

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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What About the Law?

by Dennis Baldwin, South Carolina

Collecting one's thoughts regarding a particular topic often requires a considerable amount of mental acuity. It sometimes requires letting go of opinions held for many years. The difficulties are intensified when one has built a framework around the topic which then affects many facets of what may have taken years to sort out. Difficulties arise as we attempt to deal with mental "baggage" which we have collected over the years. It is possible for our reasoning to be captivated by what often turns out to be a false line of thinking. It's no wonder that Paul said, "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

Solomon made an excellent observation when he said, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Prov. 23:7). We are a product of how we think. If our thinking is in disarray, we find ourselves in a *mental muddle*. There is nothing to do but destroy those false assumptions which rise up against the knowledge of God and let the spirit of truth assist us in bringing our thinking in line with God's mind. God lamented, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways" (Isa. 55:8).

I do not think that was intended to be an "Oh well" statement, but a call for us to change the way we think and do what it takes to begin thinking like God. That's what Jesus did: Jesus said, "I didn't make this up. What I teach comes from the One who sent me" (John 7:16, MSG). Most of what we believe we learned from someone else or we made it up ourselves. We desperately need to learn to think like Jesus. Paul saw the advantage of using this method of following Jesus' pattern: "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).

The Law of Moses

Moving from the Law of Moses (Heb. 10:28) to the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) was not a simple or straightforward task for the early Jewish converts. Paul warned Timothy about those "wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they were saying or the matters about which they made confident assertions" (1 Tim 1:7).

Paul was accused of "preaching against the Jewish people and the Law...and bringing Greeks into the temple, thus defiling the holy place" (Acts 21:28). The people were incensed, grabbed Paul and dragged him out of the temple, began beating him and were going to kill him, but a Roman commander came to Paul's defense and rescued him. Paul was taken to the barracks, and while standing on the stairs he was given permission to speak to the people. In the Hebrew dialect Paul made his defense to the people: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today" (Acts 22:3).

In Acts chapter 15, Luke chronicled how certain men came down from Judea (probably those Paul wrote to the Galatians about, who came from James, a known pillar and brother of Jesus, Gal. 2:12) and began teaching among the converts that "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). The dissension even caused Barnabas to be carried away in his thinking (Gal. 2:13). Paul had to confront Cephas (the rock who was instructed to feed the Lord's sheep). He needed to be reminded that even though they were Jews by nature, they must realize that a man is not put right by the works of the Law but through faith (Gal. 2:15-16). Difficulties arose and were dealt with. The book of Galatians sets it all straight both for them and it should for us, but many still struggle with the Law and its commandments and ordinances.

In Acts chapter 15 the Apostles and elders came together to look into the matter of circumcision as well as other kindred matters. After "much debate" Peter spoke up: "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are" (Acts 15:10-11).

Peter was quick to get to the root of the problem, as were Paul and Barnabas, and then James who gave his summation: "Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood" (Acts 15:19-20).

A letter was put together and sent to “those turning to God from among the Gentiles.” This letter included the following: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell” (Acts 15:28-29).

No instructions were included regarding any holy day or Sabbath day. That should end all the fuss. It didn’t then, and it still hasn’t.

Two Covenants

Paul invited those in Galatia who wanted to be “under the law” (as well as under grace) to stop and think about it: “listen to the law” (Gal. 4:21). He then reminds them of the “allegory” presented by the two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael. (An allegory is a story/picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning.)

In summary, Ishmael’s mother, Hagar, was Sarah’s bondswoman (she was a slave). Ishmael, Paul said, was born “according to the flesh” (Gal. 4:23). Allegorically speaking (*get the picture*), Hagar represented the First Covenant (the Law) which came from Mt. Sinai in Arabia and produced children who Paul calls “slaves” (v. 24). Paul encouraged the Galatians to realize that these children (children of the First Covenant, the Law) were *enslaved* and in *bondage* under the First Covenant, the Law. Even as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, the children of the *New Covenant* were at that time being persecuted by the children of the First Covenant, the Law (v. 29).

Isaac, the son of the free woman Sarah, was a child of promise (God had promised him to Abraham; thus he represented the promises of God) and symbolized the *New Covenant* in the allegorical picture. The promise is represented by “Jerusalem which is above” and is free (v. 26). These children, like Isaac, are born according to the Spirit, by promise (v. 28-29). Jesus explained the “new birth” in detail to Nicodemus in John chapter 3. Paul concluded that “It was for freedom that Christ set us free” (5:1).

