

DID CHRIST CANCEL THE COMMANDMENTS?

The question of commandment keeping has caused many heated arguments since the demise and disappearance of the early church. For centuries, theologians have taught that the followers of Christ no longer need to keep the Ten Commandments or any for that matter of the laws that the Creator God gave to ancient Israel, because the sacrifice of Christ canceled these laws and released mankind from any obligation to practice them.

Is this true? Were God's laws canceled at the death of Christ?

Does it really matter if you understand or practice any of the 613 plus laws contained in the Bible? Are these laws important or not? The answer may surprise you, because it is not what is popularly believed and taught today. Therefore, you might want to pay careful attention to the information contained in this broadcast about what the Bible actually says about the necessity to practice these laws in order to enter into the Kingdom of God as an eternal immortal spirit-being.

Believe it or not according to both the Old and New Testaments these laws are extremely important and their rejection by professing Christianity is one of the reasons that there is so much hatred, murder, violence, war, lying, cheating, and sexual perversion and promiscuity in the nations that they occupy. Few people realize that this world's problems are a direct result of people not practicing God's law.

Who Gave the Ten Commandments to the tribes of Israel?

The first chapter of the Gospel of John reveals that the Creator God who gave the Sovereign God's law to Israel was the God who came to earth as the Messiah. As the Creator God, Jesus was the one who created Adam and Eve, had mercy on Noah and his family, and was the one who Abraham walked and talked with on a personal basis.

The apostle John tells us this about the Creator God and the Sovereign God.

John says:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; and without him nothing was made that has been made" (Jn.1:1-3 NIV Para.).

The truth is that the God of the Old Testament was none other than the one who became Jesus Christ. And he was the one who gave the Sovereign God's laws to the tribes of Israel.

The Book of Exodus chapter 20, verses 1 through 17, contain the Ten Commandments as they were given to the tribes of Israel. These ten laws are the foundation of all 613 plus laws set forth in the biblical record.

A Review of the Commandments

Because the Ten Commandments instruct people to express love toward God and mankind, it is important to ask ourselves the following questions about these laws in order to see if these laws are truly an oppressive burden from which humanity needed to be released:

- Is it too much to ask for a person to worship, honor, and praise the one who created the universe and set in motion the laws that allow us to exist?
- Is it too much to ask for a person to acknowledge the true God as the only giver of all life?
- Is it a hardship, not to worship idols, and not to take God's name in vain?
- Was it cruel of Creator God to expect his creation to observe the seventh day of the week as a memorial of his awesome and wonderful creation?
- Is it a horrible thing to honor our fathers and mothers?

- Is it silly to ask people to respect the life of another human-being?
- Was God too harsh, when he said that a man and a woman should honor their marital contract and not commit adultery?
- Is it too much to ask of people that they not to steal another person's property?
- Is it too much to ask of people that they speak the truth?
- Was it cruel of Creator God to expect a man not to be envious of his neighbor and lust after his wife and his material things?

One does not have to have great intellect, to understand that the ten commandments are very good! There is nothing bad, evil, or wrong about these laws. They do not cause pain or suffering. Instead, they are designed to establish a harmonious relationship between God and mankind and to foster love, understanding, and peace among people.

For every effect there is a cause. All of the evil, pain, and suffering in this world, is the effect of people violating God's laws, precepts, and principles.

GOD'S COMMANDS AND LAWS ARE FOR OUR GOOD

After bringing the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, Moses records in chapter 4 of the Book of Deuteronomy that God loved them because he loved them he gave them his statutes and Commandments:

Let us review a little of what God said in Deuteronomy chapter 4, beginning in verse 36:

"From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire. Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your

inheritance, as it is today. Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Therefore, you shall practice his statutes and his commandments" (Deut.4:36-40).

God gave his law to the Israelites for their benefit. It was designed to bring them happiness, joy, and prosperity during their lifetime. However, the Israelites were not willing to accept these laws as an expression of his love for them; instead, they rebelled in their hearts, minds, and attitudes:

God said in Deuteronomy chapter 5:

"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" (Deut.5:29 NIV).

THE LAW IS PERFECT

Psalm 19 tells us of the tremendous blessings of God's law:

Beginning in verse 7:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward" (Psa.19:7-11 NIV).

God calls the disobedience to these laws sin.

The apostle John said: "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness" (1.Jn.3:4 NIV).

