



Shepherd's Voice®

Spring 2015



INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

The Long Term Effects of the Rebellion

A Study on the Added "Law of Moses"

The Second Sabbath After the First

Managing Editor: Jim Patterson
 Editor: Norman Edwards
 Assistant Editor: Jean Jantzen

Contributing Writers: Norman Edwards
 Jean Jantzen
 Jim Patterson
 Jim B. Petersen

Webmaster: Jeremiah Patton
 Circulation: Norman Edwards
 Layout & Design: Marcia Nicol

All contents of Shepherd's Voice Magazine unless otherwise stated are property of the Chicagoland Church of God.

Copyright ©2015

The writers of the articles and photographers of photos in the Shepherd's Voice Magazine may own copyrights to their work.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the King James Version (public domain) or from the New King James Version®, Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Shepherd's Voice Magazine is a production of the Chicagoland Church of God in a cooperative effort with other individuals and church organizations in the Sabbath-keeping community in the United States and Canada. This magazine is distributed and made possible by tithes and offerings of the readership and of those who support this work.

Shepherd's Voice Magazine publishes entries from regular and guest writers from a diverse range of people within the Church of God community, and covering a variety of subjects. While we invite or select our content, it may not necessarily reflect the position of the magazine or of the members of the Chicagoland organization.

COPYRIGHT FAIR USE NOTICE:

In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, any copyrighted material contained herein is distributed for nonprofit educational and other fair use purposes including, but not limited to, teaching, scholarship, research, news reporting, criticism, review, or comment.

Photos: iStockphoto.com, Dreamstime.com.

Front Cover: Dramatic depiction of Moses and the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Editorial mailing address: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
 PO Box 858
 Plainfield, IL 60544-0858

Circulation office: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
 PO Box 474
 Port Austin, Michigan 48467-0474
SVM@portAustin.net (989) 738-7700

Canada Office: Shepherd's Voice Magazine
 PO Box 74
 287 Tache Avenue
 Winnipeg, MB R2H 3B8

Email us at: info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Send Ask Norm! questions to:
asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Visit our web site: www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org



Shepherd's Voice®

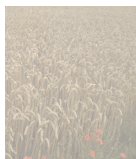
Feature Article



The Long Term Effects of the Rebellion4
Everett W. Leisure

A Study on the Added "Law of Moses"12
Norman Edwards

In This Issue



The Second Sabbath After the First.....14
Jim B. Petersen



Weep For Yourself and Your Children.....20
Dave Havir



Watch Therefore and Pray Always.....22
Tommy Willis

Regular Features

Personal
 Managing Editor.....3

Ask Norm!
 Norman Edwards.....16

PABC Update: Witnessing to Both Small and Great
 Norman Edwards.....18

Periodical mailed: 955 Other mail classes:97 Internationally re-mailed: 174 e-mail: 796. Identification Statement: Shepherd's Voice Magazine is published quarterly (4 times per year). Issues are regularly sent free to people who requested the publication and are genuinely interested in it. Shepherd's Voice Magazine is published by the Chicagoland Church of God, 11308 Highland Dr., Plainfield, IL 60585; circulation office: 8180 Port Dr, Port Austin, Michigan 48467. CCOG reserves the right to refuse service to anyone for any reason. Periodical postage paid at Plainfield, Illinois and other mailing offices (USPS 016-995). Postmaster: send address changes to Shepherd's Voice Magazine, PO Box 474, Port Austin, Michigan 48467-0474

Greetings!

Our congregation recently did a Bible study series on the Covenants in the Bible. This would include such past covenants as Adamic Covenant, the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant and the “Old Covenant” and other minor ones. Given that Christians are enveloped in the New Covenant instituted by Jesus Christ in the flesh, the question was asked as to why we should examine these former covenants that are now largely superseded by the New Covenant.

From a broader perspective our God makes deals for His purposes; to advance His will on earth. In all of God’s covenants we should recognize that the Ten Commandments, and ultimately the two greatest commandments, are at their core. We can only surmise therefore that commandment keeping will further His will on earth. When His commandments are broken His will is compromised, and there are times when He will act accordingly.

We see His response to the rebellion at Mount Sinai, and the after effects, both short and long term. Indeed He will see to it that His will is done, and through the process many will learn this very truth. Therefore, in this issue we have a study article by Everett Leisure titled *The Events of Mount Sinai*, subtitled for clarity: *The Long Term effects*

of the Rebellion – A Study on the Added Law of Moses. We may have had cause to wonder at one time or another as to why certain laws considered under the Old Covenant no longer pertain to the life of a Christian. Dealing with sin, and the propensity to sin, is a complicated matter, so we might recognize and appreciate in the article with some capacity the reasons why the Law of Moses came to be. Please take your time with the study and let us know your thoughts.

The article *Learning from the Samaritans* triggered a number of positive responses (a few in *Ask Norm!* this issue). The article examined an approach in working with mainstream Christianity today by the example that Jesus Christ gave us in dealing with the Samaritans of His time. Today we find many challenged in reaching out to others individually and as a church; trying to distinguish themselves amongst the larger presence of the mainstream. So in looking forward to the next issue we anticipate discussing particular matters that pertain to evangelism and personal outreach. This is a surprisingly uncomfortable topic amongst the brethren that needs to be addressed in more candid detail.

In Christ’s Service
Jim Patterson



The Events at Mount Sinai

The Long Term Effects of the Rebellion

A Study on the Added Law of Moses

Everett W. Leisure

The episode of the Golden calf (Exodus 32) interrupts the lofty events that shortly followed the confirming of the Sinai covenant. Israel went from the special treasure of their Creator to the focus of His anger. The original intention was that Israel would represent the Creator to the world.

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...” (Exodus 19:5-6a)

Israel Deserved Complete Destruction

Moses was basically told to *“Get out of My way so I can turn them into toast.”*

“Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation” (Exodus 32:10).

The relationship had changed. Israel was disowned.

*“And the LORD said to Moses, “Go, get down! For **your people whom you brought out** of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves”* (Exodus 32:7).

Yahweh no longer considered Israel His people. Moses had to plead for their lives.

“And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God—had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you. Then I

This is a detailed, “heavy” study, but one of the best we have seen in dealing with the multiple covenants and laws of the Bible. Many Christians tend to see the Old Testament or Old Covenant as one single covenant replaced by the New Testament or New Covenant. Others insist that a believer should live by all of both covenants at once. And finally, a great many serious Bible students live by all the New Testament and some of the Old Testament, but they could not give a specific scriptural reason why. For example, do you know which things make you “unclean” according to Leviticus 11-15 and do you cleanse yourself when you become unclean?

The truth of the matter is that there are multiple separate covenants in the “Old Testament” portion of the Bible, with different terms, rewards and punishments. The New Testament clearly shows that not all of the Old Testament commands apply to all believers (Acts 15). Yet, there are hundreds of quotes in the New Testament of the Old—the first Christians were convinced of its value. This study explains why the “Law of Moses” was added and provides important keys to understanding the difference between eternal spiritual principles and commands that were added to help prevent carnal people from deserting the ways of God.

The episode of the Golden calf (Exodus 32) interrupts the lofty events that shortly followed the confirming of the Sinai covenant. Israel went from the special treasure of their Creator to the focus of His anger. The original intention was that Israel would represent the Creator to the world.

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...” (Exodus 19:5-6a)

took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger” (Deuteronomy 9:16-18).

Moses called for volunteers to purge the evil-doers from the congregation (Exodus 32:26). The tribe of Levi answered Moses call for righteous judgment and evidently executed

the main people responsible. Moses suspected they would be blessed for this (vs 29). Unfortunately, irreversible damage was done. The original intent that the nation would represent their Creator as priests was subverted. Now, even Moses had to go far outside the camp to communicate with Him.

Moses Pleads for Israel—at a Distance

Ex 33:7-9 *“Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp,*

far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp. So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, that all the people rose, and each man stood at his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.”

Mainly because of Moses pleading Yahweh relented from destroying Israel. “Therefore He said that He would destroy them, Had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, To turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them” (Psalm 106:23). Likely Levi’s part in cleaning house also contributed to Yahweh sparing Israel.

Shortly after Moses’ fast for Israel he went back up Mt. Sinai to get the Commandments etched into a replacement set of tablets. He is still pleading for Israel and Yahweh still considers them Moses’ people.

*Then he said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.” And He said: “Behold, I make a covenant. Before all **your people** I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all **the people whom you are shall see the work of the LORD. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you”** (Exodus 34:9-10).*

‘Make’ (Heb: karath, Str, 03772) in verse 10 is an active participle which indicates an action in progress. It means to cut, which is a connection to the cutting of a sacrifice to confirm a covenant. So in response to Moses’ plea that Yahweh pardon and re-own Israel He claims to be making a covenant. He then instructs Moses certain things He expects, after which He indicates a covenant was made.

Covenant in Exodus 20-24 Continues

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel” (Exodus 34:27).

If we examine what is expected in verses 11-26 we find that all these instructions are included in the covenant of Exodus 20-23. No new covenant is being imposed with this instruction, but Israel is being reminded to honor what they have already agreed. The original covenant confirmed in Exodus 24 stands as is clearly indicated in the next verse.

So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:28).

