THE MOSAIC LAW
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Introduction

One of the great controversies that have plagued the church for centuries, in fact from its very inception is that of the Mosaic Law. Specifically, what is the Law’s relationship to sinful mankind and his eternal salvation? Also, what is the Law’s relationship to the Christian’s spiritual life? It is the prayer of this author that this article will help to answer these questions and many others.

J. Hampton Keathley III writes, “One of the profound emphases of the New Testament, especially the epistles of Paul, is that Christians are no longer under the rule of the Mosaic law. This truth is stated in no uncertain terms and in various ways (see Rom. 6:14; 7:1-14; Gal. 3:10-13, 24-25; 4:21; 5:1,13; 2 Cor. 3:7-18), but in spite of this, there have always been those who insist that the Mosaic Law, at least the Ten Commandments, are still in force for the Christian.” (The Mosaic Law: Its Function and Purpose in the New Testament, page 1)

Vocabulary

Classical Usage of Nomos

In the English Bible the expression “the Law” translates the noun nomos, which is formed from the verb nemo, which means, “distribute, deal out, assign, grant” especially in the sense of assigning property, apportioning pasture or agricultural land.

In ancient times it has a comprehensive range of meaning which embraces any kind of existing or accepted norm, order, custom, usage or tradition. The word denoted anything that was legally prescribed, regulated, or customarily practiced in any given society’s social, cultural, and political structure. In other words, the reference is to those processes which are essential whenever men live together in a community, whether small or great.

In the earliest period nomos is a creation and revelation of Zeus and is thus rooted in a divine sphere in which there is true belief. Nomos embraces every aspect of human life and it is by its very nature righteousness.

Relationships to earthly possessions have to be determined in a legally binding fashion, so that private and communal ownership may become a reality. The word nomos (found in literature from the time of Hesiod, 7th century B.C.) originally referred to distributing and what follows from it. It meant that which has been laid down, ordered or assigned but more particularly the results of this, namely arrangements which become regularized and attain the status of tradition.
The word therefore denotes custom, usage, statute, law, especially in the context of distribution of goods, and of law and order. The legal, ethical and religious meanings of nomos are inseparable in antiquity, for all goods were believed to come from the gods, who upheld order in the universe and in relations between men. Hence, the universal conviction, found throughout history, that law is linked to the divine—an idea which has persisted subconsciously even in periods when the purely human aspects of law have been emphasized.

The relation of Socrates to the laws of the state illustrates the significance of nomos for Greek ethics. Socrates does not distinguish between his pure conscience and degenerate political morality.

For the classical Greek world does not speak of personal moral conscience but of objective knowledge of what is right and wrong. Used in a political context, nomos was regarded as the most essential feature of the polis or city-state, i.e., the judicial norm, legal custom, the “law of the land.”

In the fifth century B.C. Greeks began to document and codify their laws and soon nomos came to represent the law or laws enacted by the city-state governing body known as the polis and administered by the judicial system.

Nomos was written down as nomoi (plural Laws), thereby acquiring the specific meaning of written law, the constitution (of the polis), the coercive law of the state, which had to be obeyed upon pain of punishment. This purely political view of nomos led to relativization and an increasingly man-centered approach to law.

Many Greek tragedies rested on the fact that one law stands over against another with both claiming validity but mutually incompatible. In the sixth century the new understanding of the divine world brought a corresponding change in the content of nomos. It is still connected with deity but the Zeus of an earlier age is now reconstructed as a divine principle.

The concept of the cosmos produces the view that nomos is a reflection of the universe in which the same nomos rules as in political life. Earthly law is simply a specific instance of the divine law in the cosmos. The inability to keep the nomos was given a tragic interpretation by the Greeks and was not attributed to human sinfulness, but rather places the responsibility with God.

Plato was of the opinion that rejection of the rule of the laws was equivalent to apostasy from God (Plato Leg. IV 701b/c; Ep. VII, 336b). For the mode of being and mode of operation of the gods are essentially known in nomos (Plato Leg. XII, 966c). Plato revolutionized Greek thinking by developing the concept that the ideal is not the dominion of the law, but the rule of righteous and kingly figure who possesses true knowledge.

Aristotle also follows suit and states that the man who towers over all others by reason of his arete seems to be no longer bound to any law. Not only is he over law but he himself is law both for himself and for others (Pol. 3, 13, p. 1284a, 3 ff.).
This viewpoint permeated Hellenistic thinking where nomos no longer rules as king in the polis, but the will and person of the basileus has itself become nomos.

The divine king is the new divine source of nomos, which is linked to him in a special way. The nomos of the Greeks is that wherein a being, or something of intrinsic validity, is discovered and apprehended. The true meaning of nomos is never that which, rightly understood, crushes him and reduces him to despair by making him aware that he cannot keep it.

**Septuagint Usage of Nomos**

In the Septuagint (LXX) nomos occurs 373 times, of which many are without Hebrew equivalents and the commonest equivalent is torah. In the canonical Old Testament, nomos is concentrated most heavily in the Pentateuch other than Genesis.

Among the prophets Jeremiah employs the word most frequently (15 times). Originally torah (mostly in the singular) meant an instruction from God, a command for a given situation.

In the Judaism of the last two centuries B.C. and at the time of Jesus nomos was used in an absolute sense for the law was an absolute in itself and was independent of the covenant. In the time between the testaments the Law became increasingly looked to as the source of salvation.

More and more emphasis was placed upon keeping the letter of the Law. The Law required such a place of prominence in Judaism that it was believed to provide the means to win God’s grace as well as the means to remain in His favor.

From internal pressures within Judaism itself the religion of Israel drifted into a legalistic system that adopted the idea of earning salvation by works (law-keeping). Such a legalistic attitude toward a relationship with God and an obsession with fulfilling the letter of the law occurs especially in rabbinic Judaism.

The Pharisees represented the strongest and most extreme form of such legalism and created a system of works entirely apart from the Mosaic Law. This system is clearly delineated in the Mishna and Talmud which are non-canonical texts! The majority of the citizens of the client nation of Israel did not know the original Hebrew language of the Old Testament and in particular the Torah.

The Pharisees and the Scribes knew the original language of the Torah (Hebrew) and commented or interpreted the Mosaic Law. Their commentaries themselves or their interpretation of the Mosaic Law evolved into a legalistic system of works and had in fact became nomos.

The Torah is primarily the Mosaic Law but this is the basis of all other meanings of Torah in the Rabbinical writings. Thus, the Torah can be used specifically for the Decalogue.
Along with the use of *Torah* for the Law of Moses we often find the word in the sense of that part of the Old Testament Canon which contains the Law, i.e., the Pentateuch. Also, all the writings of the Old Testament are called *Torah*. Thus, the *Torah* can denote the following: (1) The Torah (2) The Prophets (Nabhiim) (3) The Writings (Kethubim).

The Rabbinic Traditionalism placed their oral laws or oral interpretations of the Mosaic Law above the written Law or inspired Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, there is a distinction to be made regarding *nomos* since it can indicate either the uninspired oral law of the Rabbis or the divine inspired written Law delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Pharisees or the Rabbis interpreted the Mosaic Law and their commentaries or interpretations were held in higher esteem than the original language of the Hebrew Old Testament, which the Lord Jesus condemned them for (See Mark 7)!

The *Torah* referred also to the Word of God spoken by the prophets (Isaiah 1:10; 8:16, 20) and equals the duties and instructions of the priests (Haggai 2:11f.; Malachi 2:6f.). It denotes extensively the truth of God’s revelation (Isaiah 2:3; 42:24; 51:4, 7; Micah 4:2) and also refers to the Law or the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue (Deuteronomy 27:3, 8; 31:26), the Pentateuch (2 Chronicles 23:18) and includes other Old Testament teaching and instruction as well (2 Chronicles 17:9; Nehemiah 8).

In general, *torah* also involves understanding divine teaching and law. The Law expressed God’s rule over Israel and His demands upon the lives of those He graciously called His own. Israel was to be holy as God was holy (Leviticus 19:2; cf. 20:7) and the Law provided the standard and expectations of God for His covenant people and outlined the blessings that resulted from obedience and the curses that would come from disobedience and rebellion.

*New Testament Usage of Nomos*

The noun *nomos* occurs 194 times in the Greek New Testament. It appears 119 times in the writings of Paul, Romans 72 times, Galatians 32 times, 1 Corinthians: 9 times. The word appears in Acts 17 times. In John and Hebrews, *nomos* appears 14 times each. The word occurs 10 times in James and 9 times in Luke and 8 times in Matthew.

Like the term *Torah* in the Old Testament, the noun *nomos* includes many different nuances in the Greek New Testament. For instance, in the Synoptic Gospels, *nomos* stood for: (1) The Books of Moses (i.e. the Pentateuch; cf. Luke 24:44) (2) The Law of Moses as the guide for behavior before God.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature-Third Edition list the following meanings from their research: (1) a
procedure or practice that has taken hold, a custom, rule, principle, norm (2) constitutional or statutory legal system, law (3) a collection of holy writings precious to God’s people, sacred ordinance (4) (pages 677-678).

The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon list the following: (1) Of any law whatsoever (2) Of the Mosaic Law (3) Of the Christian religion (4) By metonymy ho nomos, the name of the more important part (i.e., the Pentateuch) is put for the entire collection of the sacred books of the OT (pages 427-428).

Louw and Nida have compiled the following from their research: (1) A formalized rule (or set of rules) prescribing what people must do – ‘law, ordinance, rule’ (33.333). (2) The first five books of the OT called the Torah (often better rendered as ‘instruction’) – ‘the Law’ (33.55). (3) The sacred writings of the OT – ‘holy writings, Scriptures, sacred writings’ (33.56) (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains volume 2).

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised writes ‘with a basic meaning law, i.e. what is assigned or proper; (1) generally, any law in the judicial sphere (RO 7.1); (2) as rule governing one’s conduct principle, law (RO 7.23); (3) more specifically in the NT of the Mosaic system of legislation as revealing the divine will (the Torah) law (of Moses) (LU 2.22); in an expanded sense, Jewish religious laws developed from the Mosaic law (Jewish) law (JN 18.31; AC 23.29); (4) as the collection of writings considered sacred by the Jews; (a) in a narrower sense, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, as comprising the law (MT 12.5; GA 3.10b); (b) in a wider sense, the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole (MT 5.18; RO 3.19); (5) figuratively, as the Christian gospel, the new covenant, as furnishing a new principle to govern spiritual life law (RO 8.2a; HE 10.16) (Page 273)

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised: (1) A law (2) The Mosaic Law (3) The OT Scripture (4) A legal tie (5) A law, a rule, standard (6) A rule of life and conduct. (Page 279)

In the Greek New Testament, the Mosaic Law was understood in three-fold manner: (1) The moral code as summarized in the Decalogue (2) The ceremonial law, prescribing rituals of the sacrificial system (3) The civil or political law, guiding Israel’s national and political life.

Inherent Law

In the New Testament, the Greek word used for law is nomos, which means “that which is assigned,” hence, “usage, custom,” and then “law,” or “a rule governing one’s actions.” Thus God’s law is His system of rules by which He shows and instructs in His will and administers the affairs of the world.
A system of rules may be tailored for different times, peoples, or purposes. As a result, in the progress of God’s revelation to man, we can see a number of different systems of law in the Scripture.

In Romans 2:14, Paul teaches that the Gentiles inherently possess a law that is manifested when they obey the principles that appear in written form of the Mosaic Law.

Romans 2:14-15 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them. (NASU)

In Romans 2:14, the word “For” is the “causal” use of the post-positive conjunction gar, which is connected to Paul’s statement regarding the Gentiles in Romans 2:12a, “For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law.” Therefore, it introduces a statement that explains the basis for which the Gentiles will face eternal condemnation even though they were not given the Mosaic Law. Namely, they inherently possess a moral code in their souls that is manifested when they obey the principles that appear in written form of the Mosaic Law.

The conjunction is “not” connected to Paul’s statement regarding the Jews in Romans 2:13b, “for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God but the doers of the Law will be justified.” The reason is that in Romans 2:14-15 Paul discusses exclusively the Gentile and not the Jew. Therefore, the conjunction gar does “not” introduce a statement that explains the reason why the self-righteous unregenerate Jew is not justified before a holy God by simply hearing the Law but rather by obeying it. Rather, the word introduces a statement that explains the reason why the Gentile will perish without the Law or the basis for which he will perish without the Law.

As we will note, they will perish without the Law since they have a general knowledge of God’s moral code that was planted in their souls by Him and is thus inherent within them and is manifested through the function of the conscience, which condemns them when they sin.

In Romans 2:14-15, Paul is explaining that the Gentiles also have a law so to speak by which they will be judged and can be condemned without the law because their conscience (which is the work of the law written in their hearts) is enough to condemn them.

Another reason why the conjunction gar is introducing a statement that explains why the Gentile will perish without the Law rather than introducing a statement that explains why the Jew is not justified by simply hearing the Law rather than doing it is that Paul employs the figure called “chiasmus.”
“Chiasmus” is the use of inverted parallelism of form or of content which moves toward and away from a strategic central component and explicitly states what the inverted parallelism only implied. In other words, “chiasmus” is a literary form in which ideas that have been presented in order (A, B, C…) correspond to ideas that later occur in reverse order (…C, B, A) and revolve around a central component.

For example, the statement “Winners (A) never quit (B) and therefore, perseverance is the key to success (C) because quitters (B) never win (A).” So we can see that the statement “winners never quit because quitters never win” emphasizes that winning demands perseverance.

The chiastic structure of Romans 2:12-14 can be illustrated as follows:

A₁ Romans 2:12a, “For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law.”

B₁ Romans 2:12b, “All who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law.”

C The Law of God condemns.

B₁ Romans 2:13, “For it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.” (B)

A₁ Romans 2:14-15, “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.”

Therefore, we can see that the central component of Romans 2:12-14 is that the Law of God condemns both Jew and Gentile. The Jew is condemned before God because he does not obey the written document given to Moses by the Lord whereas the Gentiles are condemned before God because they do not obey the Law of God written in their hearts as manifested by the function of their conscience when they sin.

Romans 2:14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves. (NASU)

“When” is the temporal conjunction hotan, which ”is employed with the subjunctive mood of the verb poieo, “do” in order to form an indefinite temporal
clause that indicates a future contingency from the perspective of the time of the main verb *eimi*, “are” that appears in Romans 2:14. This means that “whenever” the Gentiles who don’t have the Law obey the requirements of the Law, they inherently possess a law for themselves that is written in their hearts and not on tablets of stone as the Jews received the Law from Moses.

The temporal conjunction *hotan* is actually a contraction of *hote* and *an* and is usually not translatable but generally conveys a sense of vagueness or contingency. *Hotan* is generally used in a temporal clause when there is an element of indefiniteness. One can assume that something will occur, even be repeated, but the exact time of that occurrence cannot be established. Therefore, the conjunction *hotan* with the subjunctive mood of *poieo* is used to present the assumption that a Gentile will obey the Law but the exact time of that occurrence cannot be established. However, Paul’s emphasis is not the particular time that a Gentile obeys the Law but rather that he “does” obey the Law at times.

This obedience to the Law of God manifests that the Gentile possesses a moral code inherent in his soul, which itself is manifested through the function of his conscience that convicts them of wrongdoing resulting in guilt.

“Gentiles” is the nominative (subject) neuter plural form of the noun *ethnos*, which is used in contrast to the Jews and thus refers to all those individuals who are “not” of Jewish racial descent and thus “not” members of the covenant people of God, Israel. Therefore, by implication this word refers to all the nations of the world.

“Who do not have” is composed of the articular nominative (in simple apposition) neuter plural present active participle form of the verb *echo*, “who do…have,” which is negated by negative particle *me*, “not.”

In Romans 2:14, the verb *echo* means, “to possess” a particular object, which is identified by the accusative masculine singular form of the noun *nomos*, “the Law.” Therefore, Paul is saying that the Gentiles “did not possess” the Law of God in written form as the nation of Israel did through Moses.

The participle form of the verb *echo* functions as a “nominative in simple apposition” meaning it describes the subject *ethnos*, “Gentiles” as not possessing the Mosaic Law in written as Israel did.

The present tense is “gnomic” used of a general, timeless fact, thus indicating that the Gentiles as a “general, timeless fact” do not possess the Mosaic Law since it was given to the nation of Israel.

The negative particle *me* is regularly used to negate the meaning of the articular participle when the participle has a hypothetical sense or refers to no particular person and has a general meaning. This is the case here in Romans 2:14 where Paul is discussing a hypothetical case of no particular Gentile obeying what is
required by the Mosaic Law. Paul is supposing a case, which may occur at any
time.

“The Law” is a reference to the Mosaic Law.

“Do” is the 3rd person plural present active subjunctive form of the verb *poieo*,
which is transitive and means, “to obey” because in context, its direct object is the
substantive use of the definite article, which means, “the things” and the articular
genitive form of the noun *nomos*, “the Law.”

To obey means, “to comply with or follow the commands, prohibitions, and
instructions of another, to respond conformably in action to another, to submit
something.” If we paraphrase these definitions, and apply them to our present
context, we would say that the verb *poieo* is used with reference to a Gentile
complying with, following the commands and prohibitions of, responding
conformably in action to, submitting to the principles of the moral code of the
Mosaic Law.

The present tense of the verb *poieo* is “gnomic” meaning that it is used in a
generic statement to describe something that is true “any” time. Therefore, the
gnomic present of the verb *poieo* expresses the spiritual principle that a Gentile
possesses inherently a Law for themselves when at “any time” he obeys the
principles of right and wrong that appear in the Mosaic Law.

“Instinctively” is the dative feminine singular form of the noun *phusis*, which
refers to the innate impulse in man that governs his behavior. The word “innate”
means that which is inherent in the essential character of mankind. The English
word “instinct” accurately reflects the meaning of *phusis* in Romans 2:14 since it
refers to an innate or natural impulse, inclination or tendency.

The noun *phusis* is an “instrumental of means” indicating that this “instinct” in
the Gentiles is the “means by which” they perform the requirements of the Law.

“The things” refers to the principles that appear in the moral code of the
Mosaic Law, otherwise, known as the “Ten Commandments.”

“Of the Law” is the articular genitive masculine singular form of the noun *nomos*, which is a reference to the moral code of the Mosaic Law that is also
known as the “Ten Commandments,” or “Decalogue.”

The noun *nomos* is a “genitive of possession” indicating that the genitive noun
*nomos* “possesses” that which is denoted by the article, namely, “principles”
governing human behavior.

“These” refers to the Gentiles who do not possess the Mosaic Law.

Romans 2:14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively
the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves.
(NASU)

“Are” is the third person plural present active indicative form of the verb *eimi*,
which means, “to possess certain inherent characteristics. Therefore, in context the
word denotes a Gentile “possessing inherently” the principles that appear in written form in the moral code of the Mosaic Law.

Actually, the verb *echo* means, “to manifest that one possesses a certain inherent characteristic” since the word is coupled with *poieo*, which denotes obedience. What Paul is actually saying with the verb *eimi* and *poieo* is that the Gentiles are “manifesting that they possess inherently a law that belongs to them and governs their conduct” when they obey principles of this moral code.

The present tense of the verb *poieo* is “gnomic” used to make a statement of a general, timeless fact or spiritual axiom. Therefore, the gnomic present of the verb *eimi* indicates that whenever Gentiles, who do not possess the Mosaic Law, obey instinctively the principles of the Law, although not possessing the Law, they, “as an eternal spiritual truth” manifest that they possess inherently a law that governs them.

“A law” is the nominative masculine singular form of the noun *nomos*, which refers to a moral code that is inherent within the soul of every human being that helps to govern their conduct.

The word functions as a predicate nominative meaning it is making an assertion regarding the subject *eimi*, “they, as an eternal spiritual truth, manifest that they possess inherently.” The assertion is that the Gentiles possess inherently “a law” for themselves as indicated by the dative masculine plural form of the reflexive personal pronoun *heautou*, “to themselves.”

The reflexive pronoun *heautou* is used to highlight the participation of the subject, in the verbal action, as indirect object. Therefore, the word emphasizes the Gentiles participation in possessing inherently or innately a law, which belongs to them and governs their conduct.

The reflexive pronoun *heautou* functions as a “dative of possession.” The dative of possession functions like a genitive of possession under certain conditions in that the dative substantive possesses the noun to which it is related. In other words, the dative of possession is that to which the subject of an equative verb belongs. This occurs with equative verbs such as *eimi*, *ginomai*, and *huparcho* and possesses the subject of such verbs.

In Romans 2:14, the dative form of the reflexive pronoun *heautou* refers to the Gentiles and possesses the noun *nomos*, “law” to which it is related. In other words, *heautou* is that to which the subject of the equative verb *eimi* belongs. Therefore, the fact that the reflexive pronoun *heautou* is a “dative of possession” indicates that the Gentiles possess inherently (*eimi*) a law (*nomos*), which “belongs to them (*heautou*).”

The law of the Gentiles to whom Paul was writing was not in code but in conscience. They did not have a specific set of rules but they did have the basic
moral concepts which are contained in the Law and in particular the Ten Commandments.

Anthropologists know by research what God has revealed in His Word. There is “absolutely no” societal group that is devoid of law in the sense of a standard of right versus wrong. Also, all men know that they break their own laws and they suffer guilt.

Robert Mounce commenting on Romans 2:14, writes, “At this point Paul inserted a parenthetical remark, underscoring for his Jewish audience the critical importance of actually doing what the law said. Whenever Gentiles by natural instinct did what the law required, they demonstrated the existence of a guiding principle within themselves. Twice in verse 14 Paul stressed that non-Jewish people had no specific knowledge of the Mosaic legislation. They did “not have the law.” Yet in certain cases they did instinctively the kinds of things required by the Jewish law (e.g. they cared for the sick and elderly, showed kindness to strangers). They were, as Paul put it, ‘a law for themselves.’ That does not mean that law was irrelevant in their case but that their conduct revealed a general knowledge of God’s requirements for a principled and virtuous life. Not only did God reveal Himself to them in nature (Romans 1:19-20) but He created them with a sense of moral obligation. This moral impetus encouraged a conduct that at many points overlapped what was taught in the laws of God given to Israel.”

Romans 2:15 teaches that the manifestation of the inherent law of the Gentiles is through the function of the conscience.

Romans 2:15 In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them. (NASU)

“In that” is the nominative masculine plural form of the qualitative relative pronoun hostis, which emphasizes the obedient character of a particular group of unregenerate Gentiles who manifest through the function of their conscience and actions that they possess inherently a moral code.

In Romans 2:15, the qualitative relative pronoun hostis emphasizes the obedient character of a particular group of unregenerate Gentiles who manifest through their conduct and the function of their conscience that they possess inherently a moral code. In this verse, Paul teaches that this same group of Gentiles also demonstrate that they possess inherently a moral code in their hearts through the function of their conscience.

Although the relative pronoun hostis could be considered “generic” in its usage here emphasizing this particular class of Gentiles, the emphasis is more upon their

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1 The New American Commentary, volume 27, Romans, pages 94-95; Broadman and Holman Publishers

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character and conduct, thus it should be considered “qualitative” in its use in Romans 2:15.

We will translate the relative pronoun *hostis*, “who indeed by virtue of obedient character” since Romans 2:14 teaches that even though the Gentiles were not given the Law they manifest they possess inherently in their hearts a moral code when they obey the principles that appear in written form in the Mosaic Law.

“They show” is the third person plural present middle indicative form of the verb *endeiknumi*, which is composed of the preposition *en*, “in” and the verb *deíknumi*, “to show,” thus the world literally means, “to demonstrate or manifest something by arguments or acts, to give outward proof of something that is inherent.” Therefore, Paul is saying that the Gentiles “demonstrate” or “manifest” that they possess inherently a moral code by their obedience to the principles that appear in written form in the Mosaic Law.

The content of the Ten Commandments is not really new since the book of Genesis reveals the fact that these formalized laws were already followed or assumed as a moral standard. All Ten Commandments had been part of the Law of God previously written on hearts instead of stone, for all ten appear, in one way or another, in Genesis.

They are as follows: (1) Genesis 35:2, “Get rid of the foreign gods.” (2) Genesis 31:39, “Laban to Jacob, ‘But why did you steal my gods?’” (3) Genesis 24:3, “I want you to swear by the Lord.” (4) Genesis 2:3, “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” (5) Genesis 27:41, “The days of mourning my father are near.” (6) Genesis 4:9, “Where is your brother Abel?” (7) Genesis 39:9, “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (8) Genesis 44:4-7, “Why have you stolen my silver cup?” (9) Genesis 39:17, “[Joseph] came to me to make sport of me … but … he ran. …” (10) Genesis 12:18; 20:3, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”

In Romans 2:15, the present tense of the verb *endeiknumi* is “gnomic” used to make a statement of a general, timeless fact, a spiritual axiom or an eternal spiritual truth and fact of history. Therefore, the gnomic present of the verb *endeiknumi* indicates that whenever Gentiles, who do not possess the Mosaic Law, obey instinctively the principles of the Law, although not possessing the Law, they, “as an eternal spiritual truth and fact of history” demonstrate the Law written on their hearts.

The middle voice of the verb is “indirect” meaning that the subject, unregenerate Gentiles, act for themselves or in their own interests when they obey the principles that appear in written form in the Mosaic Law and are inherent in their soul.
“The work” is the articular accusative neuter singular form of the noun *ergon*, which refers to “conduct” that is produced by obedience to the moral code of the Mosaic Law that is inherent in the soul of every human being.

“Written” is the accusative neuter singular form of the adjective *graptos*, which is used in a figurative sense to describe that all of mankind was created by the Lord Jesus Christ with a moral code inherent in their soul.

“In their hearts” indicates that the heart is the place where the moral code of the Mosaic Law is located in these unregenerate Gentiles who obey instinctively the principles that appear in the Mosaic Law.

“Their conscience” is composed of the genitive 3rd person masculine plural form of the personal pronoun *autos*, “their” and the articular genitive feminine singular form of the noun *suneidesis*, “conscience.”

The noun *suneidesis* is composed of the preposition *sun*, “with” and the noun *eidesis*, “knowledge,” thus the word literally means, “a knowing with.”

*Suneidesis* is that process of thought which distinguishes what it considers morally good or bad, commending the good, condemning the bad, and so prompting to do the former and avoid the latter.

*Proverbs 20:27, “The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the innermost parts of his being.”*

To have a “clear conscience” does not mean that we have never sinned or do not commit acts of sin but rather it means that the underlying direction and motive of life is to obey and please God, so that acts of sin are habitually recognized as such and confessed to God the Father (1 John 1:9).

In addition to an innate awareness of God’s law, men have a warning system that activates when they choose to ignore or disobey that law and it is this instinctive, built-in sense of right and wrong that activates guilt.

All mankind has an innate inner sense of right and wrong, which Scripture refers to as “conscience.” Sociologists have encountered in all cultures a sense of sin and fear of judgment which leads that culture to make some attempt to appease whatever gods are feared and this built in discernment of right and wrong is what Paul is alluding to here in Romans 2:15.

Conscience is like an inner judge that accuses and condemns us when we have done wrong and approves and commends us when we have done right. The conscience varies in sensitivity, depending on the degree of one’s knowledge of and feeling about right and wrong. The person who has considerable knowledge of God’s Word will have a more sensitive conscience than someone who has never had opportunity to know Scripture.

Furthermore, repeated sinning hardens the conscience so that it becomes “seared” like scar tissue (1 Timothy 4:2). To continually reject God’s truth causes
the conscience to become progressively calloused, hardened and less sensitive to sin, as if covered with layers of unspiritual scar tissue.

In Romans 2:15, the noun *suneidesis* is part of a “genitive absolute” construction, which alerts the reader regarding that is important for him to know and indicates the formation of a new sentence in addition to the previous one.

The genitive absolute participial construction is formed with a noun or pronoun in the genitive case, though this can be absent. It also always contains a genitive anarthrous participle. This entire construction will usually appear at the front of a sentence but on rare occasions, it will appear at the end.

Semantically, this construction is unconnected with the rest of the sentence meaning its subject—the genitive noun or pronoun is different from the subject of the main clause.

Also, the participle is always adverbial (circumstantial) or, at least, dependent-verbal (i.e., it cannot be an adjectival or substantival participle).

Lastly, the participle is normally temporal, though it can on occasion express any of the adverbial ideas.

Therefore, in Romans 2:15, the noun *suneidesis* appears in the genitive case and the anarthrous participle form of the verb *summartureo* does as well and together they appear at the end of the sentence. The genitive noun *suneidesis* is different from the subject of the main clause, which is *hostis*, “who indeed by virtue of their obedient character” that refers to the unregenerate Gentiles who obey instinctively the principles that appear in written form in the Mosaic Law.

The participle form of *summartureo* is “temporal” indicating that unregenerate Gentiles demonstrate the conduct produced by obedience to the Law “while simultaneously,” or “during which time,” their conscience confirms the testimony of their obedience. Therefore, the noun *suneidesis* is a “genitive of time,” which indicates “kind of time” meaning “time during which” something takes place whereas as the dative of time emphasize point of time answering the question “when?” and the accusative of time, which emphasizes extent of time answering the question “how long?”

The genitive of time indicates that unregenerate Gentiles demonstrate the conduct produced by obedience to the Mosaic Law “during which time” their conscience confirms the testimony of their obedience, which manifests that they possess inherently a moral code written on their hearts.

The personal pronoun *autos* refers to the unsaved Gentiles who obey instinctively the principles of the moral code that appears in written form in the Mosaic Law and is “possessive” and a “genitive of possession” modifying the noun *suneidesis*, “conscience.”
Romans 2:15 In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them. (NASU)

“Bearing witness” is the genitive feminine singular present active participle form of the verb summartureo, which indicates that the conscience “confirms the testimony” offered by the obedience of the unregenerate Gentiles to the principles that appear in writing in the Ten Commandments of the Mosaic Law that they possess inherently a moral code in their soul.

The verb summartureo is a “genitive of time” and the participle form of the word is “temporal” indicating that unregenerate Gentiles demonstrate the conduct produced by obedience to the Law “during which time,” their conscience confirms the testimony of their obedience that they possess inherently a moral code.

The present tense is “gnomic” used for a general, timeless fact, speaking of something that “does” happen. Therefore, it indicates that unregenerate Gentiles demonstrate the conduct produced by obedience to the Law as written in their hearts during which time their conscience “does” confirm the testimony offered by their obedience to the moral principles of the Mosaic Law that they possess inherently a moral code.

“Their thoughts” is the articular genitive masculine plural form of the noun logismos, which denotes the mental activity in the soul of man or reasoning process in the soul of man by which he determines whether a particular word or action he is considering is right or wrong.

“Alternately” is the composed of the adverb metaxu and the genitive 3rd person masculine plural form of the reciprocal pronoun allelon.

The adverb metaxu is used as an improper preposition with the genitive case of the reciprocal pronoun allelon and means, “between.”

The reciprocal pronoun allelon means “the quality or state by which there is a mutual exchange between others and ourselves.” The term “reciprocal” means, “mutual, shared, shown or felt alike by both sides; united in feelings, actions, responsibilities, and attitudes.”

“Reciprocal” implies a return in due measure by each side in the matter discussed.

In Romans 2:15, the reciprocal pronoun allelon denotes the mutual exchange of thoughts, which either condemn a person for their actions or approves of them for their actions.

“Accusing” is the genitive masculine plural present active participle form of the verb kategoreo, which is a compound word composed of the preposition kata, “against,” and the verb agoruo, “to speak in the assembly.” Therefore, the word literally means, “to speak against someone, to accuse, to bring charges against.”
It was used as a technical, legal term among the Greeks for “bringing charges” or “accusing” someone in a court before a judge. The word is used without a legal connotation in Romans 2:15 since Paul is discussing the function of the human conscience and denotes thoughts that accuse a person when he does wrong or is considering doing something that is wrong and not in accordance to the moral standard inherent in his soul.