In Romans chapter 7, verse 7, the apostle Paul said that he would not have known what sin was if the law had not been there to reveal it to him. Moreover, he indicates that he is talking about the Law that is contained in the Ten Commandments,

by citing the tenth commandment, "you shall not covet." Because this law is a part of the Ten Commandments, Paul must be inferring that sin is the transgression of these ten foundational laws.

Paul also said,

"So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (Rom.7:12 NIV). And, "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin."

The apostle James also says the same thing: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (Jms.2:10). James points out that the Ten Commandments are a part of a larger body of law and that if just one part of the law is broken, the entire law is violated.

The apostle John said:

"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness."

There is no doubt as to what the apostles said is sin! Sin is the violation of God's law, and God's laws are summed up in the Ten Commandments.

And according to the apostle Paul, the wages of sin results in the death of the sinner (Rom.6:23).

Because God the Father has offered the gift of eternal life through the sacrifice Jesus Christ, is it true that he did away with the Ten Commandments and all of the other laws that he established for the benefit of mankind?

Is it true that a person who follows the teaching of Christ should no longer be concerned with any of these precepts and principles?

Matthew chapter 5, verse 17, is the scripture that is most quoted in order to show that Jesus did away with the Law. In this verse Jesus said:

"Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to destroy them but to fulfill them" (Matt.5:17 NIV).

Today, many theologians and professing Christian leaders teach that, in fulfilling the Law, Jesus did away with it. However, this is not logical. How could Jesus not destroy the Law and still destroy it?

In order to prove that this scripture does not say that the law has been done away with, it is important to research the original language of the text. The English word 'destroy' in verse 17, is translated from the Greek word 'kataluoo', which means 'tear down', 'demolish', 'do away with', 'abolish', 'annul', and 'make invalid'.

Jesus said that we were not even to think that he would destroy law! Yet, how many millions of professing Christians not only think he did, but actually believe that he destroyed the law?

The English word 'fulfill' in verse 17, is translated from a Greek word ('elaruoo'), which means 'to fill to the full', 'to complete', 'to make full', and 'to fulfill by doing'. It is impossible to both fill something up and empty and destroy it at the same time.

When studying the Bible, it is necessary to read scriptures in context, which helps to give the complete meaning to whatever subject is being studied. Therefore, it is important to read the rest of what Jesus says about the law.

Continuing in chapter 5, verse 18 Jesus says:

"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (v18).

Is heaven and earth still here? Yes! Has everything in God's Word been fulfilled? No! Is the Law of God still in effect? Yes! Because Jesus says it is still in effect!

Jesus continues in verse 19 to explain God's laws and commandments:

"Everyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called less than nothing in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these

commandments will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (v19 Para.).

A major problem with most teachers of the Bible since the demise and disappearance of the early church, is that, most have only taught enough of the scriptures to support their pet doctrines or their own ideas about what the Bible says.

There is no doubt that Christianity is one of the world's largest religions. There are over 20,000 different organizations and congregational associations that profess Christianity and claim to worship and serve the God of the Bible and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. And almost all of these competing churches and organizations teach that God's law has been canceled to one degree or another. About the only one of God's laws their leaders agree on as being totally valid, is the law tithing law, which puts money into their pockets.

The problem for those who teach that Jesus canceled God's law, is justifying the portions of biblical law that they feel should be practiced. Logic tells us, that, if Jesus canceled God's law, that the requirement to practice any portion of it is also canceled, Including tithing.

The larger question is, which one of these 20,000 plus competing professing Christian entities is to be trusted in their view of biblical law?

The Bible clearly shows that Jesus Christ only established one entity through which he would proclaim his Heavenly Father's good news message to mankind before he comes back to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. So which one of these competing churches is the custodian of God's truth and which one is actually teaching the truth in reference to God's law?

The apostle Paul said the saints at Ephesus:

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph.4:4-6 KJV).

Clearly the Sovereign Father earthly family of ambassadors, kings and priests is not divided into 20,000 plus different organizations and congregational associations that are a chaotic blend of many different beliefs and philosophies that are ever changing and continually being redefined as spiritual leadership and world circumstances change.

The choices of Christian churches range from one extreme to another: small personal groups, large crowds, quite scholarly and intellectual organizations, noisy frenzied Pentecostal churches, giant cathedrals or evangelistic tents. There seems no end to the choices a person has when seeking a religious experience. Today, we find tens of thousands of churches that call themselves Christian yet the vast majority do not even faintly resemble the early church.