Consider that covenants are agreements between two parties. They are not generally imposed. Around the confirmation of His covenant in Exodus 24 the terms were discussed at least three times before the actual confirmation (Exodus 19:6-8, 24:3, 7). So Yahweh is not imposing a covenant on this occasion, but reminding them of their obligation to the one they made in Exodus 24. Additionally, there is no record elsewhere in scripture of a covenant being confirmed on this occasion.

Another Covenant Was Added!

So what was the covenant in the making? Before we examine that, let’s consider what else happened on this forty day meeting on Mt. Sinai. The meeting is recorded in the middle 26 verses of Exodus 34. That would probably take no more than five minutes to read, yet Moses was there forty days. As he came down the mountain toward the camp Aaron and the elders met him.

*Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him **on Mount Sinai** (Exodus 34:32).*

Moses’ record indicates more commandments were given **on Mt. Sinai** than just what is recorded in Exodus 34. Leviticus is generally placed in the time frame of Moses tabernacle of meeting. “Now the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting ...” (Leviticus 1:1).

“And the LORD spoke to Moses **on Mount Sinai**, saying...” (Leviticus 25:1). Instruction on sabbatical and jubilee years follows. Chapter 26 was also apparently given **on Mt. Sinai** (vs. 46). It promises blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience including national destruction and captivity. This was not an option in the Sinai covenant of Exodus 20-23. Leviticus 27 also concludes stating that this instruction was made **on Mt. Sinai**. There are also other connections with this occasion on Mt. Sinai.

*“This is the law of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the consecrations, and the sacrifice of the peace offering, which the LORD commanded Moses **on Mount Sinai**, on the day when He commanded the children of Israel to offer their offerings to the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai” (Leviticus 7:37-38).*

*“It is a regular burnt offering which was ordained **at Mount Sinai** for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD” (Numbers 28:6).*

Animal Sacrifices Part of Second Covenant

The Hebrew designating each of these references on/at Mt. Sinai is identical. It is referring to Moses last trip up the mountain, not the occasion of Exodus 20. The regular required sacrifices were commanded at this second 40-day stay on Mt. Sinai. We know that animal sacrifice was not a high priority in the Creator’s mind. The sacrifices were established as a reaction to Israel’s backsliding. Certainly the episode of the golden calf qualifies as backsliding.

Jer 7:22-23 *‘For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of*

the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you. Yet they did not obey or incline their ear; but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward."

Although animal sacrifices were not His priority, Yahweh agreed to accept them as evidence of remorse and repentance. (Leviticus 4:13-14, 20, 26, 31) The commanded regular offerings of Numbers 28-29 were also added to serve as reminders of their shortcomings (Hebrews 10:1-3). This was not planned earlier as part of the Sinai covenant.

Levites to Serve Between Yahweh and Israel

Part of Moses specific request in Exodus 34:9 was that Yahweh would dwell among the people. Once the tabernacle was completed He did this to an extent, but He directed that the Levites camp between Him and the rest of Israel with Israel being somewhat distant (Numbers 2:2). The average Israelite was not to come near the Tabernacle. Before this there had been no distinction between the tribes. Now each tribe was to take its place either in the north, south, east or west quadrant (Num 2) except the tribe of Levi.

"but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony" (Numbers 1:53).

God wanted to keep a buffer between Himself and the rest of Israel. The nation as a whole had disqualified itself from being His priests. Only Levi was now in that position. This is a change from the intention of the Sinai covenant (Exodus 19:5-6). Our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). This appears to be what God is illustrating in the positioning of the tribes. We'll see that Levi was evidently chosen to care

for the tabernacle about the time of Moses second 40-day stay on Mt. Sinai.

The events of Numbers appear to have begun taking place in the early part of the second year in the wilderness. *"Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt ..."* (Numbers 1:1).

Aaron and his sons were anointed as priests apparently starting on the first day of the second year when the tabernacle was set up (Ex 40:2, 12, 17). Based partly on the timing of Numbers the rest of the tribe of Levi was given to help shortly after Aaron was anointed (Numbers 3:6-9, 8:20-22).

Deuteronomy places the choosing of Levi at or shortly after the time of Moses second 40-day stay on Mount Sinai.

"So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me ... At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day. Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God promised him... "As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the LORD also heard me at that time, and the LORD chose not to destroy you" (Deuteronomy 10:3-5, 8-10).

The two verses of Deuteronomy 10:7-8 describe camps where Israel

stayed long after they left the area of Mt. Sinai. Many translations link verses 8-9 with those inset verses, yet it is clear that Levi was chosen to assist with the Tabernacle before Israel left Sinai (Numbers 10:11-12, 17, 21). So it seems more in accord with the other information we have that verse 8 is referring back to the time of verse 5. The punctuation used to link verse 8 & 9 with verses 6 & 7 is not part of the original text.

Figuring Out What Was Taught and When

We need to remember that Israel was camped around Sinai for almost a year. The Sinai covenant had been confirmed probably within the first two weeks of their arrival at the base of the mountain (Exodus 19). Moses made two trips up the mountain after the confirmation of the covenant. The instruction of Leviticus 25-27, 7:37-38, Num 28:6 and Exodus 34:32 all use the phrase 'on Mt. Sinai' (יְבִיטָה רֹהֵב) which connects with his second 40-day trip. Other instruction was also received at the base of the mountain.

But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded (Exodus 34:34).

As we saw Moses moved his tent outside the camp and called it the tent/tabernacle of meeting (Exodus 33:7). The timing of Leviticus is generally put after Moses set up this tabernacle of meeting outside the camp. This is where he would meet with Yahweh. Likely this happened both before and after the events of Exodus 34.

Additional instruction was received at that tent of meeting and passed to the Elders and the people. Likely it was here that Israel was instructed to bring their offerings to the sons of Aaron at the Tabernacle (Leviticus 1:3-5, 17:3-5). Likely this was before the Tabernacle was completed or Aaron was anointed. The exact timing of everything in Leviticus is not perfectly clear. Obviously some instruction was received on Moses second 40-day stay on Mt. Sinai, some from the

Tent of Meeting. Aaron's anointing is recorded in chapter 8 & 9 which was likely the first month of the second year after leaving Egypt when the Tabernacle was completed (Exodus 40:2, 12, 17). This was about 5 months after the second 40-day stay on Mt. Sinai and before they left Sinai.

When the Tabernacle was completed it became the Tabernacle of Meeting in place of Moses' tent. It was also called the Tabernacle of the tent of meeting (Exodus 35:21, 40:2, 6-7, 12). Although it is not always easy to determine which tent is intended it seems reasonable that immediately after the golden calf Yahweh wanted to make some things perfectly clear. Israel obviously didn't get the intentions of His covenant to which they had agreed. Clarification would logically be done as soon as possible. Israel needed an enhanced lesson as to what was expected of them. Likely as a result we have some instruction that is filling in detail assumed, but not included in the law of Exodus 20-23. Also in Leviticus 23 all the Sabbaths of Yahweh are detailed, not just the weekly Sabbath and pilgrimage festivals.

So Aaron was confirmed, as was the rest of Levi (Numbers 8) who were exchanged for the firstborn. The firstborn had been the priests until that time. *"Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I am the LORD."* (Numbers 3:45). Shortly after that Israel departed their camp near Mt. Sinai. It was the twentieth day of the second month of the second year after the Exodus (Num 11:11-12).

Throughout this time many details are being filled in. As part of the covenant at Sinai they were to be holy (Exodus 22:31). Now it is clear that means don't have sex with close relatives (Leviticus 18:25-30), don't defile yourself by eating unclean animals (Leviticus 11:44, 20:25-26), isolate those unclean due to certain conditions (Leviticus 15:19, 31). Completely new instruction is given on the place of Levi (Numbers 1:50-53), the need for sacrifices (Leviticus 7:37-38, Numbers 28-29) and the threat of curses for disobedience

(Leviticus 26). Shortly after the tabernacle was completed Israel continued on their journey.

Leaving Mount Sinai

The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them' (Deuteronomy 1:6-8).

Forty Years in the Wilderness

When Israel departed they had still not been reconciled to Yahweh. They were still Moses' people. He appears to be cracking a bit under the pressure:

"Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom...'" (Numbers 11:12)

And Moses said, "The people whom I am among are six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month'" (Numbers 11:21).

This was at the first camp after they left Sinai.

So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, [graves of lust] because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving" (Numbers 11:34, 33:16).

However, they were bumping along on the road to the Promised Land.

So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh Barnea. And I

said to you, 'You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.' And everyone of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come' (Deuteronomy 1:19-22).

Of course, in hindsight, sending out scouts and spies was a mistake. Israel refused to believe that Yahweh could give them the land. They angered Him to the point He refused to let them go into the land. Their children would go into the land, but those of age would not. Israel was left to mark time for forty years in the wilderness. Needless to say that didn't make Israel the people of Yahweh either (Numbers 14:34). However, when the 40 years was just about complete Moses called Israel together for his final instruction.

Moses' Final Request: Yahweh Takes Israel Back

These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazereth, and Dizahab... Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them ... On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law... (Deuteronomy 1:1-5).

On this occasion Moses brought together the main instruction by which Israel was to live in the Promised Land. In fact he was laying out the terms of a new covenant under which Israel was to live.