The present tense of the verb *kategoreo* is “gnomic” used of a general, timeless fact or eternal spiritual truth, or spiritual axiom. It is used in a generic statement to describe something that is true “any” time. Therefore, the gnomic present of the verb *kategoreo* expresses the spiritual principle that the unregenerate Gentile’s thoughts “at any time” will make an accusation against him when considering an action to undertake or have already performed.

“Defending” is the genitive masculine plural present (deponent) middle participle form of the verb *apologeomai*, which is applied to an unregenerate Gentile’s thoughts, which at times function as a witness in his defense when he does right or is considering doing something right or good.

The present tense of the verb *apologeomai* is “gnomic” used of a general, timeless fact or eternal spiritual truth, or spiritual axiom. It is used in a generic statement to describe something that is true “any” time. Therefore, the gnomic present of the verb *apologeomai* expresses the spiritual principle that the unregenerate Gentile’s thoughts “at any time” will defend him when considering an action to take or have already undertaken.

Romans 2:14-15 presents the tenth principle of divine judgment that appears in Romans 2, which is that God judges men in direct proportion to the divine revelation that they have been exposed to in life. The Gentiles are judged by God as guilty because they have an inherent law within their souls, which is manifested through the function of the conscience. Thus, although the Gentiles did not possess the Law like Israel, they still possessed inherently a law that governed their conduct and was manifested through the function of their conscience. Therefore, the Gentiles are guilty before a holy God even though they did not have the Mosaic Law since their conscience would convict them of sin when they committed an act that was in opposition to this inherent law.

*Law in the Garden of Eden*

In the Garden of Eden, there is the Law, though the term was not specifically of Adam and Eve’s relationship with God in the Garden, there was still a law given to Adam since as we noted by way of definition, “law” is a system of principles or rules that instructs man as to God’s will and direction.
Adam was instructed to “dress and keep” the garden, and to eat freely of all the trees except the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Genesis 2:15-17 So the Lord God took Adam and He caused him to settle down in the garden of Eden in order to work it and in order to take care of it. Then, the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, “you may eat from absolutely any and every tree of this garden. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat from it because in the moment that you eat from it, you will surely die (spiritually).” (My translation)

**Patriarchal Law**

Like the Garden of Eden, although not mentioned by name, there was the Law given to the “Patriarchs” since they were given very specific revelation and instruction given to them.

Though there are few details given, God’s instructions to them still represent His law, the system of principles and rules designed to direct their lives, which is illustrated in Genesis 26:5.

**Genesis 26:4-5** “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.” (NASU)

“**Charge**” is the noun *mishmereth*, which describes duties or obligations impressed upon Abraham by the Lord.

“**Commandments**” is the noun *mitswah*, which refers to “specific orders or commandments” given to Abraham by the Lord such as when the Lord commanded Abraham to leave Ur and Haran (Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8).

“**Statutes**” is the noun *chuqqah*, which designates a “divine ordinance” such as circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) or to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:1-2).

“**Laws**” is the noun *torah*, which signifies divine teachings or instructions.

**Law of Moses**

The “Law of the Patriarchs” was followed by the “Law of Moses,” which was given to offspring of the Patriarchs, namely, Israel. The Mosaic Law is what we are most concerned about in relation to the New Testament believer and consisted of 365 negative commands and 248 positive for a total of 613 commands.

These commands can be divided into three parts or sections as we noted earlier: (1) The moral code (2) The ceremonial code (3) Civil or political code. Therefore, we can see that the Law governed every possible area of life of Israel.
Now, we must emphasize that the moral principles contained in the Mosaic Law given at Mount Sinai were merely the codified expression of the eternal moral law of God as it was given to Israel to govern her life as a nation in order to experience God’s blessing under the Abrahamic covenant. There are obviously various forms of human laws, those prescribed by man through human government or custom (see Luke 20:22; Acts 19:38).

While human government is an institution ordained by God’s will or law, some of the laws of man are direct expressions of the will of God, but still constitute laws by which men are often bound by the governmental system in which they live (Romans 13:1-7). Of course, where such laws conflict with God's laws, then we are obligated to obey God instead (Acts 4:19-20).

The fact that the Mosaic Law has been terminated does not mean that there is no law in this age of grace even though the nature of this law is quite different from the standpoint of incentive, motivation, and means. In fact, the epistles speak of “the perfect law of liberty” (Jam. 1:25), “the royal law” (Jam. 2:8), “the Law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2), and “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2). This consists of the many commands found throughout the epistles, which comprise this law. These too cover all areas of the believer’s life to direct him in the will of God in today’s world.

The moral principles embodied in the law of Moses Paul identifies as “the righteousness of the law” (Romans 8:4) and demonstrates that such principles are the goal of the Spirit-directed life in the same context in which he teaches the believer is not under the Mosaic law (Romans 6–8).

The New Testament clearly speaks of and anticipates the reign of Christ on earth when He will rule in perfect righteousness and justice (Isa. 11:4-5), which obviously implies that there will be laws, which will govern the lives of individuals during the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

** Isaiah 2:3  **Come, let’s go up to the LORD’s mountain, to the temple of the God of Jacob, so he can teach us his requirements, and we can follow his standards. (NASU)

For Zion will be the center for moral instruction, the LORD will issue edicts from Jerusalem. In the progress of His revelation and the development of His plan, there have been various dispensations administered by God with different regulations or laws giving precise instruction for each dispensation. The way God has run each dispensation has varied, however, in each case, different people were addressed with the commands differing in quantity and character, but always with specific instruction.

A great deal of flexibility is found in the use of the term *nomos*, “law” in the Greek New Testament. This term is used of the entire Old Testament (John 10:34; 12:34; 1 Corinthians 14:21).
Technically neither the Psalms nor Isaiah are a part of the Old Testament “law,” but sometimes the term “law” was applied to the entire Old Testament because it constituted God’s special revelation of instruction for Israel and ultimately for man. The term *nomos* is used with such terms as the prophets, and writings, again as a title for the entire Old Testament Scripture, but in this way it looks at them in their division (Luke 24:27, 44). It is especially used of the first five books of the Old Testament or the Mosaic Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). (Compare Luke 2:23; John 8:5; 1 Corinthians 9:9; Galatians 3:10).

The term is used of the entire specific Mosaic code given to the nation Israel to govern and guide their moral, religious and secular life, and covers parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (Deut. 4:8, 44-45). The term is used of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17).

The term *nomos*, “*Law*” is used of a principle, force or influence that impels one to action or behavior (Romans 7:21, 23a, 25) and is used of law in general (Romans 3:27 and possibly Romans 5:13b). Though part of the Law was mediated by angels, God is the origin and source of the Mosaic Law, which stems from the eternal and holy character of God, which is true even of the natural law written in the heart or conscience of man (Exodus 31:1b; Acts 7:53; Romans 2:14-16; Heb. 2:1-2).

*The Giving of the Law at Mount Sinai*

Chapter 20 of the book of Exodus contains the record of one of the greatest events in Israel’s history, namely God giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. They are referred to in Exodus 34:28 as hā ‘āšê-rê dêbâ-rîm (חֲשֶׂרֶת תּוֹרֵ֖ה), which literally means “the ten words.”

Douglas Stuart has an excellent comment, he writes, “Nothing in Exodus 20 is described as ‘commandment’ or ‘law’ or the like. To be sure, the words presented here by God do indeed command his people most solemnly to act in ways that are basic to his covenant, but their significance goes beyond that of routine ‘laws.’ What the chapter contains—in particular, the Ten ‘Words’ (דֵּבָּרִים)—is more like the content of a national constitution than merely the content of one section of codified law or another. If the American legal corpus is used as an analogy, it could be said that the ten ‘words’ of Exod 20 are somewhat like the Constitution of the United States (legally binding in a most basic, foundationally way but more than a mere set of individual laws) and the laws that follow (cf. 21:1, ‘These are the laws you are to set before them’) somewhat analogous to the various sections of federal law dealing with all sorts of particular matters that have been enacted legislatively over time. The one group is absolutely ‘constitutional’ or ‘foundational’; the other is specifically regulatory, following from the principles
articulated in the more basic ‘constitution.’ It is both traditional and convenient to call them ‘the Ten Commandments,’ as long as their special nature is recognized. Indeed, in the comment Moses spoke following the repeat of the Ten Commandments in Deut 5:6–21, he explicitly again called them ‘words’ (lit., ‘These are the words [דְּבָרִים; NIV, inexplicably, ‘commandments’] the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain,’ Deut 5:22). The biblical commandments occur in three levels of specificity. At the most comprehensive level are the ‘two great commandments’ of Deut 6:5 (‘Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength’) and Lev 19:18b (‘love your neighbor as yourself’). The first of these commands requires in broad terms a loyal, covenantal obedience to God, who is put first above all other relationships. The second requires loving (loyal) treatment of other human beings. Jesus gave his approval to what had become in Judaism an understanding of the importance of the two great commandments as summations of all the others. He also specifically indicated that the rest of the commandments ‘hang on’ these two (Matt 22:40). How so? The first four of the Ten Commandments hang on the command to love God since they describe ways to show covenant loyalty directly to him. The final six hang on the command to love neighbor as self; which Jesus also explained as doing to others as you would have them do to you (Matt 7:12). Thus the first four ‘vertical’ commandments are balanced by the final six ‘horizontal commandments.’ Then, in order of hierarchy, follow all the others. The order is, then, the two, the ten, and the six hundred and one. Some of the large group of six hundred and one remaining commandments address ‘vertical’ concerns; others speak of the ‘horizontal.’”

John Hannah writes “The Ten Commandments (in 34:28 ‘Ten Commandments’ is lit., ‘Ten Words’), the hub of all of Israel’s religious and civil laws, has two parts. The first four commandments pertain to the relationship of the Israelites with God, and the other six deal with social relationships within the covenant community. Before giving these 10 stipulations, God in the preamble spoke of His unique relationship with His people (I am the LORD your God, 20:2a) and in the historical prologue He briefly summarized what He had done for them (brought you out of Egypt … the land of slavery, v. 2b; cf. 13:3, 14; Deut. 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5, 10). Centuries before, God had led Abraham out of Ur (Gen. 15:7); now He led Abraham’s descendants out of Egypt. The Ten Commandments are an excellent summary of 10 divine rules for human conduct. They might be called rules of (1) religion, (2) worship, (3) reverence, (4) time, (5) authority, (6) life, (7) purity, (8) property, (9) tongue, and (10) contentment.’”


The NET Bible has the following comment “This chapter is the heart of the Law of Israel, and as such is well known throughout the world. There is so much literature on it that it is almost impossible to say anything briefly and do justice to the subject. But the exposition of the book must point out that this is the charter of the new nation of Israel. These ten commands (words) form the preamble; they will be followed by the decisions (judgments). And then in chap. 24 the covenant will be inaugurated. So when Israel entered into covenant with God, they entered into a theocracy by expressing their willingness to submit to his authority. The Law was the binding constitution for the nation of Israel under Yahweh their God. It was specifically given to them at a certain time and in a certain place. The Law legislated how Israel was to live in order to be blessed by God and used by him as a kingdom of priests. In the process of legislating their conduct and their ritual for worship, the Law revealed God. It revealed the holiness of Yahweh as the standard for all worship and service, and in revealing that it revealed or uncovered sin. But what the Law condemned, the Law (Leviticus) also made provision for in the laws of the sacrifice and the feasts intended for atonement. The NT teaches that the Law was good, and perfect, and holy. But it also teaches that Christ was the end (goal) of the Law, that it ultimately led to him. It was a pedagogue, Paul said, to bring people to Christ. And when the fulfillment of the promise came in him, believers were not to go back under the Law. What this means for Christians is that what the Law of Israel revealed about God and his will is timeless and still authoritative over faith and conduct, but what the Law regulated for Israel in their existence as the people of God has been done away with in Christ. The Ten Commandments reveal the essence of the Law; the ten for the most part is reiterated in the NT because they reflect the holy and righteous nature of God. The NT often raises them to a higher standard, to guard the spirit of the Law as well as the letter.”

Now, the first four of the Ten Commandments are all related to one’s relationship with God: (1) **Exodus 20:3**, You shall have no other gods before me. (NET) (2) **Exodus 20:4-6** You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water below. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children to the third and fourth generations of those who reject me, and showing covenant faithfulness to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. (NET) (3) **Exodus 20:7** You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold guiltless anyone who takes his name in vain. (NET) (4) **Exodus 20:8-11** Remember the Sabbath day to set it apart as holy.

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For six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; on it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your cattle, or the resident foreigner who is in your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. (NET)

The last six commandments address one’s conduct in relation to one’s fellow human being: (5) Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and your mother, that you may live a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving to you. (NET) (6) Exodus 20:13 You shall not murder. (NET) (7) Exodus 20:14 You shall not commit adultery. (NET) (8) Exodus 20:15 You shall not steal. (NET) (9) Exodus 20:16 You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. (NET) (10) Exodus 20:17 You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that belongs to your neighbor. (NET)

The last five commandments were applicable to not only believers in Israel but also applied to unbelievers and governed the social life of Israel: (1) “You shall not murder.” (Exodus 20:13) (2) You shall not commit adultery.” (Exodus 20:14) (3) You shall not steal.” (Exodus 20:15) (4) “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (Exodus 20:16) (5) “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” (Exodus 20:17).

The content of the Ten Commandments is not really new since the book of Genesis reveals the fact that these formalized laws were already followed or assumed as a moral standard. All Ten Commandments had been part of the Law of God previously written on hearts instead of stone, for all ten appear, in one way or another, in Genesis.

They are as follows: (1) Genesis 35:2, “Get rid of the foreign gods.” (2) Genesis 31:39, “Laban to Jacob, ‘But why did you steal my gods?’” (3) Genesis 24:3, “I want you to swear by the Lord.” (4) Genesis 2:3, “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” (5) Genesis 27:41, “The days of mourning my father are near.” (6) Genesis 4:9, “Where is your brother Abel?” (7) Genesis 39:9, “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (8) Genesis 44:4-7, “Why have you stolen my silver cup?” (9) Genesis 39:17, “[Joseph] came to me to make sport of me … but … he ran. …” (10) Genesis 12:18; 20:3, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”
Exodus 20:1-2: Preamble to the Decalogue

Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (NASB95)

Verse 2 serves as a preamble and a prologue to “the Ten Words” or “Ten Commandments.” They present the motivation for the Israelites to obey the Ten Commandments, which was that God delivered them out of the house of slavery in Egypt. This statement is designed to produce in the Israelites a love for God that is based upon what He had done for them. Thus, the basis for their relationship was love for each other and a love that was to be loyal. It was based upon who the Lord is and what He had done for the Israelites by delivering them from slavery in Egypt.

This verse also expresses the uniqueness of what Yahweh had done for the Israelites in the sense that no other god had rescued such a large group of people from such a powerful nation as Egypt.

Notice that for the first time in the narrative, God is speaking directly to the Israelites and not through the intermediation of Moses. Therefore, all of the Israelites were being spoken to directly by God just as He spoke with Moses directly at the burning bush and with Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For the first time they were all hearing the voice of God speak to them directly. The Lord’s voice is accompanied by both audio and visual displays (cf. Exodus 19:16-19; 20:18-21). This would convince the Israelites that they were indeed in the presence of God.

Exodus 20:3: The First Commandment

Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.” (NASB95)

This commandment addresses the Israelites relationship with Yahweh. In the Hebrew text, this first commandment means “You must never have other gods over or against Me.” This commandment appears in Deuteronomy 5:7 as well. The term 'elōhîm, “gods” which refers to either angels or men since it can refer to either human rulers (cf. Psalm 82; John 10:34-36) or angelic beings. This commandment is an implicit acknowledgement that there are men who are worshipped as gods as well as angels.

Therefore, this first commandment prohibits the Israelites from practicing idolatry and worshipping angels or men rather than God who is their Creator and Redeemer. It denotes the uniqueness of God in that He is the only being in creation who is to be worshipped by the Israelites. It expresses God’s claim upon the Israelites and demands their absolute loyalty and allegiance to Him.
Exodus 20:4-6: The Second Commandment

Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.” (NASB95)

This commandment also addresses the Israelites’ relationship with Yahweh. It is a prohibition against the practice of idolatry. In the Hebrew, it means “You must never make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water beneath the earth.” This prohibition denotes that nothing in creation must ever be copied and used as an object of worship by the Israelites. It prohibited the Israelites from making images or likenesses of Yahweh.

In Romans 1:18-23, Paul describes the entire human race as involved in idolatry. Deuteronomy 32:17 and 1 Corinthians 10:20 teach that the worship of idols is connected to the worship of demons since the sacrificing to idols is in reality sacrificing to demons who promote the worship of idols.

Idolatry is the worship of something created as opposed to the worship of the Creator Himself. Scores of references to idolatry appear in the Old Testament.

Joshua 24:2 states that Abraham’s father served idols. The most noteworthy instance of idolatry in the history of Israel was Aaron’s making of the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai (Ex 32:1-4). Idolatry originally meant the worship of idols, or the worship of false gods by means of idols but came to mean among the Old Testament Hebrews any worship of false gods, whether by images or otherwise or the worship of the Lord through visible symbols (Hos 8:5-6; 10:5).

Idolatry is not only the giving to any creature or human creation the honor or devotion, which belongs to God alone, but also is putting anything ahead of your relationship with God and which would prevent you from doing His will (1 Cor 10:14; Gal 5:20; Col 3:5; 1 Peter 4:3).

Ultimately in the New Testament idolatry came to mean, not only the giving to any creature or human creation the honor or devotion which belonged to God alone, but the giving to any human desire a precedence over God's will (1 Cor 10:14; Gal 5:20; Col 3:5; 1 Peter 4:3).

Exodus 20:5 “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” (NASB95)

These verses serve to explain the second commandment. The Israelites were prohibited from worshipping other gods because Yahweh was a jealous God who
tolerates no rivals, which is justified of course since He is the Creator and Redeemer and not a political ruler or angel.

God’s jealousy is not the same as the jealousy of men, which is a sin. But rather it refers to God having the Israelites best interests in mind always. It denotes His intense desire to protect the Israelites as well as His honor.

The statement “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations” does not mean that God punishes an innocent generation for the sins of the previous generation since Deuteronomy 24:16 rejects this.

Deuteronomy 24:16 “Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.” (NASB95)

Rather this statement teaches God’s determination to punish successive generations for committing the same sins they learned from their parents. God will punish generation after generation if successive generations keep practicing the sins of previous generations. In other words, children will be punished by God if they grow up to practice the same sins of their parents who are punished for their sinful acts.

Verse 6 stands in direct contrast to the promise in verse 5 to punish successive generations for practicing the sins of a predecessor generation. The former presents God’s desire to bless the Israelites. His desire is that the Israelites remain loyal to Him by obeying Him in order that He might bless them.

To love God is to obey Him (John 14:15), thus to hate God is to disobey Him. Verse 5 speaks of the latter and verse 6 speaks of the former. Love and hate in these two verses are not a reference to human emotions but rather to being loyal to God (love) and disloyal to Him (hate).

Exodus 20:7: The Third Commandment

Exodus 20:7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” (NASB95)

This third commandment, like the previous two, addresses the Israelites’ proper conduct with regards to their relationship with God. Like the previous two, it too is a prohibition. Like the second, it also guarantees the Israelites will be punished by God for disobedience.

“The name” of the Lord has a four-fold sense: (1) It signifies the “personality” of God distinguishing Him from the heathen gods. (2) It signifies the “character” of God representing who He is. (3) It signifies God’s “work” in creation and for the salvation of men. (4) It signifies the “reputation” of God before men.
To take the Lord’s name in vain meant that the Israelites were not to use His name for any idle, frivolous or insincere purpose such as speaking His name when taking an oath with no intention of keeping it (see Leviticus 19:12). It speaks of not using the Lord’s name for selfish or evil purposes (see Psalm 139:20), which would as a result undermine His authority.

*Exodus 20:8-11: The Fourth Commandment*

Exodus 20:8 “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.” (NASB95)

“Sabbath” is the noun šāḇāṯ (שַׁבָּת) (shab-bawth), which means “rest period” referring to the seventh day of the week which is called “Saturday.” This is the Bible’s first mention of the Sabbath. Genesis 2:2-3 teaches that God rested or ceased from His creative and restorative activity on the seventh day. The Hebrew words for “seventh” and “rested” are similar.

The observance of the Sabbath is an ordinance given to the nation of Israel and not the church. Although the church was not given the ordinance to observe the Sabbath, they are commanded to enter into God’s Sabbath rest meaning to rest in the promises of God and one’s union with Christ (cf. Hebrews 4).

Now, Exodus 20:8-11 makes clear that the observance of the Sabbath is connected to the fact that God Himself rested on the seventh day after six days of work (Genesis 2:2-3). The Sabbath is thus an invitation to rejoice in God’s creation and to acknowledge that He is sovereign.

Deuteronomy 5:15 gives another reason for observing the Sabbath. This verse connects the Sabbath with Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. Therefore, every Sabbath the Israelites were to bring into remembrance that the Lord delivered them from Egyptian bondage by means of His omnipotence.

Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14-15 and Exodus 23:12 teach that the Sabbath was for the benefit of both man and animal in Israel. Exodus 31:13, 17, Ezekiel 20:12 and 20 teach that it was a sign of the covenant between the Lord and Israel. Thus, those in Israel who failed to keep the Sabbath were put to death (Exodus 31:14; Numbers 15:32-36; Jeremiah 17:19-27). The keeping of the Sabbath would affirm one’s loyalty to the Lord and would guarantee His presence and deliverance.

“To keep it holy” denotes that the Israelites must keep Saturday as a day set aside exclusively for God, i.e. worshipping Him. This day should be set aside
exclusively by the Israelites as a day to bring into remembrance who God is and what He has done for them resulting in worshipping Him, i.e. giving thanks to Him.

Verses 9 and 10 present the explanation for the commandment in verse 8.

The observance of the Sabbath was designed to be a benefit for people in that it would contribute to making them spiritually stronger and draw them closer to God. The Sabbath day would bring about a change in one’s weekly routine, which would be a day of refreshment. It was a day to focus upon His will.

Exodus 20:11 teaches the Israelites that the basis for the Sabbath day observance is God creating the time, matter, space continuum as well as mankind and restoring the heavens and the earth which was judged by God due to Satan’s rebellion against God.

The fact that God is said to have “ceased” from His activity does not mean that He was tired but simply that He was satisfied with His work, which He had brought to completion by the seventh day. It means that there was nothing He could add to what He already accomplished during the six days, thus, it was perfect in every detail.

**Exodus 20:12: The Fifth Commandment**

**Exodus 20:12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” (NASB95)**

This is the first commandment that is related to the Israelites proper conduct with regards to their fellow human beings.

Honoring your father and mother involves not only financial support if necessary but also care and concern and personal involvement with them. Honor of parents involves providing for parents when they can no longer provide for themselves.

Just as parents spend twenty or so years taking care of and providing for their children, so their children are to spend whatever time and money necessary to care and provide for their parents should the parents be no longer able to do so for themselves.

Paul quotes this commandment in Ephesians 6:3 and says that it is “the first commandment with a promise” which does not mean first in the sense of the order in which it was given but rather it means “first in importance for children.”

The phrase “that you may live on long on the earth” means that God enriches the life of the obedient child no matter how long he may live on the earth. Sin always robs us and obedience always enriches us. This does not mean that people who have died young dishonored their parents.
To honor and obey one’s parents is to honor and obey God who commanded obey and honor your father and mother.

Exodus 20:13: The Sixth Commandment

**Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder.” (NASB95)**

This commandment also appears in Deuteronomy 5:17. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 13:9.

The Bible prohibits murder. However, it does not prohibit the killing of the enemy by a soldier in battle or the execution of a murderer through capital punishment.

Genesis 9:5-6 records for us the establishment of the fourth and final divine institution as well as the institution of capital punishment.

**Genesis 9:5 “Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6 Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.” (NASB95)**

The Word of God prohibits murder according to Exodus 20:13 and is one of the sins that God hates according to Proverbs 6:16-19 and according to Genesis 9:6 is to be punished through capital punishment.

“I will require” is the verb הָרַ֖שׁ (dārāš), which is a judicial term used with reference to both men and animals and expresses the fact God seeks “restitution” for murder by the execution of the murderer or the animal who has taken a human life.

As a result of the total depravity of mankind, God instituted capital punishment in order to protect both animal and human life and to curb violence and be a deterrent to crime.

The reason why this provision is given is found in the phrase “for in the image of God, He (the Lord) made (‘asah, “modeled”) (the soul of) man.”

The emphasis of this stipulation recorded in Genesis 9:5-6 does “not” refer to vengeance but rather justice and the careful recognition of the sacredness of the divine image in man, though marred by sin.

Murder is a shocking affront to God and a terrible crime against one’s fellow man. Before the Flood the lack of capital punishment led to blood vendettas (Gen. 4) and without instinctive fear, the animals corrupted their behavior.

Genesis 9:5-6 records the institution of human government where God delegated authority to mankind as His agents in exacting retribution by capital punishment upon those who take a human life indicating as well that this is not a personal matter but a social obligation. Before the Flood, there was no formal arrangement of human government and thus no formal punishment of crime or of

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crime prevention, even for the capital crime of murder, as evident in the individual histories of Cain and Lamech (Genesis 4). The absence of human government and the total depravity of mankind led to a universal state of violence and anarchy, which resulted in the judgment of the Flood. God established capital punishment and thereby human government in order to prevent the conditions of the antediluvian period from developing again.

Numbers 35:30-34, Deuteronomy 17:6-7 and 19:15 teach that capital punishment “cannot” take place unless there are two or more witnesses to the crime and that they all agree in their testimony after being individually interviewed. Capital punishment is taught in the Old Testament (Ex. 21:12, 15-17; 22:2, 18-20; Num. 35:6-34; Deut. 19:1-13; 24:7) and in the New Testament (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13). The fact that capital punishment was instituted does “not” mean that there is never to be an exception to the punishment of execution for the crime of murder.

With God, justice may be tempered with mercy, in response to repentance. For example, David was guilty of the capital crimes of murder and adultery in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba respectively and God forgave David when he confessed his sin and thus David instead of dying by stoning or the sword as he deserved, “died in a good old age, full of days, riches and honor (1 Chron. 29:28).

Also, the woman caught in the act of adultery was guilty by the Mosaic Law of a crime punishable by death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22) and the Lord Jesus seeing her heart of repentance, was moved to forgive her and to see that she was set free (Jn. 8:3-11). In like manner, a judge or a governor is warranted in taking such mitigating factors as may exist in a given situation into consideration in determining a sentence, legal penalty of capital punishment.

The essential point is that man was delegated authority and responsibility of human government by God and that this responsibility first entails the recognition of the sacredness of human life and that man is created in the image of God and the recognition of capital punishment as the just and legal penalty for murder. It is clear that the authority for capital punishment implies also the authority to establish laws governing human activities and personal relationships, which if unregulated would lead to murder, robbery, adultery, thus this instruction to Noah is the fundamental basis for all human legal and governmental institutions.

Exodus 20:14: The Seventh Commandment

Exodus 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery.” (NASB95)

Marriage was established by God in the Garden of Eden when He brought the Woman to Adam to be his helpmate (See Genesis 2:18-25). Therefore, committing
adultery would be sin against God because it would violate the divine institution of marriage. Of course, as we have noted the Word of God prohibits adultery.

Adultery begins in the heart (Mark 7:21-23). The act of adultery takes place when the thought of adultery is acted upon (James 1:13-15). Committing adultery is a manifestation of not loving your neighbor as yourself (Romans 13:9-10).

Under the Mosaic Law, both the adulterer and the adulteress received the death penalty (Leviticus 20:10).

In Matthew 5:27-28, the Lord Jesus Christ taught if you look lustfully at another man’s wife, you have already committed adultery with her in your heart.

In James 2:10-11, James teaches those Jewish Christians who succumbed to the Judaizers and sought to live under the Mosaic economy taught that if you do not commit adultery but commit murder, you have transgressed the Law since whoever stumbles in one point has become guilty of transgressing all that is taught in the Law.


God has ordained sex within the boundaries of marriage in order to perpetuate and protect the human race from disease and emotional trauma, which is brought on by adultery.

Adultery was a problem throughout Israel’s history (Jeremiah 7:9-11; 9:1-6; Ezekiel 22:1-16).

In the first century, the Jews were divorcing their women without legitimate Biblical reasons and were thus committing adultery.

There are three legitimate grounds for divorce: (1) Failure to be faithful to the marriage partner (Deuteronomy 24:1-5) (2) Failure to provide emotional support in the form of sex (Exodus 21:10-11) (3) Failure to provided material support (Exodus 21:10-11). Therefore, adultery was grounds for divorce since it was the failure to be faithful to the marriage contract.

The refusal to have sex with your marriage partner is grounds for divorce since it is a failure to provide sex for your marriage partner under the marriage contract. Physical abuse is grounds for divorce since it is the failure to provide emotional support under the marriage contract. Physical neglect is grounds for divorce since it is the failure to provide material support under the terms of the marriage contract.

During our Lord’s First Advent, many Jewish men tried to circumvent the Mosaic Law command against adultery by divorcing their wives and marrying another woman to whom they were attracted. This practice of divorcing their wives for simply any reason came about because of misinterpreting the meaning of the phrase “indecency” in Deuteronomy 24:1-5.
In first century Israel, there were two schools of interpretation concerning Deuteronomy 24:1. There was the “Shammai” school, which was conservative in that they took the word “indecency” literally referring to some form of sexual immorality such as adultery. The second was the “Hillel” school, which was liberal in that they took the word “indecency” and added to it, saying that the word meant “any indecency at all,” thus teaching that a Jewish man could divorce his wife for anything that he didn’t like about her such as she burned the bacon at breakfast.

In Matthew 19:1-12, the Lord Jesus Christ condemned this practice of divorcing without a legitimate reason. In this passage, the “certificate of divorce” enabled the divorcees to remarry.

The directive will of God is that marriage was originally designed to be a lifelong commitment (Gen. 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6), but the permissive will of God has permitted divorce because of the fallen nature of man and negative volition to the Word of God on the part of one or both partners (Matt. 19:7-8).

The victim of adultery has two legitimate choices, forgiveness or divorce (Ephesian 4:31-32).

Recovering from the sin of adultery demands the confession of the sin to the Father and then bringing one’s thoughts in obedience to Christ, which constitutes obeying the commands of Ephesians 5:18 to be influenced by means of the Spirit and Colossians 3:16 to let the Word of Christ richly dwell in your soul.

The believer’s love for the Lord is to motivate him to obey God’s will, which prohibits adultery. His love and gratitude to the Lord for all that He had done for him is the secret to withstanding the temptation to commit sin and not just adultery since his love for the Lord and gratitude towards Him will motivate him to obey the laws of God pertaining to adultery. Obedience to the will of God, motivated by his love for God, enables the believer to withstand temptation from the old Adamic sin nature and the cosmic system of Satan. Obedience to the will of God demonstrates our love for God.

Obedience to the Word of God is motivated by the believer’s love for the Lord and the believer’s love for the Lord is simply the response of the believer to the love God has demonstrated towards the believer through His Son Jesus Christ on the Cross and raising him up and seated him with Christ (See Ephesians 2:1-10). This is why the apostle Paul prayed that the Philippians love for the Lord would continue to grow since love for the Lord serves as a protection from sin and motivation to resist the temptation to sin.

Philippians 1:9 Now, this I make it a habit to pray that your divine-love might continue to flourish yet more and more by means of a total discerning experiential knowledge (of the love of God manifested in Christ by the Holy Spirit in the pages of Scripture). (Author’s translation)
Therefore, the believer receives the capacity to withstand committing the sin of adultery and all sin by means of his love for the Lord and if the believer loves the Lord it is only because the Lord loved him first (1 John 4:19).

The believer’s love for the Lord is demonstrated by his obedience to the Lord’s commands and his obedience to the Lord’s commands is the response in his soul to the love, which the Lord exercised towards him. Also, the believer’s awareness that God had a plan for his life and his personal sense of destiny will further motivate him to withstand the lusts of the old Adamic sin nature.

