

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth – Part 1

Are We Under the Law & Must Christians Obey the Ten Commandments?

***"Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth." II Timothy 2:15***

Confusion and wrong doctrine amongst believers in the church comes from people who do not "rightly divide" the word of God. They do not read Scripture in its entire context, or take into account to whom the writer is speaking. Is the writer speaking to Christians? Is he speaking about Believers, or about non-believers? Is he speaking about Israel, or about the church of Jesus Christ? Is he speaking to people under the Law of Moses, or to people under the dispensation of grace? God makes a distinction between people, and we must be careful to see to whom He is speaking in a particular passage of Scripture. God has divided people into three distinct categories: (1.) unbelieving Jews (the nation of Israel), (2.) unbelieving Gentiles, and (3.) the church of God, which is the body of Christ.

- **I Corinthians 10:32** "Give none offense, neither **to the Jews**, nor **to the Gentiles**, nor **to the CHURCH of God**."
- **Ephesians 1:22-23** "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things **to the CHURCH, which is His BODY**, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

So, the question is this: are we as Christians (the church of God and Body of Christ) under the law, and must we as Christians obey the Ten Commandments? "The Law" refers to the Old Testament Law and commandments God gave to Moses and the Israelites. Keeping the Old Testament Law could **NEVER** give a person eternal life. **Salvation and eternal life HAS ALWAYS BEEN by FAITH in GOD** (see Hebrews 11:1-39). The Law serves the purpose of SHOWING US HOW FAR WE ARE FROM GOD'S PERFECT STANDARD, and thus shows us that we CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES, and that **we NEED A SAVIOR!! The Law DEFINES SIN**, shows us how sinful we are, how destructive sin is in our lives, and how HORRIBLE sin is in God's sight.

- **I Timothy 1:8-10** "But we know that **the law is good, if a man use it lawfully**; knowing this, that **the law is NOT made for a RIGHTEOUS man** (we, as Christians, are made righteous in Christ - II Cor. 5:21), but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers (fornicators), for them that defile themselves with mankind (homosexuals), for menstealers (kidnappers), for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."
- **Galatians 3:19,21 & 23** "What PURPOSE then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions (sins), till the Seed (Christ - see Gal. 3:16) should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." "Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law." "But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, **kept for the FAITH which would afterward be revealed (when Christ came)**."

- **Romans 7:7-8** "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have KNOWN sin except through the law. For I would not have KNOWN [about] covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"
- **Romans 6:14** "For SIN shall NOT have DOMINION over you, for **you are NOT UNDER LAW but under GRACE.**"

Jesus said He came to fulfill the law. **Once something is fulfilled, it is done**, it is over. Jesus said from the cross, **"It is finished!"** When a debt is fulfilled and paid, you don't have to keep making payments. There are over 300 prophecies of the first coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures, but once Jesus came and fulfilled those prophecies, their purpose was accomplished (fulfilled). The same goes for **the Ten Commandments and ALL of the Law of Moses: it has been FULFILLED and ACCOMPLISHED in Jesus Christ, and we as believers are "in Christ" and our righteousness is IN HIM**, so we do not have to live by a set of rules and commandments. Because **"the righteous REQUIREMENT of the LAW is FULFILLED in us"** through what Jesus did on the cross (Romans 8:4), God says in Romans 7:1-6 that we "have become **DEAD to the LAW** through the BODY of CHRIST" and **"we have been DELIVERED from the LAW, having DIED** to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the **NEWNESS of the SPIRIT** and not in the **OLDNESS of the letter (of the law).**" We could never keep God's laws ourselves, so God now **IMPUTES to us** (applies to our account) the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and since He kept the law perfectly, the REQUIREMENT has been FULFILLED in us through Jesus.