These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb... that you may enter

into covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath, which the LORD your God makes with you today, that He may **establish you today** as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deuteronomy 29:1,12,13).

This covenant accomplishes Moses' request of Exodus 34:9:

*Then he said, "If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and **pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance**" (Exodus 34:9).*

This covenant is a direct answer to Moses' plea. Yahweh is again taking Israel as His people. As part of this agreement Moses directed that Israel write the terms of this law on stones when they entered the Land.

*"Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, that on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them. You shall build with whole stones the altar of the LORD your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law. Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying, "Take heed and listen, O Israel: **This day you have become the people of the LORD your God**" (Deuteronomy 27:4-9).*

... and He said to them: "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 32:46).

The "Law of Moses" Is the Law Requested by Moses

Israel followed Moses instruction when they entered the land:

*Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of **the law of Moses, which he had written** (Joshua 8:30-32).*

Thus was confirmed the Law of Moses. It consisted of the law that Moses enjoined on Israel that day, although it assumed the existence of Moses' other books for details. It was not named that just because it came through him, but because it was done at his behest, because of his pleading and self-sacrifice for Israel. "...*pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.*" And He said: *"Behold, I make a covenant..."* (Exodus 34:9d-10a)

The Septuagint text contains an interesting variation from the standard text of Exodus 34:10. *"And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I establish a covenant for thee in the presence of all thy people; I will do glorious things, which have not been done in all the earth, or in any nation; and all the people among whom thou art shall see the works of the Lord, that they are wonderful, which I will do for thee."* This covenant was being done **for** Moses, at his request. Covenants have Parts. The first eleven chapters of Deuteronomy are an introduction that rehash why Israel needed this covenant. An introduction like this was typical in a covenant. The reasons for the covenant are clear. *"Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. "Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD" (Deuteronomy 9:6-7). "You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you (Deuteronomy 9:24).*

Israel already had a covenant with Yahweh. Why another? This covenant cemented the place of Levi (17:8-9, 21:5, 18:1-5). It also formalized Yahweh's option to deal with their failure in some way other than death (Deuteronomy 28:15). They had been put on notice as of Moses meeting on Mt. Sinai that there would be severe curses for disobedience (Leviticus 26:46). Deuteronomy is a legal document containing the general terms under which Israel would live in the Promised Land.

Failure to follow this instruction would lead to very serious consequences. These things were a matter of life and death. It makes sense that Yahweh wanted to make sure the terms were clear, everyone understood, and that they bought into the deal. *"Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it" (Galatians 3:15).* For these same reasons even covenants of men were not changed. This new order could not be tacked on to the original Sinai covenant.

Animal Sacrifices Centralized

It also established centralized animal sacrifices and centralized worship at the dwelling place of Yahweh (Deuteronomy 12:5-14, 16:6, 11, 16, 18:1). Although originally noted in Leviticus 17:3-5 this had not actually been practiced.

*"You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes— ... But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, ... "then there will be **the place** where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD."*

The covenant of the Lord, the original covenant, allowed sacrifices in multiple places. *"An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your*

peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In **every place where I record My name** I will come to you, and I will bless you” (Exodus 20:24).

Israel showed they couldn't be trusted to sacrifice as they saw fit. This new order could not become part of the covenant agreed in Exodus 24. Covenants are serious things. It is a pledge of mutual loyalty on which one stakes his life. Once confirmed the terms are fixed. Even covenants designed by men are not changed, let alone one put together by the Creator (Galatians 3:15, see also Psalm 89:34). The covenant made at Sinai is uniquely identified as His covenant and the covenant of the Lord made in Horeb, the area of Mt. Sinai.

“And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice. So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone” (Deuteronomy 4:12-13).

“Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you” (Deuteronomy 4:23).

So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: ‘Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;’ (Deuteronomy 31:24-26).

New Law Added so that Israel “May Live”

This new Law was added to the original expectations of the Creator. The purpose of this new covenant, this law, of Deuteronomy was **not** to establish the whole nation as priests as was the intent of His covenant (Exodus 19:5). This covenant was made at the behest of Moses so Israel could live, **as opposed to being destroyed**.

“Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, **that you may live**, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you” (Deuteronomy 4:1)

“... in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, **that you may live and multiply**; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess” (Deuteronomy 30:16). (see also Deuteronomy 5:33, 6:24, 8:1, 16:20)

Much of this new instruction revolved around the existence of Aaron, his sons and the Levitical priesthood. There is nothing in the instruction of Exodus 20-23 having to do with Levi. The Levitical Priesthood did not exist until after the golden calf episode. Although some of this Law of Moses was made to teach them more perfectly the ways of Yahweh, some was intended to simply slow or prevent their further backsliding (Jeremiah 7:22-24). Levi stood with Moses to clean house after the golden calf (Exodus 32:26-29). It appears they understood Yahweh's intention better than the other tribes, so they became the teachers:

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? (Hebrews 7:11) (See also Numbers 3:11-12; Malachi 2:7; 2 Chronicles 17:7-9.)

The Greek word translated ‘under’ in verse 11 above is ‘epi’ (Str. 1909). Its primary meaning is actually ‘upon’. Hebrews is actually telling us that the Law was hung upon the Levitical Priesthood. They administered it. It established them as the teachers, priests and judges in Israel (Deuteronomy 17:8-10, 18:1). This is reflected in the NASB version.

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there

for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?” (See also NIV, Philips, Alford, Emphasized Bible or EGNT).

Jewish Rabbi's have long taught that the five books of Moses contain 613 commandments, but 342 require a temple or priesthood, and hence could not have been kept since the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. The whole of Old Testament law is a three-legged horse without Levi. We must reach for a different standard.

Abraham Not Under Levitical Priesthood

The whole law, dependent on the Levitical priesthood, is not the law that Abraham kept. It is a different law.

This covenant likely contains instruction Moses received on Mt. Sinai or from the tent of meeting that was not detailed in earlier books. It also repeats much instruction that appears in Leviticus. It was not official before confirmed. The covenant of Deuteronomy made in Moab was the official confirmation. It was added to the law of His covenant to deal with Israel's transgressions, past, present & future. It was the authority until Messiah began to teach (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). It also added detail geared to them regarding the original Law of God confirmed with Israel about 39 years earlier in Sinai. That Sinai law was the same covenant Abraham lived by (I Chronicles 16:15-18).

The Law established in Deuteronomy did not support everyone being priests, only Levi. It was added to the requirements of the covenant of the Lord. It did not replace the covenant of the Lord, but was set next to it, of equal applicability. The covenant of the Lord was made at Sinai. This new covenant was the **Law of Moses**.

What became known as ‘the Law’ in New Testament times was not a normal outgrowth of the Creator making things clearer. It did add some detail, but its main purpose was to create a system which would keep Israel within certain acceptable bounds of behavior so they could live and remain in the Promised Land.

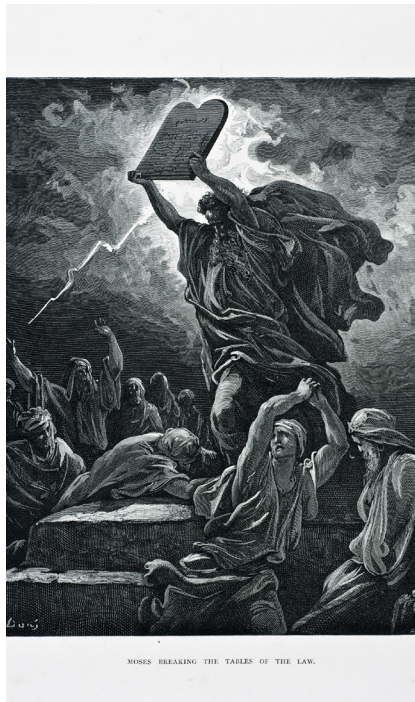
The covenant at Sinai generally assumed obedience. **There were few provisions for failure.** One could nurse someone back to health or restore something stolen. Beyond that failure generally resulted in the default penalty of death. That was not supposed to be used often (Exodus 20:20).

The Law of Moses assumed **disobedience.** Israel deserved to die, but God preserved them through his faithfulness, His regard for Moses and ultimately His own. The Creator wanted obedience, but because of His faithfulness, regard for Moses and promises to the Patriarchs, but ultimately for His own Namesake.

By His grace He allowed Israel to live and inherit the land promised to the patriarchs. The Law of Moses adds to our understanding of what was originally intended, but it was also a compromise for a people that didn't understand and lacked faith in their Creator and His ways. It put Levi between the Creator and the people. It established the temple as Yahweh's place that gave a false sense of security. It allowed animal sacrifices for atonement instead of a pure and contrite heart. All in all, Israel ended up looking to physical things and the temple routine for justification. Messiah calls us to a higher standard. That standard can be seen in His teaching and conduct.

Messiah's teaching did not void, nullify or do away with the Law of Moses. It simply pointed out the higher standard believers are expected to achieve. This standard began to be expected with His teaching, not His death. His death completed the witness and made the terms of the New Covenant complete.

“Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house” (Isaiah 42:5).



Those who grasp the New Covenant are to live to His standard. The Law mediated by Moses is generally a good Law, but parts of it compromised the standards of the Creator.