We often fail to remember that “Abraham looked for the city whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10, 16). This is no doubt referring to the “New Jerusalem” described in the last two chapters of Revelation — part of the promises which God made to Abraham of *progeny*, *property*, and *prosperity*. The story prefigures the obsolescence of the Law (Heb. 8:13) in the casting out of the bondswoman, for God did not intend the children of the bondswoman to be heirs with the children of the free woman (Gal. 4:30). “So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondswoman [the Law], but of the free woman” (v. 31).

Paul was simply making the point that God had always intended for the future to belong, not to the Law: “When [God] said, ‘a new covenant,’ He has made the old **obsolete**. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is **ready to disappear**” (Heb. 8:13). Instead the future belongs to the promises of God contained in the *New Covenant* instituted by Messiah Jesus. Paul instructed the Galatians not to return to the Law, the yoke of slavery and bondage to which they were being encouraged to return by false teachers, as some are even today.

Why Then the Law?

“This commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So then, the **Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good**. Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that **through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful**” (Rom. 7:10-13).

“Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For **if a law had been given which was able to impart life**, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by the faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But **before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law**, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our **tutor** to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:21-24).

It must be pointed out, as Paul did, that the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good (Rom. 7:11). It was written on the tablets of stone by the “finger of God” (Ex. 31:18; Deut. 9:10) and “ordained by angels” (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19). However, let it also be noted that there was not given “a law which could impart life” (Gal. 3:21). The law was given so that sin could be seen as it actually is: “utterly sinful” (Rom. 7:13). Jesus made it plain that he did not come “to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill,” give it its ultimate meaning (Matt. 5:17).

Jesus, the Agent of Change

Jesus was the “agent of change” because: “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? For **when the**

priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also" (Heb. 7:11-12).

For Jesus to be the "mediator of a **better covenant**" (Heb. 8:6) he firstly had to have the **decree** to make him so: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4). Jesus "has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life" (Heb. 7:16). Remember that David was a prophet of God (Acts 2:30). As "high priest," the agent of change had to have something to offer, which he did:

"Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have not desired, nor have you taken pleasure in them' (**which are offered according to the Law**), then he said, '**Behold, I have come to do Your will.**' He **takes away the first** in order to establish the **second**. By this will we have been sanctified through the **offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**" (Heb 10:8-10).

This is why it was said of the prophesied Messiah: "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a **body You have prepared for me**; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure.' Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) **to do Your will, O God**'" (Heb 10:5-7).

Jesus, the Messianic high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (from the tribe of Judah) and not according to the order of the Law of Moses (from the tribe of Levi), had something to offer, namely himself, which he offered for our sins on the cross of Calvary. To the Father he said, "not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39).

The New Covenant

Let me examine a few more New Covenant texts to better understand the issues confronting many of our friends who otherwise could be enjoying the freedom offered under the New Covenant.

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke" (Jer. 31:31-32).

The commandment, whose purpose included making sin appear exceedingly sinful (Rom. 7:13) and being a "schoolmaster" to bring God's people to the Messiah, was "holy, righteous and good." But according to Jeremiah the people of God "**broke**" that covenant. God made the covenant; the Jews broke the covenant, and God had every right to ordain a New Covenant in the place of the First Covenant. There was ordained a "New Covenant," a "better covenant," "a more excellent ministry," "enacted on better promises," "a better hope"

(Heb. 8:6; 7:19). "If that **first** covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a **second**" (Heb. 8:7). Another high priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" was ordained in Psalm 110:4. He was ordained to replace the sons of Aaron even though this High Priest (Jesus) was from the tribe of Judah. By ordaining a "New Covenant" God, by decree, "**made the first covenant obsolete**. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear" (Heb. 8:13).

Shall we be so forward as to resurrect that Old Covenant and by that action actually reject the New Covenant which the Messiah established by his blood? "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20).

It needs to be emphasized again that the first covenant refers to the covenant made on Mt. Sinai in Arabia (Gal. 4:24-25). Remember that the two tablets God gave Moses (twice) were written with "the finger of God": "The Lord gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them were all the words which the Lord had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly" (Deut. 9:10; also Ex. 31:18).

It might be helpful to understand that this covenant written by the finger of God came with an "until"; "obsolete...and ready to disappear"; an "abolishing"; "a setting aside"; a "fading away"; "a time of reformation."

"Under guardians and managers **until** the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, coming into existence from a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:2-5).

"When He said, 'a new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming **obsolete** and growing old is ready to **disappear**" (Heb. 8:13).

"By **abolishing** in his flesh the enmity, which is the **Law of commandments contained in ordinances**, so that in himself he might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace" (Eph 2:15).