- **Matthew 5:17-18** "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but **to FULFILL**. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law **UNTIL ALL is FULFILLED.**"
- **II Corinthians 5:21** "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might **be MADE the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God in Him.**"
- **Romans 8:4** "That **the righteous REQUIREMENT of the LAW** might be **FULFILLED in us** who do not walk according to the flesh but **according to the Spirit.**"
- **Romans 4:5-6** "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, **his FAITH is ACCOUNTED for RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom **God IMPUTES righteousness** apart from WORKS....."
- **Galatians 2:16-21** "Knowing that a man is **not** justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and **not by the works of the Law**; for **by the works of the Law** shall no flesh be justified..... **For I through the Law am DEAD to the Law, that I might LIVE unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh (in this human body) I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for **if righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain.**"
- **Romans 7:1-6** "Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that **the law has DOMINION** over a man **as long as he lives?**..... "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become **DEAD to the LAW through the BODY of CHRIST**, that you may be **married to another**, even to **Him who was raised from the dead**, that we should **bear FRUIT to God**. For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to **bear fruit to death**. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the **NEWNESS of the SPIRIT** and not in the **oldness of the letter.**"
- **Romans 6:3-4** "Or do you not know that as many of us as were BAPTIZED into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were BURIED with Him through baptism into DEATH, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in NEWNESS of LIFE.**"

God wants us to serve Him in the **NEWNESS of the SPIRIT** and not in the **OLDNESS of the letter (of the law).**" **Jesus said we are to "BEAR FRUIT to GOD."** In this context "fruit" means product, RESULTS, outcome. The OUTCOME of our lives should be to DO God's will and live a life that is pleasing to Him.

- **John 15:8** "Herein is My Father glorified, that **ye BEAR much FRUIT**; so shall ye be My disciples."
- **Galatians 5:22-23** "But **the FRUIT of the SPIRIT** is LOVE, JOY, PEACE, longsuffering (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."
- **Colossians 1:10** "That you may have **a walk (lifestyle) worthy of the Lord, fully PLEASING Him, being FRUITFUL** in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Don't be confused; the moral laws of God still remain. Sin is still sin. Murder is still murder, and will always be wrong and a sin. Lying is still lying, and will always be wrong and a sin. Fornication (adultery) will always be wrong and a sin. However, under the New Covenant, these sins are referred to as the "works of the flesh" (Romans 13:8-14, Galatians 5:13-21), and we as Christians are commanded **to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.** Everything we do under the New Covenant is to be done in the power of the Holy Spirit, and not the letter of the law, and our motivation for obeying God is out of LOVE, not out of fear of death under the Law of Moses. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). I remember as a new Christian wondering, "What are those commandments? Are they the Ten Commandments? I thought the New Testament teaches that we are not under the law, but under grace? So how does that fit in with keeping the commandments of Jesus?" The answer is, first of all, that these are the commandments of Jesus, not Moses - Jesus said, "If you love Me, **keep MY commandments.**" There are several principles regarding the commandments of Jesus which are repeated in the Scriptures: **(1.)** If you love Jesus **you will keep His commandments;** **(2.)** Jesus said that ALL the commandments are summed up in "**LOVE God and LOVE your neighbor as yourself**"; **(3.)** The Holy Spirit gives us the love of God in our hearts and the power to carry out the commandments; **(4.)** Keeping His commandments and **abiding in His LOVE** is proof that we belong to Him. So, it is a continuous cycle of God pouring His love into us so that we can keep His commandments, and our obeying His commandments keeps us abiding in His love. If God Himself gives us the power to love and keep His commandments, then what is our responsibility, what is our part in the equation? Jesus said, "You shall LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." **This means that we must be WILLING to ALLOW God to pour out His love in and through us.** We must turn ALL of our strength and purpose, ALL of our emotions and feelings, ALL of our thought-life towards God, and **ASK Him to USE US** as a container and channel of His love. He provides the power, but He does not force it on us, or give it to us **while our hearts and minds are occupied in selfish, worldly concerns. He waits for us to be willing vessels,** and then He will pour out His love and power into us and through us to others.

- **James 2:8** "If ye fulfil **the ROYAL LAW** according to the Scripture, '**Thou shalt LOVE thy neighbor as Thyself,**' ye do well."
- **John 13:34-35** "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; *even* as I have loved you, that **you also LOVE one another.** By this all will **know that you are My DISCIPLES,** if you have LOVE for ONE ANOTHER."
- **Romans 13:8-10** "Owe no one anything except **to LOVE one another, for he who loves another has FULFILLED the LAW.** For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, '**You shall LOVE your neighbor as yourself.**' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore **LOVE is the fulfillment of the law.**"
- **Galatians 5:13-16** "For you, brethren, have been called to **liberty (freedom);** only do not use **liberty** as an opportunity for the flesh, but through LOVE serve one