Ramifications

Understanding this origin and purpose of the Law in distinction from the covenant of the Lord requires a thorough rethink of the instruction of the New Testament as Christianity views it. Many of these issues are addressed on the CreatorsCovenant.org web site. However there is one that certainly should be mentioned here.

What purpose then [does] the law [serve]? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator (Galatians 3:19).

The law added was the Law of Moses.

“Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God;...” (Deuteronomy 31:26ab).


The covenant of the Lord was already there. It was not added.

The Sinai law is not included in Paul's concept of 'the law' added.

The Law of Moses was added to deal with Israel's transgressions, past, present and future. Moses makes it clear Israel was continually rebellious and in imminent danger of being blotted off the map (Deuteronomy 9). The Law was made so that they might live (Deuteronomy 4:1, 8:1, etc.) as opposed to being destroyed, which was the first thought that crossed the Creator's mind (Exodus 32:10). It established the regular offerings administered by the Levites (Deuteronomy 18:1, 5, Leviticus 7:37-38, Numbers 28:6). Anyone could build an altar and offer a sacrifice according to the Covenant of the Lord (Exodus 20:24).

The law was the authority until the Seed, Messiah, came. He was the prophet to whom they should listen (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). His word became the authority even if it did not completely support the Law. Messiah became the authority when He came, when He started speaking as Messiah, not at His death when He was about to leave. If He didn't instruct or act contrary to the law it still stands as originally intended.

The Law was based on the existence of the Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 7:11, NASB, NIV). That priesthood did not exist at the confirming of the Covenant of the Lord in Exodus 24. No mention is made of it or the tabernacle. Aaron and his sons were not anointed to serve until the tabernacle was completed (Exodus 40:12-17). Once the Temple was destroyed it was evident that priesthood no longer spoke for the Creator.

The coming of the Seed does not leave us without standards or make the books of Moses irrelevant. Generally Messiah supported the Law. He expects His teaching and example to be the full standard for those who seek to follow Him. Some instructions in the Law of Moses were a compromise of the Father's expectation, summarized in His Covenant. Now that we have Messiah's example and teaching, the time for compromise is over. It is now time to carefully examine the original instruction, follow His example and live to that standard, which is the Father's standard as He originally intended. 

“Law of Moses” in the Bible

Norman Edwards

When we hear the expression “Law of Moses”, we may think of the “Pentateuch” (the first five books of the Bible), the “Ten Commandments”, the “entire Old Testament” or some other part of the Scripture. But the Bible does not use “Law of Moses” like that. It uses it for that part of the law which was added because of the transgression of the ancient Israelites, as the accompanying study explains. Sure, there are many Bible verses regarding the law that Moses wrote, but there are exactly 21 references to the “Law of Moses” in the Bible. The Hebrew and Greek literally use two words in these places, our closest English equivalent would be: “Moses’ Law”. All 21 are cited in order, below, along with 5 quotes from Romans and Galatians which use the expression “works of the law”, a clear reference to the “Law of Moses”, as explained below,

It is of special interest to note the Bible books that do not use the phrase “Law of Moses”. It is **not** found in the Pentateuch, the major prophets, the Psalms, the Proverbs or any passage referring to Messiah’s reign in the future. The Law of Moses is about a way of life that gave people many things to do in an effort to prevent them from going back into sinful practices.

*... as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the **Law of Moses**: “an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings (Joshua 8:31).*

*And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the **law of Moses**, which he had written (Joshua 8:32).*

This law was written on whole stones so that everyone would know what it

was. Ignorance of the law was no excuse. The large stones were plastered smooth, so small letters could be used, allowing many words to fit. All of the laws for sacrifices, washings and other ordinances could possibly have been contained on these stones.

*“Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the **Law of Moses**, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left...” (Joshua 23:6).*

The law was designed to keep Israel from going astray. It worked effectively during the time of Joshua and the elders who followed him (Joshua 24:31). As Israel began to disregard the Law of Moses, they departed from the fundamental principles of God as well.

*“And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the **Law of Moses**, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;...” (1 Kings 2:3).*

This was David’s admonition to Solomon as he was dying. He told Solomon to keep God’s statutes, commandments, judgments and testimonies—the most important things—as they were written in the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses explains how to carry out these things—and what to do when people disobey.

*But the children of the murderers he did not execute, according to what is written in the Book of the **Law of Moses**, in which the LORD commanded, saying, “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; but a person shall be put to death for his own sin” (2 Kings 14:6).*

This verse is referring to Deuteronomy 24:16, which is clearly part of the Law of Moses. One can tell from the overall context as well as the direct mention of priests and Levites eight verses earlier in Deuteronomy 24:8.

*Now before him [Josiah] there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the **Law of Moses**; nor after him did any arise like him (2 Kings 23:25).*

Josiah not only had a heart for God, he followed **all** the Law of Moses as well.

*Also Jehoiada appointed the oversight of the house of the LORD to the hand of the priests, the Levites, whom David had assigned in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the **Law of Moses**, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was established by David (2 Chronicles 23:18).*

This verse is particularly instructive. The Law of Moses explained about the priests, Levites and offerings. It was David who organized the courses of the priests (1 Chronicles 23:6) and who set up song services (1 Chronicles 6:31). The Law of Moses does not specify priestly courses or any kind of music for the service.

*Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the LORD. They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the **Law of Moses** the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood received from the hand of the Levites (2 Chronicles 30:15,16).*

Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and

*Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the **Law of Moses** the man of God (Ezra 3:2).*

*... this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he was a skilled scribe in the **Law of Moses**, which the LORD God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. Some of the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:6,7).*

The above references are all about the duties of the Priests and Levites under the Law of Moses. The Passover Sacrifice was originally given as a home sacrifice with no need for a priesthood (Exodus 12), The Law of Moses changed it to a temple sacrifice in Deuteronomy 16:1-7, like all of the other added sacrifices (Deuteronomy 12:5-14; 14:22-26; 15:19-20; 26:2).

*Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the **Law of Moses**, which the LORD had commanded Israel (Nehemiah 8:1).*

This book obviously contained the Law of Moses as well as the “Law of God” (Nehemiah 8:8). Ezra 8 and 9 show that the book they were reading contained commands to the priests and Levites (Law of Moses). But there are also references to each book of the Pentateuch. In order to implement the instruction of Deuteronomy one needs the other books of Moses for details. Deuteronomy 18:1 indicates the Levites are to offer the offerings. One needs all five books to implement the Law of Moses.

*“Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the **Law of Moses** the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against*

Him” (Daniel 9:11)

*“As it is written in the **Law of Moses**, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth” (Daniel 9:13).*

*The **Law of Moses** specified the punishments that would come for disobedience. (Deuteronomy 28:15).*

*“Remember the **Law of Moses**, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments” (Malachi 4:4).*

The book of Malachi was written largely to the priests and Levites to carry out their duty under the Law of Moses (Malachi 1:6; 2:1, 4-8; 3:3) By the time Christ came, the priests and Levites had largely replaced the principles of God and the Law of Moses with their own tradition (Matthew 15:4-9; 23:1-38), which made people contentious and greedy, rather than bringing them to God.

*Now when the days of her purification according to the **law of Moses** were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (Luke 2:22).*

This purification was explained in Leviticus 12. It required a priest, and was therefore part of the law of Moses.

*Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the **Law of Moses** and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44).*

Jewish scholars recognize three major division of the Scriptures: “the Law, the Prophets and the Writings”. Some Bible students will say that Christ is referring to those three divisions here—which would make the “Law of Moses” equivalent to the Pentateuch. So why did Christ say “Law of Moses” instead of just “Law”? For the same reason He said

“Psalms” instead of “Writings”. The Writings consist of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. But the subject here is “things that must be fulfilled...concerning Me (Christ)”. Of all the “Writings” the vast majority of the prophecies of Christ are in the Psalms—the Book of Daniel having some and the Song of Solomon sometimes interpreted as a prophecy. Similarly, the Law of Moses expounding the sacrifices and the Levitical rituals was all designed to point to Christ and the need for a Savior. When Christ came, the prophecies about him were fulfilled from the Prophets and from Psalms, and the purpose of the Levitical sacrifices was completed. Yes, Abraham’s Sacrifice of Isaac, and the Passover lamb also point to Christ and are not part of the Law of Moses, but Christ leaves them out of His summary statement here, lest anyone think that the Ten Commandments and other righteous principles of the Law are no longer necessary after His coming. These righteous principles are the laws He is writing on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Romans 2:12-16; Hebrews 8:10-11; 10:15-17)

*“If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the **law of Moses** should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?” (John 7:23).*

The Sabbath was given in Genesis 2:2-3 and reaffirmed in Exodus 20:8-11. Circumcision was originally given to Abraham in Genesis 17:10-27, but made part of the **Law of Moses** in Leviticus 12, and regarded as an agreement to keep the “whole law of Moses” (Acts 15:1; Galatians 5:3).

*“... and by Him [Christ] everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the **law of Moses** (Acts 13:39).*

*But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the **law of Moses**” (Acts 15:5).*

The Law of Moses was never in-

tended to produce eternal life (Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Heb 10:4). It was intended to remind Israel of God's laws, lest they break them so badly that He would destroy them, and to show them His salvation to come through Christ. Those who were not descended from Abraham had no part in the covenant of circumcision, and those who were not Israelites had no requirement to keep the Law of Moses. Abel, Enoch and Noah were made righteous by faith (Hebrews 11:1-7) without the covenants of circumcision or the Law of Moses. That same righteousness through faith is available to the believer today. The Law of Moses – those additions requiring a Levitical priesthood – ended for everybody in 70 A.D. when the temple and priesthood were destroyed. God, in His wisdom, has seen that they have not resumed.