Exodus 20:15: The Eighth Commandment

Exodus 20:15 “You shall not steal.” (NASB95)

This prohibition demands that the Israelites respect each other’s property, which ignored creates instability in society. Stealing is taking something that does not belong to you without permission. This sin undermines the social order. Those who steal food causes someone to go hungry. The one who steals an animal hinders another’s ability to farm. The stealing of clothing can cause another to suffer from the elements.

Disobedience to this prohibition is a manifestation of not loving one’s neighbor as oneself. This prohibition appears in other places in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:11; Deuteronomy 5:19). It is reinforced many times in the New Testament (Matthew 19:18; Romans 2:21; 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:10; Ephesians 4:28; Titus 2:10; 1 Peter 4:15). By way of contrast, instead of stealing believers are to work with their own hands so that they might be able to share with someone who is in need (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12).

Exodus 20:16: The Ninth Commandment

Exodus 20:16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (NASB95)

This prohibition is reinforced in Leviticus 5:1 and Deuteronomy 19:18. The immediate concern with this prohibition is justice and honesty toward those with whom the Israelites may appear in court or legal investigation of any kind. It of course involves maintaining integrity before the Lord, who because He is omniscience knows the truth about everything. The Lord will ultimately hold accountable those who have resorted to lies to protect themselves from harm or in order to maliciously injure the other person in the court action.

This prohibition emphasizes personal integrity in all interpersonal relationships. To resort to false accusation and testimony is to dishonor God and support Satan who is the father of lies.
Exodus 20:17: The Tenth Commandment

Exodus 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” (NASB95)

This prohibition appears in Deuteronomy 5:21 and Paul quotes from it in Romans 13:9. To covet is to desire inordinately or without due regard for the rights of others. Therefore, the Lord is emphatically prohibiting the Israelites from desiring inordinately or without due regard for the rights of their fellow citizens. Failure to observe this prohibition is a failure to love one’s neighbor as oneself and produces an unstable society.

Exodus 20:18-21: The Israelites Response

Exodus 20:18 All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. 19 Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.” 20 Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.” 21 So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was. (NASB95)

This passage reveals that the Israelites were terrified by hearing God speak audibly and directly to them. They demanded that in the future Moses would speak to them rather than God. The Scriptures make clear that God’s voice is deafeningly loud. Moses was able to endure it because God gave him grace to do so. However, the Israelites were terrified by the sound of God’s voice. Accompanied by the thunder and lightening, the voice of God struck great fear in the hearts of every Israelite.

These verses teach that God’s presence is extremely threatening to those who are not as holy as God. He must limit manifesting Himself so as to not overwhelm human beings. God’s presence also manifests God’s holiness and for a person who is a sinner by nature and practice, it would be a terrifying experience since God’s holiness demands that sin and sinners be judged. Thus, the need for the Savior, Jesus Christ, who has made it possible for sinners to come into the presence of God without fear.

Moses tells the people to not be afraid because God was testing them to see if they really would be afraid of disobeying Him by sinning. Thus, Moses was telling them it was good that they had this response to God’s voice and commandments
since it indicated that they would be afraid of offending Him by committing sin. Consequently, their fear of God would serve as a deterrent to sinning. To be afraid of the consequences of disobeying God is very important attitude for a believer to possess since it promotes experiential sanctification and experiencing the holiness of God in one’s life.

Verse 21 tells the reader that Moses approached God by climbing the mountain where God’s glory resided but the Israelites stayed at a distance. Thus, we see Moses alone with God on the mountain while the people stayed at the base of the mountain. This reveals that Moses was on intimate terms with God while the Israelites were not. This sets up a pattern that appears in future passages where God speaks to Moses directly and indirectly to the Israelites through Moses.

The reason why Moses was on intimate terms with God and the Israelites were not is that the former was occupied with pursuing holiness whereas the latter was not but rather pursued happiness on their own terms. The former loved God with his entire being whereas the latter did not. Therefore, only those who love God with their entire being and pursue holiness are on intimate terms with God.

Exodus 20:22-26: Laws About the Construction of Altars

Exodus 20:22 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven. 23 You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves. 24 You shall make an altar of earth 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 cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. 25 If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it. 26 And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it.’” (NASB95)

These verses present to Israel regulations with regards to the worship of the Lord. The proper worship of the Lord required proper regulations or in other words things that were to be done and not to be done.

Verse 22 is a reminder to the Israelites of what they have seen and heard for themselves. It tells them that God Himself has spoken to them from heaven in a localized place, namely Mount Sinai. This verse teaches that on the basis of God’s revelation on the mountain, the Israelites were obligated to obey Him as instructed in verses 24-26. Verse 23 summarizes the first two commandments, which prohibit the practice of idolatry.

In verses 24-26, the Lord gives the Israelites a brief overview of the construction of altars, which are to be used to worship Him. The point of this
section is that those who worship a holy God must maintain holiness by the manner in which they worship. The Israelites are to worship in the manner prescribed by God.

If you recall, in Exodus 17:15, we have the record of Moses building an altar and naming it “The Lord is My Banner.” The fact that Moses builds an altar recalls the patriarchs building altars to memorialize theophanies and covenant promises. Noah started the practice (Genesis 8:20) and it continued with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-7) and his son and grandson (Genesis 26:25; 35:7). These altars were to worship the Lord in the sense of expressing gratitude for what the Lord has done or promised to do in the future. Therefore, Moses was carrying on a tradition of God’s people in expressing thanksgiving to God for delivering the Israelites.

In Exodus 27:1-8, we will see the Israelites receiving detailed instructions with regards to the construction of altars. The initial altar here in Exodus 20:24-26 is simple made of dirt or stone that was not cut by men. The reason for this simplicity is to reflect God’s holiness and His abhorrence of idolatry. It emphasizes that God only accepts that which He has created and provided. Thus, the altar could not be something in which human beings could take pride in it or ownership of it. This altar could not have steps. In the ancient world, most people did not wear underwear. Even though Levitical priests eventually wore undergarments (Exodus 28:42), there was always the risk of the worshipper or priest’s genitals being exposed as he walked up steps, which would insult God. Thus, the Lord instructs the Israelites to construct their altars with no steps.

“Burnt offering” is the noun ʿō·lā(h) (עֹלָה), which portrays or typifies that aspect of Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the Cross, which would propitiate the Father (1 John 2:2; 4:10). The burnt offering in Leviticus 1:2-17 depicts the doctrine of propitiation with emphasis on the work of Christ.

“Propitiation” is the Godward side of salvation whereby the voluntary substitutionary spiritual death of the impeccable humanity of Christ in hypostatic union satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God that the sins of the entire world-past, present and future be judged (1 John 2:2; 4:10).

“Peace offerings” is the noun še·lēm (שֶׁלֶם), which called for the shedding of blood and taught the doctrine of reconciliation (Lev. 3). The peace offering sets forth God as propitiated and the sinner reconciled.

The peace offering emphasizes the person of Christ who is described in the Scriptures by the following: (1) “our peace” (Eph. 2:14). (2) “Made peace” (Col. 1:20). (3) “Preached peace” (Eph. 2:17). (4) “Prince of peace” (Isa. 9:6).

The peace offering is found in Leviticus 3 and always followed the other offerings. Categories of Peace offerings: (1) Thank offering (z̄e·bāh hattōda, “sacrifice of thanksgiving,” Lev. 7:12; 22:29) (2) Votive offering (z̄e·bāh nēdēr,

Peace offerings took place on: (1) Public occasions (2) Private occasions. Public: (1) Customary on festive inauguration (Ex. 24:5; 2 Sam. 6:17-18; 1 Kings 8:63) (2) Election of kings (1 Sam. 11:15) (3) Joyous occasions (Deut. 27:7; Josh. 8:31) (4) Prescribed for the feast of Pentecost (Lev. 23:19) (5) Festivals were observed with them (Num. 10:10; 2 Chron. 30:22).

Solomon arranged three times a year a sacrificial festival of burnt and peace offerings (1 Kings 9:25). Private: (1) Result of free impulse or fulfillment of a vow (Lev. 7:16; 22:21; Num. 15:8) (2) Recognition of a special favor from Jehovah (Lev. 7:12; 22:29) (3) Regularly employed at the expiration of a Nazarite vow (Num. 6:14).

The peace offering had two sources: (1) “Of the herd” (Lev. 3:1-5) (2) “From the flock” (Lev. 3:6-17). Types of animals were offered: (1) Bull (Lev. 3:1-5) (2) Lamb (Lev. 3:6-11) (3) Goat (Lev. 3:12-16).

Qualification for the animals: (1) Must be unblemished which speaks of the impeccability of the person of Christ. (2) The animal could be either male or female which represents the offerer and what he or she sees in Christ.

The fire in the peace offering represents the total commitment of Christ to God the Father’s plan and His human testings and sufferings. The peace offering placed on top of the burnt offering represents the fact that the person and work of our Lord go together (Lev. 3:5). The sinner can come to God and have communion and fellowship with Him on the basis of the person and work of Christ. The peace offering sets forth God as propitiated and the sinner reconciled.

Bull (Lev. 3:1-5): (1) Sets forth the servant side of our Lord (Mark 10:45). (2) Domesticated animal used to “bear” burdens and to plow fields. (3) Represented transportation and commerce in the ancient world.

Our Lord served man by paying the ransom price, which delivered all of humanity from the slave market of sin. He served all of mankind by propitiating God the Father’s justice at the Cross with His substitutionary spiritual death. Our Lord served God by doing His will. God the Father’s will was for His Son to die on the Cross as a propitiation for our sins.

Lamb (Lev. 3:6-11): (1) represents Christ in His complete identification with man in life and death. (2) Pictured Christ as the qualified sin-bearer or His quality and ability to take the place of man in bearing the sins of the world. John 1:29 speaks of the Lamb’s, i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ, work on the Cross. John 1:36 speaks of the Person of our Lord. Isaiah 53 portrays our Lord as a Lamb who becomes our Substitute. Our Substitute is called a lamb in His resurrection (Rev. 5:6). He is the Lamb in His return at the Second Advent (Rev. 6:16-17).
The “entire fat tail” refers to a special breed of sheep peculiar to Palestine. They were found in Palestine, Syria, North Africa and Egypt. They often weighed 15 lbs. or more and consisted of marrow and fat. All the sheep in Palestine were “broad-tailed.” The broad part of the tail is abnormal projection or outgrowth of fat from which the true tail hangs down. This is the rump or tailbone, which passes over into the vertebrae of the tail. This was the Lord’s portion.

Goat (Lev. 3:12-16): (1) represents the complete identification of Christ as adequate to take away the sins of the world. (2) Represents that aspect of Christ’s work, which propitiated God the Father. In Lev. 16:10, the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement and represented that aspect of Christ’s work, which puts away our sins (John 1:29). The Lord Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins. God no longer remembers our sins (Psa. 103:12).

The Ritual for the Peace Offering (shelem): (1) Offerer led the animal to the altar and laid his hand upon its head and killed it. (2) The priest caught the blood and sprinkled it upon the altar. (3) The fat of the intestines was taken from the animal and burned upon the altar on top of the burnt offering (Lev. 3:3-5, 9-11, 14-16; 9:18-20). (4) The breast and right shoulder were separated from each other. (5) The shoulder was laid aside for the priest. (6) The breast was waved, i.e., symbolically presented to the Lord, from whom the priests received it for their use. (7) The priest’s part may be eaten by him, either boiled or roasted in some clean place (Lev. 7:30-34; 10:13-14). (8) All the flesh of public peace offering belonged to the priests (Lev. 23:20). (9) The rest of the flesh belonged to the offerer and was to be shared with his family and guests. (10) Whatever remained after 3 days was burned.

The Law of the Peace Offering (Lev. 7:11-38): (1) Freewill offering for the purpose of thanksgiving (Lev. 7:11-12; cf. Heb. 13:15) (2) Unleavened cakes and wafers speak of the impeccability of Christ, or the lack of evil or sin in His life. (3) The unleavened cakes mixed with oil speak of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our Lord’s life and ministry. (4) The leavened cakes speak of the evil and sin still present in the offerer. (5) The leavened cakes were elevated toward heaven, which speaks of occupation with the Person of Christ.

Leviticus 7:15-18 teaches: (1) Offering was to be eaten that same day without delay in order to teach the importance of staying close to Christ for peace of conscience and for power over temptation. (2) The sacrifice was to be burned on 3rd day in order to guard against the desecration of the sacrificial meal, which was holy. (3) Flesh putrefies on the 3rd day if it is not preserved artificially. Communion and fellowship with God’s people was cut off if any flesh was eaten on the 3rd day. The one who offered the sacrifice would not be accepted by God if the flesh was eaten on the 3rd day.
Leviticus 7:19-21: (1) Speaks of the importance of confession of sin for there is no fellowship and communion without confession of sin. (2) Fellowship and communion was cut off if the offer came in contact with anything unclean which speaks of residence in the Cosmic System of Satan.

Leviticus 7:23-27: (1) The fat of animals that were not commanded to be sacrifice was unacceptable and could not be eaten because it was unclean. (2) The fat of animals that had been torn to pieces by other animals was an unacceptable or unclean sacrifice and defiled the eater but could be used for the common purposes of ordinary life. (3) Fellowship and communion were cut off if the individual offered any of these animals as a sacrifice to God. (4) Fellowship and communion were cut off if the fat portions of the ox, sheep or goat were eaten by the offerer because they were gifts set apart for God. (5) The fat portions of the ox, sheep and goat were considered the best portions of the animal and therefore, belonged to God since He only demands the best. (6) Fellowship and communion with God were cut off if the offerer ate any blood. (7) The soul life of the animal was in the blood and was sanctified as the medium of atonement for the soul of man (Lev. 17:10-16). (8) The blood of the animal represented the spiritual death of our Lord on the Cross.

Leviticus 7:29-34: (1) the offerer of his own free will was to bring a peace offering. (2) This represents the acceptance of the terms of God’s peace treaty, i.e., reconciliation. (3) The breast of the animal belonged to the high priest (Aaron) and his sons. (4) The breast spoke of Christ’s love for us (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:20).

The peace offering was performed with the breast-piece, which was called the wave-breast (Lev. 7:34; 10:45; Num. 6:20; Ex. 29:27).

The “waving” of the breast was a private thank offering. The priest placed his own hands underneath and moved the hands of the offerer backwards and forwards in a horizontal direction. The movement forwards in the direction of the altar indicated the presentation of the sacrifice or the symbolic transfer of it to God. The movement backwards meant the reception of it back again as a present, which God handed over to His servants the priests.

The right thigh belonged to the priest and spoke of the power of Christ to save us and keep us saved forever, Christ is our eternal security (John 10:27-30). The right thigh was used as a heave offering and was called the heave offering because it was “lifted” or “heaved off” from the sacrificial animal as a gift of honor for the officiating priest. The heave offering enabled the priests to take part as God’s representatives in the sacrificial meal. The heave offering was not waved like the breast-piece. The wave and heave offerings were gifts to Jehovah and could only be used by the priest and their children (Lev. 22:10; Num. 18:19).

At the moment of his salvation, the church age believer was given a royal ambassadorship in which he is to represent the absent Christ who sits as the right
hand of the Father and presents the gospel message of peace with God to the unsaved through faith alone in Christ alone (2 Cor. 5:20a).

So the peace offering illustrated the doctrine of reconciliation, which is the manward side of the Cross. The peace offering in Leviticus 3 is summarized by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:14-18. The Jew had peace with God the same way that the Gentile can have peace with God, faith in Jesus Christ. The peace offering sets forth God as propitiated and the sinner reconciled.

**Overview of Exodus 21**

Exodus chapter 21 is divided into two sections: (1) Regulations governing the treatment of slaves (1-11). (2) Regulations with regards to injuries to people and animals (12-36).

**Exodus 21:1-11: Law on Servants**

Exodus 21:1 “Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them: 2 If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. 3 If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone. 5 But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,’ 6 then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently. 7 If a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do. 8 If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people because of his unfairness to her. 9 If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. 10 If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. 11 If he will not do these three things for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.” (NASB95)

In Exodus 21:1, “ordinances” is the Hebrew noun miš·pāṭ (מִשְׁפָּט), which denotes a law or regulation in the form of a spoken or written command, which is to be obeyed and results in a penalty for non-compliance.

Therefore, in Exodus 21:1, “ordinances” is the Hebrew noun miš·pāṭ (מִשְׁפָּט), which denotes civil law in the exercise of human government. The word designates different aspects of Israelite civil government. These laws express God’s
sovereignty over the nation of Israel. God’s attribute of justice is exercised and manifested through enforcement of these laws. They serve to provide rights for the citizens of Israel and identify God’s rights as well. They involve dispensing justice.

Chapter 21 begins with the treatment of human beings and in particular the treatment of slaves who were the most likely to be mistreated or exploited in society.

In Exodus 21:2, “slave” is the Hebrew noun ʿě∙ḇěḏ (חֶבֶד) (eh´-bed), which refers to a six year contract servant in Israel.

The Bible does not condemn slavery, but in fact condones it (Lev. 25:44). Slavery was commonly practiced in the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel was commanded by the Lord God to make slaves of those whom they conquered in battle. Under Israelite law, the length and type of service depended upon nationality, the form of servitude, and gender. For instance, Israelites who became slaves to resolve a problem with debt were to be treated as “hired workers” under the Mosaic Law and not as slaves from pagan nations.

There were five ways in which one could become a slave: (1) Those who sold themselves into slavery because of debt. (2) Those who were prisoners of war. (3) Those who were born into slavery (Gen. 17:23; Lev. 22:11) (4) Those who were sold into slavery, i.e., Joseph (Gen. 37:28, 36) (5) Those who were caught committing the crime of breaking and entering (Ex. 22:2-3).

Slaves were acquired through: (1) Trade (2) Purchase (3) Payment of debt (4) Gifts (5) Birth (6) Plunder in war (7) Self-determination.

An Israelite could sell himself or herself into slavery to a fellow countryman to pay off a debt. The Lord freed Israel from bondage in Egypt to serve Him, not to serve foreign nations as slaves (Lev. 25:35-42, 55; Deut. 15:15). Israelites who had to sell themselves into slavery because of debt were a great problem in ancient Israel. In fact, David’s army was composed of individuals who were oppressed and were debt ridden (1 Sam. 22:1). Amos 2:6, 8:4 point to this widespread problem in Israel. Nehemiah 5 describes the problem of debt-slavery in post-exilic Israel. Nehemiah required the wealthy nobles to take a public oath that they would not take advantage of the poor exiles returning to Israel from Babylon.

Famine and the king of Persia’s tax on the poor had caused many returning exiles to give their sons and daughters over to be slaves. This should have never been a problem in Israel for the Lord had made provision and foresaw in His omniscience this abuse of the rich over the poor in Israel.

The Lord had commanded that there be no interest charged to a fellow Israelite (Ex. 22:25). All Jewish slaves were to be freed on the year of Jubilee. All Jewish slaves were to serve 6 years and then could go free, if they desired, on the 7th year and did not have to make payment to their master (Ex. 21:2). The rich nobles in Israel were not to make slaves of their fellow countryman.
Slaves carried out: (1) Household duties (2) Farming duties (3) Young women served as concubines (4) Building projects for the state.

Slaves within Israelite society, as well as in other ancient Semitic societies, were dependent and subservient. The slave was not permitted to come and go as they pleased.

The price of a slave in Israel: The average price of a slave during the third century B.C. was between 10 and 20 shekels. Joseph was sold by his brothers for 20 silver shekels (Gen. 37:28).

The Mosaic Law stipulated that 30 shekels of silver were to be the compensation for a slave who had been gored to death by an ox (Ex. 21:32). Our Lord was betrayed by Judas Iscariot for 30 pieces of silver, the price of slave (Matt. 26:15). This was according to the prophecy found in Zech. 11:13.

The word shekel comes from the Hebrew word *shaqal* and means “to weigh something in the balance to measure its amount,” and commonly, “to weigh out silver or gold as payment for something.” The shekel was the common unit of weight throughout Canaan and Mesopotamia. The weight of the shekel varied according to time and place.

The temple shekel weighed approximately 10 grams and the ordinary merchant’s shekel weighed 11 1/2 to 12 grams and the heavier or royal shekel weighed approximately 13 grams. In the New Testament, the shekel was the standard wage for a day’s labor. The value of a male or female slave in Israel as designated by the Lord was 30 shekels of silver (Ex. 21:32).

The Rights of Slaves in Israel: (1) To redeem themselves and work for their freedom (2) To good and fair treatment (Lev. 25:43) (3) To justice (Ex. 21:20; Job 31:13) (4) To marry and have children (Ex. 21:5) (5) To choose to remain a permanent slave after being set free (Ex. 21:5; Deut. 15:16) (6) To own property and have money (Lev. 25:29) (7) To promotion (Gen. 15:2) (8) To worship God without interference from Master (Ex. 12:44; Deut. 12:12).

Hebrew slaves had more rights: (1) They could be held for only 6 years (Ex. 21:2; Deut. 15:12) (2) When freed, the master had to provide animals, grain and wine (Deut. 15:13). (3) They could not be returned to foreign owners if they ran away (Deut. 23:15).

Slave owners had the right: (1) To hold slaves as possessions (Lev. 25:45) (2) To leave slaves to his inheritance (Lev. 25:46) (3) To hold as property the wife and children of all slaves who were unmarried at the time they became a slave (Ex. 21:4) (4) To capture runaways (1 Kings 2:39-41) (5) To free slaves on the Sabbatical Year or Jubilee (6) To circumcise slaves as commanded by the Lord (Gen. 17:12-13, 23, 27) (7) To sell, trade, or give away slaves (Gen. 29:24) (8) To punish or disciplines slaves, but not to kill (Ex. 21:20) (9) To marry a slave or give them in marriage (1 Chron. 2:35) (10) To marry a daughter to a slave (1 Chron.
2:34) (11) To make slaves those who are caught for breaking and entering (Ex. 22:2-3) (12) To make slaves of those individuals caught stealing (Gen. 44:8-33) (13) To demand military service of his slaves (Gen. 14:14-24).

Exodus 21:1-11 is divided into two parts: (1) Regulations governing the rights of male slaves (1-6). (2) Regulations governing the rights of female slaves (7-11).

Exodus 21:3-4 gives examples involving three situations with regards to six year servants: (1) A single, unattached servant (2) A servant who starts his term of service married (3) A servant who marries another worker under contract to the same boss and might have children during the time of employment. The law concerning these situations are designed to ensure that neither the servant nor the employer lose what is rightfully theirs at the time of termination of the service. This complex law has the following provisions: (1) The servant who is married prior to the contracted service is to retain his wife and children and the master is to figure in the costs of housing, food and clothing for the spouse as well. (2) The male servant who marries a female servant who is under contract to the master, cannot bring this woman with him at the end of his contractual duties. (3) The male servant could remain with the master if he wanted to stay with his wife and children or he could wait till she finishes her contractual duties to her employer. (4) He could find a job somewhere else and compensate financially the employer for his wife and children. (5) He could remain a servant of the employer forever.

Exodus 21:5-6 contains regulations with regards to voluntary permanent service and Exodus 21:7-11 list protections for female servants.

Exodus 21:12-17: Four Crimes that Require the Death Penalty

Exodus 21:12 “He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. 13 But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee. 14 If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die. 15 He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. 16 He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death. 17 He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” (NASB95)

Exodus 21:12-17 lists four crimes that required the death penalty: (1) Premeditated murder (verses 12, 14) (2) Physical violence against parents (verse 15) (3) Kidnapping (verse 16) (4) Verbal abuse of parents (verse 17).

Both Genesis 9:5-6 and Romans 13:1-7 make clear that government authority is tied to capital punishment since it was established by God to administer capital punishment to murderers and justice to lawbreakers. With the establishment of
human government, the Lord was seeking to prevent the same conditions of lawlessness that permeated the Antediluvian period from occurring again when there was no human government, nor capital punishment.

Numbers 35:30-34, Deuteronomy 17:6-7 and 19:15 teach that capital punishment “cannot” take place unless there are two or more witnesses to the crime and that they all agree in their testimony after being individually interviewed. Capital punishment is taught in the Old Testament (Ex. 21:12, 15-17; 22:2, 18-20; Num. 35:6-34; Deut. 19:1-13; 24:7) and in the New Testament (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13). The fact that capital punishment was instituted does “not” mean that there is never to be an exception to the punishment of execution for the crime of murder.

With God, justice may be tempered with mercy, in response to repentance. For example, David was guilty of the capital crimes of murder and adultery in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba respectively and God forgave David when he confessed his sin and thus David instead of dying by stoning or the sword as he deserved, “died in a good old age, full of days, riches and honor (1 Chron. 29:28).

Also, the woman caught in the act of adultery was guilty by the Mosaic Law of a crime punishable by death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22) and the Lord Jesus seeing her heart of repentance, was moved to forgive her and to see that she was set free (Jn. 8:3-11). In like manner, a judge or a governor is warranted in taking such mitigating factors as may exist in a given situation into consideration in determining a sentence, legal penalty of capital punishment.

The essential point is that man was delegated authority and responsibility of human government by God and that this responsibility first entails the recognition of the sacredness of human life and that man is created in the image of God and the recognition of capital punishment as the just and legal penalty for murder. It is clear that the authority for capital punishment implies also the authority to establish laws governing human activities and personal relationships, which if unregulated would lead to murder, robbery, adultery, thus this instruction to Noah is the fundamental basis for all human legal and governmental institutions.

Now, Exodus 21:13 addresses unintentional or accidental homicide. A person who unintentionally or accidentally kills another person could escape to one of the six cities of refuge after Israel was in the land (Numbers 35:6-34; Deuteronomy 19:1-13; Joshua 20).

Exodus 21:18-27: Laws Concerning Injuries to People

Exodus 21:18 “If men have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but remains in bed, 19 if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go
unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, and shall take care of him until he is completely healed. 20 If a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished. 21 If, however, he survives a day or two, no vengeance shall be taken; for he is his property. 22 If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman’s husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide. 23 But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. 26 If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye. 27 And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.” (NASB95)

Exodus 21:18-27 presents regulations or laws with regards to life threatening injuries to people, which is divided into four parts: (1) Regulations with regards to compensation for injured party in a physical quarrel (verses 18-19). (2) Regulations concerning the punishment of those who mistreat their slaves (verses 20-21). (3) Regulations concerning a pregnant woman losing her child due to physical injury (verses 22-25). (4) Laws of retaliation (verses 26-27).

Exodus 21:22-25 teaches that financial compensation must be paid by the guilty party to the husband of the pregnant woman if she gives birth prematurely as a result of striking her. However, verse 23 says that if there is further injury to the child in the sense that the child dies, then there was to be the death penalty for the guilty party as indicated by the expression “life for life.”

The expression “life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise” is related to civil law. It teaches that the penalty imposed on a person for causing physical injury must be appropriate to the nature of the injury. Consequently, giving financial compensation to a person who has been permanently maimed by another person is not adequate justice for the person maimed. Or, it is not adequate justice to give a family of a person who has been murdered by another financial compensation since the penalty does not fit the crime. This principle prevented the rich from buying their way of out capital crimes they have committed.

These types of laws are called “talion” laws. A person in the twenty-first century often misunderstands these laws in a literalistic sense. There is no evidence in ancient history where any judge required a literal application of talion law beyond the expression “life of life.” This expression meant that death was the satisfaction of the law. However beyond this, there was no actual taking of another person’s eye for having ruined the eye of another person. This is clearly indicated in Exodus 21:26-28 where a man who destroyed the eye of another man, shall go
free on account of the eye and if he knocks out the tooth of his slave, he shall be set free on account of the tooth. This passage says that if an ox gores a person to death, the ox shall be put down but the owner is to go unpunished. The goal of these type of laws was to make sure that justice was accomplished and that appropriate punishment was administered.

Exodus 21:28-36: Laws Concerning Injuries to Animals

Exodus 21:28 “If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished. 29 If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. 30 If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him. 31 Whether it gores a son or a daughter, it shall be done to him according to the same rule. 32 If the ox goes a male or female slave, the owner shall give his or her master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned. 33 If a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, 34 the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall become his. 35 If one man’s ox hurts another’s so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide its price equally; and also they shall divide the dead ox. 36 Or if it is known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, yet its owner has not confined it, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall become his.” (NASB95)

Exodus 21:28-36 contains laws with regards to injuries caused by or to animals and is divided into three parts: (1) Regulations concerning injuries inflicted by animals (verses 28-32). (2) Regulations concerning the loss of animal due to negligence (verses 33-34). (3) Regulations concerning someone’s bull killing another person’s bull (verse 35).

Verses 28-32 make clear that owners are responsible for the conduct of their animals. A bull is used to illustrate the legal principles that apply to cases in which it kills someone. In this situation, the owner of the bull suffers the loss of the bull and does not suffer the death penalty.

Verse 29 teaches that if a bull has a history of goring people and its owner has been warned and this bull kills a person then this person is to be put to death along with his bull since this is a negligent homicide.

Verse 30 appears to undermine the point of the preceding law in verse 29. However, this is not the case. Verse 30 gives a judge some leeway in cases which are more complicated. For example, let’s say that a bull tried to gore someone only
once in the past and someone had borrowed the bull against the owner’s advice and had mistreated the bull and then the bull gored that person. In this circumstance, the death penalty for the owner of the bull would not be fair and just. A more appropriate punishment is to be determined by the judge in relation to the level of culpability.

“He shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him” means that if a compensation payment was demanded of him, then the owner had to pay a redemption price for his life in the full amount which the judge sets. This was not a fine but rather it was a redemption payment because the basis for the penalty was the death penalty. It was the buying back of one’s life.

Verses 31 and 32 develop this law further by applying it to children and servants. Interestingly the taking of the servant’s life by someone’s bull does not result in the death penalty because of the way a servant functioned under the control of the employer. This means that because the servant was required to do certain things for the employer which would involve risk such as being around a bull, the death penalty was not required. Thus, a servant who was gored by a bull while carrying out his duties was presumably doing what the master told the servant to do by command. So a servant who is told by his master to work around a bull did not have the freedom to avoid the bull in contrast to a person who wasn’t a servant who could decide for himself to leave the presence of the bull. Thus, the owner of the bull was not as guilty as he would be if the bull gored someone who happened to be passing by and was not his servant.

Verses 33-34 contain a law which requires a person to make restitution to the person whose bull falls into an uncovered pit he dug.

The law in verse 35 stipulates that if a man’s ox or bull hurts another man’s ox or bull so that it dies, then the two of them shall sell the live ox or bull and divide the price equally and also they are to divide the dead ox between them. Basically, this law requires the liquidation of assets represented in the living bull as well as the dead one. Connected to this, verse 36 stipulates that if a bull who has a history of goring and yet its owner has not confined the animal to a safe place then the owner must pay ox for ox and the dead animal shall become his. The owner who is at fault because of his negligence has to pay for the dead bull at the market price.

Exodus 22:1-17: Property Laws

Exodus 22:1 “If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. 2 If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. 3 But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns
nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double. 5 If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed bare and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man’s field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. 6 If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field itself is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely make restitution. 7 If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep for him and it is stolen from the man’s house, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double. 8 If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor’s property. 9 For every breach of trust, whether it is for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, ‘This is it,’ the case of both parties shall come before the judges; he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor. 10 If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for him, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, 11 an oath before the Lord shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor’s property; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution. 12 But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. 13 If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces. 14 If a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. 15 If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire. 16 If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her to be his wife. 17 If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins.” (NASB95)

This pericope contains property laws. The laws in this section of chapter 22 make clear that God does not agree with the current prison system since none of these laws contain incarceration for any of the crimes mentioned. The modern prison systems of Western societies punish crimes of theft and sexual assault with confinement. Exodus 22 makes clear that God does not agree with our current penal system in America.