- another. **For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall LOVE your neighbor as yourself.'**..... I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."
- **John 14:21 & 23-24** "He who has My commandments and keeps them, **it is he who LOVES Me....**" "Jesus answered and said to him, **'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My WORD;** and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make Our home with him. **He who does not love Me does not keep MY WORDS**"
 - **I John 2:3-6** "Now by this we know that we know Him (Jesus), if we keep His (Jesus') commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But **whoever KEEPS His WORD, truly the LOVE of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.** He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."
 - **I John 2:7 & 3:11** "Brethren, I write **no new commandment** to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning (from the beginning of Jesus' ministry)." **"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should LOVE one another."**
 - **I John 3:23** "And **this is His commandment,** that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **LOVE one another, just as HE COMMANDED US."**
 - **I Timothy 1:5** "But the goal of **our COMMANDMENT is LOVE from a pure heart** and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Despite what the New Testament teaches about our being under grace and not under the law, some people would have us believe that we must still keep the Ten Commandments, and especially the 4th commandment, which is keeping the Sabbath. They are not "rightly dividing the word of God" and they have not considered a few other issues that are involved. For instance, **if you are going to require adherence to the Ten Commandments, why must you also not keep the approximately 600 additional commandments given to Israel under the Law of Moses?** (Deuteronomy 28:15). If you are going to pick out the weekly 7th day Sabbath, what about all the other "sabbaths" and holy days, and the Passover, and going to the temple in Jerusalem for these holy days? The Israelites were required to keep ALL the holy days and sabbaths. Under the New Covenant, God tells us **they were only a shadow** of the real thing that was to come, which is Jesus Christ Himself. The temple in Jerusalem was a symbol or "shadow" and God allowed it to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. It was no longer needed, because WE are now the temple of the living God. Under the New Covenant, we no longer need a priest, because God says WE are His royal priesthood. We no longer have to observe the Passover, because Christ is our Passover (I Corinthians 5:7).

- **Colossians 2:16-17** "Therefore let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or SABBATHS, which are a SHADOW of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."
- **James 2:10** "For whoever shall **keep the WHOLE LAW,** and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."
- **I Peter 2:9-10** "But **YOU** are a **chosen generation, a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, a holy nation, His own special people,** that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"
- **I Corinthians 3:16** "Do you not know that **YOU are the TEMPLE of God** and that **the Spirit of God dwells in YOU?**"
- **I Corinthians 6:19** "Or do you not know that **YOUR BODY is the TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit** who is in **YOU,** whom you have from God, and **YOU are not your own?**"
- **II Corinthians 6:16** "..... For **YOU are the TEMPLE of the living God.** As God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them, I will be their God, and they shall be **My people.**'"

Also, if you are going to put yourself back under the law, you must accept the death penalty and "curse" for not keeping the law. **The law was an unbearable BONDAGE** that no one

could keep, and the penalty for breaking the Sabbath was being stoned to death. We are in Christ, and Christ has made us free from the curse of the law!

- **Galatians 5:1** "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which **Christ has made us FREE**, and do not be entangled again with **a yoke of BONDAGE**."
- **II Corinthians 3:4-6** "And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the **NEW COVENANT**, not of the letter (the written law) but of the Spirit; for the **LETTER KILLS**, but the Spirit gives life. But if **the ministry of DEATH, written and engraved on STONES** (the 10 Commandments on stone tablets), was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, (Exodus 34:1-9, 27-35) how will the ministry (working) of the Spirit not be more glorious?"
- **Galatians 3:10 & 13** "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.'" "Christ has redeemed us from **the CURSE of the LAW**, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.')"
- **Galatians 4:3-5, 9-10, 21-31** "Even so we, when we were children, were in **BONDAGE** under the elements of the world. But when the **FULNESS** of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born **under the LAW, to redeem those who were UNDER the LAW**, that we might receive the adoption as sons." "But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the **WEAK and BEGGARLY** elements, to which **you desire again to be in BONDAGE? You observe DAYS (Sabbath days)** and months and seasons and years...." "Tell me, **you who desire to be under the law**, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman..... which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from **Mount Sinai (the law of Moses)** which gives birth to **BONDAGE**..... "But as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit (see John 3:3-7), even so it is now. Nevertheless, what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.' So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman but of the **FREE**."