*So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the **Law of Moses** and the Prophets, from morning till evening (Acts 28:23).*

*What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the **works of the law**. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone (Romans 9:30-32).*

(See comments on Galatians below)

“You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about? (1 Corinthians 9:9)

This is a citation of Deuteronomy 25:4, clearly part of the added Law of Moses.

*... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the **works of the law**; for by the **works of the law** no flesh*

shall be justified (Galatians 2:26). This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Galatians 3:2)

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Galatians 3:5)

For as many as are of the **works of the law** are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them (Galatians 3:10).

We can know that Galatians 3:10 is referring to the “law of Moses” because it is citing Deuteronomy 27:25, which is about the whole stones containing the “Law of Moses” (Deuteronomy 27:6; Joshua 8:31). Those laws contained curses for disobedience. The works that they were given to do would remind them of Christ to come, but they would not produce the faith that justified Abraham or every believer, today.

*Anyone who has rejected **Moses' law** dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Hebrews 10:28).*

This refers to Deuteronomy 17:6-7, which again deals with the punishments of the Law of Moses. The judges were not given the option of granting mercy to a murderer. With human judges prone to corruption, and with carnal people prone to making excuses to escape punishment, this surety of death for murder would reduce the number of murders in society. But is the death penalty for murder part of an eternal law of God or part of the added law of Moses? God did not give Cain the death penalty for murder, but banished him and set a mark on him to protect him (Genesis 4:9-15). About 4000 years later, Jesus forgave the men who crucified him (Luke 23:32-34).

Some Laws of God More Important than Others


To some, it might seem inconsistent of God to give different commands at different times. But that is what He in His Wisdom has chosen to do. The books of the Bible were written over the space

of at least 1600 years. Some people had direct access to Christ, apostles or prophets, others have not. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandments, He did not say they are all equally important, but He gave the two most important commandments (Matthew 22:37-39). A person who wants to serve God with his whole heart can do a lot with just those two commandments. But when a people rejects God time after time, He gives them laws that are not the best:

*... because they rejected my ordinances and did not observe my statutes, and profaned my sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. Nevertheless my eye spared them, and I did not destroy them or make an end of them in the wilderness.... because they had not executed my ordinances, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their ancestors' idols. Moreover **I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live.** (Ezekiel 20:16-17, 24-25, NRSV)*

One need not be troubled about which parts of the Old Testament are part of the Law of Moses, and whether or not they have application today with the destruction of the Levitical priesthood. In some cases it is obvious; we no longer offer animal sacrifices. In other cases, we may need to ask our Father to show us by the power of His Spirit:

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13).

We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:6). 

The Second Sabbath after the First

Jim B. Petersen

In Luke 6:1, Luke makes a strange reference to a special Sabbath, calling it “*the second Sabbath after the first.*” Some believe this to be the day of Pentecost because it is an annual Sabbath which follows a weekly Sabbath. A closer look at the story surrounding this unusual reference will help us determine what it is a reference to and what significance it has.

The setting of the story is one where Jesus and his disciples were walking through a grain field, and because of great hunger on the part of the disciples they took of the standing heads of grain and ate. Grain grew only in the spring of the year in two major food crops, barley and wheat. The harvest of those crops was significantly impacted by the spring celebrations of Unleavened Bread and the harvest of first fruits. The spring harvest could not begin until the first cutting of ripe barley was taken through the ceremony of the wave sheaf offering during the days of unleavened bread. The spring harvest started with the barley and continued with the wheat when it ripened soon after. The entire harvest was concluded at or before Pentecost (harvest of first fruits).

In this we see there was a possibility that Luke may have made reference to Pentecost as there could have been a few missed stands of grain left to garner from. This would be highly unlikely since there was included in that harvest a measure of time for accounting, a fact included in an archaeological fragment called the Gezer calendar of 925 BC

More plausible is the fact that they were walking in the grain field on an actual weekly Sabbath. This possibility is the wave sheaf offering Sabbath (the weekly Sabbath during the days of Unleavened Bread) where

the priests went out into the field to tie off selected samples of barley to be chosen from, and then cut off at the setting of the Sabbath sun. This selection of barley was threshed out and offered as a wave offering the following day. This Sabbath qualifies as a “second Sabbath after the first” in that it was the second Sabbath of the three festival Sabbaths of the days of Unleavened bread.

The ripened barley crop ready for the ceremonial cutting of the wave sheaf is a perfect match for the context of Luke’s account. Being protected by a sanctification rule that prevented harvesting before the priests cut the selected samples of this first crop also adds to the credibility of this being the day. To top it off Jesus appeal to David’s example in His defense of His disciples actions, speaks directly to a sanctification breach with the taking of the shew bread reserved for the Priesthood. This shew bread (comprising twelve loaves) was set out fresh every Sabbath (1 Sam. 21:6; Lev 24:5-9).

Special note was made of what happened on this unique weekly Sabbath day because Luke was providing information for the high ranking official Theophilus (Luke 1:1-3) (likely a Roman court official involved in Paul’s trial in Rome). Apparently this official understood Paul’s terminology and what laws or rules that were binding on that special Sabbath. It seems the expression “second Sabbath after the first” may have had greater usage and significance then than what we can appreciate in this age, seeing that we no longer wait for a cutting ceremony before we are allowed to start our harvesting.

Jesus was charged with allowing His disciples to take of that sanctified grain. Outright threshing of grain was prohibited on the Sabbath, but not

taking and eating a hand full. When oral law was finally written down after the fall of Jerusalem, it reduced the work restriction of harvesting on the Sabbath down to that of quantities as small as for a meal (that which could be put into a container-winnowing or threshing in any manner that would be productive in volume”). Even this regular Sabbath rule would have had to be stretched to bring condemnation to Jesus’ disciples actions. All fingers point to the breach of a ceremonial law, not a Sabbath one. Jesus’ appeal was not to some Sabbath law but to the incident with David and his men, an appeal that identified the lack of mercy on the part of the accusers (Matthew 12:7). A lack of mercy, judgment and faith were the accusers main failure in their penchant for obedience to the law (Matthew 23:23).

What Jesus established for His accusers that day was “*He was the Lord of the Sabbath.*” For it is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that one is able to enter the rest of eternal life, a gospel message that is abundant in mercy. Jesus was represented by that first cutting of barley on that special Sabbath. The Grain had ripened, the green life giving stalks had dried up and died, and as the sheaf was cut off from its earthly connection and lifted up so would Jesus be lifted up in resurrection. The life now in the kernels of grain were waved in acceptance to God the following day. So it was with Jesus, He was presented to the Father on that wave sheaf offering day that followed this special symbolic Sabbath. This special Sabbath, in its context of the days of unleavened bread, demonstrates the meaning of all Sabbaths as being the picture of eternal life through the sacrifice of Jesus. 📖

The Shepherd’s Voice® is a free offering.

It is made possible by the tithes and offerings of the Chicagoland Church of God members, participating churches, and individual contributors. Donations are welcome and may be tax deductible.

January 24, 2014

SVM:

I strongly feel the Scriptures in John 14:12 ought to be taken more seriously by all Christians so that the Body of Christ will grow up into maturity and attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ and be ready for the soon-coming Rapture.

—Jim in Singapore

Dear Jim,

We agree that we should do “greater works” than Christ did while he was on the Earth because His Spirit is in us. Many Christians feel it is enough to attend church and believe the right doctrines. But verses such as John 14:12 or 15:8 tell us we need to bear fruit: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples”

Christ and the Apostles did much of their work via the miraculous power of God. But there are times, such as when poor people needed help, that they made a physical collection of food—rather than miraculously create it as Christ did with the loaves and fishes. Today, most of the works of the Church are done with human effort to earn money to buy things to help people. Numerous groups have used their own physical efforts to translate the Bible into every major language on earth and to deliver copies almost everywhere. Many Christian missions help people who are starving, sick, depressed or controlled by substance abuse. Even though much of this has been done, numerous people still have no knowledge of Christianity and a lot more good works are needed.

Unfortunately, many church denominations have spent a lot of effort trying to convince people of their understanding of Christian doctrines—as more correct than doctrines of other groups. I would classify the “rapture” as one of those disputable doctrines. The word “rapture” does not occur in most Bible translations, and in the few that use it, it is a word for “joy” found in the Old Testament—nothing to do with Christians escaping tribulation.

One should always be very careful

Ask Norm!



asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

when the common name of a doctrine is not used in the Bible. How could the apostles have believed and taught a doctrine for which they did not have a name? There is a tendency of theologians to coin a term for a doctrine and assign many verses to it, when those verses may not be related in that way. For example, the verses used to support the “rapture” doctrine talk about “protection”, “being taken”, “Christ’s appearing”, “caught up in the air” etc. But these scriptures may not be talking about the same thing.

Whereas if one looks up “resurrection” in an exhaustive concordance, one will find numerous verses about that doctrine—including Hebrews 6:2 which lists it as one of the six elementary principles of Christ. Revelation 26:5-6 mention the “first resurrection” as most desirable—for believers who will reign with Christ at his return. I hope to see you there!