"There is a **setting aside** of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness" (Heb. 7:18).

We "are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the **end of what was fading away**" (2 Cor. 3:13).

"Since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a **time of reformation**" (Heb 9:10).

As the Agent of Change Did Jesus Change the Law?

"For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also" (Heb. 7:12). It is

important to concede that there was to be a change in the Law, and the change would come because of the change in the priesthood, and it would come from Jesus, *the agent of change*:

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill it. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:17-18).

It would be helpful to grasp the significance of what Moses had to say about the prophet like himself whom God would raise up from among the brethren: “I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him” (Deut. 18:18-19).

Jesus fulfills that prophecy according to Peter in his second sermon at Pentecost (Acts 3:22-23). God’s words would come from the Messiah’s mouth because they were put there by God. He must be heard in all things. Jesus said, “My teaching is not mine but His who sent me” (John 7:16). God Himself said, “This is my beloved Son...listen to him” (Matt. 17:5). Examine the changes in the Law that Jesus made:

“A **new commandment** I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34).

“**You have heard that the ancients** were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ **But I say to you** that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell” (Matt. 5:21-22).

“**You have heard that it was said**, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; **but I say to you** that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28).

“Again, **you have heard that the ancients were told**, ‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.’ **But I say to you**, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these comes from evil” (Matt. 5:33-37).

“**You have heard that it was said**, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ **But I say to you**, do not

resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matt. 5:38-39).

“**You have heard that it was said**, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **But I say to you**, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:43-45).

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that **I commanded you**; and look, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

“‘Now **in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women** [Deut. 22:22]; what then do you say?...He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her...Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ She said, ‘No one, lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘I do not condemn you either. Go. From now on sin no more’” (John 8:5-11).

“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields **on the Sabbath**, and his disciples became hungry and **began to pick the heads of grain and eat**. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, ‘Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.’ But he said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple **break the Sabbath and are innocent**? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For **the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath**” (Matt. 12:1-8).

Paul wrote to the Galatians and the Corinthians about the “**Law of Messiah**,” and James called it the perfect “law of liberty” (alluding to the freedom of the New Covenant in the allegory of Gal. 4):

“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the **law of Messiah**” (Gal. 6:2).

“To those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the **law of Messiah**, so that I might win those who are without law” (1 Cor. 9:21).

“But one who looks intently at the **perfect law, the law of liberty**, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25).

Conclusion

“Christ is the **end of the law** for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4).

In spite of all that he had said regarding his training, his dedication to and association with the Law, Paul made the following monumental statement:

“To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, **as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law**, so that I might win those who are under the Law” (1 Cor. 9:20).

So let me ask the reader: Are you under the First Covenant or the New Covenant? Why would you want to continue under the First Covenant? Jesus, Peter, James, Paul and the other Apostles sorted this out long ago. It does boil down to that. Jesus “abolished in his flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances” (Eph. 2:15).

“But what does the Scripture say? ‘Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.’ So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman. It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 4:30-5:1).

Paul issued a decisive warning: Do not get physically circumcised. If you do (don’t do it!) “you will be obliged to keep the **whole Law**” (Gal. 5:2-3). What is this “**whole Law**” which you are instructed *not* to keep? It is important to be in the right, one and only New Covenant. ✧

Everything Is Theological

by Barbara Buzzard, Georgia

As Bible-believing Christians our minds are so very different to those who are unbelievers. Our views are and should be formed and colored by the Scriptures. For it is in them that we find...

To be converted is to be transformed — of mind, of attitude, of judgment, of the **way we see**. We see with new eyes and new hearts. We *see* with the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

And so it seems that everything is theological:

- Our moral compasses and values
- The way we think and the way we speak
- The words that we speak
- The way we treat others
- The way we treat animals
- The way we treat the earth
- The way we spend our time
- The way we see the past and the future
- The way we see our environment
- The way we view the biology of our bodies
- The way we view world news
- The way we choose a mate
- How we reflect on things
- Our leisure and entertainment choices

- How we spend our money
- How we celebrate
- The way we evaluate our selves/our church/our lives

Allowing Scripture to define our thinking in no way limits free will. It enhances it. The Scriptures provide the perfect points of reference that we need. They are not only the frame and the backdrop but the centerpiece as well. We often object to strict uniformity, and yet in a subtle way we follow fads that almost demand our adherence to fashion or outlook or protocol. We yield to peer pressure, both as children and as adults, and we don’t recognize that we have been coerced and inveigled into a pattern of acting or thinking which society has determined. It is much safer to invest in and lean on Scripture.