What is taught by the Lord in Exodus 22 is the concept of restitution. The laws that appear in this chapter teach the principle that the person who causes someone else to lose personal property, land or money by theft, neglect or failing to observe the usual betrothal process must provide restitution to the person who suffered loss. God’s laws demand that the guilty party make restitution for their crimes against property and that the innocent must be exonerated.
In Exodus 22, the verb šā·lēm (שלום) appears 14 times and is translated “he shall surely make restitution” (verses 3, 5), “he shall pay” (verses 4, 7), “shall pay” (verse 9), “he shall make restitution from” (verses 5, 11), “he shall make restitution” (verses 12, 13, 15), “shall surely make restitution” (verse 6) and “he shall make full restitution” (verse 14).

The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples the doctrine of restitution.

Matthew 5:21 “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ 22 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.’ 23 Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. 25 Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.” (NASB95)

Some make the claim that the death of Christ brings experiential forgiveness before God and before men without any further resolution or restitution between men.

These proponents argue that for every sin and crime, one need only to confess to God for total forgiveness experientially. The victim is then required to forgive based solely upon the positional forgiveness that “he” has personally received in Christ. This view is proposed from faulty interpretations of the following two passages:

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (NASB95)

Colossians 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (NASB95)

If we carry this view to its logical end, the victim must forgive and seek restoration with the perpetrator solely because of the forgiveness of Christ. Thus, the thief steals, confesses to God, who supposedly totally forgives him, but tough luck for the victim who has lost real property!

The slanderer libels, devastates his target, and confesses to God, who supposedly totally forgives him but tough luck again for the victim with a ruined reputation!

In the case of sin against one’s fellow human being, those who hold that confession to God alone is all that is necessary for forgiveness in the experiential
sense remove the basis for criminal law. They also remove the basis of restitution to victims and some holding this view include in their logic a faulty interpretation of David’s prayer of confession in Psalm 51.

**Psalm 51:4a Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight. (NASB95)**

Thus, with their logic, the thief steals, confesses to God, who supposedly totally forgives him, but tough luck for the victim who has lost real property or the slanderer libels, devastates his target, and confesses to God, who supposedly totally forgives him but tough luck again for the victim with a ruined reputation!

In this way they avoid the command of James 5:16 to confess your sins to one another but to the contrary, we should interpret this passage where the confession of the offender’s sin to the offended party takes place.

Our Lord taught His disciples that if their horizontal relationships with people are not right because of sin, then they are not right in their vertical relationship with God. For instance, if we don’t forgive our fellow believers, then God won’t forgive us in the experiential sense and thus we won’t be restored to fellowship (Mt. 6:14-15; Mt. 18:21-35).

**Matthew 6:14 “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (NASB95)**

So, if we have sinned and injured someone whether his or her property or reputation, we must confess it to the injured party and offer restitution, which in some cases, restitution could simply involve an apology.

Sins against society and against one another require civil restitution for experiential forgiveness before God and men, thus, the thief steals, realizes his sin, and confesses to God and his victim, then makes restitution, and God forgives him.

The divine requirement commands men to forgive the repentant offender. The death of Christ compensated God and the perpetrator compensates the victim by restitution. The slanderer libels and devastates his target, realizes his sin, confesses to God and the victim, makes restitution, and God forgives him. The Lord requires men to forgive the repentant man and the death of Christ compensates God whereas restitution compensates the victim.

Leviticus 6 presents clear guidelines about the principles involved when one sins against God and another person. It too teaches this principle of restitution.

**Leviticus 6:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his companion, 3 or has found what was lost and lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do. 4 then it shall be, when he sins and becomes guilty, that he shall**
restore what he took by robbery or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him or the lost thing which he found, 5 or anything about, which he swore falsely; he shall make restitution for it in full and add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day he presents his guilt offering. 6 Then he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering, 7 and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt.” (NASB95)

In the Gospel of Luke, Zaccheus informed the Lord that he gave to those whom he had defrauded four times as much.

Luke 19:8 Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” 9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (NASB95)

Exodus 22 teaches that the more intentional the crime, higher restitution is required, which is calculated in multiples of the value of the loss. Judges determine what should be compensated in cases of neglect. In cases, in which a person causes another to suffer loss but there was no culpability, then no compensation was required. Interestingly, these laws also intended to teach the Israelites that in God’s providence some things are no one’s fault so that no restitution is required.

In verses 1-4, we have laws pertaining to thieves. Specifically, it deals with the theft of animals, which constitute the property of another. Israelite society was an agricultural and pastoral society, thus these laws address certain situations which would arise in such a society. These verses contain four laws on restitution for theft as well as a stipulation with regards to defense against burglary.

These verses develop further what is meant by the eighth commandment found in Exodus 20:15, which is the prohibition against stealing another’s property. Failure to obey this prohibition, not only constitutes not loving God with one’s entire being and strength but also not loving one’s neighbor as oneself.

Exodus 22:1 addresses the compensation requirements for victims who have had livestock stolen from them and the thief has been apprehended. It addresses intentional theft. This verse teaches that the thief who kills another man’s ox or sheep must compensate the victim by returning the same kind of animals. Five head of cattle had to be paid for the loss of one ox and four sheep for the loss of one sheep. This heavy compensation would serve as a deterrent with regards to the theft of animals in Israel. It was prescribed because missing ox prevented a person from getting work done on one’s farm because they were used as work animals.
Verse 2 instructs the Israelites as to what is a reasonable defense against burglary. If a thief breaks in during the night and is killed by the owner of the property, then the owner was not charged with murder since he would have no idea if the thief was intent on murdering him and his family. However, verse 3 reveals that if the crime took place during the daylights hours, the owner would be guilty of a crime since the thief would have posed no threat to his life during the daylight hours and could be stopped and made to pay restitution.

So if caught at night, the owner could kill the thief but such was not the case if the crime took place during the daytime. At night the thief would pose a threat to the life of the owner and so in self-defense the thief could be killed by the owner protecting his home and family. However, verse 3 presents an exception to this if the sun had already risen and the homeowner could see if the thief was armed or intent on killing him and his family. Verse 4 teaches the Israelites that if the thief is found alive when he is apprehended, then he is to pay double.

Now, verses 1-4 teach the Israelites that God requires punishment to be precise and carefully administered with careful regard for the actual circumstances of a crime and should never be administered in mechanical fashion. God wants the Israelite judges to take into account all the circumstances and motives surrounding a crime and not treat all thefts as if they were equal. He also is teaching the Israelites in verses 1-4 that the major consideration in any ruling of a theft must be the victim!

Verses 5 and 6 teach that the person whose livestock grazes in another’s man’s field causing the loss or damage of crops is to make restitution. They also teach that the negligent person who starts a fire that causes the loss of a man’s crops must also make restitution to the victim.

Exodus 22:7-9 teaches the Israelites that property entrusted by one person to another demanded acceptance of responsibility by both the giver and receiver. They teach that when a person entrusts their property to you, you must treat it as your own, which manifests the fact that you love your neighbor as yourself.

In verse 7, if a person gives his neighbor money or goods to take care of for him and they are stolen from the house of the caretaker, then thief if he is caught must pay double. However, verse 8 addresses a more complicated and difficult situation. This verse addresses a claim in which property was entrusted to another person’s care and was missing or stolen. If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house who was entrusted to take care of his neighbor’s property by his neighbor must appear before the judges in order to determine if he was guilty of the theft. The judges were to determine if the property was simply lost due negligence on the part of the owner who sought to avoid responsibility.

Verse 9 says that every breach of trust between neighbors shall come before the judges and the one who is judged guilty by the court must pay double to the victim.
Verse 10 tells the reader that if a person gives his neighbor a donkey, ox, sheep or any animal to keep for him and this animal dies or is hurt or lost while no one was looking, then the two of them will make an oath that he has not laid hands on the animal and the owner shall accept this oath as evidence of his innocence and shall not make restitution. Verse 11 teaches that God will decide in cases where both parties are adamant they are innocent when the owner of the property says that he is not negligent and his neighbor who he entrusted the property to is claiming innocence as well. The oath was designed to force the guilty party to confess. The oath of a person meant that the person was telling the truth. If they lied under oath they would be punished by God. Verse 12 says that if he is guilty, then he is to make restitution. Verse 13 presents a case in which the animal entrusted to another is killed by another animal. The remains of the dead animal are to be brought before the judges as evidence of the innocence of the person entrusted with the animal. Thus, no restitution is required.

The Lord teaches in verse 14 that if a person borrows an animal from his neighbor and the animal dies or is injured while the owner is not with the animal, then this person must make full restitution to his neighbor. This restitution is taught in verses 5-6, which is a one for one substitute of as good or better quality. In other words, a twenty year old animal was not adequate compensation for a three year old animal in the prime of life or a newborn.

Then, in verse 15, the Lord teaches that if the owner is with the animal, the person does not have to make restitution and if it is hired then what was paid for the hire shall cover it. So this verse instructs the Israelites that if you borrow or rent an animal with the owner, it was the owner’s job to look out for the safety of the animal and not you. It also teaches them that when they rent an animal, then insurance was to be included in the rental fee of the animal. This law would ensure that both parties, namely the renter and the borrower understood the risks involved in the rental.

Now, many expositors do not consider verses 16 and 17 as connected to verses 1-15 but rather connected to verses 18-31. These two verses present laws with regards to premarital sex and the bride price whereas verses 18-31 contain laws which address social responsibility and verses 1-15 address property rights. Thus, many consider verses 16-17 as connected to verses 18-31 since the laws in verses 16-17 seem better suited to be connected with laws concerning social responsibility rather than property rights which is the issue in verses 1-15.

To place the laws about virgins with laws concerning property rights does not imply in any way that women are property. Rather, the institution of the bride price was a firm financial responsibility in ancient Israel. No man could get out of paying the bride price by avoiding the marriage vows and having premarital sex
with a woman. The man always had to pay the pride price to the family of the women regardless if he married her or not.

The “bride-price” refers to the compensation paid to the family of the bride for the loss of the bride’s presence and services and her potential offspring. The “bride-price” must not be confused with a “dowry,” since the latter was provided by the bride’s family whereas the former was provided by the groom.

Paying a bride-price appears degrading to those in western culture, in the twenty-first century. However, in the ancient world and in Israel it was not considered as such. In fact, it honored women. The price paid was not an indicator of worth since this law did not require the woman’s family to pay for her husband and the husband’s worth was never doubted.

Paying the bride-price forced the man to make a formal commitment for marriage which involved not only his interests and those of his bride to be but also the interests of both families. By having premarital sex with a woman with her permission or without, devalued her and degraded her. Paying the bride-price demonstrated that the man valued marriage and its covenant sign, which was sexual intercourse.

Therefore, in Israel, if a couple had sexual intercourse without the formal negotiation process involving the two families, the Lord required that the man pay the bride-price. The bride-price had to be made even if the father of the bride refused to give his daughter to the man if he so desired since it would be harder for the woman to marry and her father to receive a bride-price from another after she was sexually compromised.


Exodus 22:18 “You shall not allow a sorceress to live. 19 Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. 20 He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed. 21 You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. 23 If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; 24 and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. 25 If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. 26 If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, 27 for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious. 28 You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people. 29 You shall not delay the
offering from your harvest and your vintage. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. 30 You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me. 31 You shall be holy men to Me, therefore you shall not eat any flesh torn to pieces in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.” (NASB95)

In verses 18-20, the Lord lists three sins that demanded the death penalty. The first deals with prohibition of the practice of witchcraft. The second prohibits bestiality (cf. Leviticus 20:16; Deuteronomy 27:21), which was prominent in the worship of Baal by the Canaanites (Leviticus 18:23-24). The third prohibits sacrifices to any god other than the Lord (cf. Exodus 20:3-5). Each of these forbidden practices, witchcraft, bestiality and polytheism led people away from faith in Yahweh.

In verse 18, “a sorceress” is the verb ḵāšāp̄, which refers to an individual who practices witchcraft or sorcery in other words is involved with the black magic arts. It refers to an individual who practices magic by using occult formulas, incantations and mystic utterings. Witchcraft was outlawed in Israel (Exodus 22:18; Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

Therefore, verse 18 condemns witchcraft, which is condemned throughout the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:25; Deuteronomy 18:8-14; 2 Kings 9:21-26; 17:17; Jeremiah 27:8-11; Micah 5:10-15; Nahum 3:1-4; Malachi 3:5) as well as the New Testament (Acts 8:9ff; 13:6-8; 19:19).

In verse 19, “lies” is the verb šāḵāb̄ (שָׁכָּב), which refers to “sexual intercourse” and in this verse it is used in a prohibition that forbids any Israelite having sex with an animal. Thus, this verse forbids bestiality.

Verse 20 forbids polytheism, which recalls Exodus 20:3-5. This verse makes clear that Yahweh tolerated no rivals.

The Lord teaches the Israelites in verses 21-27 that He is deeply concerned about the welfare of the disadvantage and unprotected. The terms “stranger,” “widows,” and “orphans” is not an exhaustive list but rather presents a wide range of individuals in ancient times who were mistreated. These verses made clear that it was the personal responsibility of the Israelites to care for these people and protect and provide for them. No governmental welfare system existed in Israel because of this requirement.

In verse 21, the Lord teaches the Israelites to not discriminate against foreigners or aliens because they too were aliens or strangers in Egypt for over four hundred years. A resident alien was a person who moved into an area where he had neither land nor clan ties and would be without traditional tribal legal support and protection and would be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Thus, the Israelites were prohibited by God for taking advantage of resident aliens, which was common in the ancient world. Thus, God does not want the Israelites to engage in a
practice of discriminating against aliens when they were themselves at one time aliens or foreigners residing in Egypt for over four hundred years.

Then, in verses 22-24, He instructs them to not take advantage or abuse widows and orphans since He will take up their cause and punish those who are guilty of this crime. The Old Testament teaches the Israelites to have a compassionate concern for widows, which of course reflects the Lord’s concern for them (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 24:17; Psalm 94:6; Isaiah 1:17; Malachi 3:5) and was adopted by the first century apostolic church (Acts 6:1; James 1:27). In fact, the office of deacon in the first century apostolic church came into existence to deal with the problem of the caring of widows in the Christian community (Acts 6:1-10).

In the Old Testament, widows along with orphans, strangers and the poor helped to compose a group of disadvantaged people in Israel (Exodus 22:21-22; Isaiah 1:23; 10:2; Jeremiah 5:28). God in His grace made special provisions for the protection of this group (Leviticus 22:13; Deuteronomy 10:18). For instance, during the harvest, field gleanings were to be left for the widow and the orphan (Deuteronomy 24:19-22). Also, the levirate marriage was put into effect when a widow was also without a male child (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). The Lord promised that He would personally uphold and defend the rights of the widow (Deuteronomy 10:18; Proverbs 15:25). However, despite these provisions for the protection and maintaining the rights of the widow in Israel, the Old Testament reveals that the widow had a difficult time of it. They were exploited and abused (Isaiah 1:23; Ezekiel 22:7). Thus, widowhood was considered by many to be a reproach (Isaiah 4:1).

In verse 24, the Lord says that if the Israelites abuse and exploit widows and orphans then He will punish them severely by making their wives widows and their children orphans. This would be accomplished by defeat on the battlefield, which is denoted by the term “sword,” which is often used in the Old Testament and New Testament as metonymy for “war” (cf. Exodus 17:13; Leviticus 26:6; Deuteronomy 32:24; 2 Samuel 1:12; 2:26). Thus, one of the reasons for the defeat of Israel on the battlefield at the hands of the Assyrians, Babylonians and Romans was their terrible abuse and exploitation of orphans and widows in their communities. The Lord is warning the Israelites that if they do not practice social justice then He would allow Israel’s enemies to kill them.

The Lord instructs the Israelites in verses 25-27 that borrowing and lending are acceptable practices. However, charging interest was forbidden and any other exploitative practice (cf. Leviticus 25:36-37; Deuteronomy 23:19-20). Therefore, in Israel, loans were to be interest free (Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 23:19-20).

In verse 25, the Israelites are prohibited from acting as a creditor to a fellow poor Israelite and charging them interest. In verse 26, they are told to return their
fellow poor Israelite’s cloak before the sun sets, which was given as a pledge. The reason is that this cloak is their only means of protecting themselves from the elements. The Lord promises in verse 27 to take up the cause of the poor if they cry out to Him for justice.

In the ancient world, people would used things like a cloak as “collateral” for a loan to assure the lender that they will repay. Now, this law in verses 25-27 presumes that most people have property that is not essential to maintain human life. However, this is not the case with the poor who would have to put up an item as collateral which is essential for their survival. Thus, the Lord does not want the poor to be put in danger by putting up their cloaks or any other item for collateral to a lender.

So in verses 25-27, the Lord prohibits the Israelites charging interest for a loan to their fellow citizens. The pagan nations around Israel charged very high interest rates. Some were as high as fifty percent or more. In the case of borrowing food, it was common to charge thirty-three and one-third percent. If it was a loan of money, the rate would be twenty percent. Thus, for the Jews to not charge interest for loans was totally unique in the ancient world. However, the Israelites were guilty of charging interest to their fellow citizens and were judged for it (cf. Ezekiel 18:8, 13, 17; 22:12; Nehemiah 5:6-13).

Exodus 22:21-27 teaches the Israelites that they are to be compassionate and kind to others especially to the disadvantage and helpless. God’s love is “compassionate” meaning that God intensely desires and will act to alleviate the pain and suffering of another or remove its cause (1 John 3:16-17). Thus, the Israelites as His representatives to the world, were to reflect His love by being compassionate to the disadvantage and non-citizens.

In Exodus 22:28, the Lord prohibits the Israelites from cursing Him or their leaders. The prohibition of not cursing the Lord is designed to produce reverence for Him among the Israelites. The Lord prohibits the Israelites from cursing their governmental leaders in order to instill in them a respect for authority that He has delegated to human leaders.

Romans 13:1-7 teaches that all governmental leaders whether in Israel or the Gentile nations are servants of God. Thus, for an Israeliite citizen to disrespect the governmental leader of his country was to disrespect God.

Exodus 22:29 requires that the Israelites not withhold their harvest or vintage, which reflects an act of defiance against the Lord. It was an open refusal to cooperate with the Lord’s covenant by keeping from Him those things which originate from Him and belong to Him.

The commands “the firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me” and “You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep” in Exodus 22:29-30 recall Exodus 13:2, 12-13. Since the Lord spared the firstborn children of the
Israelites and the firstborn of their flocks in Egypt, the Israelites were obligated to dedicate to the Lord their firstborn children and those from their flocks. The Israelites were to dedicate to the Lord their firstborn sons as well as the firstborn male of every beast they own when they enter the land of Canaan. The animals are included since they benefited from the deliverance in Egypt and were spared because of the blood of the Passover lamb that was spread on the doorpost and lintel of every Israelite home. Not only were the firstborns in Israel required to be dedicated to the Lord as well as the animals but the firstborn males were to be redeemed at eight days old according to Exodus 13:13. Numbers 18:15-16 teaches that the firstborn of man was to be redeemed by their fathers and the redemption price was five shekels in silver.

In verse 31, the Israelites are told by God to be holy men to Him meaning they were to reflect His standards and practices rather than the standards and practices of the heathen peoples around them. Thus, this verse says that the Israelites were prohibited from eating the meat of animals killed by other animals, which would still contain some of the blood.

There was a health concern with this prohibition since scavenged meat that had been dead for some time was subject to contamination. Leviticus 7:24, 17:15 and 22:8 contains similar laws to the one presented here in Exodus 22:31. The repetition of this prohibition in the Law emphasizes the seriousness of this law to the Israelites, which must be conscientiously practiced by them.

Overview of Chapter 23

Exodus 23:1-9 contains laws with regards to legal justice. These verses answer the question as to how one loves his neighbor as himself since they deal with interpersonal relationships among members of the nation of Israel. These verses teach the Israelites that they were to be conscientiously honest and fair with each other. They were to completely avoid unkindness and injustice when dealing with each other. They were to be characterized as a people who had respect for one another. They teach the Israelites that failure to practice righteousness and justice with each other will result in discipline from the Lord. Exodus 23:10-13 contains laws with regards to sabbaths. Verses 10-11 teach the Israelites that they were to let their land lie fallow every seventh year whereas verses 12-13 are reminded to observe the weekly sabbath in which they were to rest on the seventh day. In Exodus 23:14-19, we have a discussion with regards to three annual festivals which the Israelites were to observe. They were to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the month of Abib (March-April) about the time of the barley harvest. They were also to observe the Feast of Harvest in the spring at the beginning of the wheat harvest when the firstfruits of the crops were to be given to
the Lord. This feast is also called Pentecost since it occurred 50 days after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Lastly, they were to observe the Feast of Ingathering in early autumn (September-October). This feast is also called Tabernacles. Then, we have epilogue of the chapter in Exodus 23:20-33. This pericope contains instructions to obey God during and after the conquest of Canaan. This section contains promises of cursing for disobedience and blessing for obedience. In this sense, it is very similar to those sections in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

Verses 20-26 emphasize the need to obey God. Verses 27-30 serve as encouragement since they have God promising to drive the occupants of Canaan from the land. Then lastly, in verses 31-33, we have the Lord marking the borders of the Promised Land.

**Exodus 23:1-9: Laws on Legal Justice**

Exodus 23:1 “You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. 2 You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice; 3 nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute. 4 If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. 5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him. 6 You shall not pervert the justice due to your needy brother in his dispute. 7 Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty. 8 You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just. 9 You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (NASB95)

This pericope and specifically verses 1-2 elaborate upon the ninth commandment contained in Exodus 20:16, which prohibits the Israelites from bearing false witness against their fellow Israelite. Verses 1-2 prohibit the Israelites from getting involved in character assassination.

The Israelites are prohibited from bearing or spreading a false report about another Israelite. This means that they were not to spread gossip and hearsay. These verses emphasize the need to be absolutely honest in speaking about others. In every dispute they were to hear testimony from both sides before coming to a judgment. Even when appearances seem to confirm the charge, the Israelites were to wait until all the facts have been presented before making a decision. They were not to judge another based on one person’s testimony.

Spreading a false report about someone would be extremely damaging to their community and would be a failure to love one’s neighbor as oneself. It damages
the community because it could influence what people thought about an individual so that they would relate differently to him than otherwise would have been the case. It also could be damaging in the sense that when it came time for a person to testify in a case against someone, their attitudes toward the person could be prejudiced by the rumors and gossip and hearsay, which are falsely called “common knowledge.”

A false report could serve as the basis for wrongfully arresting someone and bringing them to trial when they were actually innocent. False reports also would create factions in their community and clicks and divisiveness.

In verse 2, “the masses” would be better rendered “the majority.” The Israelites were not to get involved in following the majority in doing evil to a person by bearing a false report about them so as to pervert justice. They were not to be swayed by the majority in mistreating someone.

So verse 2 addresses the effects of popular reaction to a charge of wrongdoing when it has been embraced by the majority as a fact. Unjustified malice or envy could make the defamation of the person’s character plausible for the majority to jump to the conclusion that they are guilty even before the case has been brought to court. The elders of the Israelites who would serve as judges were to conscientiously and scrupulously carry out their investigation with integrity.

Verse 3 is a prohibition with regards to showing partiality to a person in a case because they are poor. If the evidence and witnesses demonstrate their guilt, then they are to be judged guilty regardless if they are poor.

In verse 4, the Israelites are taught to love their neighbors by the instruction to return their enemies’ wandering donkey or ox to them and not let it wander away so that their enemy loses the animal. The word for “enemy” is the participle form of the Hebrew verb ʾāyāḇ (אָיַב), which means “enemy” in the sense of someone who is openly hostile toward you.

The Lord is teaching the Israelites that they were not to be like the nations around them. The natural sinful inclination of people is not to help someone who is hostile toward them. However, the Lord wants the Israelites to treat their enemies the way they would want to be treated regardless of their enemy’s hostility toward them.

Verse 5 presents another instruction with regards to one’s enemies which if obeyed would manifest loving one’s neighbor as oneself. If the Israelites saw their enemy’s donkey fallen under its load, they were not to ignore the donkey but to help the donkey. It goes without saying that by practicing the Israelites practicing this command, their enemies might reconsider their attitude toward them.

In verse 6, we have another example as to how the Israelites were to love their neighbor, namely by not practicing justice with regards to the poor in their community. In contrast to verse 3, which prohibited the Israelites from showing
partiality to the poor, here in verse 6, we have the flip side where the Israelites were prohibited from being unjust toward a person because they were poor. It would be easy and tempting to deny justice to the poor in lawsuits since they lack the resources to insure justice for themselves. Also, the poor are less likely than the rich to have friends on a jury or to be on good terms with the judge on the case. Since the poor have so little influence in a society it would be easy to withhold justice from them.

In verse 7, the Israelites are told to keep far from a false charge, which means that they were prohibited from getting involved in any way with a complaint against someone in a court case that is not entirely true. This prohibition again is a call for honesty and integrity. Also, in verse 7 the Lord prohibits the Israelites from killing an innocent person or the righteous since He will not acquit the guilty.

This makes clear that those individuals who cause the death of an innocent person are guilty themselves by virtue of their unjust action. This prohibition emphasizes with the Israelites the need to be conscientious in their legal processes and not to rush to judgment so that a person is wrongfully executed whom the majority assumes is guilty but against whom there is no overwhelming evidence of guilt.

The Lord in verse 8 prohibits the Israelites from taking a bribe. The Israelites were not to take a bride because it blinds the clear sighted and subverts justice. A bribe causes the dismissal of cases that actually have merit. They were not to declare the guilty innocent or vice versa because of receiving a bribe. The power of the bribe is that it subverts justice and destroys personal integrity.

The Israelites are told by the Lord in verse 9 to not oppress strangers in their land because they themselves were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thus, the Lord is telling them to remember that they were mistreated in Egypt as strangers and were not to practice the same mistreatment of strangers in their land. This prohibition echoes the one taught in Exodus 22:21.

As was the case in Exodus 22:21, here in Exodus 23:9, the Lord is teaching the Israelites to not discriminate against foreigners or aliens because they too were aliens or strangers in Egypt for over four hundred years. A resident alien was a person who moved into an area where he had neither land nor clan ties and would be without traditional tribal legal support and protection and would be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Thus, the Israelites were prohibited by God for taking advantage of resident aliens, which was common in the ancient world. Thus, God does not want the Israelites to engage in a practice of discriminating against aliens when they were themselves at one time aliens or foreigners residing in Egypt for over four hundred years.
Exodus 23:10-13: Laws Concerning Sabbaths

Exodus 23:10 “You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, 11 but on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. 12 Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves. 13 Now concerning everything which I have said to you, be on your guard; and do not mention the name of other gods, nor let them be heard from your mouth.” (NASB95)

In verses 10-11, the Lord commands the Israelites to sow their land for six years and gather in its yield. However, on the seventh year they were to let the land rest so that the poor of the land may eat of it. Whatever the poor leaves, their animals could eat. This was to be practiced with their vineyards and their olives groves. This sabbatical year reminded the Israelites that God owned the land and that they were merely stewards (cf. Leviticus 25:23). It is also taught in Leviticus 25:1-7.

Now, this sabbatical year command appears to have called for no crop farming every seven years throughout Israel, which would mean that everyone would take a year off farming. However, Exodus 23:10-11 and Leviticus 25:1-7 do not actually state whether there was to be a nationwide stoppage on all farms for all crops at the same time or a system of staggered seven-year cessations for individual crops in individual fields. Interestingly, the law on the Year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25:8-55 explicitly demands a nationwide observance at the same time by everyone in Israel. However, Leviticus 25:1-7 does not explicitly demand universal compliance throughout Israel, which suggests that farmers were given the freedom to decide how to rotate or stagger the resting of their crops among their various fields, groves and vineyards. Thus, farmers would be active every year whereas their fields, vineyards and groves would not be. Also, the same amount of food would be produced every year.

One of the reasons for the Babylonian captivity was that the Israelites failed to observe the sabbatical year. They were deported from the land for seventy years in order to give the land rest (cf. 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Deuteronomy 15:1-3).

In Exodus 23:12, the Lord reminds the Israelites to observe the Sabbath meaning that they were to work six days of the week but rest on the seventh day. This verse echoes Exodus 20:8-11.

Genesis 2:2-3 teaches that God rested or ceased from His creative and restorative activity on the seventh day. The Hebrew words for “seventh” and “rested” are similar.
The observance of the Sabbath is an ordinance given to the nation of Israel and not the church. Although the church was not given the ordinance to observe the Sabbath, they are commanded to enter into God’s Sabbath resting meaning to rest in the promises of God and one’s union with Christ (cf. Hebrews 4). Though the Sabbath was not given to the church, the principle taught by it is applicable to the church, namely, that one is to set aside time to reflect upon who and what God is and what He has done on behalf of you. In other words, they are to set aside time for God and to devote oneself to Him exclusively. So whether one observes Saturday or Sunday or Monday, a believer should not work seven days a week but take at least one day to devote exclusively to God.

Now, Exodus 20:8-11 makes clear that the observance of the Sabbath is connected to the fact that God Himself rested on the seventh day after six days of work (Genesis 2:2-3). The Sabbath is thus an invitation to rejoice in God’s creation and to acknowledge that He is sovereign.

Deuteronomy 5:15 gives another reason for observing the Sabbath. This verse connects the Sabbath with Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. Therefore, every Sabbath the Israelites were to bring into remembrance that the Lord delivered them from Egyptian bondage by means of His omnipotence.

Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14-15 and Exodus 23:12 teach that the Sabbath was for the benefit of both man and animal in Israel. Exodus 31:13, 17, Ezekiel 20:12 and 20 teach that it was a sign of the covenant between the Lord and Israel. Thus, those in Israel who failed to keep the Sabbath were put to death (Exodus 31:14; Numbers 15:32-36; Jeremiah 17:19-27). The keeping of the Sabbath would affirm one’s loyalty to the Lord and would guarantee His presence and deliverance.

Exodus 23:13 echoes Exodus 20:3 and also expands upon it in the sense that it adds the prohibition against even mentioning any other gods but Yahweh. Both these verses emphasize that the Israelites are to be totally and completely loyal and devoted to Yahweh. He alone is to be worshipped.

Both these verses prohibit the Israelites from practicing idolatry and worshipping angels or men rather than God who is their Creator and Redeemer. It denotes the uniqueness of God in that He is the only being in creation who is to be worshipped by the Israelites. It expresses God’s claim upon the Israelites and demands their absolute loyalty and allegiance to Him.

Exodus 23:14-19: Laws Concerning Annual Festivals

Exodus 23:14 “Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. 15 You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me
empty-handed. 16 Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field. 17 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God. 18 You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor is the fat of My feast to remain overnight until morning. 19 You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God. You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.” (NASB95)


Exodus 23:14 makes clear that no one was exempt from attending these three festivals. No excuses could be made. No one could claim that their job responsibilities kept them from attending. The emphasis of these three festivals was to worship the Lord. God set aside time for the Israelites to worship Him, giving them a break from their daily routines.

Now, in Exodus 23:15, the Israelites are told to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the month of Abib (March-April) about the time of the barley harvest. In verse 16, they were commanded to observe the Feast of Harvest in the spring at the beginning of the wheat harvest when the firstfruits of the crops were to be given to the Lord. This feast is also called Pentecost since it occurred 50 days after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Lastly, also in verse 16, they were commanded to observe the Feast of Ingathering in early autumn (September-October). This feast is also called Tabernacles.

The observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is first mentioned in Exodus 12:17. In Exodus 12:15-20, the Lord gives Moses and Aaron instructions with regards to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was to be a national celebration of Israel’s redemption from Egypt. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were closely connected and constituted a single unit. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be for seven days according to Exodus 12:15, from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the month (Lev. 23:6; Num. 28:17). The removal of leaven from each home signifies the removal of evil. It speaks of sanctification.