*Readers
respond to SVM
Summer 2014*

November 9, 2014

Greetings!

I love all the articles in the Summer 2014 SVM. You describe how to get along with all kinds of Sabbath keeping groups, as well as showing how much Sunday groups have played very vital parts! Your articles give tremendous spiritual wisdom. At times, it seems my

pot-holes and roadblocks come from former WCG friends, who think they must “set me straight” and “correct” me, whenever I open up from the heart and share with them. It’s insulting and snippy to me and makes me feel they are bragging and know more. So I must be corrected. Your articles quickly melted away these roots of bitterness, that quickly sprung up, after sharing our joyous and happy Feast cruise. (Those roots take hold fast and grow. ☺) It was a beautiful time. Also, it was the first Feast that my sweet husband wanted to join in with the group for meals, shows and group things on the ship, and that made me very thankful. ☺ All the various brethren, from the children to the elderly, were unique and special, and very loving and kind.

It is interesting how God uses every group for His purposes. It makes all my “gripes” melt like ice cubes thrown on the fire, and gives me understanding so I don’t get bitter and “too” carnal. LOL! It was very special to meet Jim and Kim Patterson and fellowship with them, as well as all the brethren on the cruise.

I thank you so much, for the blessing of SVM. It speaks to me, right where I need to hear!

With thanks and love and peace,
Terri Vining, Coral, Michigan

Dear Terri,

Thank you for your encouragement. We all need to face the question, “Where is God working?” If we do not, we may find ourselves speaking against what God is doing. Sure, the scripture teaches us to help people

“overtaken in a fault” (Galatians 6:1; Leviticus 19:17). But just because a person has a fault does not mean that God is not using them. Samson had sins, but the Philistines who thought God was not with him and dared to fight him died. Jonah defied God’s direct orders, but a lot of Ninevites still believed God was with him and they lived! We all have personal and doctrinal faults. We should not absorb the personal or doctrinal faults of others. But we cannot say that we or anyone else is not being used by God simply because they have personal and doctrinal faults that differ from our own.

If we are to work effectively with other believers, we must want to view them as God views them, not the way a self-seeking carnal person might view them. Please see the article, “What is Your Ministry Model?” in the previous issue.

March 26, 2014

Hello Norm!

Passover and Wavesheaf go together. Just as the Passover is a solemn reminder of Christ’s death for our sins and the renewal of the covenant we entered into with Him, so the Wavesheaf Day is a glorious reminder of His resurrection to eternal life. It is our Hope and What we are waiting patiently for. You can’t have one without the other. Sorry about the “Easter seals” They are just meant to be pretty flowers. I hope your Passover/Wavesheaf/Unleavened Bread week is Holy and Joyous Love and Peace,

—J.C.

Dear J.C.

Yes, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ should always be understood together. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” and then died on the cross, the victory had been won. He had been obedient to the Father, lived a sinless life, and paid the penalty for our sins:

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:10).

Some Feast-observing brethren have historically done little to observe the wavesheaf day and commemorate the resurrection—possibly concerned that they would appear to be keeping Easter. Indeed, they sometimes fall on the same day, as they did this year. There is not a command in Leviticus 23 to assemble on the Wavesheaf day, but there is a command for the priest to wave the sheaf and to count 50 days until Pentecost (The Feast of Weeks). Certainly those faithful to God would have wanted to witness these events in the Old Testament, and to honor these days in the New Testament.

It is interesting that the truth about these Spring days has become more commonly understood among mainstream Christianity. Many Churches now often have Passover meals and “Resurrection Sunday” or just “Resurrection” services instead of Easter. I noticed the Resurrection Card you sent me does not contain the word “Easter” and is scripturally sound.

That is a good trend.

I do not mind pictures of lilies on your card; God made lilies to bloom during the Passover season. Nor are rabbits, reindeer, holly branches, poinsettias or other living things God made somehow now evil because they have been used in non-biblical tradition. The job of the believer is to spread the true teaching of the Bible, not to be fearful of the misuse of things God made for good.

November 28, 2014

Dear Norm!

I want to commend you on the latest issue of Shepherd’s Voice Magazine. I am just overjoyed about the third paragraph in the left hand column of page 17 where you state the Bible does not teach that homosexuality is somehow greater than all other evils, that the Old Testament gave it the same penalty as cursing God, adultery or striking one’s parents. Here in the south, especially, I hear such awful statements against them by our own people, Sabbath keepers, professing to follow in the steps of our Savior. I wrote a poem I plan

to read every opportunity I get and I am sending it to you. I am hoping to cause some to stop and think. I also plan to copy the page in your magazine and put it into some hands.

Thank you for writing those words. I have enclosed a small donation which I feel will be put to good use. Also, the article about Learning from the Samaritans is so needful. And the one by Dave Havir on “Love is More Important than Biblical Interpretation”. The whole issue is full of needful admonition for the churches and assemblies. Thank you. I hope you have time to read my poem, taking note of the punctuation to get the feel of it.

—L.D.

Dear L.D.

Thank you for encouraging us in these truths. One of the difficulties facing all religious groups is exclusion. Jesus was faulted on one side for befriending tax collectors, prostitutes or other known sinners. He was faulted on the other side for dining with self-righteous Pharisees. The early church took years to accept non-Israelite believers. We all have tendencies to class certain people as “good” and others as “bad”, and then feel good about shunning the “bad.”

I read your poem—over 100 lines long! It accurately describes many of the sins that we tolerate in our congregations—especially when the people acknowledge that they are struggling to become free of the sin. I also agree with its point regarding believers rejecting people with homosexual tendencies before even attempting to find out if they are seeking recovery.

The Bible teaches the removal of flagrant sinners from a congregation. This includes people unconcerned with repenting, those with a noticeable negative impact on others and those who are a danger to others. If people are openly committing adultery with little care that it is sin, or if they are leading others to do it or if they are preying on innocent victims, they must be removed from a congregation.

continue on page 19



PABC Update: Witnessing to Both Small and Great

Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come (Acts 26:22).

The brethren at Port Austin Bible Campus ministry have certainly been involved in a witness to the small and the great. Why? Because that is what God does. He creates the stars of the universe (Isaiah 40:26); He counts the hairs on our head (Matt 10:29). He makes the sun stand still in the sky to give one army victory over another (Joshua 10-13); He made a shade plant grow in one night so one man could be more comfortable in the sun (Jonah 4:6, 10). Our scale is much smaller than these examples, but it is a principle of what God does.

In a ministry to homeless people, the “small things” can be as simple as saying an encouraging, “Hello how are you?” every morning to someone who may never have lived in an encouraging environment. Or, it can be helping people to get up at a certain time, make a list of what they want to do today or pray rather than give up. It is also showing dramatized version of the Bible to people who have never read or heard the Scriptures. And for some of our Guests, we are the first people they remember encouraging them to do the right thing without being angry towards them.

On the “great” side of the scale, we

have helped people leave a life of substance abuse and helped parents keep custody of their children that they would otherwise lose. On the other side, we have helped children escape bad parents. Years ago, I might have thought that I would never have been involved helping a teen escape her parents or helping government agencies take parents away from children. But when parents are hopelessly entangled in substance abuse or pathological lying—or when mothers bring a stream of Internet boyfriends through their home without regard for the safety of their daughters, it is time to protect the innocent (Psalm 82:3-4).

Living on the same campus, having the ability to know what someone else is doing 24 hours per day, provides a deep insight into what they really do. This is so much better than the few hours per week that most professionals have with them, whether they work for government agencies, healthcare establishments, law-enforcement, etc. Some people are good at putting on an act for a few hours per week and fooling veteran case-workers. But they cannot keep up the act continually—their substance use, rages, dishonesty, etc. will become evident to people who can check on them at any time.


As a very “large scale” project, our appeal to the Michigan Supreme Court questioning whether local zoning applies to churches that are not corporations was not accepted for hearing. Supreme courts generally have discretion to simply not rule on a case. This, however, gives us standing to appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States of America. Only about 2% of such cases are heard by Washington Court, but I believe it is ultimately God who will work with the judges to decide to hear it.

The details of the case were explained in SVM, Fall 2012 and SVM, Summer 2013 issues. In brief: a few days after people in the Port Austin township complained about the existence of a homeless shelter in their township, we were cited for having chickens in a business district. There were no complaints from our neighbors. We did not remove them because we believe that zoning applies only to churches that are corporations, which the state creates and can therefore regulate. In general, states do not make any laws

about what unincorporated churches do on their own property because of the First Amendment to the Federal Constitution: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

We lost our jury trial, and had to make our chickens cross the road into the part of our property zoned industrial. We lost a Circuit court appeal, and then the Michigan Court of Appeals and Supreme Court refused to consider it. Neither the prosecution nor any judge made any effort to address this legal argument. They essentially said, “zoning has been applied to other churches and so it must apply to yours” without citing any laws or cases specifically covering this matter.

While our chances of being heard at the nation’s Supreme Court are less, the effect a favorable decision will have on the nation is many times greater. It is also there, where constitutional issues are best considered. Since the Supreme Court has removed prayer, Bible reading and the ten commandments from schools and most public life on the doctrine of “separation of Church and State”, why should the state have control of where a church puts its chickens on its own property? Do we have “separation of Church and State”, or “State control of the Church”?

