the Law when He said in Matthew 5:17-18, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."

The word "destroy" is from the Greek word *kataluo* (Strong #2647), meaning "to destroy utterly, to overthrow completely, . . . to fail in purpose" (Vine's Exp. Dict.). The same word is used in Acts 5:38-39 when Gamaliel said that if the preaching of the apostles was "of God, you will not be able to overthrow it."

Indeed Christ did not destroy or overthrow the Law; it did not fail in purpose. Jesus said in Luke 16:17, "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail." The Law did not fail; it did exactly what it was intended to do: bring the world to Christ. In that it truly succeeded!

The word "fulfill" in v17 is from the Greek word *pleroo* (Strong #4137), meaning "to fill, to make full, complete" (Vine's Exp. Dict.). Webster's Dictionary defines fulfill as: "1. To bring to realization. 2. To carry out; perform. 3. To satisfy (requirements, obligations, etc.). 4. To bring to an end." The word "accomplished" in v18 is from the Greek word *ginomai* (Strong #1096), meaning "to become, to come to pass, happen" (Thayer's Greek Lexicon). Christ came to pay the debt to law, a debt that man could not pay. Colossians 2:14 teaches that Christ's death "cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

Thus Christ in His death for all mankind satisfied the requirements of the Law. Those who are in Christ are no longer bound by such; our debt has been fully paid. (See also Luke 24:44 "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.")

### ***The Apostles Taught that the Law was Fulfilled***

Following the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the inspired apostles taught that the Law of Moses was no longer in effect. In Romans 7:4, Paul wrote, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God." In v6 he said, "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter."

In Galatians 3:24-25, Paul said, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." In Ephesians 2:14-15, he said that Christ "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall [between Jews and Gentiles] by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances."

In 2 Corinthians 3:6ff, Paul spoke of the Law as "the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones" (V7) and as a "ministry of condemnation" (V9). He referred to such as "that which fades away" (v11) and "the old covenant (v14). In v6, Paul said we are "servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Finally, consider the letter to the Hebrews, the very subject of which is a comparison of the old and new covenants. The writer said in 1:1-2: "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son." The inspired writer then, in the remainder of the letter, explains that the way of Christ is far superior to the Old Law of Moses.

Hebrews 7:11 speaks of Christ as another priest who would not be needed "if perfection is through the Levitical priesthood." But since such was not possible, "of necessity there takes place a change of law also" (v12). V18 speaks of "setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness." V22 says that Christ then is the "guarantee of a better covenant."

For more on this and other lessons, see [The Doctrines That Divide Us](#), available on Amazon.com.