Leaven was not to be found in the house. It is a substance such as yeast that is used to produce fermentation in dough. It produces a gas that lightens dough or batter. Leaven in the word of God speaks of evil (1 Cor. 5:6b-8; Gal. 5:9). Evil is anything that denies the grace of God such as legalism. The person with leaven in
their house represented someone who adds works to salvation and therefore tramples on the Work of Christ and refuses the grace of God, which is God’s unmerited favor towards man. It is extended to us based upon His justice being satisfied at the cross by Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross.

The Israelites were to separate themselves from the evil standards of the rest of the heathen world in order to serve the Lord exclusively. Failure to do so would result in a loss of the covenant privileges and rights and also death.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the day after the Passover and continued for seven days (Lev. 23:6-8). It began immediately after sunset, which was the beginning of the fifteenth day of Nisan. Thus there was no interval between the Passover and this feast. The Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately followed the Passover and lasted seven days, from the fifteenth to the twentieth Nisan (or Abib). On each of those days, after the morning sacrifice, a sacrifice in connection with the feast was presented; unleavened bread alone was eaten (Ex. 12:15-20; 13:6-7; Deut. 16:3-8).

The usual morning and evening sacrifices, with their grain and drink offerings. Two young bulls, one ram, seven lambs of the first year, with their grain and drink offerings. These were presented after the morning sacrifice (Num. 28:19-24). The first and seventh days of the feast were celebrated by a holy convocation and resting from work, with the exception of preparing food. On the intervening days work might be carried on unless the weekly Sabbath fell on one of them, in which case the full strictness of Sabbath-keeping was observed, and the special feast sacrifice was not presented until after the Sabbath offering.

On the second feast day (sixteenth Nisan) the first sheaf of the new harvest (barley) was symbolically offering to the Lord by waving—not burning on the altar—accompanied with a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, with its grain and drink offerings. Previous to this offering neither bread nor roasted grain of the new harvest was allowed to be eaten (Lev. 23:9-14). Those attending presented freewill, burnt, and holy offerings of sheep and oxen (Ex. 23:15, 19; Deut. 16:2), and sacrificial meals were eaten.

The feast closed on the twenty-first, with rest from work and a holy convocation. Scripture records that the Passover was kept on the evening before the Israelites left Egypt (Ex. 12:28), the second year after the Exodus (Num. 9:1-5), and then not again until they entered Canaan (Ex. 13:5; Josh. 5:10). Only three instances are recorded in which the Passover was celebrated between the entrance into the Promise Land and the Babylonian captivity, namely, under Solomon (2 Chron. 8:13), under Hezekiah when he restored the national worship (30:15), and under Josiah (2 Kings 23:21; 2 Chron. 35:1-19). But the inference that the Passover was celebrated only on those occasions seems less warranted, that in later times it was so punctually and universally observed.
After the return of the Jews from captivity the celebration of the Passover, like that of other institutions, became more regular and systematic; and its laws, rites, manners, and customs have been faithfully transmitted to us. These were the same as those in the time of Christ and His apostles, and therefore, of the utmost importance and interest to us in understanding the New Testament.

The Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Mark 14; Luke 22). The application of the Feast of Unleavened Bread for us here in the church age is that it portrays experiential sanctification (John 17:17; 1 Cor. 5:6-9).

In Exodus 12:16, the Lord stipulates that the Israelites were not to do any work on the first day and the last day of the Feast Unleavened. Instead they were to use these two days to worship the Lord together as a corporate unit. These two days were to be days of celebration and a time to bring into remembrance their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt.

In Exodus 12:17, the Lord says that like the Passover festival, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a permanent ordinance to be observed forever by the Israelites. Then, in Exodus 12:18-20, He reiterates with Moses and Aaron the instructions He gave them as recorded in Exodus 12:15. In these verses, the Lord repeats the instructions He gave in Exodus 12:15 and 16 in order to emphasize the importance of the Israelites observing this Feast of Unleavened Bread annually as a permanent ordinance.

Exodus 13:6-7 echo Exodus 12:14-20. The former reiterates the latter and in fact condenses it. In Exodus 13:8, Moses teaches the Israelites that when they observed the feast of unleavened bread they were to communicate to their sons what the Lord did for them. In Exodus 13:9, he teaches that the observance of this feast was to continually remind the Israelites of the Lord delivering them from slavery in Egypt. In Exodus 13:10, he says that this great deliverance was to be observed by them annually in the ceremony of the seven-day festival of unleavened bread.

The Feast of Harvest or Weeks or Pentecost was the second national festival in Israel and took place fifty days after the Passover Sabbath (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:25-21; Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16:9-12). It was designated the Feast of Weeks which celebrated the wheat harvest in Israel and was a one day feast of celebration. It was originally the festival of the first fruits of the grain harvest (Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:17-22; Num. 28:26-31). It was called the Feast of Weeks because it came after a period of seven weeks of harvesting that began with the offering of the first barley sheaf during the Passover celebration and ended with the wheat harvest.

Pentecost took place fifty days after the Feasts of First fruits, which spoke of our Lord’s resurrection. It was celebrated in Israel as the anniversary of the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mount Sinai in 1441 B.C., which was the beginning of the dispensation of the Law. The dispensation of grace began on the day of Pentecost.
with the baptism of the Spirit. So God is setting a contrast between the Law and Grace.

Fifty days after the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost was observed. This was literally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem in June of 33 A.D. The church age began on the day of Pentecost. The space between the feast of Passover and the day of Pentecost was 50 days. Pentecost is also called the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10, 16; 2 Chron. 8:13). It was called this because it was celebrated 7 complete weeks, or 50 days, after the Passover (Lev. 23:15-16). It was also called the Feast of the Harvest (Ex. 23:16) because it concluded the harvest of the latter grains. Pentecost was also known as the day of the first fruits (Num. 28:26) because the 1st loaves made from the new grain were then offered on the altar (Lev. 23:17).

Pentecost began with the offering of the First-Fruits of the Barley Harvest and ended with the ingathering of the Wheat Harvest. The first day of the Feast of the First-Fruits, the Last Day was the Feast of Pentecost. Only the 1st and last day were celebrated. At the Feast of Pentecost new Meat offering was to be offered before the Lord, which depicts the Church as something new, a mystery. It was called new because it must be of grain from the new harvest. This also speaks of the Church.

At the Feast of First-Fruits stalks of grain were to be offered and waved, but at the Feast of Pentecost the grain was to ground and made into flour, from which two loaves were to be baked with leaven.

The Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles typifies the millennial reign of Christ. The Feast of Tabernacles is also called in the Scriptures the festival of Tents (Hebrew: הָגָה הָאֲסֹף, “Feast of Booths,” 2 Chron. 8:13; Ezra 3:4; Zech. 14:16, 18-19; Greek: skenopegia, John 7:2, “Feast of Booths”) was so called because the Israelites were commanded to live in booths during its continuance (Lev. 23:43). It was also called the feast of Ingathering (Hebrew: הָגָה הָאֲסֹף, Ex. 23:16, “Feast of the Harvest”; 34:22), because it was held after the ingathering of the harvest and fruits.

The Feast of Tabernacles was also called the festival of Jehovah (Hebrew: הָגָה YHWH, Lev. 23:39, “feast of the Lord”) or simply the festival (1 Kings 8:2; 2 Chron. 5:3, “the feast”), because it was the most important or well known.


The Feast of Tabernacles was a celebration to be observed at the end of the harvest and was continued seven days (Deut. 16:13). The people during the feast were to dwell in booths made of the branches of palm trees and willows from the
brook, which would remind them of the palm trees of Elim, and the Willows of Babylon (Ps. 137:1-9).

What the Sabbath is to the week, a day of rest; so the seventh month to the other six months of the seventh month cycle, typifies a period of rest-the Sabbath rest of the millennial dispensation in relation to the other six thousand years of the world’s workday history.

Like the Lord’s Supper is to us here in the church age, a memorial looking back to the Person and Work of Christ on the cross and forward to the Second Advent so the feast of tabernacles will be a memorial to Israel looking back to Egypt and forward to the millennium.

While the Feast of Tabernacles began on the Sabbath and continued seven days, it was to be followed by a Sabbath (Lev. 23:39). This Sabbath on the eighth day points to the eternal state that follows the millennium and the termination of human history when the Lord will create a new heavens and a new earth.

In Exodus 23:17 the Lord teaches the Israelites that all their males should appear three times a year in order to worship at these three feasts. They were to worship with grain and animal offerings. An offering was to be without yeast on the altar when it was consumed.

Exodus 23:18 prohibits the Israelites from offering the blood of the animal sacrifice with unleavened bread, nor were the fat of the animal to remain overnight until morning. This prohibition is related to pagan rituals, which God would not allow the Israelites to practice. God did not want the Israelites duplicating the pagan sacrifices. In the ancient world people knew that when the blood was drained from the animal that the animal would die. They thus concluded and they were right that the life of an animal is in its blood. Consequently, these ancient people would drink the blood of the animal in an attempt to prolong or strengthen their lives. The Lord who gives and prolongs life forbid the Israelites from engaging in such practices (cf. Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; Deuteronomy 15:23).

The following prohibition in Exodus 23:18 prevented the Israelites from letting the fat of the animal remain overnight until morning. Leviticus 3:16-17 presents a more comprehensive statement with regards to the Lord’s teaching here in Exodus 23:18. This prohibition is directly related to worshipping God in the manner in which He prescribes. All the fat of the animal was to be the Lord’s portion forever. The fat portions of the animal were separated from the meat with muscle and were to be presented as burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar. If a person tried to keep them for any other purpose than for the Lord, then they were failing to worship Him in a manner prescribed by Him. Keeping the fat until morning would be withholding from the Lord that which is His and would be making God wait for His portion, which is disrespectful.
Exodus 23:19 teaches them to bring firstfruits of their crops and give them to the Lord. This command teaches the Israelites to give the Lord their best from their crops, which would honor Him. This command prevented the Israelites from cheating God. God deserved the best of their crops because He is responsible for giving them their crops and their productivity.

The prohibition in Exodus 23:19 to not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk occurs three times in the Pentateuch (Exodus 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21). This prohibition is also directly related to pagan rituals. In the Canaanite fertility religion, they believed that cooking a young goat in its mother’s milk would magically stimulate the power of nature to procreate, thus producing a stronger flock or would somehow make the flock more fertile. To engage in this practice would be dangerous for the Israelites because it could lead them to conclude that the productivity of their flocks was not directly tied to the blessing of the Lord but rather was tied to these magical practices of this fertility religion. Thus, this prohibition is designed to protect the Israelites from engaging in such pagan practices which would direct thanksgiving away from God and toward the gods of the Canaanite religion. This prohibition in Exodus 23:19 is used by Rabbis to forbid mixing dairy with meat. The Orthodox Jews keep dairy and meat separate.

Overview of Exodus 24

Exodus chapter 24 is considered by many Bible scholars as the climax to the book of Exodus since it contains the record of the Israelites ratifying the covenant that God had established with them, which is called today “the Mosaic covenant” or the “Mosaic Law.”

In Exodus 19-23, we have presented the stipulations, which would include the Ten Commandments and various ordinances, which were to govern the conduct of the nation. These commandments and ordinances would serve as the nation’s constitution. It bestowed upon the Israelites the wonderful privilege of worshipping and serving God as well as representing Him by reflecting His perfect, holy standards before the Gentile world. Now, in Exodus 24, we have the people ratifying the covenant by agreeing to do all that God required of them.

Exodus 24 is divided into two sections: (1) Exodus 24:1-11: The Israelites ratify the covenant. (2) Exodus 24:12-18: God summons Moses to Mount Sinai in order to receive the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone.

The NET Bible has the following note, “Exod 24 is the high point of the book in many ways, but most importantly, here Yahweh makes a covenant with the people – the Sinaitic Covenant. The unit not only serves to record the event in Israel’s becoming a nation, but it provides a paradigm of the worship of God’s covenant people – entering into the presence of the glory of Yahweh. See
additionally W. A. Maier, “The Analysis of Exodus 24 According to Modern Literary, Form, and Redaction Critical Methodology,” *Springfielder* 37 (1973): 35-52. The passage may be divided into four parts for exposition: vv. 1–2, the call for worship; vv. 3–8, the consecration of the worshipers; vv. 9–11, the confirmation of the covenant; and vv. 12–18, the communication with Yahweh.”5

*Exodus 24:1-11: The Israelites Ratify the Covenant with God*

Exodus 24:1 Then He said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance. 2 Moses alone, however, shall come near to the Lord, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him.” 3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!” 4 Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. Then he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!” 8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.” 9 Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. 11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.”

Verses 1-2 contain the invitation from God for Israel to ratify the covenant. Specifically, only the leadership of Israel was permitted to approach God on Mount Sinai. Selected by God were of course Moses but also his brother Aaron as well as his sons, Nadab and Abihu including also seventy elders. From this entourage, only Moses was permitted by God to draw near to Him while the others stayed at a distance. This restriction was to honor Moses in the site of these elders. It also demonstrated that only Moses was on intimate terms with God and was the most obedient of all the elders of Israel. It also demonstrated that Moses was the mediatorial ruler in Israel meaning that he stood between God and the Israelites and represented God before the Israelites and represented the Israelites before God.

In verse 3, we read that after hearing the covenant code of conduct repeated to them by Moses as he had heard it on the mountain, the Israelites gave their assent to it. Verses 4 and 7 indicate that this Israelite assent took place a second time after Moses had written the covenant code of conduct down and read it to the Israelites. This assent meant that they promised to obey everything in this covenant code of conduct which contained the Ten Commandments recorded in chapter 20 as well as the various ordinances recorded in chapters 21-23. The Israelites’ agreement to keep the covenant that appears here in chapter 24 echoes their statement in Exodus 19:8.

Exodus 19:7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words which the Lord had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do!” And Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. (NASB95)

In this verse as is the case in Exodus 24:3 and 7, after listening to the elders of Israel, the Israelites agree to do all that the Lord commanded them to do, thus they enter into the covenant with the Lord.

Some expositors have criticized this response as presumptuous and that the Israelites should have confessed their total inability to obey perfectly the Lord’s commands. They argue that they were placing too much confidence in themselves. However, Deuteronomy chapter 5 records the same event but reveals in greater detail what the Lord thought of the Israelites’ response. In Deuteronomy 5:28, the Lord says that the Israelites had done well by responding in such a fashion. Then, in Deuteronomy 5:29, the Lord also reveals that the Israelites did not have the capacity to obey Him. He bemoans the fact that they did not have the heart to do so. So these passages teach us the Lord accepted the Israelites’ response, though they were not aware of their inability to obey Him, and the covenant was ratified for the establishment of the kingdom of God in Israel.

So the Israelites’ response to God that they would obey all that He commanded expresses their desire to obey Him wholeheartedly even though they did not have the capacity to do so. They wanted what God was offering them. However, they overestimated their own ability to keep the covenant, much like Peter overestimated own ability to overcome Satan and remain faithful to the Lord during His passion. The Israelites also underestimated God’s own holy standards. This is the direct result of not appreciating their own sinfulness and God’s holiness. However, the Mosaic Law would teach about both.

Now, Exodus 24:4 records that Moses wrote down the law. This was extremely important since this would be needed to instruct future generations as well as foreigners entering into the covenant community. It would have to be written down in order to aid judges in deciding cases. Having it in writing would remove guessing or relying on one’s memory as to what the Lord said. It would provide
them a reference, in which they could know exactly what the Lord required in certain cases. Also, by having it in writing, the Israelites could read it so as to keep the law fresh in their minds and ready for application.

Verse 4 also tells the reader that the following morning Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He erected twelve pillars, which represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Verse 5 says that Moses directed the young men of the nation to offer burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings. The former portrayed or typified that aspect of Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the Cross, which would propitiate the Father (1 John 2:2; 4:10). The burnt offering in Leviticus 1:2-17 depicts the doctrine of propitiation with emphasis on the work of Christ. “Propitiation” is the Godward side of salvation whereby the voluntary substitutionary spiritual death of the impeccable humanity of Christ in hypostatic union satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God that the sins of the entire world-past, present and future be judged (1 John 2:2; 4:10). The peace offering called for the shedding of blood and taught the doctrine of reconciliation (Lev. 3). The peace offering sets forth God as propitiated and the sinner reconciled.

Later on in Israel’s history, the Levitical priesthood would have performed these animal sacrifices. Therefore, we have the young men of Israel performing this function until the Levites were chosen by the Lord to do this task. These sacrifices made clear to the Israelites that they could only approach God who is holy to worship Him and have fellowship with Him by means of a blood animal sacrifice.

Exodus 24:4-7 contains five elements, which served to direct the people’s attention to their new relationship with God. Each of these elements serve to prepare the Israelites for their verbal agreement ratifying the covenant. Their first assent was unofficial, the second would be official. These five elements were an altar, twelve stone pillars, animal sacrifices, the sprinkling of blood on the altar and the reading of the covenant. The contents of this covenant appear in Exodus 20:1-23:33.

The blood in the basins was to be sprinkled on the people as a visible sign that they were the recipients of the benefit that the shed blood provided. The blood sprinkled on the altar signified that God was the other party in the covenant agreement, which was represented by sacrifices at the altar. Hebrews 9:22 makes clear that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. The blood animal sacrifices would remind the Israelites that forgiveness and their acceptance by God was based on a sacrifice, which would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross.

Exodus 24:8 records that Moses sprinkled the blood on the Israelites which symbolized their being parties to the covenant. The blood of the animal would
remind the Israelites of their oath to be keep the covenant. The ceremony was designed to be memorable so that the Israelites could recall their oath to the Lord.

Exodus 24:9-11 tell the reader that Moses along with Aaron and his two oldest sons and seventy elders were granted an audience in the presence of the Lord Himself in order to confirm and ratify the covenant.

Verse 10 says that these individuals saw God, which appears to conflict with Exodus 33:11, 20, John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12, which state that no one can seen God and live. These verses make clear that sinful humans who are saved by grace never actually see God in His essence. This can only take place after their death or the rapture when they are minus their sin nature.

Thus, the elders saw only a vision or some sort of representation of God in which they could discern who He was. They saw some sort of shape that allowed them to see Him in a vague sense. So God lets this contingent of Israelite leaders see some kind of form that lets them known that they were dealing with a person and are in fact in the presence of God.

Exodus 33:11 says that Moses spoke “face to face” with God, which does not contradict the fact that he was not allowed to see God’s face (v. 20) as “face to face” is a figurative expression suggesting openness and friendship (cf. Num. 12:8; Deut. 34:10; and comments on John 1:18).

So in Exodus 24:9-11, we have a special ceremony that entails a meal. It was commonplace in Moses’ day and in the ancient world to ratify an agreement with a meal (cf. Genesis 31:54; Luke 22:15-20). Thus, the significance of Moses, Aaron, his two sons and the seventy elders eating a meal with God is that it symbolized the ratification of an agreement between God and the nation of Israel. It symbolized that God had accepted the Israelites and expressed His approval of them. The Lord Jesus Christ was said to eat with sinners, which expressed His acceptance of sinners (cf. Matthew 9:10-11; 11:19; Mark 2:15-15; Luke 5:30; 15:2). So this formal meal demonstrated a mutual agreement had taken place between God and the Israelites. It expressed cooperation between the two sides and God’s acceptance of the Israelites and their respect of God.

Verse 10 says that under the feet of the God of Israel “there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself.” A more accurate translation of this phrase would “there appeared like the work of brick composed of sapphire indeed as clear as the sky itself.” This description indicates that the men on the mountain were given the impression that God was not actually standing on the mountain but was only visible there in a personal way. It indicated that God did not need any kind of footing like men or in other words that He was transcendent of creation.

Verse 11 tells the reader that God did not kill this Israeliite delegation. This reflects the attitude in the ancient world that to see God meant certain death.
However, God does not kill any member of this delegation to express the fact that they would be assured that God was willing to enter into this agreement with them.

*Exodus 24:12-18: God Summons Moses to the Mountain to Receive Ten Commandments on Tablets of Stone*

Hannah writes “The Mosaic Covenant had been confirmed (24:1-11) and Israel was then a theocracy, a government or commonwealth under God. Having been redeemed from bondage by God and now in a covenant under His laws, God’s people were then enlightened as to the proper way to worship Him. So Moses was called into God’s presence to receive the Decalogue in stone along with other commands (24:12) and he returned 40 days later (31:18; 34:28). In that period of time God communicated to Moses the form of Israel’s worship. The tabernacle was to become the focus of Israel’s worship of God. This lengthy section (24:12-31:18) deals with ordinances pertaining to the sanctuary and priestly ministry—ceremonial laws that undergirded the covenant.”

Exodus 24:12 Now the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction.” 13 So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. 14 But to the elders he said, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them.” 15 Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. 17 And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. 18 Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. (NASB95)

Exodus 24:12 along with 34:28 tell the reader that while Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights he received from God on tablets of stone the Ten Commandments as well as commands related to worshipping God.

Exodus 24:12-18 assumes that the Israelite delegation composed of Moses, Aaron, his two sons and seventy elders had descended from the mountain and were back in the Israelite camp. The trip recorded in this pericope would involve only Moses and his assistant, Joshua. It would last for forty days and forty nights. The events recorded in Exodus 25:1-32:16 took place during this period of time.

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Exodus 24:12 makes clear that God only wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone whereas all the other commandments found in Exodus 21-23 were written by Moses according to God’s dictation (Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; cf. Deuteronomy 27:3, 8; 31:9). Furthermore, Deuteronomy 4:13, 5:22 and 10:2-4 also tell us that God only wrote down on tablets of stone the Decalogue.

Douglas Stuart has the following excellent comment, he writes “God invited Moses up the mountain with the clear instruction that he would be there a long time (‘and stay here’). A special feature of this visit to the top is the promise of receiving the tablets of stone. These function effectively as the document clause of the Sinai covenant—in part because the covenant’s totality is reflected broadly in the Ten Commandments and also because that which God himself wrote could surely be understood to symbolize his authorship of the whole, most of which was dictated to his amanuensis, Moses. For Moses to be able to receive these tablets personally and deliver them personally to the Israelites on God’s behalf would parallel the personal experience of the leaders in eating the covenant meal with Yahweh as described in the passage immediately preceding the present context. That the tablets would eventually reside in the ark itself (25:21–22) as an indicator of the permanent presence of God through his word shows their significance. But neither the tablets nor the rest of the law functions in a merely symbolic way. God’s covenant is based on stipulations—rules that must be kept, requirements that if broken would condemn Israel to great pain and misfortune. God thus insisted that Moses understand that he himself had written the commandments ‘for their instruction.’ From the ancient world outside of Israel, all surviving written evidence indicates that laws were understood to be given by a king to his people, not a god to his people. To be sure, the king could claim that a god or gods instructed him to promulgate the laws, but no claim close to the present one existed outside the biblical covenant—that God himself provided his laws directly to his covenant people and that he actually wrote the basic ones (the Ten Words/Commandments) personally on stone as a sign that all his laws came directly from him and are not the product of human invention. Israel’s teacher was thus God himself, who gave them his covenant ‘for their instruction.’ It cannot be escaped that when Jesus issued laws—not merely as the one who wrote them down as dictated but as the actual author—he was staking a claim to divinity under the concept of Israelite covenant law, in which the author of the commands is also the divine Sovereign.”

In Exodus 24:14, Moses tells the elders to wait for his return with Joshua and delegates authority to Aaron and Hur to decide legal matters in his stead. This would indicate quite clearly to the Israelites that Moses was intending to be away

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for quite awhile. Thus, they would need to be patient until his return, which they were not as evidenced by the events recorded in Exodus 32 and the building of the golden calf.

In Exodus 24:15-16, we have the glory of the Lord represented in a cloud resting on Mount Sinai, covering it for six days. This is the same cloud mentioned in Exodus 19:18. Verse 17 says that the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. This indicates the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the Sinai Peninsula to Horeb which is mentioned in Exodus 13:21-22 and 14:19-24, now resided on this mountain top.

The pillar of cloud during the day and the pillar of fire at night was a visible manifestation of the Lord’s presence in the camp of the Israelites. This visible manifestation was to guide and protect the Israelites and also would comfort them. So we have here the pillar of cloud resting on the mountain during the day and the pillar of fire appearing on the mountain at night. This was a manifestation of God’s presence. The glory of the Lord is manifestation of the presence of God or one or more of His attributes or His person. This is another theophany meaning a visible and auditory manifestation of God.

**Three-Fold Division of the Mosaic Law**

It is common to divide the Mosaic Law into three parts as we noted earlier, but though this is helpful for analysis and the study of the Mosaic Law and the way it functions, such a division is never stated as such in Scripture but rather it is seen as a unit.

**Part 1:** The Moral Law or the Ten Commandments. This part of the Law governed the moral life giving guidance to Israel in principles of right and wrong in relation to God and man (Exodus 20:1-17).

**Part 2:** The Ordinances or the Ceremonial Law. This was the spiritual portion of Law, which guided and provided for Israel in her worship and spiritual relationship and fellowship with God. It included the priesthood, tabernacle and sacrifices (Exodus 25-31: Leviticus).

**Part 3:** The Judgments, or the Social Law. This part of the Law governed Israel in her secular, social, political, and economic life (Exodus 21:1–23:13).

The Mosaic Law was an indivisible unit and is that which was terminated by the Lord Jesus.

**Romans 10:4** For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (NASU)

Though the Law is usually divided into three parts, as described above, it is important to see that it was an indivisible unit. Thus, when Paul stated that we are not under the Law, this included all three parts, including the Ten Commandments.
Some will agree that parts of the Old Testament Law have been done away but assert the Ten Commandments are supposedly still in force today. But all three parts of the Law were designed to function as a unit to guide Israel in all of its life.

The Ten Commandments cannot be separated from the rest. Further, even though most recognize this three-fold division, the Jews so numbered all the commands that they approached the Law as a unit. The Jews did not view the Law as having a three-fold division but rather they divided the 613 commandments of the Law into twelve families of commandments which were then subdivided into twelve additional families of positive and twelve additional families of negative commands. Further, that it is a unit is evident by the fact that the recognition of any of its features, i.e., as a meritorious system of righteousness with God, obligates the person to fulfill the entire Law, as we are taught by both Paul and James (cf. Galatians 3:10, 12; 5:3; James 2:8-11).

Further evidence that the Law is a unit is the penalty of death for disobedience is attached to all three parts of the Law. Noticing the penalties attached to certain commands further emphasizes the unitized character of the Law. When the command to keep the Sabbath (one of the “commandments”) was violated by a man who gathered sticks on that day, the penalty was death by stoning (Num. 15:32-36).

When the people of Israel violated the command concerning the Sabbatical Year for the land (one of the “judgments”), God sent them into captivity where many died (Jer. 25:11). When Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord (one of the “ordinances”), they immediately died (Lev. 10:1-7).

Clearly these commands from various parts of the Law were equally binding and the punishment equally severe. Therefore, the Law was an indivisible unit.

**Mosaic Law was Conditional**

The Mosaic Law was a conditional covenant made specifically for Israel alone to govern her life in the Promised Land. From the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.12) we see Israel was a chosen nation, an instrument of God to become a channel of blessing to all nations. The Lord was her Theocratic King who was to rule and guide the nation in her destiny that she might not become polluted or contaminated by other Gentile heathen nations and could thus fulfill her purpose. For this reason the Mosaic Law was instituted to direct Israel as a nation in all spheres of her life: (1) Morally (2) Socially (3) Politically (4) Economically (5) Religiously.

The indwelling presence of the old Adamic sin nature, made it possible for anyone to obey completely the Mosaic Law. However, in the spirit of the Law it did set forth moral principles which were applicable and would bring blessing to
all people anywhere and at any time when applied and used as a standard of right and wrong.

There were certain economic provisions in the Law to govern and protect the economic life of Israel in their promised land. For example there was the right of property ownership, free enterprise, protection of the poor which guarded against the evils of great concentrations of wealth in the hands of a few with the consequent impoverishment of others. But the poor were provided for in such a way as to avoid the loss of free enterprise and the individual’s initiative by high taxation as well as to avoid making leeches out of men who refused to work. However, the strict application of these laws to our world is impossible since the original conditions in which God directly intervened cannot be reproduced, at least not until the millennium.

Yet, politicians and economists could study and learn much from these laws and principles. The foundation and basis of the Mosaic Law is the covenant God made with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In several places in Exodus and Deuteronomy, there are references to the Abrahamic Covenant which establish the fact that the giving of the Law at Sinai was based on the covenant with Abraham and God’s continuing plan for the nation of Israel as a priesthood nation (cf. Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 4:4-8 with Ex. 2:24-25; Deut. 4:36-38; 29:31; 1 Chron. 16:15-19).

God had given many promises to bless the descendants of Abraham and the heathen Gentile nations through them and these divine promises were reiterated and expanded to Abraham and to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 12:1f; 15; 17:1ff; 26:24f; 28:13f).

The Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant meaning that its ultimate fulfillment is dependent on God’s sovereign and faithfulness to His promises to Abraham regardless of Israel’s continued disobedience (cf. Ezek. 20:1-44). The Mosaic Covenant, however, was a conditional covenant. Though its ultimate fulfillment is dependent on God, for any generation to experience the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, there had to be faithfulness to God. Thus, enters the Law, a conditional covenant given to Moses for the nation of Israel after their redemption out of the land of Egypt. It was through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant (the Law) that Israel would be able to experience the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant in the Promised Land.

For obedience there would be blessings; for disobedience, cursing (cf. Deut. 28-30). The Mosaic Law is holy, good, and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14) but it was only temporary as the book of Hebrews so clearly teaches. As such, the Mosaic Law was designed to maintain a proper relationship between God and His people Israel (blessing versus cursing), but only until the coming of Messiah and the establishment of a New Covenant.
Christ Fulfilled the Law Mosaic Law

Several passages of Scripture clearly establish that the coming of Christ has brought an end to the Mosaic Law.

**Romans 10:4** Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, which instituted a new law or principle of life, i.e., the law of the Spirit, the one of liberty and grace (Rom. 8:2, 13).

This fact was also clearly settled by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, which was convened to investigate the issue of the Law and its place in the life of believers.

The council came about because some were saying “**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved,**” and because even certain of the Pharisees who had believed were also saying “**It is necessary to circumcise the Gentiles and to order them to observe the law of Moses.**”

The conclusion of the council, consisting of apostles and elders, was to reject the concept of placing New Testament believers under the yoke of the Law (Acts 15:6-11). The only thing the Jerusalem Council asked was that Gentile believers control their liberty in matters that might be offensive to Jewish believers, but they did not seek to place the believers under the yoke of the Law for they realized the Law had come to an end (Compare Romans 14).

In 2 Corinthians 3:6-13 Paul declares three times that the Mosaic system is done away or abolished (vss. 7, 11, 13).

Finally, the book of Hebrews demonstrates that the old covenant of the Mosaic Law was only temporary and has been replaced by the coming of Christ whose ministry is based on. A better priesthood, one after the order of Melchizedek, which is superior to Aaron’s, and a better covenant with better promises (see Hebrews 7-10). The old covenant was only a shadow of heavenly things, and if it had been able to make men perfect before God there would have been no occasion for a second or new covenant (see Hebrews 7:11-12; 8:1-13). This change in the priesthood also necessitates a change in the Law, which demonstrates that the Law has been terminated or done away.

A careful reading of the New Testament shows us that nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated as obligations for believers with the one exception being the command to keep the Sabbath. If the Mosaic Law has been done away, then why are these commandments repeated in the New Testament? Further, some commandments outside the Ten Commandments are even repeated in the New Testament.

For instance, as a motivation for loving others, Paul referred to four of the Ten Commandments because they demonstrate this principle, but then, to summarize,
he mentioned one from Leviticus 19:18, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Law was never designed to be a permanent rule of life but rather was simply a tutor or guardian to guide Israel and reveal her need for the Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:7, 11; Galatians 3:23-24; Romans 10:4). The Mosaic Law is weak because it is dependent on sinful man’s ability and is especially weak when adopted as a system of merit (Romans 8:3).