Zoning is a serious matter. In our legal research, we found it has frequently been used to close homeless ministries, churches, and other missions. This has happened by outright banning them, or by making their operation so expensive they can no longer afford it. We believe it is important to put these questions before the judges of our nation, just as the widow went to the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8). If we don’t ask, we may never receive. If we lose our religious freedom because we abandoned it to those who would take it away, then we are partly to blame. If leaders refuse to answer or claim that they have authority over the church, then we have done what we can and God will deal with them according to His timing and infinite wisdom. We would appreciate your prayers on this matter. If you are interested in this case, please contact PABC at 989-738-7700. 

continued from page 17

gation quickly. So it should be with homosexuals. One who claims it is a good lifestyle, who encourages others to do it or who preys on others must be required to leave. But the one who is repentant and seeking recovery should be welcomed and encouraged.

We are glad that so much of our magazine has been an encouragement to you. We hope to continue to be a blessing to you and many others.

Dear Norm!

I really liked your article in the summer 2014 SVM on Learning from the Samaritans. I have felt this way for a long time now. My mother-in-law is a Protestant, Church of Christ, Sunday- and Christmas-keeping believer in Jesus Christ and the Father. There is more good in her little finger than there is in all of me. She repented many, many years ago and was baptized by immersion into the Church of Christ. Do we really think that she isn't saved because she doesn't understand the true Sabbath and God's Holy Days?

There must be some reason Jesus says to the Churches, "hold on to what you have." Thanks to men such as William Tyndale we have the word of God in English, that any "plow boy" can read. He died at the stake by strangulation and burning for his efforts. He was a Protestant. Not many wise men or noble are called now, but there have been a few such as Tyndale to do noble things for the rest of us.

The problem is Nicolaity: when you have the clergy class telling the laity class what to believe. If they were all as William Tyndale or Peter, John or Paul, then that would be great. But unfortunately, there are a lot of false shepherds who knowingly mislead the brethren and then there are many who want to be teachers but don't understand the Bible as they think they do. Jesus says he "hates" Nicolaity. For good reason: it keeps people in ignorance.

Thanks to Tyndale and those who

finished his work after his death, we in the end times still have the words of the men who walked with Jesus. All we need to do is read it, study it and pray and discuss it together as a whole body and we would grow in grace and knowledge. We have the Holy Spirit and It will lead us into all truth. The word of God says so. Church services shouldn't be run the same as "the world". Something along the lines of the Synagogue in Christ's time sounds more correct. Paul discusses it in 1 Corinthians 14:23-40. Decently and in order as verse 40 states.

I just wanted to give you a little feedback on the article.

Jean C., Montana

Dear Jean,

Thank you for your encouragement and testimony about your mother-in-law. I know that Jesus Christ will judge in righteousness at His return—including everything that we have kept secret (Luke 8:7; Romans 2:16; 2 Timothy 4:1). I do not know how He will judge each person. Jesus apparently assured one of the criminals who died with Him that he would be in the Kingdom of God (Luke 23:43). Yet the Scribes and Pharisees, who kept the Sabbath and Feast days and taught the law of God, will not be in His Kingdom because of their hypocritical religious attitude (Matthew 23:1-14). It is clear that God rejects some people for teaching commandments of men rather than the truth of God (Matthew 15:9, Mark 7:7). An important principle of judgment is found in Luke 12:48: "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." We need to do the truth we know—even if others are not doing it.


I don't know how God decides what knowledge to give each person, but he clearly does not give everything to everyone. I have been studying the bible for 40 years and I do not think I will have it all right before I die—even if that is another 40 years from now. But I am not fearful, rather I am confident that "... He will judge the world in righteousness..." (Acts 17:31). It will be the best for me; it will be the best for your mother-in-

law; it will be the best for everybody! I think William Tyndale was a good example of a Christian. He was a brilliant, educated man who could have had a long, wealthy, distinguished university career. But he saw the need to translate the Scriptures into English. He tried to get the English government to repeal the Latin-only Scriptures law, but they refused. So he used his skill in speaking eight languages to travel Europe, pretending to be a native there, and quietly translating the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into English. After he had mostly completed his work, he was caught and executed for his "crime" in 1535 A.D.

There is no doubt that Tyndale was committed to obeying God as he understood Him—every bit as much as Sabbath-keepers who lost their jobs and families to keep the Sabbath. We need to realize that the world would have to wait over 350 years after Tyndale's death for James Strong to produce the first Exhaustive Concordance so people could thoroughly study subjects like "Sabbath", "first day", "week", etc.

I agree that denominational church hierarchies, or "Nicolaity" as you call it, have caused trouble for Christianity. It was church hierarchies of the past that sometimes decided the common people could not be trusted to read the Bible in their own language—and it is church hierarchies of today who sometimes decide on a list of doctrines that people must accept to be considered Christian.

Matthew 7:12-29 is a discourse by Jesus on how to recognize true servants of God. The first verse essentially expounds the golden rule. Then, He talks about bearing good fruits. Christ makes it clear that many will come in His Name and do religious things, but will not be true believers. But he talks mostly about fruits, not works or doctrines.

You are absolutely right about churches. We do not need a bunch of church organizations assuring their members that they have the truth and are right before God. We need individual Christians reading the Bible and living by the Holy Spirit—meeting together in congregations to edify each other and do Christian work together! 

Weep for Yourselves and for Your Children

Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—I have a question for you. Is a believer allowed to mourn when national events in society negatively affect him and his family? I ask this question because some religious people seek to minimize the role of mourning—by using religious phrases.

Some religious people say the following:

- “If you remember that God is in charge, you would not need to mourn over national events.”
- “If you had enough faith, you would not need to mourn over national events.”
- “If you would keep your eyes on the Kingdom of God, you would not need to mourn over national events.”

Such statements ignore what Jesus taught.

Notice a statement that Jesus made when He was walking toward His crucifixion:

But Jesus, turning to them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children” (Luke 23:28).

Believers notice that Jesus Christ understood the value of mourning. In fact, Jesus did more than understand its value—He recommended mourning.

Stating the Obvious

Before we discuss more about Christ’s endorsement of times to mourn, let’s quickly address some religious concepts. Believers are fully aware that God is in charge. They love the following five sections of Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:39; Job 38:4-41; Isaiah 40:12-31; Isaiah

45:5-12; and 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

- Believers are fully aware of the importance of faith. They love the following five sections of scripture: Exodus 14:13-14; Psalm 18; Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 16:24-27; and 2 Corinthians 4:8-9.
- Believers are fully aware of the importance of focusing on their heavenly citizenship. They love the following five sections of Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 3:1-3; and Hebrews 11:13-16.

It is acceptable to mourn. It is precious to comfort those in mourning.

- Second, we realize that Jesus set an example of mourning in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me’ (Matthew 26:37-38).



Sorrow is Acceptable

How do we know that sorrow can be acceptable? Here are two reasons:

- First, we realize that Jesus taught about the reality of mourning. He mentioned mourning in the section of scripture that is called the Sermon on the Mount. “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*” (Matthew 5:4)

If the sinless Christ experienced sorrow, it can be a healthy and valuable experience.

Sorrow for the Community

Okay. We see that Jesus experienced sorrow prior to His suffering and death. That seems understandable. But did Jesus ever experience mourning for the events of His community? Notice Christ’s emotional reaction.

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another; because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

Jesus mourned when He saw events affecting the community. People can mourn over local events, national events or global events.

Sorrow for the Family

Okay. We see that Jesus experienced an emotional reaction for the plight of His community. But did Jesus ever allow people to experience mourning for the events that affected their family? Notice Christ's perspective.

And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:27-28).

Jesus understood people mourning when events affected themselves and their family.

Just Get Over It

Some religious people in this present age could ask: "Do you really think the national calamities at this time rival the calamities recorded in history?" My answer: Since people mourn at different times, it is not important whether there are worse times of national calamities. Jesus gave people room to mourn. Will you give people room to mourn?

When people tend to minimize trials and calamity, it has the same effect as people who use the time-honored mistake of trying to help people in mourning—by saying "just get over it." The approach of "just get over it" reveals a fundamental lack of understanding about how to deal with people who are mourning.

Prophecy Can Hurt

Have you ever focused upon the fact that the reality of prophecy often hurts people? Believers understandably look forward to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of God's Kingdom. But the return of Jesus Christ will be preceded by some horrible conditions in the world. Both the Old and New Testaments reveal the biblical pattern for times of calamity often preceding times of blessing. The prophet Amos made a recommendation—do not be so anxious for the arrival of the Day of the Lord.

"Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good is the day of the LORD to you? It will be darkness, and not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him! Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?" (Amos 5:18-20)

I am sure that there are people who believe that the words of Amos apply only to the people of society. Friends, are you assuming that all believers will escape the calamities ahead? Certainly, you are aware of the many examples of chosen people being caught up in the pain of history and prophecy.

Do you understand that the details of prophecy may hurt a little—or maybe even hurt a lot? Although God said that the Babylonian captivity would eventually end with good news, those 70 years in captivity were difficult.

"For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all

the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive" (Jeremiah 29:10-14).