With so many widely differing views, opinions, and interpretations of what the Bible actually says, who do you believe? The answer is, believe no one. Do not believe what anyone tells you about the Bible and God's law, unless you can prove it from the pages of the Bible or from a credible historical source

Because both the Old and New Testaments record that there is only one faith and one method of worship that is acceptable to God, logic tells us that, if any one of these thousands of differing groups is correct in their worship of God, then all the others are incorrect and stand condemned as being counterfeits of the Sovereign God's worship system.

The simple fact is that many people would like to know what the Bible actually says, but most people are too lazy to study the Bible for themselves and would rather have someone else tell them what they should believe the Bible says. Therefore, most people, including most people who teach the Bible do not understand the importance of God's law to their salvation.

Jesus said that there are two distinct paths that a person can follow during one's life, but there is only one path that will lead to eternal and immortal life.

Jesus said:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the path that leads to destruction, and many will enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the path that leads to life, and only a few will find it. (Matt.7:13-14) Para.)

Just how important is to understand and practice God's law?

Again Jesus said: "Many will say to me in that day (that is, in the day of judgement), Lord, Lord, didn't we prophecy in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I say to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you workers of lawlessness".

Logically, one can not be a worker of lawlessness if God's law has been canceled. So why would Jesus reprimand these people for being lawless? The answer is that, God's law does exist and has not been canceled. Because the law does exist, a person who breaks it is a worker of lawlessness. And those who violate God's law will find themselves being thrown into the Lake of Fire in the day of their judgement.

It is clear what Jesus said, when he said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt.5:17 NIV).

We know that Jesus Christ came to fulfill all the prophecies concerning his first coming. And that the prophecies about his second coming are yet to be fulfilled.

The question is, how did he fulfill the law and not destroy it?

The prophecy of Christ coming and what he would do for God's law is found in the Book of Isaiah chapter 42, verse 21, which says:

"The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable" (Isa.42:21).

The English word 'magnify' in verse 21, is translated from a Hebrew word that literally means 'to make great' or 'cause to be great'. This is exactly what Jesus Christ did concerning the law of God. He magnified the law by showing how good and beneficial it is.

As the Creator God, Jesus gave the Sovereign God's law to the Israelites. When he gave these laws, he fully intended for Israel to keep the letter and the spirit of each law. In return, the Israelites would be blessed with tremendous physical blessings. See Deut.28. .

The Creator God said:

"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" (Deut.5:29 NIV).

Although the Israelites understood the physical basis for keeping the law, most of them did not comprehend the spiritual intent and meaning of the laws and commandments of God.

Therefore, a part of the plan of God for the salvation of humanity called for Jesus Christ to come and to explain the spiritual intent and meaning of these laws and commandments. This is precisely what he did as recorded in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7, and Luke chapter 6.

All of the teachings of Jesus Christ concerning the commandments of God bring their full spiritual meaning and intent into focus!

Other Teachings of Christ about the Commandments

The question of eternal life is on the minds of many people today, just as it was on the minds of people during Jesus' day. A young man asked Jesus, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus replied, "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (Matt.19:16-17 NIV).

If Jesus had come to abolish the commandments, why did he tell this young man to keep them? Jesus

told the young man in no uncertain terms that, if he expected to receive eternal life, he must keep the commandments!

When Jesus told the young man to keep the commandments, he replied, "which ones" to this question Jesus replied, "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt.19:18-19 NIV).

Part of these instructions are from the Ten Commandments, and the instruction "to love your neighbor" is a law from the covenant between God and national Israel (Lev.19:18).

Jesus was explaining that eternal life is not gained only through obedience to the Ten Commandments, but one must also love one's neighbor, because all of the commandments are based on the principle of love (Matt.22:37-40).

The young man replied, "All these I have kept, What do I still lack?" (v.20).

Apparently the young man thought that he would receive eternal life immediately, because he had done these things to the best of his ability. To the young man's question, Jesus replied, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me" (v21).

What Jesus said to this young man shows that we must keep the Ten Commandments and the rest of God's laws, if we expect to receive eternal life. Moreover, we must not only keep the commandments, but also we must totally devote our lives to God and follow Jesus Christ's example without reservation.

VAIN WORSHIP

Jesus was not the soft-spoken person that most people have imagined. Neither was he an insipid and feeble personality, which is falsely depicted in so many pictures of Christ, which actually violates the second commandment against idolatry. On the contrary, Jesus was a dynamic, powerful,

personality who spoke the truth without reservation.

He spoke openly to the Pharisees and Scribes who were in opposition to his teachings and said the following concerning their teaching about God's law:

"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. And he said to them: 'You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!'" (Mk.7:6-9 NIV).