Also theological:

- Our ambitions and resolutions
- Our views on child rearing
- Our views on charity and mercy and compassion
- Our views on responsibility
- Our views on separation of church and state
- Our views on capital punishment
- Our views on violence
- Our views on abortion
- Our views on adoption
- Our views on relationships, physical, emotional and spiritual
- Our views on same sex marriage and transgenderism
- Our responses to tragedy
- What we eat (can you imagine a junk food Messiah?)
- What we consider virtues
- What we consider non-negotiables

And so if your Christianity has not taken over your life, please move in that direction. It is the only safe way to go when we face that moment of Truth. As John Eldredge says, “What you believe about the Kingdom changes everything.”¹ To be sure, what we believe about Jesus changes everything. There is no need to drift. It is not so much a matter of legislation but of education. We became Bible students for life when we enrolled in the program. This is where the rubber meets the road. It is required to be ALL IN.

It is said that Jewish rabbis have a prayer for everything — proving my point that everything is theological. Prayers commence at the first waking

¹ *All Things New: Heaven, Earth and the Restoration of Everything You Love*, p. 55.

moment and cover most activities of the day. There is, for example, a prayer for drinking wine and a prayer for the first springtime blossoms — which is to say that God is involved in everything. As prayer is an integral part of a Christian's life, so too are the choices we make, and the decisions which make us who we are. The mindset of consulting Scripture increases our everyday awareness of our Creator and His Messiah.

Looking into the media mirror will seduce and deceive, will blind and distort. Add to that the fact that we deceive ourselves (Ps. 119:29). A comparison between our view and the view of Scripture is critical. Hold yourself to the most stringent of tests. Having the mind of Christ presents us with a profoundly life-changing pattern of thinking. We have been blessed with a code of conduct which will enable us to defeat Satan and to be found worthy of God's greatest reward, that invitation to administer justice with His Son. ✧

Daniel 12:1-3 solves all problems about the events connected with the future coming of Jesus. At the time of the death of the final King of the North (Dan. 11:45), the Great Tribulation will happen (**12:1**; Matt. 24:21), followed "at that time" by the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:23; Luke 14:14) to the life of the age to come (**12:2**), and the shining of the saints like the stars in the Kingdom (**12:3**), affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 13:43.

To State the Obvious

Mark 9:7: "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!"

1 Tim. 6:3-4: "If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with the health-giving words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing..."

2 John 7-9: "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son."

Luke 6:46: "Why do you call me 'lord, lord' and refuse to do what I say?"

John 14:15: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

It is beyond all possible argument that the Christianity of the Bible must be based on the words of Jesus himself, not only on the fact that he died for our sins and was raised from death on the third day. Jesus

asserted in Matthew 5:17: "Do not imagine that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I came not to abolish, but to **fulfill**...Not the smallest letter or stroke will pass from the Law until all is fulfilled."

It is a falsehood to maintain that Jesus came to carry out the Law of Moses in the letter. If that is what he did, we would all be obliged as his followers to keep the Law of Moses in the letter. The truth is that Jesus came to teach the Law of Messiah in the spirit (1 Cor. 9:21). There is therefore a fundamental difference between the Law of Moses in the letter and the law as fulfilled and brought to its intended level, spiritualized by Jesus. In this way Jesus is the model Christian, the second Adam perfectly fulfilling the will of his Father.

Three classic examples are shown by:

1. The fact that Jesus repealed part of the Mosaic Law of divorce and created a standard which goes back to Genesis (Matt. 19:3-9).

2. Jesus refused to obey the Mosaic Law that all adulterers should be stoned. Again, he took the Torah to a higher standard, teaching the spirit of the Law (John 8:3-11).

3. Mark 7:19 notes that Jesus "cleansed all foods."

In five blocks of information in Matthew, each ending with the words, "When Jesus had finished all these sayings,"² Jesus is presented as the new Law-giver in the spirit. These are the words of the New Covenant, which Jesus then ratified by his death. Jesus is the new and final Moses.

A further spiritualizing and heightening of the Torah was given by Paul. Jesus said, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). But the basis for the spiritualizing and heightening is found in the words of Jesus, the master-teacher and presenter of the New Covenant. It is thus untrue to say that Jesus kept the Law of Moses in the letter. If that were the case, the Law of Moses would be the true Christian standard which we would be obliged to follow. At stake in this discussion is the fundamental truth that the words of the historical Jesus are the foundation of biblical Christianity. Salvation depends on it (Heb. 5:9). ✧

The *spirits* to whom Jesus made a proclamation after he rose from the dead (1 Pet. 3:18-20) were the fallen angels/demons involved in the outrageous sin of Genesis 6. The word "spirits," when used absolutely, by itself, unqualified, to describe a class of personalities, always means angels or demons. In this case of course it is demons. There was an unparalleled mating of some evil angels with human females, producing giants, and a degree of evil which led to the flood.