Although God was with the believers during the time when Christ came in the flesh, they had to deal with their nation being occupied. They had to deal with the atrocities of tax collectors and soldiers.


Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:12-14).

Final Thoughts

Here are a couple of reminders when the circumstances of life influence you to mourn for the conditions you see around you. It is recommended that when a believer prays for leaders he should pray for the well-being of the community and the family.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

It is recommended that when a believer experiences sorrow he should blend it with a true hope.

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope . . . For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 16-18). 

“Watch Therefore and Pray Always...”

Tommy Willis

A few months ago I read how a journalist related that he felt they are forced by both their readers and themselves to be shortsighted. He went on to relate that an historian can look back on matters with hindsight; but that a journalist is often rushed to get the news into the papers, and he believed this led to shortsightedness too much of the time.

This got me to thinking, that as Christians we need to be careful and not jump to conclusions with our Bible study, because sometimes over the years there's been the tendency to jump to conclusions as a certain event happened in the world. And we often linked it to a certain Bible prophecy, when there may have not been the connection we thought. But if we look at the bigger picture, we can keep a more balanced perspective.

People want to see the future, and often also want as much of the details as possible so that they can plan for their future. But how much of a perspective do you need to plan your future? Do we really need to know all the details? God says that if we seek Him diligently it will all work out for us. He will care for all of our needs as we seek Him first.

There's nothing wrong in planning for our future; we should do that. But we also need to be aware of what God tells us in the book of James:

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit.” Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even

a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live to do this or that” (James 4:13-15).

When I watch the evening news, Tom Brokaw usually ends the news broadcast by saying, “I’ll see you tomorrow night.” I usually respond by saying, “If God spares us Tom, I’ll see you tomorrow night.” I know Tom Brokaw cannot hear me, even though I can hear him. But responding this way helps me stay in focus, and helps keep my mind where it should be.

Concerning the end time Jesus said to: “*Watch therefore, and pray always...*” (Luke 21:36). It is through much contact with God that we will be prepared for His coming. Over the years when this Scripture was brought up we have often focused on the “watch” part so much more than the pray part that we got out of balance with it. We often took this to mean watching world events to the point of wanting to be aware of all the details as much as possible. And we have often let the “pray always” part slip into the background.

Even the “watch” part I believe has to do with watching our spiritual state, to be careful and watchful about our spiritual condition. I’m not trying to suggest that we should not be watching world events, because I do believe that applies also, and that God wants us to be aware of what is going on around us; and we should watch world events. And from all I see going on, I feel the end of the age is drawing near. But we can be watching world events diligently, and yet still be drifting from God. Plus,

we won’t really see the things we need to see if we are not staying close to God as we should be; we will only think we are.

Human nature simply wants to know about the future, and what is going to happen. And this often leads Christians to want to put everything into a neat little box concerning how future events will unfold.

If we are drawing closer to God in our personal contact with Him in our prayers and meditations, then He will have us see what we need to see concerning the times we are living in.

I remember a conversation I had about eight years ago with a brother in Christ. We both agreed that time was short, and that the end of the age was drawing near, because we felt all the signs were there. About a year and a half after that conversation, he found out he had cancer, and he only lived a few months more before passing on. Time is short for us all. We look to what will happen concerning the end time; and we should be aware of that. But our personal “end time” could happen soon. We may get cancer like my friend did. Or we could get in a car accident. God does not promise us tomorrow. So I believe that it is also the brevity of this life that God wants us to look at: “*So teach us to number our days, that we might apply our hearts to wisdom.*” (Psalm 90:12).

We are like a flower that is here today and gone tomorrow. And God wants us to use the time wisely to seek Him out, so that we will get to know Him. And watching our spiritual state is of more importance than trying to

watch every detail of world events. The word watch in the Greek relates to: “to be sleepless, to keep awake—watch.” It made me think of Matthew 25 with the wise and foolish virgins, and how we should be careful not to slumber or be asleep spiritually; but should heed the admonishment to keep awake.

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with the carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:34-36).

Some parts of those verses in different translations say, “*And take heed to yourselves.. lest at any time your mind should be dulled...*

your faculties numbed... or your mind clouded...” This Scripture relates to the distractions of this life that can take us away from God if we let it, and that day can come upon you unaware.

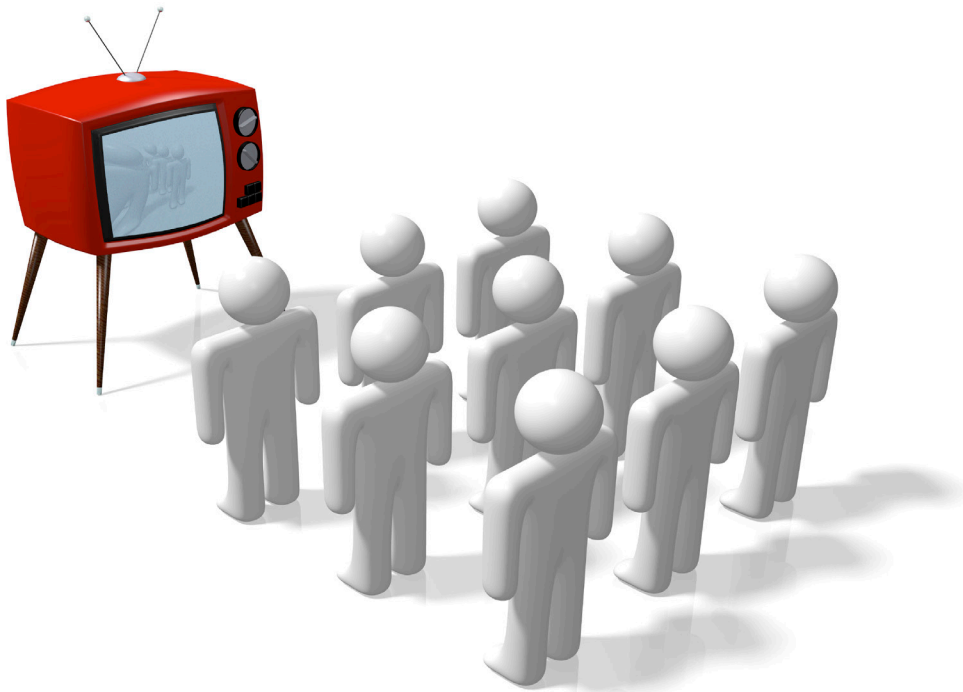
Years ago I asked myself how could a Christian be caught unaware with all that the Bible says will happen during the end time? Right after I had asked myself this question, I had allowed a lot of distractions to come in my life, because I had slacked up on my prayers; it was a week of chaos. Then God helped me see—have a week like I just had, and you could easily be caught unaware. It was a good lesson. That’s why we need to stay with Him in prayer. It is so important to stay close to our Father and Jesus Christ.

Certainly we should be aware of world events; but let us not leave the most important matter undone—that of watching our spiritual state. According to the above Scripture much prayer will be necessary for us to be prepared as we should be for His return.

Do not think you stand firm in these matters, lest you fall, because we cannot make it on our own strength. I came across a quote from a Greek poet that can apply here: “*All arrogance will reap a harvest rich in tears.*” We need to be building up our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Ask Him to take you by the hand and lead you through the Scriptures. Spend much time in prayer, and get to know Him personally. Get your foundation down in Him. And as this old world gets shaken as Scripture says it will, everything around us can fall; but we can still be standing if we get grounded in Jesus Christ. “*Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling...*” (Jude 24).

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (1 Peter 4:7).

Are we to watch world events?



Feast at Wooten Woods, Tennessee

This 2015 Feast of Tabernacles at Wooten Woods, Tennessee promises to be different than any Feast you have attended before. From its initial outside service with an hour-long blood-red moon visible, to its diversity of believers attending, to its emphasis on music and nature—all with the purpose of evangelism in mind!

The purpose is to bring together Christians who are looking forward to the return of Christ, no matter what their religious background. Many believers observe His death and resurrection, as well as the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—and will be overjoyed to find a Feast celebrating His return.

When Jesus walked this earth, He talked to the religious leaders and the sinners, the rich and the poor, the Jews and the Gentiles. He was not afraid to lose His virtue, because he was in constant contact with God. Those of us who have been filled with the Holy Spirit and reading God's word for 30 or more years should be able to be teachers (Hebrews 5:12; Galatians 6:1). Those of us who have been musicians for years should be ready to inspire others with their music (Colossians 3:16). We will be happy to see you there.

Much detail is available on the website: KingdomFeast.org. You may e-mail nedwards@kingdomfeast.org or call me directly at 989-738-7774.



Feast at Penticton, British Columbia

This year will be the fifth Feast of Tabernacles celebrated in Penticton, British Columbia. The previous four have been a delight; a time of rejoicing with God's people from many different organizations, worshipping one God as one family.

Penticton is a jewel, located in the wine and fruit growing area of B.C. surrounded by mountains and sandwiched between two large lakes, Okanagan to the north and Skaha to the south. It is a beautiful setting for the Feast.

There are many things to do in the area such as golfing, fishing, biking, shopping, walking trails, rock climbing and of course, touring the vineyards. There is also a wide variety of restaurants. There will be planned activities, both indoor and out.

For more information, please contact Alex Kennedy at 250-488-3624, kennoman@icloud.com