Jesus emphatically argued that people are hypocrites if they reject the law of God and claim to worship him!

Many people profess to love God? But how does a person know that God loves them?

The apostle John recorded that Jesus said concerning those who truly love him and those whom his Father loves:

Jesus said:

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. . . . "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me" (Jn.14:21, 23-24 NIV).

Consider also how Jesus says that we can remain in his love: He said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (Jn.15:10 NIV).

The apostle Peter said, "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1.Pet.2:21 NIV).

One of the examples that Jesus gave us to follow, was his obedience of the letter and spirit of his Heavenly Father's law.

New Testament Teachings about God's Commandments

When we practice God's law, we show our love for God the Father and his son our Savior. However, if we violate God's law, we show that we hate God the Father and his Son.

Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command" (Jn.15:14 NIV). You are a friend of Jesus Christ if you do the things that he has commanded. But, you are his enemy if you do not keep his commandments:

The apostle Paul told the Colossians that they were once alienated from God and were his enemies because of their evil behavior" (Col.1:21).

In Mark chapter 7, Jesus said that, "From within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. (Mk.7:21-23 NIV).

All of the things that Jesus mentions here are violations of God's law and make a man unclean and unfit to enter the Kingdom of God. In order to avoid violation God's law a person must change their way of thinking and their lifestyle in order to become a righteous person. One must also accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins. Only then can we love and obey God from our heart.

God's solution to removing sin is not the removal or destruction of his laws that show a person what sin is. His solution is to change a person's thought process from evil thoughts and behaviors to righteous thoughts and behaviors. God's purpose is to truly establish his law within the minds and hearts of men and women.

In Hebrews chapter 8, the writer repeats God's promise to change the hearts and minds of people, in order for them to keep his law:

God says:

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Heb.8:10 NIV).

This is how we are truly reconciled to God the Father. There is a change of mind, which is called conversion. One is converted from a hostile, sinning, evil-minded person into a loving, commandment-keeping, law abiding person who does the will of God. After this conversion, one is no longer an enemy of God!

What is the ultimate fate of God's enemies?

Do not be deceived, just professing Jesus name and doing good works does insure one's salvation:

Jesus said: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you worker of lawlessness'" (Matt.7:21-23 NIV).

A person must be doing the will of the Father, otherwise a person is a worker of lawlessness and will have their life terminated in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death from which there is no return.

The Book of Revelation shows that liars will not be in the Kingdom of God, but they will be burned up in the Lake of Fire! (Rev.21:8, 27; 22:15)

It would make no sense to throw a person in the lake of fire for lying if a person does not have to practice the commandment that says not to lie.

The simple fact, is that, there is no justification in the biblical record for violating God's laws, precepts, and principles. An honest study of the biblical record shows that in order to please God and to obtain eternal and immortal life a person must be practicing God's laws, precepts, and principles to the best of one's ability during this life time.

There are many sincere and dedicated people who believe that they are worshiping God in truth and that God's law is no longer applicable because of Christ's sacrifice. However, this is not what the Bible says. Sincerity and dedication do not equal truth! Only truth is truth! Sincerity only shows the attitude with which people do what they do.

Only God determines what truth is and is not. The Bible teaches that "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro.14:12 KJV).

It is apparent that many people are truly dedicated to their religious precepts, but this does not mean that they understand the truth of God. The sad fact, is that, most people today who profess to believe in the Bible, have been misled by false prophets and teachers, who teach a counterfeit of God's truth.

If this were not true there would only be one truth being taught and only one unified body teaching this one truth. Instead there thousands of competing associations and organizations who profess to teach biblical truth. Logic tells us that, because both the Old and New Testaments record that there is only one faith and one method of worship that is acceptable to God, if any one of these thousands of competing groups is correct, then all the others are incorrect and stand condemned as followers and teachers of a false system of worship and belief.

Should a person who professes to follow the teachings of the Bible practice God's law? The answer from the Bible is that, a person cannot be in harmony with God the Father or his son the Savior of mankind, unless a person is practicing all of the commandments and other biblical law that defines a person's relationship with them.

Solomon summarized the answer to the question of whether or not to practice God's law, when he said:

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Eccl.12:13-14 NIV)

I see that my time is up, if you want to know more about God's law and why it should be practiced during the gospel age of salvation or the more about other subjects that I have briefly touched on in this in this broadcast, Write to me at the at the address given in the following announcement. Until next time this is Bud Cocherell for Bible Research.

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