**Impotence of the Law to Help Sinners**

The Mosaic Law stands in contrast to the grace of God as now manifested in the coming of Christ (Romans 6:14; 7:6; 8:3; Galatians 3:12). Though given to Israel to govern her life in the promise land for blessing instead of cursing, there was an attendant purpose in the giving of the Mosaic Law to Israel, and which purpose still stands to this day. Namely, the Law was designed to demonstrate to men their total helpless and hopeless condition before a holy and righteous and just God and to lead him to the Savior.

The Mosaic Law was given only to Israel (Exodus 19:3; Leviticus 26:46; Romans 3:19; 9:4) and was not given to the Gentiles of the Old Testament or the Church (Acts 15:5; 15:24; Romans 8:14; Galatians 2:19). The Mosaic Law cannot justify an individual before God (Romans 3:20-28; Galatians 2:16) and could not provide eternal salvation for men (Galatians 3:21-26).

The Mosaic Law could not provide the Holy Spirit and could not solve the problems of the old sin nature (Romans 8:2-3) and it could not make perfect, or permanently deal with sin (Hebrews 7:19) nor could it sanctify (Galatians 3:21; 5:5; Romans 8:3). Therefore, as Paul says in Galatians 3:19-24, the Law was designed to be a temporary guardian until the coming of Christ, the Suffering Messiah Savior. However, Israel approached the Law as a system of merit, shifting from a faith basis to a works basis (Exodus 19:8; Romans 10:3).

Even today, people often try to use the Law as a means of establishing their own standing before God. But the Word of God emphatically teaches us that the Law brings a curse (Galatians 3:10-12), brings death, it is a killer (2 Corinthians 3:6-7; Romans 7:9-10), brings condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:9), makes offenses abound (Romans 5:10; 7:7-13), declares all men guilty (Romans 3:19), and holds men in bondage to sin and death (Galatians 4:3-5, 9, 24; Romans 7:10-14). This is because man possesses an old Adamic sin nature that can never fulfill the righteousness of the Law, especially in the spirit of the Law. Therefore, mankind always falls short as Romans 3:23 tells us, and becomes condemned or guilty before a Holy God (Romans 3:19).
Paul taught that the law is weak through the human flesh since it contains the sin nature (8:3).

Romans 8:1-4 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (NASU)

Paul teaches outside of the book of Romans that the law never justifies people (Gal. 2:16; 3:11).

Galatians 2:16 Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; For by the works of the Law no person will be justified. (NASU)

He teaches that the law is sin’s strength (1 Cor. 15:56).

1 Corinthians 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (NASU)

Three-Fold Use of the Law

In the study of the Bible, there are three specific purposes that surface in the proper use of the Mosaic Law. First of all, in a general sense, the Mosaic Law was given to provide a standard of righteousness (Deuteronomy 4:8; Psalm 19:7-9) and in the process, it revealed the righteousness, holiness, and goodness of God (Deut. 4:8; Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; Rom. 7:12-14).

The Law given at Mount Sinai to Israel was to reveal a holy God and to demonstrate the reality of an infinite gulf that separated man from Him.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God. (NASU)

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (NASU)

Secondly, the Law was given to identify sin and reveal man’s sin and bankrupt condition as guilty before God (Rom. 3:19f; 7:7-8; 5:20; Gal. 3:19).

As J. Hampton Keathley Jr. states, “Like the blood-alcohol test is designed to prove men are drunk, so the Law is designed to prove men are sinners, under the wrath of God.”

God’s holy Law reveals to man just who and what he is, namely, sinful and separated from God by an infinite gulf that he is unable to bridge in his own human strength.
Lastly, the Law was given to shut man up to faith, i.e., to exclude the works of the Law (or any system of works) as a system of merit for either salvation or sanctification and thereby lead him to Christ as the only means of righteousness (Galatians 3:19-20, 20-24; 1 Timothy 1:8-9; Romans 3:21-24).

The ceremonial portion of the Law did this by pointing to the coming of a suffering Savior, “for without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

By keeping the Law, we are speaking about the true sense as God intended it, not as Israel and man tend to take it. The Law demonstrated to the Jew his sin (and so all mankind) and that he was shut up under that sin but was also designed to guide him, indeed to drive him to Christ. Then, the Social Law, regulated his life by showing him how to live socially, not to give him merit before God, but to enable him to experience the blessings of the covenant rather than the cursing as God warned in Deuteronomy.

Part of the purpose of the Law was to point men to the coming Savior through its shadows and types. Through the moral law, man could see God’s holy character as well as his own sinfulness and the infinite gulf that separates God and man. Through the ceremonial part of the Law (the priesthood, sacrifices, and tabernacle), man could find the solution to his sin by faith in what this part of the Law represented, a suffering Savior, one who would die as the Lamb of God. But even though no one could perfectly keep the Law, it was also designed for Israel’s immediate blessing by setting forth-righteous principles that would show them how to love God and their fellow man. This would produce a stable and secure society as well as a testimony to the nations (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). Thus, in 613 commands the Mosaic Law represented an ethical code given by God to Israel to govern the nation until the coming of Messiah, but at their heart, they represented the moral law of God, namely, righteous principles vital to humanity.

Today, we are not under this code, but many of its righteous principles, the eternal laws of God, have been carried over and are part of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ (Romans 8:2) or the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2). In this, some of the former commands are carried over (Romans 13:9), some new commands and guidelines are added (Ephesians 4:11f; 1 Timothy 3:1f; 4:4), and some have been revised, as in the case of capitol punishment, which is to be exercised by human government (Romans 13:4).

It needs to be emphasized that the end of the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments, does not cancel or detract one iota from the eternal moral law of God. Remember, the moral principles of the ten laws did not begin with Sinai but are as eternal and immutable as the character of God. To understand this should dispel the fears of those who think the abolition of the Mosaic Law leaves only a state of lawlessness.
The moral principles embodied in the law of Moses are called “the righteousness of the law” (Romans 8:4), which demonstrates that such principles are the goal of a life directed by the Spirit and the Word, and in the same context, Paul teaches that the believer is not under the Mosaic law (Romans 6-8). Therefore, the born-again Jew of the first century moved entirely from the Mosaic Law into the new economy of grace instituted by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

The Law is still good from the standpoint of its main function and purpose (1 Timothy 1:8-10; James 2:1-10; Galatians 5:1-3; 6:1), which is how James uses the Law, to reveal sin (James 2:9), to get believers out of self-righteous legalism, and move them into a walk by faith in a living Savior.

The believer is never saved by keeping the Law (Galatians 2:21) and he is not under the Law as a rule of life, i.e., sacrifice, Sabbath keeping, tithing (Rev. 6:14; Acts 15:5, 24). Therefore, he does not walk by the Law but by the Spirit, which is the new law for the New Testament saint (Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:5), which is law of liberty through faith in the power of God.

The believer is dead to the Law (Rom. 7:1-6; Gal. 2:19) by virtue of his identification with Jesus Christ in His death, who fulfilled the Law. He is to fulfill the righteousness of the Law, i.e., the spirit of the law as seen in Christ’s words in Matthew 10:37-40 love for God, and love for one’s neighbor (James 2:9). But this can only be fulfilled through knowledge of the Word of God and the filling of the Holy Spirit, which furnishes the power or ability needed to live the Christian life according to the eternal moral law of God. Therefore, church age believers are under God’s new law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2-4).

Christ fulfilled the Ten Commandments by living a perfect and sinless life and so when man trusts in Christ as his Savior, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to that individual so we have justification (Romans 4) resulting in the fact that the Law can’t condemn us (Romans 8:1; 7:1-6; Romans 5:1; 4:4-8). Christ fulfilled the ceremonial ordinances, the shadows and types of His person and work, by dying on the cross for us and in our place, which demonstrated that God was also perfect justice and sin must be judged, but God provided His Son, the precious Lamb of God. The penalty, which the Law exercised, was paid in full at the Cross.

Again there is no condemnation because the believer is “in Christ” (Col. 2:14; Romans 3:24-25). Christ also fulfilled the Social Law, but now He replaces it with a new way of life fitting to our new salvation. He gives provision for the inner man, namely, the indwelling Holy Spirit who provides us the capacity to experience sanctification so that we may experience also the righteousness of the Law (Romans 8:2-4).

Christ is the end of the Law and church believers are not under the Mosaic Law but under grace (Rom. 6:14). Since the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the Law by His person and work at the Cross, church age believers are under a new law, namely,
the obligation to walk by the Spirit of Life through faith in the Word of God (Romans 8:2-4). If we are led by the Spirit, then we are not under the Law (Galatians 5:18).

Against such, i.e., the fruit of the Spirit, there is no law because the believer is then operating under the highest law, the standards are met as we walk by the Holy Spirit and grow in the Word (Gal. 5:22).

After salvation by grace there has always been the grave danger of reverting to Law or legalism by taboos and tactics of coercion, or some form of human manipulation (Galatians 3:1-3). To go back to the Law as a way of life puts one under the control of the flesh, it nullifies true spirituality by faith in the Holy Spirit, and defeats the believer, which results in human good and domination by the sin nature or the flesh (Galatians 5:1-5; Colossians 2:14f).

The fact that the Christian is not under the Mosaic Law does not mean, of course, that there is lawlessness or no proper sense of morality or ethics in the Christian life but rather quite the opposite is true. But in dealing with the subject of morality or ethics, it must be understood that the clear teaching of the New Testament is that the moral life the Christian is responsible for is that no one can be saved by virtue of his own works (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Furthermore, the morality of the Christian life is to be the result of the living in the nature of Christ by obedience to the Spirit’s voice, which is heard through the communication of the Word of God. In the New Testament, then, completely adequate teaching is provided as to the principles of conduct the Christian will follow if he truly presents his body “a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) and walks “by means of the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:9).

Titus 2:11-15 provides an outline around in which to group these principles.

**Titus 2:11-15** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. (NASU)

First in this passage it is stated that God’s grace brings us salvation but His grace then teaches us to live soberly, righteously and godly. These are three important lines of responsibility: the believer is to live soberly with regard to himself (Romans 12:3); righteously with regard to his fellow men; and godly with regard to the Lord.

The same truth can be more or less expressed in a somewhat different way: We should seek to live in accordance with the precepts of grace because (1) this will
please God (Hebrews 13:16) and will demonstrate our love for Christ (John 14:15); (2) it will help others (Matthew 5:16; Titus 3:8,14); (3) it will bring true joy and blessing to our own hearts (John 15:10-11).

J. Hampton Keathley III compiled a list of duties toward God and one’s fellow human being. The following is a list of “positive” duties toward God: (1) Trust Him (Mark 11:22; John 14:1, ASV; Heb 11:6). (2) Love Him and seek to know Him better (1 John 5:2; Phil 3:10, 15; Jas 4:8). (3) Be thankful to Him; worship and praise Him (John 4:23; Col 3:15; Heb 13:15.) (4) Serve Him (Rom 12:6-8, 11; 1 Cor 15:58). (5) Pray to Him (Luke 18:1; Rom 12:12; Eph 6:18; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; 1 Tim 2:2). (6) Live in accordance with His will (Rom 12:1; Heb 13:21; Jas 4:7). (7) Walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 25; Eph 5:18). (8) Hold fast to sound doctrine and contend for the faith (2 Tim 1:13; Heb 13:9; Jude 3). (9) Witness for Christ (John 15:27; Acts 1:8; 1 Thess 5:15). (10) Do everything as unto Him (1 Cor 10:31; Eph 6:7-8; Col 3:17,23-24). (11) Be diligent in devotion and study of His Word (John 5:39; Col 3:16; 2 Tim 2:15; Jas 4:8; 1 Pet 2:2).

The following is a list of “negative” duties towards God: (1) Do not have idols (1 Cor 10:7, 14; Eph 5:3; Phil 3:19; Col 3:5; 1 Tim 6:17; Heb 13:15; 1 John 5:21). (2) Do not receive false teachers (2 John 10). (3) Do not mock or speak against God (Gal 6:7; Col 3:8).

The following is a list of “positive” duties towards one’s fellow human being: (1) Love all, especially our brethren (John 15:17; Rom 12:10; 1 Cor 16:14; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:23; 4:7 {1 John 4:7}). (2) Be sympathetic and compassionate (Eph 4:32; Phil 2:4; Col 3:12). (3) Forgive and forbear (Rom 12:19; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13). (4) Deal honestly and fairly (Rom 12:17b; 13:7 {Rom 13:7}; 13:13 {Rom 13:13}; 1 Thess 4:12; Jas 2:1). (5) Do good to all and help all (Rom 12:13; Gal 6:2, 10; 1 Thess 5:15; Titus 3:1; Heb 13:16; Jas 4:17; 3 John 11). (6) Tell the truth (Eph 4:25). (7) Be courteous and live peaceably with all (Rom 12:18; 1 Pet 2:17; 3:8 {1 Pet 3:8}). (8) Treat others as we would like for them to treat us (Luke 6:31; Rom 12:17a). (9) Provide a good example for others (1 Cor 8:9, 13; Phil 2:15). (10) Urge other believers to good works and seek to restore backsliders (Gal 6:1; Heb 10:24).

The following is a list of “negative” duties towards one’s fellow human being: (1) Do not lie or bear false witness (Eph 4:25; Col 3:9; Titus 2:3). (2) Do not steal (Eph 4:28; 1 Pet 4:15). (3) Do not murder (1 Pet 4:15). (4) Do not commit adultery or fornication (1 Cor 6:18; 1 Thess 4:13). (5) Do not judge others or speak evil of them (Rom 14:13; Titus 3:2; Jas 4:11; cf. John 7:24). (6) Do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Cor 6:14). (7) Do not have fellowship with professing Christians who live in scandalous sin (1 Cor 5:11; 2 Thess 3:14). (8) Do not go to law with other believers (1 Cor 6:1ff). (9) Do not glory in men (1 Cor 3:21). (10)
Avoid troublemakers and useless disputes (Rom 16:17; 2 Tim 2:23; Titus 3:12).
(11) Do not have unpaid debts (Rom 13:8).


The following is a list of “negative” duties towards one self: (1) Abhor evil (Rom 12:9; 1 Thess 5:22). (2) Avoid pride (Rom 12:3; Jas 4:10; 1 Pet 5:6). (3) Do not conform to or love the world (Rom 12:2; 1 John 2:15). (4) Do not fellowship with evil (Eph 5:11). (5) Do not sin through anger (Eph 4:26). (6) Do not worry (Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7; 1 John 4:1,27). (7) Do not be lazy (Rom 12:1). (8) Do not use filthy speech (Eph 4:29; 5:4 {Eph 5:4}). (9) Do not become drunk (Eph 5:18). (10) Do not complain (1 Cor 10:10; Phil 2:14).

There are also miscellaneous duties that the believer is responsible for in that he has duties towards animals and responsibilities with regard to human government and special duties devolving upon particular classes, such as the unmarried, husbands, wives, children, servants.

**Paul’s Teaching in Romans Regarding the Purpose of the Law**

In the book of Romans, Paul taught extensively on the purpose of the Law. He taught that the law in the form of the entire Old Testament canon was given, not as the way of deliverance, but actually condemned the human race (3:19).

**Romans 3:19** Now, we know for certain that whatever the Law says, it speaks for the benefit of those under the jurisdiction of the Law in order that each and every mouth may be silenced and in addition all the unsaved inhabitants of the cosmic system may be demonstrated as guilty in the judgment of God. (My translation)

The law makes the sinner aware of sin in his life (3:20).

**Romans 3:20** Because each and every member of sinful humanity will never be justified in His judgment by means of actions produced by obedience
to the Law for through the Law there does come about an awareness of the sin nature. (My translation)

The introduction of the Law increased the transgression of Adam in the sense that the Law exposed man’s sinful nature to disobey the revealed will of God and in fact stimulated man’s sinful nature to disobey the revealed will of God.

Romans 5:20 Now, the Law was an addendum in order that the transgression might increase but where personal sin increased, grace infinitely abounded. (My translation)

The apostle Paul teaches in Romans 4:15 that the purpose of the Law was to bring about wrath but where there is no law, there is no violation.

Romans 4:15 For, the Law, as an eternal spiritual truth, produces righteous indignation but where there is, at any time, the total absence of the Law, neither, is there, as an eternal spiritual truth, violation. (My translation)

No one will ever be justified by obedience to the law because of the presence of the sin nature (3:20).

Romans 3:20 Because each and every member of sinful humanity will never be justified in His judgment by means of actions produced by obedience to the Law for through the Law there does come about an awareness of the sin nature. (My translation)

In Romans 7:1, in which Paul poses a rhetorical question to the Jewish Christians in Rome and asks if they are ignorant of the fact that the Mosaic Law has jurisdiction over a person as along as he lives.

Romans 7:1 Or, are some of you in a state of ignorance concerning this fact spiritual brothers (specifically, I am now addressing those who are very familiar with the Law through instruction), namely, that the Law does, as an eternal spiritual truth, have jurisdiction over a person during the entire extent of time they do live? (My translation)

That Paul is addressing the Jewish Christians in Rome specifically in this passage, which is indicated in his parenthetical statement “I am now addressing those who are very familiar with the Law through instruction.” Thus, when he uses the term “Law” he is referring specifically, to the Mosaic Law, i.e. the Jewish law and not to an axiom of political justice both Jewish and Roman.

Now, even though Paul’s comments in verses 1-6 are specifically directed towards the Jewish Christians in Rome, these comments would also be of benefit for the Gentile Christians as well in that it would protect them from the Judaizers’ legalistic teaching, which the Galatian church fell victim to (See Galatians 5).

Then, in Romans 7:2, Paul presents the principle found in the Mosaic Law that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives but if he dies, she is discharged from her marriage contract with her husband.
Romans 7:2 For example, the married woman is always bound by contract to the husband while he does live. However, if the husband dies, then she is, as an eternal spiritual truth, discharged from the contract with respect to her husband. (My translation)

Paul teaches in Romans 7:3 that if a Jewish woman’s husband dies, then she is not an adulteress if she remarries.

Romans 7:3 Therefore, based upon what has been previously stated, if while her husband does live she enters into marriage with another man, then she will, as a certainty, cause herself to be known publicly as an adulteress. However, if her husband dies then she is, as an eternal spiritual truth free from the contract with the result that she is, as an eternal spiritual truth not an adulteress if she enters into marriage with another man. (My translation)

In Romans 7:4, Paul teaches that in the same way that a Jewish wife is discharged from the marriage contract with her deceased husband and free to marry another so the Christian has been discharged from the Law and was married to Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 7:4 Therefore, my spiritual brothers, all of you without exception have also been put to death by means of Christ’s body with the result that all of you have been entered into marriage with another, the one who was raised from the dead ones in order that we might produce fruit for the benefit of God the Father. (My translation)

In Romans 7:4a, he teaches that the Jewish Christians in Rome were dead with respect to the Mosaic Law through the body of Christ or in other words their identification with Christ in His physical death. Then, in Romans 7:4b, the apostle teaches that the Jewish Christians in Rome and all Christians for that matter have been married to Christ in order to bear fruit for God the Father.

Next, in Romans 7:5, Paul taught the Roman believers that prior to their conversion to Christianity, when they were in bondage to the sin nature, the sinful passions of their sin natures produced personal sin as a result of their permitting these desires to be operative in their human bodies.

Romans 7:5 For you see, when we were once in a perpetual state of being in bondage to our flesh, the sinful desires, which were aroused by means of the Law were perpetually allowed to be operative in the members of our body resulting in the production of fruit related to spiritual death. (My translation)

This passage describes the Roman Christians prior to their conversion to Christianity whereas Romans 7:6 describes their present status of having been freed from the Law, having died to it and now having the capacity to serve in newness of the Spirit.

Next, in Romans 7:6, Paul teaches the Jewish Christians in Rome that they have been discharged from their legal and moral obligations to the Mosaic Law as a
result of being identified with Christ in His physical death. Consequently, he teaches that they are forever in a state of being slaves for the benefit of the Father.

This he teaches was by means of the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit the moment they trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior and never by means of the useless observance of the letter of the Law.

**Romans 7:6** But now in our present state, we have been discharged from the Law as a result of having died with respect to that which we were once in a perpetual state of being bound. Consequently, we are, as an eternal spiritual truth, forever slaves for the benefit of God the Father by means of the extraordinary work of the Spirit and never by means of the useless observance of the letter, which is the Law. (My translation)

In verse 7, Paul poses a rhetorical question that anticipates the false inference from his teaching in Romans 5:20, 6:14b and 7:5 that the Law is equivalent to the sin nature. He empathically rejects the idea that the Law is sinful but rather that it made him aware of his sin nature and then presents an example with the tenth commandment that prohibits coveting and identifies it as a sin.

**Romans 7:7** Therefore, what is the conclusion that we are forced to? Is, the Law, in the state of being identical with the sin nature? Absolutely not! On the contrary, I would have never become aware of my sin nature except by means of the Law. For example, I would never have been able to identify covetousness if the Law had not said, “You shall never covet.” (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:8, Paul teaches the Christians in Rome that because the sin nature seized a base of operations through the tenth commandment, the sin nature produced in him each and every kind of covetousness. At the conclusion of the verse he begins to explain why this is the case.

He states that apart from the Law, personal sin is dead in the sense that it can never be charged to the account of the sinner when the Law is not in effect.

**Romans 7:8** In fact, because the sin nature seized a base of operations by means of the tenth commandment, it produced in me each and every kind of covetousness for you see apart from the Law personal sin is, as an eternal spiritual truth dead. (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:9, Paul teaches that when the tenth commandment became a reality in his life, his sin nature suddenly became active and consequently, he died spiritually.

**Romans 7:9** However, at one time, I used to be alive apart from the Law but when the tenth commandment became a reality (in my life), the sin nature suddenly became active. Consequently, I became spiritually dead. (My translation)
In this passage, he teaches that his awareness of the significance of the tenth commandment awakened his sin nature and he died spiritually. For a Christian to die spiritually is to lose fellowship with God, which is restored through the confession of sin (1 John 1:9).

Next, we read in Romans 7:10 that Paul surprisingly discovered through his own personal experience as a Christian that the tenth commandment prohibiting coveting, which was intended to give life instead resulted in his experience temporal spiritual death.

**Romans 7:10** In other words, this commandment, which was for the purpose of life, was surprisingly discovered through my own personal experience to result in temporal spiritual death. (My translation)

In Romans 7:11, he teaches that because his sin nature seized a base of operations through the commandment, it deceived and killed him.

**Romans 7:11** For you see because the sin nature seized a base of operations by means of the tenth commandment, it deceived me and in addition by means of it, put me to death. (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:12, Paul presents a positive inference from his teaching in verses 7-11 by stating that the Law is holy and the tenth commandment is holy, righteous and good.

**Romans 7:12** Therefore, indeed, the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth holy. Furthermore, the tenth commandment is, as an eternal spiritual truth holy and in addition righteous as well as good. (My translation)

In this passage, Paul refutes in emphatic terms the erroneous conclusion that could be inferred from his teaching in Romans 5:20, 6:14b and 7:5 that the Law is equivalent to the sin nature by stating that the Law is holy and the tenth commandment is also holy, and righteous as well as good.

In Romans 7:13a, Paul poses a rhetorical question that anticipates an erroneous conclusion that could be inferred from his teaching in verses 7-12 that the commandment caused him to lose fellowship with God. This false assertion, he emphatically refutes and declares that it was the sin nature, which caused him to lose fellowship with God. Then in Romans 7:13b, he teaches that the Mosaic Law was given to expose man’s sinful nature and the sin nature’s extraordinarily sinful character.

**Romans 7:13** Therefore, did that which is good cause temporal spiritual death in me? Absolutely not! On the contrary, the sin nature caused temporal spiritual death in me in order that the sin nature would be exposed by repeatedly producing temporal spiritual death in me by means of that which is good in order that by means of the tenth commandment, the sin nature would demonstrate itself extraordinarily sinful in character. (My translation)
In Romans 7:14, Paul acknowledges that the Law is spiritual but that he is unspiritual because he still possesses as a Christian a sin nature.

**Romans 7:14** For you see, we acknowledge this fact, namely that the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth spiritual. However, I myself, as an eternal spiritual truth, perpetually exist in a state of being unspiritual, sold as a slave under the authority and dominion of the sin nature. (My translation)

Next, in Romans 7:15, Paul reveals that he does not practice obedience to the Law that he desires to do but rather commits sin in violation of the Law, which he hates.

**Romans 7:15** For you see, I habitually produce what I by no means understand because I by no means habitually practice the very thing that I habitually desire to do. On the contrary I habitually commit the very thing that I do hate. (My translation)

Then in Romans 7:16, Paul presents even more evidence to his readers that he possesses a sin nature by arguing that if he practices sin, which he hates, then he agrees with the Law’s assessment of his conduct that it is sinful and testifies that it is perfect.

**Romans 7:16** However, if, and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument I habitually commit the very thing that I by no means habitually desire to do as I’ve already admitted to. Then, I do agree with the Law. I do testify that it is, as an eternal spiritual truth perfect. (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:17, he presents the logical conclusion that he possesses a sin nature that agrees with his claim in verse 14 that he possesses a sin nature and which logical conclusion is based upon the evidence presented by him in verses 15-16.

**Romans 7:17** So then, as previously stated, based upon the evidence presented, I myself do no longer produce it but rather, the sin nature, which does perpetually dwell in me. (My translation)

In Romans 7:18, Paul states to the Christians in Rome that he recognizes that nothing good dwells in his physical body because the desire to do God’s will is present in him but the power to do so is not.

**Romans 7:18** For you see, I know as a fact through experience, namely that absolutely nothing good, as an eternal spiritual truth, dwells in me, that is, in my flesh because the desire is, as an eternal spiritual truth, present in me, however, the capacity to produce that which is perfect, is, as an eternal spiritual truth absolutely not. (My translation)

Then, in Romans 7:19, he acknowledges that he does not do what he desires to do but rather the evil he does not want to do.
Romans 7:19 For you see, the good that I habitually desire to do, I by no means habitually accomplish. On the contrary, I habitually practice the very evil that I by no means habitually desire to do. (My translation)  
Next, in Romans 7:20, Paul concludes that his sin nature is the source of evil in his life.  
Romans 7:20 So then, as previously stated if, and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument, I habitually commit the very thing that I myself by no means habitually desire to do and of course I’ve demonstrated this is true and have already admitted to this. Then, I myself do no longer produce it but rather the sin nature, which, does perpetually dwell in me. (My translation)  
Lastly, Paul in Romans 7:21 relates to the Christians in Rome that he discovered a spiritual principle that when he desired to obey the Law that evil was present in him in the form of the sin nature.  
Romans 7:21 Therefore, I surprisingly discovered through my own personal experience the principle: when I, at any time, desire to accomplish that which is perfect that evil is, as an eternal spiritual truth, present in me. (My translation)  
Romans 10:1-5 Spiritual brothers, indeed, the desire produced by my own heart and in addition my specific detailed request on behalf of them is always for their deliverance. Because I testify concerning them that they possess a zeal for God, however by no means according to an experiential knowledge. Because they have in the past rejected the righteousness originating from God the Father and continue to do so up to the present moment. In fact, because they have in the past zealously sought to establish their own and continue to do so up to the present moment, they never submitted to the righteousness originating from God the Father. Because (faith in) Christ is, as an eternal spiritual truth, the purpose of the Law resulting in righteousness for the benefit of each and every member of the human race to those who at any time do exercise absolute confidence (in Christ). Because Moses writes concerning this particular righteousness, which is based upon obedience to the Law (as constituting a source of justification): “The person who obeys them will cause himself to live by means of them.” (My translation)  
In Romans 10:5 Paul presents the reason why faith in Christ resulting in the imputation of divine righteousness and justification has always been the ultimate purpose of the Law rather than obedience to the Law and to support this he begins to cite a series of Old Testament passages. The first passage he uses is Leviticus 18:5 in which Moses writes concerning the righteousness that is based on obedience to the Law that the Jew who obeys the commandments of the Law perfectly will live by them or in other words, obtain eternal life. Of course, every
person born into the world is spiritually dead and possesses a sin nature, making it impossible to render the perfect obedience that the Law requires.

God never intended the Law to be a means of salvation according to Galatians 3:21, which that “if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.” However, the Law did come with promises of life as a result of obedience as we noted in Leviticus 18:5 and Matthew 19:16-17.

The Scriptures teach that if a person obeys perfectly the Law, he will live.

Leviticus 18:5 So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD. (NASU)

Ezekiel 20:11 I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live. (NASU)

Galatians 3:10-12 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.” Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.” (NASU)

The Lord Jesus Christ taught the Jews that if they obeyed perfectly the Law that they would obtain eternal life.

Matthew 19:16-17 And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” (NASU)

Luke 10:25-29 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.” But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (NASU)

The Law would have given life to anyone who obeyed it perfectly. However, as we noted before, man has no capacity whatsoever to render perfect obedience to the Law since he possesses a sinful nature. Thus, the Law promises life even though God did not give it with this intention since He knew sinful man had no capacity to render perfect obedience to it.
God never intended obedience to the Law to be the means of salvation but the Law did come with promises of life if obeyed perfectly as we noted earlier. Thus, we can infer that the Law would have given eternal life had it been perfectly obeyed.

So in this sense the Law promises life even though God did not give the Law with this intention since man’s sinful nature makes it impossible for him to obey the Law perfectly.

The Word of God is life thus if a Jew kept the Law, which is a part of the Word of God, then he would experience eternal life.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (NASU)

John 6:67-68 So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.” (NASU)

Philippians 2:14-16, Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. (NASU)

1 John 1:1 Who has always existed from eternity past, who we have heard, who we have witnessed with our eyes, who we observed, even our hands touched concerning the Word who is the life (of God). (My translation)

The Law would give life to a Jew if they obeyed it perfectly. The Law required perfect obedience because the Law is the perfect expression of God’s perfect character and integrity and His holiness. However, the Jew did not have the capacity to render perfect obedience to the Law because they like all men are sinners by nature.

Romans 3:10 As it stands written for all of eternity, “there is, as an eternal spiritual truth, absolutely none righteous, not even one.” (My translation)

Romans 3:23 For each and every person has sinned consequently, they are always failing to measure up to the glory originating from God. (My translation)

In Romans 8:4, Paul teaches that the Father’s purpose for Christ’s physical death was so that the righteous requirement of the Law, i.e. perfect obedience might be fulfilled in those Christians who conduct themselves in submission to the Spirit rather than the sin nature.

Romans 8:1-4, Therefore, there is now, as an eternal spiritual truth, never any condemnation, none whatsoever for the benefit of those in union with Christ who is Jesus. Because, the life-giving Spirit’s authoritative power, by
means of (the death and resurrection of) Christ, who is Jesus, has set you free from the sin nature’s authoritative power as well as spiritual death’s. Because with reference to the Law’s inability in which it was always powerless through the flesh, God the Father accomplished by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. In fact, with regards to the sin nature, He (the Father) executed the sin nature by means of His (Son’s) human nature. In order that the Law’s righteous requirement would be fulfilled in us, those of us who are not, as an eternal spiritual truth, conducting our lives in submission to the flesh but rather in submission to the Spirit. (My translation)

In Romans 8:4, the noun *dikaioma* means, “righteous requirement” and refers to perfect obedience, which the Law requires. It refers to the Law’s demands for perfect obedience.

As we have noted earlier, no human being with the exception of Jesus Christ of course, was able to render perfect obedience to the Law because of the presence of the sin nature in all of humanity. Christ rendered perfect obedience to the Law, which constituted His loving God perfectly and His neighbor perfectly. The Christian fulfills the righteous requirement of Law positionally because of his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Apart from the Spirit, Christians can’t fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law “experientially” as clearly delineated by Paul in Romans 7:14-25. However, they can when they are in fellowship with God through the power of the Spirit. Therefore, the Christian fulfills the righteous requirement of the Law, i.e. the perfect obedience of Christ to the Law positionally through his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. He experiences this union and identification by appropriating by faith through the power of the Spirit his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. This constitutes experiencing sanctification, salvation, righteousness and fellowship with God.