Finally, we are saved by **GRACE through our FAITH** (Ephesians 2:8-9), and NOT by our works or by keeping the Old Testament Law, but that does NOT give us **LICENSE** to **SIN** or to live any old way that we please. We **SHOULD** do good works and be **OBEIENT** to what we know God wants us to do, but as Christians, we are NOT to put ourselves back under the Old Testament Law or **any other form of LEGALISM, RITUALS or keeping ORDINANCES**. Being "**UNDER GRACE**" means we are to serve God out of the **motivation of LOVE and GRATITUDE**, and **by the POWER of the HOLY SPIRIT!**

- **Galatians 3:6-7, 17 & 29** "Just as Abraham '**believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**' Therefore know that only those who are **of FAITH are sons of Abraham.**" "And this I say, that the **LAW** (of Moses), which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect." "And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Questions & Answers

QUESTION - Must Christians Obey the Ten Commandments? What about the 4th commandment, to keep the Sabbath? "I'm pretty sure Jesus kept the Sabbath.

ANSWER - Now, if some people want to put themselves back under the law and keep the Sabbath, that is their business, and Romans 14:1-6 says that we are not to argue with or put down those who are "weak" in their understanding of Scripture, and we are not to judge one another on the basis of what holidays and days of worship we decide to keep. However, many of those who teach that we must keep ALL of the Ten Commandments take Scripture verses out of context, and even twist them to try to prove their point, and that is wrong. Let's look at some of the verses they use to "prove" that we as Christians must still keep the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments.

As for Jesus keeping the Sabbath, of course Jesus kept ALL of the Old Covenant commandments, because He was a prophet under the Old Covenant **until AFTER His crucifixion and resurrection**. He went into the synagogues and into the temple in Jerusalem to read from the scrolls of the Scriptures, and to preach, but He preached that the kingdom of God was near, that it was coming soon. He preached that the very Scriptures He was reading were being fulfilled right then, but He also preached that something new was on its way - that is the New Testament or New Covenant, and we are under that New Covenant of grace, not of law. Jesus still operated under the Old Mosaic Law as a Jew, because He came to fulfill the law for us! God's word says that Jesus took upon Himself on the cross ALL of our sins and iniquities (Colossians 2:14), which means our inability to keep God's law, and then it says He rose again for our justification (Romans 4:25)

1.) Matthew 24:20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."

Jesus was answering the Disciples' question, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the **SIGN of Your coming**, and of the **END of the AGE?**" (Verse 3) He was speaking to the JEWS, and their question concerned the Temple in Jerusalem. In Matthew 24, Jesus is **telling the JEWS about what will happen to the JEWS and their TEMPLE** in the LAST DAYS (vs. 16 "then let **those who are IN JUDEA** flee to the mountains...."). Many people get confused when reading the Bible, because they do not distinguish between ISRAEL and the CHURCH. There are prophecies that concern Israel, and there are prophecies that concern the Church of Jesus Christ, and these two are NOT the same! The Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the END of the seven-year Great Tribulation will be VISIBLE (the "sign" of His coming). The Rapture is when we, the Believers in Christ, are CAUGHT UP to meet Jesus in the clouds at His SECRET coming for His church. The Rapture is NOT the same as His VERY VISIBLE Second Coming on the Mount of Olives with all His armies of saints and angels with Him (we will be COMING BACK WITH Jesus then). The Rapture and the Second Coming at the "end of the age" are TWO SEPARATE EVENTS.

2.) Mark 2:27-28

3.) Hebrews 4:4-11

4.) Colossians 1:16

5.) Romans 2:21-29

6.) Romans 3:29-31

7.) I Corinthians 7:19

8.) Acts 5:29

9.) I John 2:1-4

10.) I John 3:22-24

11.) I John 5:1-3

12.) Revelation 12:17

13.) Revelation 14:12

14.) Revelation 22:12-14

15.) Leviticus 24:22 & 26:1-5

More verses - Romans 2:28-29, John 1:47 with Psalm 32:2 & 73:1, Galatians 5:26-29, Exodus 20:11 romans 3:31, Romans 8:3-4,