² Matt. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1.

Comments

• “After more than fifty years at the Jehovah’s Witness organization, I’m going through a faith metamorphosis. I’m convinced that most of the Watchtower teachings are not truth but, due to family and shunning, am still underground. I have been watching your weekly Bible study and I’m really amazed on how clear and simple are your Bible dissertations. Keep preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.” — *Email*

• “At the age of 20 I became a Communist. After the Soviet occupation of our country in August 1968, I was completely sobered and started looking for a new direction for my life. My reflections on the second sentence of thermodynamics and information theory led me to a clear conclusion: In the beginning was the information, super-information. In the beginning was the word. I tried to get to the source of this super-information. I experimented with yoga, a bit of spiritism, and eventually I came to the Bible through a connection with Jehovah’s Witnesses, which was a forbidden Church in our country. In September 1971 my wife and I were baptized. In our newly found faith we were very zealous, preaching the early coming of the Kingdom of God, and also experiencing feelings of close brotherhood amongst our brothers and sisters of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Since May 1984 I have spent 10 months in prison as an elder of a church unauthorized by Communist government. After the so-called Velvet Revolution in 1989/90, it was possible to hold any faith without persecution. At the time of totalitarianism, as Jehovah’s Witnesses, we experienced quite a great deal of freedom in the discussion of biblical issues and in authentic fraternal interpersonal relationships. While there was a totalitarian regime outside of our church, we were experiencing freedom within our church. Now the situation had changed radically. The atmosphere in our church had become increasingly legalistic. The ever-increasing pressure on the consciences by the Church structures many of the most conscientious Witnesses refused to endure and either left or were excluded. It took me over eight years before I fully realized what was happening. At the end of 2001, I was also excommunicated. But what next? I was looking for where to turn. Besides interviews with many people, I have been studying Christian authors, such as Hans Küng. I was almost desperate. At the end of 2005, fortunately, I found an article on the Internet about the blood problem. The author is Raymond Franz, former member of the Governing Body of Watchtower Society. I got his whole book *In Search of Christian Freedom*. Its content helped me completely break up with the teachings of the Witnesses and free myself. It was not until the spring of 2017 that I found your brochure *What*

Happens When We Die? Finally, a precise explanation based on the Bible, and only the Bible! But I am completely overwhelmed by the book *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah* — sower and the seed of immortality, so I actually always felt! Finally, I have to sow according to the principle in Matt. 10:8: You received free; give free.” — *Czech Republic*

He has translated many of our Restoration Fellowship articles and books into Czech (on our website).

• “My good friend told me about the Restoration Fellowship books. I received *They Never Told Me This in Church!* Other than my Bible it is the best book I own! My friend is a pastor and he told me that that book could have saved him about seven years of study!” — *North Carolina, correctional institution*

• “Thank you for the definitive take on the understanding of Scripture. I have bought *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven* and am about halfway through at the moment. Totally mind releasing. Refreshing straight forward logical understanding. I have been a Christian since 1981 in Pentecostal Assemblies of God fellowship and always had a niggle inside over issues like Trinity, heaven and Kingdom but accepted the classical teaching in Bible studies with slight misgivings for about 36 years. About seven years ago my wife and I faded from regular church life as it seemed to be playing church. A year ago I was challenged by a couple on Pentecostal issues which led me to doing some serious study online and Bible reading to get a reply in order. I came across your and Dan Gill’s videos which addressed all these niggly issues. Just wanted to say Hi and encourage you in your work. I think there is a growing groundswell of correct understanding occurring round the world, but it has not caught on here yet. New Zealand would be 99.5% Trinitarian. Certainly all my Christian friends are and they think I have flipped.” — *New Zealand*

• “The 2 Jehovah’s Witness groups are:

1. The 144,000 for whom Jesus is the mediator. These are also kings and priests and are the only humans in the covenant — really the only humans that matter.
2. Then there is the rest of the Witness population, who are classed as the ‘domestics’ or ‘other sheep.’ These ones are not in the New Covenant but benefit from associating with the ‘kings and priests’/144,000 class.

Then there is all the rest of humanity who aren’t Witnesses and they are the walking dead! That’s basically how they are viewed if they don’t become a JW before Armageddon. They are doomed, and those of us who have left the organization are already viewed as dead. And I’m not exaggerating! I was a Witness for 35 wasted years!” — *Australia*