Christ’s perfect obedience to the Law has become the Christian’s perfect obedience because Christ’s death destroyed the sin nature and the baptism of the Spirit identified the Christian with Christ in His death and resurrection. The Father’s purpose for sacrificing His Son on the Cross was so that the righteous requirement of the Law would be fulfilled in Christians experientially. Specifically, it would be fulfilled in those Christians who are not conducting their lives in submission to the sin nature but rather in submission to the Spirit.

In regards to this, the New Testament writers have much to say under the inspiration of the Spirit. The Scriptures teach that the believer is to walk or live his life on earth by faith in the Word of God and not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. (NASU)
Just as the Christian received the Lord Jesus as his Savior by exercising faith in Him for eternal salvation, so after salvation he is to live by the same principle of faith (Compare Ephesians 2:8-9 with Colossians 2:5-7).

Colossians 2:5-7 For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. (NASU)

Paul in Romans 13:8 issues a prohibition that is related to the believer’s financial obligations. He also issues a command that is related to his moral or spiritual obligation to his fellow human being, both believer and unbeliever. The prohibition should always be met whereas the command is a debt that can never be fulfilled since it is the royal family of God’s honor code and is the Christian way of life.

Romans 13:8 All of you continue making it your habit to owe absolutely nothing to anyone except to continue making it your habit of divinely loving one another because the one who, at any time does divinely love the other person fulfills the Law. (My translation)

Paul’s statement in Romans 13:9 serves to advance upon and intensify his statement at the end of verse 8 that loving one’s neighbor fulfills the requirement of the Mosaic Law.

Romans 13:9 In fact, this group of commandments: “You must never commit adultery, you must never commit murder, you must never steal, you must never covet,” (and if, and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that there does exist any other commandment and we know that one does) is, as an eternal spiritual truth summarized by this command: “You must love your neighbor as yourself.” (My translation)

In Romans 13:9, Paul cites four of the Ten Commandments that are related to the believer’s conduct in relation to the entire human race and alludes to a fifth and does explicitly mention it that also is related to the believer’s conduct in relation to the entire human race. Therefore, he is citing these commandments to advance and intensify his argument from verse 8 that loving one’s neighbor fulfills the Law in that obedience to these prohibitions is a manifestation of loving one’s neighbor.

The apostle is teaching in Romans 13:9 that when the believer obeys these four commandments, he is manifesting the fact that he loves his fellow human being as he would himself or herself. Consequently, the implication is that if they do not obey any one of these commandments then they don’t love their neighbor as they would their own selves.
Romans 13:10 teaches that divine-love never commits evil against a neighbor, therefore, love fulfills the Law.

Romans 13:10 Divine-love never, as an eternal spiritual truth commits evil against a neighbor. Therefore, divine-love fulfills the Law. (My translation)

This passage teaches that the Law and the love of God are not mutually exclusive since operating in God’s love will fulfill all that the Law requires. When the believer is operating in the love of God and thus fulfilling all that the Law requires, he is simply responding by faith to the Spirit’s revelation in the Word of God that he is the object and beneficiary of God’s love before and after being justified through faith alone in Christ alone. This faith manifests itself in obedience to the Spirit’s command in the Word of God to love your neighbor as yourself and appropriates the power of the Spirit so as to give the believer the capacity to obey this command that summarizes all that the Law requires from the believer in relation to his fellow human beings.

The Law in Colossians 2:14-23

Colossians 2:14 Specifically, He caused the cancellation of that which was against each and every one of us, namely a certificate of debt which is according to a written code of laws, which was continually existing in the state of being opposed to each and every one of us. To be more explicit, He eradicated it, removing this partition by causing it to be nailed to the cross. (Author’s translation)

The apostle Paul identifies specifically for the faithful Christians in Colossae how the Father graciously forgave Jewish Christians like himself each and every one of their transgressions which he asserts at the end of Colossians 2:13.

It is important when interpreting Paul’s statements here in Colossians 2:14 that when he speaks of “us” he is referring to Jewish Christians like himself and not both Jew and Gentile Christians. This is indicated by several factors. First the Colossian Christian community was Gentile. Paul was of course Jewish. The reference to “uncircumcision” in Colossians 2:13 is a reference to this fact that the Colossians were Gentiles since this is a term the Jews used for the Gentiles. This interpretation is further substantiated by the fact that Paul asserts in Colossians 2:14 that the Father cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees which were against the Jew and were hostile to the Jews. The Mosaic Law was given to the Jews and not the Gentiles according to Romans 9:1-5 and the book of Exodus.

Now, in Colossians 2:14, when Paul speaks of the Father causing the cancellation of this condemnation from the Law, he is referring to the doctrine of propitiation. When he asserts that the Father eradicated the certificate of debt
which is according to a written code of laws which was against Jewish Christians prior to their conversion by nailing it to the cross, he is referring to the doctrine of propitiation.

Propitiation is the Godward side of salvation whereby the voluntary substitutionary spiritual death of the impeccable humanity of Christ in hypostatic union satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God that the sins of the entire world -past, present and future be judged.

**Leviticus 1:4** “And he (sinner) shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering (picturing the imputation of our sins to Christ), that it may be accepted for him to make atonement (propitiation) on his behalf. (NASB95)

**Romans 3:21** But now, independently of seeking to be justified by obedience to the Law, the righteousness originating from God is being manifested at the present time while simultaneously being attested to by the Law and the Prophets. 22 Namely, the righteousness originating from God through faith in Jesus who is the Christ for the benefit of each and every person who does believe for there is, as an eternal spiritual truth, absolutely no distinction. 23 For each and every person has sinned consequently they are always failing to measure up to the glory originating from God 24 with the result that they might, as an eternal spiritual truth, be undeservedly justified based upon His grace by means of the redemption, which is by means of the spiritual death of Christ who is Jesus 25 whom God the Father offered publicly as a propitiatory gift through faith by means of His blood in order to demonstrate His righteousness because of the deliberate and temporary suspension of judgment of the sins, which have taken place in the past on the basis of the tolerance originating from the character and nature of God the Father. 26 Correspondingly, in relation to the demonstration of His righteousness during this present distinct period of history, that He Himself is, as an eternal spiritual truth, inherently righteous, even while justifying anyone by means of faith in Jesus. (Author’s translation)

**Hebrews 2:17** Therefore, He (the Lord Jesus Christ) had to be made like His brethren (humanity) in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (NASB95)

**1 John 2:2** And He Himself (the Lord Jesus Christ) is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (NASB95)

**1 John 4:10** In this is love, not that we loved God (the Father), but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (NASB95)

So in Colossians 2:14 when Paul asserts that the Father caused the eradication of the Jewish Christian’s condemnation from the Law by causing it to be nailed to
the cross, he is referring to the spiritual and physical deaths of Jesus Christ on the cross, which served to propitiate the Father. This work of propitiation reconciled a holy God to sinful humanity.

When Paul asserts in Colossians 2:14 that the Jewish Christian’s condemnation from the Law prior to their conversion was eradicated by being nailed to the cross, he is also only referring to the imputation of sins to Jesus Christ on the cross.

**Colossians 2:15** Simultaneously, for His own benefit, He disarmed the angelic rulers as well as the angelic authorities. He caused them to suffer disgrace publicly by causing them to be led in a triumphal procession through Him. (Author’s translation)

Colossians 2:15 is composed of a temporal clause which is in turn followed by a declarative statement and then lastly by a participial clause which presents the means by which the event expressed in the declarative statement was accomplished. This verse brings to a conclusion Paul’s reasoning as to why the faithful Christians in Colossae must continue to obey the command he issues them in Colossians 2:8. He orders them in this verse to not stop making it their habit of watching out for anyone belonging to a group who would seek to take each and every one of them captive through empty, deceitful philosophy which is based upon the tradition produced by men. It is also based upon the elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system, which are by no means based upon the teaching originating from Christ.

**Colossians 2:8** Don’t stop making it your habit of watching out for anyone belonging to a group who would seek to take each and every one of you captive through empty, deceitful philosophy based upon the tradition produced by human beings, based upon the elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system, which are by no means based upon the teaching originating from Christ. (Author’s translation)

The apostle Paul solemnly issues the faithful Christians in Colossae a command which is designed to protect them from those teaching false doctrine in their region of the world. He doesn’t want them to stop watching out for those teaching false doctrine. He not only wants to protect them from false doctrine but also he wants to protect their status of receiving a full reward from the Lord Jesus Christ at the Bema Seat. He wants them to protect themselves from false doctrine in order that they might not lose rewards.

These faithful Christians in Colossae were already on the lookout for these false teachers since this epistle clearly implies the former was already doing this. If you recall, in Colossians 1:3-5, the apostle Paul informed these faithful Christians in Colossae that he gave thanks to the Father in prayer for them after hearing about their faith in Jesus Christ and that they were practicing the love of God with one another. Then, in Colossians 2:5, he asserts that he was rejoicing over the fact that

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they were disciplined and specifically their dedication which was produced by their faith with regards to their union and identification with Jesus Christ.

Paul identifies the means by which these false teachers would seek to take the Colossians captive as being empty, deceitful philosophy. When he speaks of “philosophy” he is speaking of human understanding or wisdom in contrast with divinely revealed knowledge. In other words, it pertains to human wisdom which is not divinely inspired. It speaks of a worldview which is opposed to a worldview that is based upon divine revelation. It refers to a system of concept or a teaching which is totally based upon human understanding or wisdom and is not based upon or derived from divine revelation. So this “philosophy” pertains to a belief system of philosophical beliefs accepted as authoritative by some group or school. Here it is used in relation to those teaching false doctrine in the area of Colossae. This philosophy is “deceitful” since it would cause the Colossians to have misleading or erroneous views concerning the truth. This philosophy is “empty” since it is completely lacking in truth and is devoid of divine viewpoint since it is not based upon divine revelation.

Then, Paul describes where this empty, deceitful philosophy originates. First he identifies that it originates from man-made traditions and the various commands and prohibitions found in the Mosaic Law, which they misapplied to the church. He then emphatically tells the Colossians where it does not originate from, namely it does not originate from Jesus Christ.

So Paul first states that this empty, deceitful philosophy is based upon the traditions produced by human beings. These “traditions” pertain to the content of traditional instruction of a particular group of people. These traditions are unique to human beings and are produced by human beings. These traditions are the production of human beings rather than men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. If you recall, Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their adherence to their own rabbinical traditions rather than the Word of God (Mark 7).

These traditions produced by men is a reference to the Judaizers and specifically the Essene branch of Judaism which also held to an incipient form of Gnosticism. The Essenes lived on the shores of the Dead Sea and were very well-known in the first century for their ascetic practices, one of which was abstaining from marriage. Asceticism is the idea that abstinence from physical things like food or sex is essential for spiritual purity. The phrase “self-made religion” (Colossians 2:23) reflect the asceticism of the Essenes as does “self-abasement” and “severe treatment of the body” (2:23). This Essene Judaism which had confronted the Colossian church in Paul’s day also had a Gnostic tendency. In fact, it appears that it contained an incipient form of Gnosticism.

Not only was the empty, deceitful philosophy of the Judaizers based upon man-made traditions or in other words, not based upon divine revelation but it also was
based upon the various commands and prohibitions of the Mosaic Law which were inspired by the Holy Spirit but misinterpreted and misapplied to the church. The prepositional phrase “based upon the elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system” is used in relation to the various commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law such as the dietary regulations, Sabbath observance, observance of the seven feasts of Israel and observance of circumcision. The Judaizers sought to place Gentile Christians under the Mosaic Law with its 613 commandments. The apostle Paul was attempted to address the problem with the Essence branch of Judaism here in Colossians. That this prepositional phrase is a reference to the various commands and prohibitions found in the Mosaic Law is indicated by the content of Paul’s teaching in Colossians 2:8-23 which mentions in these verses explicitly or implicitly all these things found in the Mosaic Law. He refers to circumcision in Colossians 2:11 and Sabbath observance in Colossians 2:16 and 21. He mentions the seven great feasts of Israel and new-moon celebrations and the deity regulations in Colossians 2:1 and 21. Also, although the Law itself is not explicitly mentioned by Paul in Colossians 2:14, it is clearly implied in this verse. In this verse, he affirms Christ delivered the Colossians from the condemnation they incurred from breaking the Law. In this verse, the expression τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, “the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us,” echoes an expression in Ephesians 2:15, namely τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, “by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.” Ephesians 2:15 explicitly mentions the Law whereas Colossians 2:14 does not but does imply it since sinners are all legally indebted to the Law whether the Jews in regards to the Mosaic Law or the Gentiles with the Law in their conscience (Romans 2:14-15). The Law condemned both Jew and Gentile (Romans 1:18-3:23). Christ’s death on the cross paid the sinner’s sin debt which was incurred from breaking the Law.

These “elementary teachings” are unique to the cosmic system of Satan which promotes the application of the Law to Jewish and Gentile Christians. They do so in order to hinder Jewish and Gentile Christians from experiencing their freedom from the Law which is the result of their identification with Christ in death.

“The cosmic system” pertains to a vast system and arrangement of human affairs, earthly goods, godless governments, conflicts, riches, pleasures, culture, education, world religions, the cults and the occult dominated and negatively affected by Satan who is god of this satanic cosmos. This system is promoted by Satan, conformed to his ideals, aims, methods, and character, and stands perpetually in opposition to God the cause of Christ. This world system is used to seduce men away from God and the person of Christ. It is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-Bible, and very anti-humanity though it often appears as humanitarian as part of Satan’s masquerade as an angel of light.
So these elementary principles or regulations from the Mosaic Law are promoted by Satan’s organization and system in the sense that they are the ones who were influencing the Judaizers to seek to put both Jewish and Gentile Christians under the Mosaic Law. The purpose of which was so that both Jewish and Gentile Christians could not experience their freedom from the Mosaic Law and their freedom because of their union and identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father.

Colossians 2:8 ends with Paul emphatically refuting the idea that this empty, deceitful philosophy of the false teachers in Colossae was based upon the teaching of Jesus Christ. Rather, the false teaching in Colossae was totally antithetical to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in Colossians 2:8 Paul is warning these faithful Christians in Colossae to not stop watching out for these false teachers who would seek to take each and every one of them captive by their empty, deceitful philosophy. This philosophy was based upon man-made traditions and a misinterpretation and misapplication of the Mosaic Law to Christians. The latter was promoted by Satan’s organization and world system so as to prevent Christians from experiencing their freedom from the Law because of their identification with Christ in His death. He is in effect telling them that their teaching regarding the Mosaic Law is demonic and does not originate with Jesus Christ and is opposed to Jesus Christ. Their heterodox teaching was inspired by Satan and his fallen angels. In fact, the Scriptures teach that all false doctrine originates from Satan and his kingdom.

So interestingly here in Colossians 2:15 Paul asserts that the Father through His Son Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection has taken Satan and the kingdom of darkness captive and has publicly disgraced them just as a Roman general would do so during the Roman triumphal procession. Paul asserts in Colossians 2:8 that Satan and his kingdom are behind the false teachers in Colossae. But they have been defeated by Christ Paul asserts in Colossians 2:15. Therefore, Paul is using the figure irony.

Zuck writes “Irony is a kind of ridicule expressed indirectly in the form of a compliment. Irony is often conveyed by the speaker’s tone of voice so that the hearers know that irony is intended. This sometimes makes it difficult to determine whether a written statement is to be taken as irony. But the context usually helps determine whether irony is being used.”

Satan and his kingdom were seeking to take captive the Colossians through the false doctrine communicated by the Judaizers and yet Christ has taken them captive. Thus, it would be foolish for the Colossians to adhere to the false doctrine.

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teachings of the Judaizers whose false doctrine originates from the kingdom of darkness. Jesus Christ who they are identified with in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father has defeated the kingdom of darkness. He accomplished this through His death and resurrection and has publicly disgraced them taking them captive when He ascended into the third heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. So Satan is trying take the Colossians captive and yet he and his fellow non-elect angels are the real captives. Through this figure of irony, Paul is actually not only complimenting Christ but reminding the Colossians that they are in union and identified with the victor over Satan, namely Jesus Christ. Why then follow the Judaizers and their false doctrine when the source of their teaching has been defeated by Jesus Christ?

In Colossians 2:15, the temporal clause teaches that while the Father eradicated the Jewish Christian’s condemnation due to not keeping the Law perfectly prior to their conversion, He also simultaneously, for His own benefit, disarmed the angelic rulers as well as the angelic authorities from the kingdom of darkness. Paul has in mind the Roman triumphal procession. This temporal clause conjures up images of prisoners of war being led naked through the city as a display of the victor’s triumph and the losers’ humiliation and defeat (cf. 2 Sam. 10:5; 1 Chron. 19:4f.). Not only was the enemy disarmed but they were also stripped of their clothing in order to humiliate them. Thus, Paul is teaching the Colossians with this temporal clause that through His Son Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection and session, the Father stripped the kingdom of darkness of their armor and weapons and thus their power.

But in what sense did Christ’s death and resurrection defeat Satan and his kingdom? The works of the devil involved enslaving humanity to himself through sin. Christ’s death resolved the problem of sin and thus defeated Satan who used sin to enslave humanity to himself. The resurrection vindicated Jesus and demonstrated that the Father had in fact accepted His spiritual and physical deaths on the cross as a substitute for unregenerate humanity as the payment for sin. The ascension of Jesus Christ publicly disgraced Satan and his fellow fallen angels since those human beings who trusted in the Lord and were housed in Paradise in Hades were led to the third heaven by Jesus Christ as the spoils of victory. His session at the right hand of the Father was public demonstration and vindication of Jesus Christ in the throne room of God that He is victorious over Satan.

This statement in Colossians 2:15 also reveals the fulfillment of God’s promise to Adam and Eve which is recorded in Genesis 3:15.

So this temporal clause in Colossians 2:15 is identifying and describing another victory provided for the Colossians because of Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. This victory benefitted the Father because the kingdom of darkness sought to establish themselves as a rival kingdom.
and an alternative to living in His kingdom. It was for His benefit to defeat the kingdom of darkness because they slandered Him and sought to undermine His activities among the human race. It was for His benefit since the kingdom of darkness sought to seduce other angels and members of the human race from worshipping Him.

The declarative statement which follows this temporal clause asserts that the Father caused these angelic rulers and authorities from the kingdom of darkness to suffer disgrace publicly. They were disgraced publicly because Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection and session was in full view of both mankind and the elect angels. Jesus Christ’s substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths on the cross were in public in full view of members of the human race, both regenerate and unregenerate as well as the angels, both elect and non-elect. His resurrection was public as well since unregenerate members of the human race, namely, the Roman guard at the tomb of Jesus were present at His resurrection. Also, regenerate human beings, namely the disciples of Jesus witnessed His being raised from the dead. Lastly, His ascension into heaven was public in full view of His disciples as well as in full view of the angels, both elect and non-elect. His session was in full view of both elect and non-elect angels.

Then, Paul identifies the means by which the Father caused these angelic rulers and authorities from the kingdom of darkness to suffer disgrace publicly. He asserts that the Father caused the kingdom of darkness to suffer disgrace publicly by causing them to be led in a triumphal procession through Jesus Christ.

Paul uses in Colossians 2:15 uses the Roman military triumph as an analogy in order to teach the doctrine of the triumphal procession to members of the royal family of God in Colossae. He uses it to teach them that Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father defeated Satan and his kingdom. Their union and identification with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father provides them the victory over Satan and his kingdom. When the Colossians appropriate by faith this union and identification with Christ, they will experience this victory in time.

Colossians 2:16 Therefore, continue making it your habit of not letting anyone condemn any of you as guilty because of food or because of drink or because of a particular feast or new moon or a Sabbath. (Author’s translation)

The prohibition Paul issues the faithful Christians in Colossae is the direct result of an inference from his teaching in Colossians 2:9-15, which communicate the various reasons as to why the faithful Christians in Colossae must continue to obey the command he issues them in Colossians 2:8.
Colossians 2:8 Don’t stop making it your habit of watching out for anyone belonging to a group who would seek to take each and every one of you captive through empty, deceitful philosophy based upon the tradition produced by human beings, based upon the elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system, which are by no means based upon the teaching originating from Christ. (Author’s translation)

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Not only was the empty, deceitful philosophy of the Judaizers based upon man-made traditions or in other words, not based upon divine revelation but it also was based upon the various commands and prohibitions of the Mosaic Law which were inspired by the Holy Spirit but misinterpreted and misapplied to the church. The prepositional phrase “based upon the elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system” is used in relation to the various commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law such as the dietary regulations, Sabbath observance, observance of the seven feasts of Israel and observance of circumcision. The Judaizers sought to place Gentile Christians under the Mosaic Law with its 613 commandments. The apostle Paul was attempted to address the problem with the Essence branch of Judaism here in Colossians. That this prepositional phrase is a reference to the various commands and prohibitions found in the Mosaic Law is indicated by the content of Paul’s teaching in Colossians 2:8-23 which mentions in these verses explicitly or implicitly all these things found in the Mosaic Law. He refers to circumcision in Colossians 2:11 and Sabbath observance in Colossians 2:16 and 21. He mentions the seven great feasts of Israel and new-moon celebrations and the deity regulations in Colossians 2:1 and 21. Also, although the Law itself is not explicitly mentioned by Paul in Colossians 2:14, it is clearly implied in this verse. In this verse, he affirms Christ delivered the Colossians from the condemnation they incurred from breaking the Law. In this verse, the expression τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, “the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us,” echoes an expression in Ephesians 2:15, namely τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, “by setting aside in his flesh the law with
its commands and regulations.” Ephesians 2:15 explicitly mentions the Law whereas Colossians 2:14 does not but does imply it since sinners are all legally indebted to the Law whether the Jews in regards to the Mosaic Law or the Gentiles with the Law in their conscience (Romans 2:14-15). The Law condemned both Jew and Gentile (Romans 1:18-3:23). Christ’s death on the cross paid the sinner’s sin debt which was incurred from breaking the Law.

These “elementary teachings” are unique to the cosmic system of Satan which promotes the application of the Law to Jewish and Gentile Christians. They do so in order to hinder Jewish and Gentile Christians from experiencing their freedom from the Law which is the result of their identification with Christ in death.

“The cosmic system” pertains to a vast system and arrangement of human affairs, earthly goods, godless governments, conflicts, riches, pleasures, culture, education, world religions, the cults and the occult dominated and negatively affected by Satan who is god of this satanic cosmos. This system is promoted by Satan, conformed to his ideals, aims, methods, and character, and stands perpetually in opposition to God the cause of Christ. This world system is used to seduce men away from God and the person of Christ. It is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-Bible, and very anti-humanity though it often appears as humanitarian as part of Satan’s masquerade as an angel of light.

So these elementary principles or regulations from the Mosaic Law are promoted by Satan’s organization and system in the sense that they are the ones who were influencing the Judaizers to seek to put both Jewish and Gentile Christians under the Mosaic Law. The purpose of which was so that both Jewish and Gentile Christians could not experience their freedom from the Mosaic Law and their freedom because of their union and identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father.

Colossians 2:8 ends with Paul emphatically refuting the idea that this empty, deceitful philosophy of the false teachers in Colossae was based upon the teaching of Jesus Christ. Rather, the false teaching in Colossae was totally antithetical to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in Colossians 2:8 Paul is warning these faithful Christians in Colossae to not stop watching out for these false teachers who would seek to take each and every one of them captive by their empty, deceitful philosophy. This philosophy was based upon man-made traditions and a misinterpretation and misapplication of the Mosaic Law to Christians. The latter was promoted by Satan’s organization and world system so as to prevent Christians from experiencing their freedom from the Law because of their identification with Christ in His death. He is in effect telling them that their teaching regarding the Mosaic Law is demonic and does not originate with Jesus Christ and is opposed to Jesus Christ. Their heterodox teaching was inspired by Satan and his fallen angels. In
fact, the Scriptures teach that all false doctrine originates from Satan and his kingdom.

Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:9 presents the reason for his previous command in Colossians 2:8.

**Colossians 2:9 The reason for this command is that in Him, the totality of attributes which compose the divine nature permanently dwell in bodily form. (Author’s translation)**

The apostle Paul is asserting that the totality of attributes which compose the divine nature dwell permanently in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, it indicates that Jesus Christ is the full or perfect embodiment of deity or the divine nature. In other words, it emphasizes that Jesus Christ is God. By doing so, Paul is refuting Docetic Gnosticism which was in its incipient form when he wrote Colossians. This type of Gnosticism denied that Jesus Christ had a human nature. Paul is asserting here in Colossians 2:9 that Jesus Christ is God and is human. In theology the fact that Jesus Christ is both God and man is called “the hypostatic union” in theology.

**Colossians 2:10 Also, by means of your union and identification with Him, each and every one of you as an eternal spiritual truth exist in the state of being made complete, who is, as an eternal spiritual truth existing in the state of being the head over each and every ruler and authority. (Author’s translation)**

Colossians 2:10 contains two declarative statements. The first provides the second reason as to why the faithful Christians in Colossae must obey the apostle Paul’s command in Colossians 2:8. Here in Colossians 2:10 the apostle Paul asserts that by means of their union and identification with Jesus Christ, each and every one of these faithful Christians in Colossae as an eternal spiritual truth existed in the state of being made complete. This means that the Colossians were lacking nothing with regards to their salvation. It expresses the sufficiency of their union and identification with Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session to provide them eternal salvation. It expresses the idea that their union and identification with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session was sufficient to deliver them totally and completely from eternal condemnation. It was sufficient to deliver them totally and completely from spiritual and physical death, condemnation from the Law, personal sins as well as enslavement to the sin nature and Satan and his cosmic system.

This first statement also indicates that the Colossians were made complete in the sense that they are now partakers of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). This is indicated by the fact that Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:10 is directly related to his statement in Colossians 2:9 that the totality of attributes which compose the divine nature permanently dwell in the person of Jesus Christ. The verb πληροῦ in
Colossians 2:10 is related to the noun πληρομα in Colossians 2:9 which speaks of the totality of attributes which compose the divine nature. The verb πληροω in Colossians 2:10 is composing a play on words with the noun πληρομα in Colossians 2:9. Paul is not saying that the Colossians now possess the divine nature or that they were elevated to the same stature as Jesus Christ. But rather it simply means that they partaking of the divine nature of Jesus Christ by means of their union and identification with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. It also means that they are partakers of Jesus Christ’s divine nature because He indwells them permanently (cf. Col. 1:27).

When Paul mentions the Colossians’ union and identification with Christ in Colossians 2:10, he is referring to the fact that at the moment they believed in Christ, the omnipotence of the Spirit caused them to become identical and united with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session, and which ministry of the Spirit is called in Scripture, the “baptism” of the Spirit. This means that when Christ was crucified, God crucified the Christian with Him and when Christ died and was buried, God considers them to have died and been buried with Christ. It also means that when Christ was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father (the session of Christ), God raised and seated the Christian with Him.

The second statement in Colossians 2:10 asserts that Jesus Christ is as an eternal spiritual truth existing in the state of being head over each and every ruler and authority. This statement brings out the implication for the Colossians of being in union with Jesus Christ and identified with Him. Since they are complete by means of their union and identification with Jesus Christ and He, Jesus Christ is the head over every angelic and human ruler and authority, the Colossians are therefore also in a position of authority and are superior to human and angelic rulers and authority. This second statement serves to refute the Essene branch of Judaism with its incipient form of Gnosticism whose teaching elevated angelic beings over Jesus Christ and worshipped angels (cf. Col. 2:18).

This second statement in Colossians 2:10 is asserting that the Christian has victory over Satan’s kingdom since they are those who are identified by Paul as being rulers and authority. The rulers are human and angelic governmental rulers whereas the authorities are those human beings and angels who are under the authority or have been delegated authority to them by these human and angelic governmental rulers. Each and every one of them are under the authority of Jesus Christ. Since the Christian is identified with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father, the Christian is sovereign over these human and angelic governmental rulers and authorities. This sovereign rulership of the church will be manifested on earth during the millennial
reign of Jesus Christ. If you recall, Paul taught in Colossians 1:16 that each and every one of these human and angelic rulers and authorities was created by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is greater than any angelic or human ruler and authority because He created them all and is superior to these since they are united and identified with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. Paul is thus saying in Colossians 2:10 that Christians share in Jesus Christ sovereign authority over the human and angelic races by means of their union and identification with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Colossians must reject the false doctrine taught by the Essence branch of Judaism with its incipient form of Gnosticism. They should thus worship only Jesus Christ and never the angels.

Colossians 2:11 Furthermore, because of your faith in Him, each and every one of you was circumcised by means of a circumcision which was not performed by human beings, by means of the removal of your body composed of that which is flesh, by means of this circumcision which is identification with Christ. (Author’s translation)

Colossians 2:11 presents the third reason why the faithful Christians in Colossae were to obey Paul’s command in Colossians 2:8. This command required that they continue making it their habit of watching out for anyone belonging to a group who would seek to take each and every one of them captive through empty, deceitful philosophy which is based upon the tradition produced by human beings. He describes this human tradition as based upon the elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system of Satan. His last description of this false teaching is that it by no means based upon the teaching originating from Jesus Christ. Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:9 presented to the Colossians the first reason why they were to obey the command in Colossians 2:8. In the former, the apostle asserts that the totality of attributes which compose the divine nature permanently dwell bodily in Jesus Christ. His first declarative statement in Colossians 2:10 presented the second reason why they were to obey this command. In this verse, Paul teaches that by means of their union and identification with Jesus Christ, each and every one of the Colossians is as an eternal spiritual truth exist in the state of being made complete. He then asserts that Jesus Christ is the head over and every human and angelic ruler and authority. Now, here in Colossians 2:11, Paul gives the Colossians a third reason why they should obey his command recorded in Colossians 2:8.

Paul reminds the Colossians in verse 11 that because of their faith in Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father, each and every one of them was circumcised by means of a circumcision which was not performed by human beings. This circumcision is a reference to their identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death and burial
which is the direct result of the baptism of the Spirit. This is indicated by Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:12 in which he reminds the Colossians that they have been buried with Christ in baptism and which baptism they were also raised up with Christ through faith in Him.

So in Colossians 2:11, when Paul reminds the Colossians that they were circumcised by means of a circumcision which was not performed by human beings, he is referring to their identification with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death and burial which is the direct result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. By referring to circumcision, Paul is attacking the false teaching of the Essene branch of the Judaizers who taught that all God’s people must be circumcised just as every eight day old Jewish or any proselyte would receive. So the reference to circumcision in Colossians 2:11 indicates that the nature of the heresy in Colossae was Jewish.

The Scriptures teach and Paul is teaching in Colossians 2:11 that the ordinance of circumcision could not save man but was to be the distinguishing sign of the Jewish nation from the other nations. God has not commanded circumcision of the flesh for Christians. The First Church Council in Jerusalem that is recorded in Acts 15 deemed that a person does not get saved through the practice of circumcision but through faith alone in Christ, thus the Gentiles were not required to be circumcised.

Paul reminds the Christians in Colossae that each and every one of them was circumcised by means of a circumcision which is not performed by human beings. This is a reference as we noted to their identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death and burial which is the direct result of the baptism of the Spirit.

In the same way that literal circumcision in Israel identified the Israelites as the covenant people of God and was the confirmation mark of their faith in the God of Israel, so the Christian’s identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, and burial identifies them as God’s people during the church age and is the identifying mark of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Then, the apostle employs two prepositional phrases to identify specifically the means by which they received this spiritual circumcision. The first prepositional phrase specifies that this spiritual circumcision was by means of the removal of their body composed of that which is flesh. This is figurative language for the Christian’s identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, and burial which are all related to solving the Christian’s problem with their indwelling Adamic sin nature. Their identification with Christ in His resurrection guarantees that they will all receive a resurrection body at the rapture of the church which is imminent. This resurrection body will be minus the sin nature of course.

So we have seen that Paul reminds the Colossian church that because of their faith in Jesus Christ, each and every one of them was circumcised by means of a
circumcision which was not performed by human beings. This as we noted is a reference to their identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death and burial which is the direct result of the baptism of the Spirit. He then defines specifically the means by which they received this spiritual circumcision, namely by means of the removal of the body composed of that which is flesh. This too is a reference to the Colossians’ identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, and burial, all of which resolved the problem with their indwelling Adamic sin nature.

The apostle Paul then uses another prepositional phrase to identify specifically for the Colossians the means by which they were circumcised with a circumcision which was not performed by human beings, namely it was by means of a circumcision accomplished by their identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death and burial. Again, this identification with Christ resolved their problem with their indwelling Adamic sin nature.

Colossians 2:12 Specifically each and every one of you were buried with Him by means of the baptism which is essential and superior. Correspondingly, by means of which each and every one of you were raised together with Him by means of your faith in God the Father’s exertion of power who caused Him to enter into the state of being raised out from the dead ones. (Author’s translation)

In Colossians 2:12, the apostle Paul is clarifying for the Colossians what he means by his teaching in Colossians 2:11 that they were circumcised with a circumcision which was not performed by human beings. He is defining for the Colossians specifically how each and every one of them were circumcised by means of a circumcision which was not performed by the human beings. In other words, it is making explicit how each and every one of the Colossians were circumcised by means of a circumcision which was not performed by the human beings. He is reminding the Colossians that each and every one of them was circumcised with a circumcision which was not performed by human beings and specifically by being buried with Christ through the baptism performed by the Holy Spirit.

The baptism Paul speaks of here in Colossians 2:12 is a reference to the baptism of the Spirit which takes place the moment the sinner trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior and is declared justified by the Father. The baptism of the Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit at the moment of the Christian’s conversion and identifies them with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. It does not refer to water baptism since the participial clause here in Colossians 2:12 is identifying specifically for the Colossians Paul’s statements in Colossians 2:11 that they were circumcised with a circumcision which was not performed by human beings. It is also identifying specifically for the Colossians what Paul means by the prepositional phrase in Colossians 2:11 that
they were circumcised by means of the removal of the body composed of that which is flesh. It is also clarifying for the Colossians what Paul means in Colossians 2:11 by the prepositional phrase which asserts that they were circumcised by means of a circumcision which is specifically identification with Christ. Furthermore, Paul also teaches in Colossians 2:12 that not only were the Colossians buried with Christ through baptism but they were also raised up with Christ through baptism through their faith in Jesus Christ by means of God’s activity. Therefore, the baptism mentioned by Paul in Colossians 2:12 is not speaking of literal water baptism. Rather it is referring to the baptism performed by God and specifically that which was performed by the Holy Spirit at their conversion.

So the apostle Paul is reminding the Colossians in Colossians 2:12 that the baptism of the Spirit was the means by which each and every one of them was identified with Christ in His death and burial. Correspondingly, the baptism of the Spirit was the means by which each and every one of them was identified with Jesus Christ in His resurrection. He is teaching them that their identification with Christ in His burial and resurrection share the same relationship in that they were both brought about by the baptism of the Spirit.

Paul reminds the Colossians that each and every one of them was raised together with Christ by means of their faith in the Father’s exertion of power. He is speaking of justifying faith meaning the fact that these faithful Colossian believers exercised in Jesus Christ which resulted in God declaring them justified. In other words, it speaks of their faith at the moment of conversion which resulted in their justification.

In Colossians 2:12, Paul refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead by means of the exertion of the Father’s omnipotence.

Colossians 2:13 In other words, even though each and every one of you existed in the state of being spiritually dead ones because of your transgressions, specifically because of the uncircumcision which is your flesh, He caused each and every one of you to be made alive together with Him. Simultaneously for His own glory, He graciously forgave each and every one of our transgressions for the benefit of each and every one of us. (Author’s translation)

Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:13 is epexegetical meaning that it explains from another perspective his previous statements in Colossians 2:11-12. He asserts that when the Colossians were dead spiritually in their transgressions and the uncircumcision of their human bodies, the Father made them alive together with Christ while simultaneously forgiving all their transgressions. This assertion further explains what Paul means by his statements in Colossians 2:11-12. This is indicated by the fact that the Colossians being made alive together with Christ in
verse 13 corresponds to their being raised with Christ in verse 12. The Colossians being dead in their transgressions and the uncircumcision of their flesh in verse 13 makes explicit what is implied in verses 11 and 12. What is implied in verses 11 and 12 is that the Colossians prior to their conversion were uncircumcised spiritually. What is also made explicit in verse 13 which is implied in verses 11 and 12 is that the Colossians were forgiven all their transgression because of being identified with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Their faith in Jesus Christ at their conversion changed forever their spiritual condition since it resulted in the Spirit identifying them with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Since Christ’s death resolved their problem with their sin nature and personal sins, their identification with Christ in His death and resurrection was the result of their faith in Christ resulting in their receiving the forgiveness of all their transgressions.

Just as ritual of circumcision in the Old Testament was the mark of a person’s faith in the God of Israel and identified them as having a covenant relationship with Him so the baptism of the Spirit is the mark of a person’s faith in Jesus Christ during the church age and identifies them as having a relationship with the triune God.

Therefore, all three verses are speaking of God’s gracious undertaking on behalf of the Colossians at their conversion. All three refer to the baptism of the Spirit identifying all of them with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection when they trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

This epexegetical statement in Colossians 2:13 contains a concessive and a temporal clause. The former emphasizes with the Colossians that despite the fact that each and every one of them existed in the state of being spiritually dead because of their transgressions, specifically because of the uncircumcision which is their flesh, the Father caused each and every one of them to be made alive together with His Jesus Christ. The temporal clause emphasizes that while the Father was making them alive together with His Son, He also simultaneously forgave them each and every one of their transgressions.

The reference to the Colossians being spiritually dead prior to their conversion meant that they were totally separated from God and had absolutely no merit with God and absolutely no desire to have a relationship with God.

The apostle Paul teaches the Colossians that prior to their conversion they were spiritually dead because of their transgressions and then he specifies what he means by this by asserting that they were spiritually dead because of the uncircumcision which is their flesh. This means that they were spiritually dead because of their transgressions and specifically they were spiritually dead because they possessed a sin nature which resided in the genetic structure of their human bodies. The uncircumcision which is their flesh pertains to the fact that they all
possessed a sin nature which was located in the genetic structure of their human bodies. This sin nature is the direct result of God pronouncing a curse upon the bodies of Adam and his progeny because of his disobedience to His command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 3:17 records the Lord informing Adam that he and his wife and his children would go back to the dust of the ground which is a reference to the death of their physical bodies. Their bodies would die because of the indwelling sin nature.

Paul uses this word “uncircumcision” because the Colossians who were Gentiles were given this name by the Jews. Just as circumcision was to be the sign or identifying mark that a person was a believer in the God of Israel so uncircumcision marked a person as not being a part of the covenant people of God. Circumcision was a sign of being regenerated whereas uncircumcision was a sign of being unregenerate. Thus, Paul uses the term.

So in Colossians 2:13, Paul is describing these faithful Christians in Colossae when they were unregenerate human beings enslaved to sin and Satan prior to their conversion.

Paul asserts in Colossians 2:13 that the Father caused each and every of the Colossians to be made alive together with His Son Jesus Christ. This echoes Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2:5. The verb συζητωποιεῖο is used in both passages. The Father through the Spirit caused the Colossians to be identified with Jesus Christ in His resurrection.

The temporal clause in Colossians 2:13 asserts that while identifying the Colossians with Christ in His resurrection, the Father simultaneously forgave each and every one of “our” transgressions for the benefit of each and every one of us. Notice the change to “our” and “us.” The Colossian Christian community was Gentile. Paul was of course Jewish. The reference to “uncircumcision” here in Colossians 2:13 is a reference to this fact that the Colossians were Gentiles. This all indicates that Paul is referring to Jewish Christians with the words “our” and “us.” This interpretation is further substantiated by the fact that Paul asserts in Colossians 2:14 that the Father cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees which were against the Jew and were hostile to the Jews. The Mosaic Law was given to the Jews and not the Gentiles (cf. Romans 9:1-5).

Paul states that the Father did this for His own benefit or for His own glory. The Father graciously forgave all the transgression of the Colossians “for His own benefit” or in other words “for His own glory” since it manifested His character by doing so. This interpretation is supported by Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2:7.

**Colossians 2:14 Specifically, He caused the cancellation of that which was against each and every one of us, namely a certificate of debt which is according to a written code of laws, which was continually existing in the state of being opposed to each and every one of us. To be more explicit, He**
eradicated it, removing this partition by causing it to be nailed to the cross.  
(Author’s translation)

The apostle Paul identifies specifically for the faithful Christians in Colossae how the Father graciously forgave Jewish Christians like himself each and every one of their transgressions which he asserts at the end of Colossians 2:13.

It is important when interpreting Paul’s statements here in Colossians 2:14 that when he speaks of “us” he is referring to Jewish Christians like himself and not both Jew and Gentile Christians. This is indicated by several factors. First the Colossian Christian community was Gentile. Paul was of course Jewish. The reference to “uncircumcision” in Colossians 2:13 is a reference to this fact that the Colossians were Gentiles since this is a term the Jews used for the Gentiles. This interpretation is further substantiated by the fact that Paul asserts in Colossians 2:14 that the Father cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees which were against the Jew and were hostile to the Jews. The Mosaic Law was given to the Jews and not the Gentiles according to Romans 9:1-5 and the book of Exodus.

Some would argue that the reference to the Law here in Colossians 2:14 can also be a reference to the law or Ten Commandments which is written on the hearts of every human being both Jew and Gentile and is referred to by Paul in Romans 2:14-15. However, when Paul is referring to a certificate of debt, he makes clear that in Colossians 2:14 that it is a written code of laws. The Jews exclusively and not the Gentiles received from God in writing through Moses the written law.

Therefore, when Paul asserts in Colossians 2:14 that the Father caused the cancellation of a certificate of debt which was according to a written code of laws, which was continually opposed to each and every Jewish Christian prior to their conversion, he is speaking of sacrificing His Son Jesus Christ on the cross. His Son’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross cancelled out this condemnation from the Law which these Jewish Christians incurred prior to their conversion.

The reason why Paul makes the switch to Jewish Christians from Gentile Christians here in Colossians 2:13-14 is that he is attacking the Essene branch of Judaism whose misapplication and misinterpretation of the Mosaic Law was the source of the heresy in Colossae. So the question would be obvious to Paul’s Gentile Christians readers. If the Jews were condemned by God for not obeying perfectly the Law, why would these Gentile Colossian believers submit to the teaching of the Judaizers who sought to have them submit to the various commands and prohibitions in the Law? If keeping the Law never resulted in a Jew being declared justified by God, why would these Gentile Colossian believers seek to keep the Law to live the Christian way of life?

Paul asserts that the Law was against the Jews and was hostile to them. This was the case because it served to condemn the Jews since they could not obey
perfectly the 613 mandates which are found in the Law. They could never obey these commands and prohibitions perfectly because they were sinners by nature and practice. God is holy. He demands perfection. Therefore, the Law served to condemn the Jews before a holy God. Thus, they had a sin debt in relation to God because of failing to obey perfectly the commands and prohibitions He gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. Thus, one of the reasons why God the Son had to become a man was to fulfill all these commands and prohibitions perfectly which the Jews could never do. The Son’s substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths on the cross propitiated or satisfied the Father’s holy requirements that sin and sinners be judged for not obeying perfectly His Law. Thus, the Son served as the Jews Substitute in relation to their failure to keep perfectly the Mosaic Law.

Therefore, the Father cancelled out the Mosaic Law in the sense that He destroyed its validity, the force and effectiveness in relation to the Jew since His Son’s life fulfilled the requirements of the Law perfectly. Also, His Son’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross propitiated or satisfied His holy requirements that sin and sinners be judged.

Paul then defines specifically for the reader in Colossians 2:14 how the Father caused the cancellation of the certificate of debt which was a written code of laws for the Jew which condemned the Jew because they were sinners by nature and practice and God is holy. He asserts that the Father has taken this condemnation from the Mosaic Law out of the way by having nailing it to the cross. Therefore, when Paul says that the Father resolved the Jewish Christians problem prior to their conversion of being condemned by the Mosaic Law, he is asserting that the Father took away this condemnation through the substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths of His Son on the cross. The Father eradicated this condemnation through the substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross. This condemnation was done away with completely by the Son’s work on the cross. Paul describes this condemnation from the Law as the partition separating sinners and God who is holy. This condemnation was separating the unregenerate Jew and a holy God. Paul then asserts that God the Father caused the eradication of this partition by means of His Son Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross.

So here in Colossians 2:14 we can see that although the Mosaic Law itself is not explicitly mentioned by Paul in this verse, it is clearly implied. In this verse, the expression τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, “namely a certificate of debt which is according to a written code of laws, which was continually existing in the state of being opposed to each and every one of us,” echoes an expression in Ephesians 2:15, namely τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, “by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.”
Ephesians 2:15 explicitly mentions the Law whereas Colossians 2:14 does not but does imply it since sinners are all legally indebted to the Law whether the Jews in regards to the Mosaic Law or the Gentiles with the Law in their conscience (Romans 2:14-15). The Law condemned both Jew and Gentile (Romans 1:18-3:23). Christ’s death on the cross paid the sinner’s sin debt which was incurred from breaking the Law.

So therefore since Jesus Christ resolved the Jewish Christians problem of being condemned by failing to obey perfectly the commands and prohibitions through His spiritual and physical deaths on the cross and since they are identified with Christ in His crucifixion, death and burial, they are dead to the Mosaic Law. In Romans 7:1-6, Paul taught that the Jewish Christian is dead to the Mosaic Law in that it no longer has any jurisdiction over them.

When Paul speaks of the Father causing the cancellation of this condemnation from the Law, he is referring to the doctrine of propitiation. When he asserts that the Father eradicated the certificate of debt which is according to a written code of laws which was against Jewish Christians prior to their conversion by nailing it to the cross, he is referring to the doctrine of propitiation, which is the Godward side of salvation. This doctrine refers to the fact that the voluntary substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths of Jesus Christ on the cross satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God that the sins of the entire world -past, present and future be judged.

So in Colossians 2:14 when Paul asserts that the Father caused the eradication of the Jewish Christian’s condemnation from the Law by causing it to nailed to the cross, he is referring to the spiritual and physical deaths of Jesus Christ on the cross, which served to propitiate the Father. This work of propitiation reconciled a holy God to sinful humanity.

When Paul asserts in Colossians 2:14 that the Jewish Christian’s condemnation from the Law prior to their conversion was eradicated by being nailed to the cross, he is also only referring to the imputation of sins to Jesus Christ on the cross.

When Paul asserts in Colossians 2:14 that the Jews condemnation from the Law was eradicated by being nailed to the cross, he is referring to Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross which propitiated the Father and reconciled sinful humanity to God who is holy.

Colossians 2:15 Simultaneously, for His own benefit, He disarmed the angelic rulers as well as the angelic authorities. He caused them to suffer disgrace publicly by causing them to be led in a triumphal procession through Him. (Author’s translation)

Colossians 2:15 is composed of temporal clause which is in turn followed by a declarative statement and then lastly by a participial clause which presents the means by which the event expressed in the declarative statement was
accomplished. This verse brings to a conclusion Paul’s reasoning as to why the faithful Christians in Colossae must continue to obey the command he issues them in Colossians 2:8.

In Colossians 2:15, the temporal clause teaches that while the Father eradicated the Jewish Christian’s condemnation due to not keeping the Law perfectly prior to their conversion, He also simultaneously, for His own benefit, disarmed the angelic rulers as well as the angelic authorities from the kingdom of darkness. Paul has in mind the Roman triumphal procession. This temporal clause conjures up images of prisoners of war being led naked through the city as a display of the victor’s triumph and the losers’ humiliation and defeat (cf. 2 Sam. 10:5; 1 Chron. 19:4f.). Not only was the enemy disarmed but they were also stripped of their clothing in order to humiliate them. Thus, Paul is teaching the Colossians with this temporal clause that through His Son Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection and session, the Father stripped the kingdom of darkness of their armor and weapons and thus their power.

But in what sense did Christ’s death and resurrection defeated Satan and his kingdom? The works of the devil involved enslaving humanity to himself through sin. Christ’s death resolved the problem of sin and thus defeated Satan who used sin to enslave humanity to himself. The resurrection vindicated Jesus and demonstrated that the Father had in fact accepted His spiritual and physical deaths on the cross as a substitute for unregenerate humanity as the payment for sin. The ascension of Jesus Christ publicly disgraced Satan and his fellow fallen angels since those human beings who trusted in the Lord and were housed in Paradise in Hades were led to the third heaven by Jesus Christ as the spoils of victory. His session at the right hand of the Father was a public demonstration and vindication of Jesus Christ in the throne room of God that He is victorious over Satan.

This statement in Colossians 2:15 also reveals the fulfillment of God’s promise to Adam and Eve which is recorded in Genesis 3:15.

**Genesis 3:15** “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” (NASB95)

The seed of the serpent does not refer to unregenerate humanity (unbelievers) since the phrase “your seed” is used in contrast to the phrase “her seed,” which refers to one individual, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the phrase “your seed” refers to one individual, namely, the Antichrist who will be the ruler of a ten-nation confederacy constituting a Revived Roman Empire, during Daniel’s Seventieth week, which is also called by theologians as the “Tribulation Period.” “Her Seed” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the “Last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) and if so, then, “your seed” refers to a single individual as well.
“He (Jesus Christ) shall bruise you (Satan) on the head” is the first prophecy concerning the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ would defeat Satan at the cross by being obedient to the Father’s will with His death on the cross.

The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 is the “seed plot” of the Virgin Birth and Incarnation of the Son of God (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23; John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16) as well as the “seed plot” of the Redemption and Salvation of mankind as well as the defeat of Satan, which is developed in further detail in the rest of the Bible (Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:14; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Jn. 3:8).

“You (Satan) shall bruise Him (Christ) on the heel” is a symbolic or figurative reference to the Lord’s suffering and death on the cross, which the Father used as the instrument to destroy the works of the devil.

What Satan did to the Lord at the cross was only temporary and did not defeat the Lord but what the Lord did to Satan at the cross was to achieve total and complete victory over Satan since His death on the cross redeemed mankind and demonstrated the love of God for all men. Our Lord’s death refutes Satan’s argument that God does not love His creatures and redeems unregenerate humanity from bondage to Satan who enslaved them to himself through sin.

So this temporal clause in Colossians 2:15 is identifying and describing another victory provided for the Colossians because of Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father. This victory benefitted the Father because the kingdom of darkness sought to establish themselves as a rival kingdom and an alternative to living in His kingdom. It was for His benefit to defeat the kingdom of darkness because they slandered Him and sought to undermine His activities among the human race. It was for His benefit since the kingdom of darkness sought to seduce other angels and members of the human race from worshipping Him.

The declarative statement which follows this temporal clause asserts that the Father caused these angelic rulers and authorities from the kingdom of darkness to suffer disgrace publicly. They were disgraced publicly because Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection and session was in full view of both mankind and the elect angels. Jesus Christ’s substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths on the cross were in public in full view of members of the human race, both regenerate and unregenerate as well as the angels, both elect and non-elect. His resurrection was public as well since unregenerate members of the human race, namely, the Roman guard at the tomb of Jesus were present at His resurrection. Also, regenerate human beings, namely the disciples of Jesus witnessed His being raised from the dead. Lastly, His ascension into heaven was public in full view of His disciples as well as in full view of the angels, both elect and non-elect. His session was in full view of both elect and non-elect angels.
Then, Paul identifies the means by which the Father caused these angelic rulers and authorities from the kingdom of darkness to suffer disgrace publicly. He asserts that the Father caused the kingdom of darkness to suffer disgrace publicly by causing them to be led in a triumphal procession through Jesus Christ.

There are two triumphal processions taught in the Scriptures: (1) Ascension of Jesus Christ after the resurrection. (2) Second Advent of Christ.

The first triumphal procession of our Lord began with His ascension and culminated with His session. It began in the first heaven, passed through the second heaven and terminated in the third heaven at throne of God the Father where Jesus Christ in a glorified resurrected body seated Himself at the right hand of God the Father as victor in the angelic conflict.

The second triumphal procession will take place at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ which will bring to an end the tribulation portion of Daniel’s seventieth week. At His Second Advent, the Lord Jesus Christ will destroy the Tributional armies, have Antichrist and the False Prophet thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:11-19), will imprison Satan for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3) and will establish His millennial reign on planet earth (Rev. 20:4-6). At that time, the Lord and His armies will orbit the earth before landing on the Mount of Olives, which was the site of His Ascension (Acts. 1:9-11). There will be a great earthquake when our Lord’s foot touches the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:1-8) and will be a unique day having neither day nor night (Zech. 14:7).

The first triumphal procession took place on the day of our Lord’s resurrection when He ascended into the third heaven and arrived as victor in the angelic conflict as a result of His strategic victory over Satan at the cross, which was accomplished, through His voluntary substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths and resurrection.

Paul in Colossians 2:15 uses the Roman military triumph as an analogy in order to teach the doctrine of the triumphal procession to members of the royal family of God in Colossae. He uses it to teach them that Jesus Christ’s death, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of the Father defeated Satan and his kingdom. Their union and identification with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session at the right hand of the Father provides them the victory over Satan and his kingdom. When the Colossians appropriate by faith this union and identification with Christ, they will experience this victory in time.

Now, here in Colossians 2:16, Paul orders the Colossians continue to make it their habit of not letting anyone of the Judaizers condemn any of them as guilty because of food or drink or because of a particular feast or a new moon or Sabbath. The reference to food and drink is a reference to the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law. The reference to feasts is speaking of the seven great feasts the Lord prescribed in the Mosaic Law for Israel to observe, which were Passover,
Unleavened Bread, First-Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles. The reference to the new moon is speaking of the monthly Jewish celebration held in connection with their lunar calendar. The new moon designated the beginning of a new month of the Jewish calendar. Israel was told in Numbers 28:11 to offer sacrifices on the first of the month of worship, faith and gratefulness to the Lord. The Sabbath reference is of course speaking of the seventh day of the Jewish week which served as a ceremonial day of rest in Israel which today in our culture would be Saturday. This day began at sundown on Friday and ended at sunset on Saturday. Everything that Paul mentioned here in Colossians 2:16 is related to the Mosaic Law. Therefore, in Colossians 2:16 Paul is commanding the Colossians to continue to make it their habit of not letting any of the Judaizers condemn them as guilty before God because they did not observe the various prohibitions and commands prescribed in the Mosaic Law.

When he speaks of the Judaizers condemning the Colossians as guilty because they do not observe these various things in the Mosaic Law, he is referring the Judaizers making them feel guilty before God because of not observing these things in the Law. Paul could not keep the Judaizers from condemning these faithful Christians in Colossae but he could keep the Colossians from feeling guilty because of the Judaizers seeking to impose the Mosaic Law on them.

What Paul is addressing is the legalism of the Judaizers. Legalism refers to someone seeking to impose rules and regulations upon a Christian which are the result of misinterpretation and misapplication of the Bible. The Judaizers were misinterpreting the Mosaic Law and misapplying it to both the Jewish and Gentile Christian. This prohibition in Colossians 2:16 and the one in Colossians 2:8 seek to address this problem with the Judaizers in Colossae. Satan and his kingdom were behind this legalism since Paul teaches in Colossians 2:8 that the teaching of the Judaizers was promoted by the cosmic system of Satan.

Ingram writes that legalism is “An approach to living in which a person attempts to conform to a particular standard or set of standards to achieve a desired status or goal. In Jewish and Christian traditions, the term legalism has most frequently referred to attempts to conform behavior, attitudes, and/or thoughts to the Mosaic law as contained in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), as well as compatible extensions of such principles found in the Old Testament, New Testament, or related documents and communities. Among Christians, the proper role of the Mosaic law is to serve as a guide or a mentor to lead us to faith in Christ, as is clearly stated in Galatians 3:24. Legalism, with its emphasis on self-sufficiency and acceptability based on performance compared to a standard, tends to lead people away from dependence on Christ.”

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Now, we must compare this prohibition in Colossians 2:16 with his statements in Colossians 2:9-15 which the present the reasons why the faithful Christians in Colosse must continue to obey his command in Colossians 2:8 since this prohibition is an inference from Paul’s statements in Colossians 2:9-15. Therefore, Paul wants the Colossians to continue to make it their habit of obeying this prohibition because the teaching of the Judaizers’ originated with men and Satan which stands in stark contrast to Paul’s gospel which is the teaching of Jesus Christ who is the Son of God. Thus, they should obey his prohibition in Colossians 2:16 because his gospel originates with Jesus Christ who is God and the Judaizers’ teaching does not. Also, the Colossians must obey his prohibition in Colossians 2:16 because they were identified with Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection through the baptism of the Spirit as a result of being declared justified by the Father through their faith in His Son Jesus Christ. They should also obey the prohibition because the sins of the Jewish Christian which they committed prior to their conversion to Christianity were forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross eradicated the condemnation the Jewish Christian was under prior to their conversion because of not keeping the 613 commands of the Mosaic Law perfectly. The implication is that the Colossians must obey Paul’s prohibition in Colossians 2:16 and reject the teaching of the Judaizers because keeping the Law never solved their problem with sin and the condemnation from the Law but Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross did. Lastly, the Colossians must obey Paul’s prohibition in Colossians 2:16 because the Father defeated Satan and his kingdom through His Son Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. If you recall, Colossians 2:8 teaches that the teaching of the Judaizers originates with the cosmic system of Satan. Therefore, the Colossians must obey Paul’s prohibition in Colossians 2:16 because the Father defeated Satan and his fellow fallen angels through His Son Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection and the Judaizers’ teaching originates with Satan’s kingdom.

In Romans 7:1-6, Paul taught the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome that Jewish Christians are not under the authority of the Mosaic Law because they are identified with Christ in His death on the cross and thus Gentile Christians are not under the authority of the Mosaic Law as well.

**Colossians 2:17 These are, as an eternal spiritual truth a shadow, namely, the things which will inevitably come but the substantive reality is, as an eternal spiritual truth specifically the Christ. (Author’s translation)**

The apostle makes two assertions in Colossians 2:17. The first is that the dietary regulations, the seven feasts, the new moon and the Sabbath which he mentions in Colossians 2:16 are as an eternal spiritual truth a shadow. He then defines what he means by “a shadow” by asserting that they are the things which will inevitably come, which is referring to the First and Second Advents of Jesus Christ from the
perspective that they are still yet future. In this first assertion, Paul is speaking
from the perspective of living during the dispensation of the Mosaic Law prior to
the First and Second Advents of Jesus Christ. In other words, he is speaking of
these things when the Son of God had yet to enter the human race.

The second assertion in Colossians 2:17 stands in contrast with the first. It states
that the substantive reality of these various aspects of the Mosaic Law is as an
eternal spiritual truth specifically the Christ. The Christ is the substantive reality of
the dietary regulations, seven great feasts, the new moon and the Sabbath which
are prescribed in the Mosaic Law for Israel to observe. This means that Jesus
Christ is the antitype and the dietary regulations, seven great feasts, the new moon
and the Sabbath which are prescribed in the Mosaic Law for Israel to observe
typify Him and specifically who He is and what He did during His First Advent
and what He will do during His Second Advent.

As we noted, “shadow” is the noun skia which is used prophetically of the
relation of type to antitype. It pertains to a faint archetype which foreshadows a
later reality. So it describes something which is a mere representation of something
real or that is a reality.

So here in Colossians 2:17, the antitype is Jesus Christ and the type is the
dietary regulations, seven great feasts, the new moon and the Sabbath which are
prescribed in the Mosaic Law for Israel to observe. Jesus Christ is greater of course
than all these things since He is the Son of God and gave them to Israel to observe.
Jesus Christ is a historical person and all these things related to the Mosaic Law are
also historical realities since Israel observed these things for centuries. All of these
things related to the Law prefigure or are a predictive foreshadowing of Jesus
Christ. They were all designed to point to Jesus Christ who was the fulfillment of
these things.

Some interpreters contend that the noun sōma here in Colossians 2:17 refers to
the body of Christ or in other words the church. Some argue it refers to the
physical human body of Jesus. However, the context indicates that Paul is
contrasting the person, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with the various
aspects of the Mosaic Law. In Colossians 2:8-23, Paul is teaching the Colossians
that the Judaizers’ attempt to get them to live their lives according to the Mosaic
Law is opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ which he exhorts them to continue to
live by. The Mosaic Law does not apply to them but rather the gospel of Jesus
Christ since it was His death and resurrection which provided them eternal life and
their identification with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection served as the
basis for their Christian walk.

A contrast between Jesus Christ’s human body and the Law or a contrast
between the church and the Law does not fit the context. Paul is concerned that the
Colossians reject the Judaizers’ misapplication and misuse of the Law and continue
to adhered to his gospel and specifically His teaching about Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection and their union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. Furthermore, up to this point in Colossians, Paul has been emphasizing with the Colossians the superiority of Christ and sufficiency of Christ in their lives (cf. Col. 1:15-20; 2:9-15).

How is Jesus Christ the fulfillment of dietary regulations, seven great feasts, the new moon and the Sabbath which are prescribed in the Mosaic Law for Israel to observe? First of all, with regards to the seven great feasts, Jesus Christ is the literal fulfillment of Passover because of His death on the cross (1 Cor. 5:7). He is also the literal fulfillment of the feast of Unleavened Bread because of His impeccable life and person (1 Cor. 5:7-8). He is the fulfillment of the feast of First-Fruits because of His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23). He fulfilled the feast of Pentecost in that He sent the Spirit to indwell the church on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28; cf. Acts 2:1-47). Jesus Christ will fulfill the feast of Trumpets in that He will administer the seven trumpet judgments during the tribulation portion of Daniel’s seventieth week. He will be the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement at His Second Advent (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:26-27; Heb. 9:19-28). Lastly, the Lord Jesus Christ will fulfill the feast of Tabernacles with His millennial reign.

In regards to the Sabbath, Jesus Christ is the Christian’s spiritual rest (Heb. 4:3, 9, 11). With regards to the new moon, Jesus Christ was its fulfillment since the new moon designated the beginning of a new month of the Jewish calendar and Israel was told to offer sacrifices on this day to worship the Lord and these sacrifices were fulfilled by Him and pointed to His cross.

The dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law were fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the sense that these dietary regulations were designed to set the citizens of the nation of Israel apart from their pagan Gentile neighbors. In other words, they were designed to sanctify them in relation to their Gentile neighbors. The Jew who trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior is sanctified as a result of being identified with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection through the baptism of the Spirit.

Lastly, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law since He obeyed the Mosaic Law perfectly during His First Advent (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 8:3-4).

So for these reasons, the faithful Christians in Colossae, were to reject the Judaizers attempt to get them to govern their lives by the various commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law and the substantive reality of the ceremonial aspect of the Law and the moral aspect of the Law. The ceremonial aspect of the Law foreshadowed His person and work on the cross and His resurrection. He obeyed perfectly the Ten Commandments and the other commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law.

Christ fulfilled the Ten Commandments by living a perfect and sinless life and so when man trusts in Christ as his Savior, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to that
individual so we have justification (Romans 4) resulting in the fact that the Law can’t condemn us (Romans 8:1; 7:1-6; Romans 5:1; 4:4-8). Christ fulfilled the ceremonial ordinances, the shadows and types of His person and work, by dying on the cross for us and in our place, which demonstrated that God was also perfect justice and sin must be judged, but God provided His Son, the precious Lamb of God. The penalty, which the Law exercised, was paid in full at the Cross.

Again there is no condemnation because the believer is “in Christ” (Col. 2:14; Romans 3:24-25). Christ also fulfilled the Social Law, but now He replaces it with a new way of life fitting to our new salvation. He gives provision for the inner man, namely, the indwelling Holy Spirit who provides us the capacity to experience sanctification so that we may experience also the righteousness of the Law (Romans 8:2-4).

Christ is the end of the Law and church believers are not under the Mosaic Law but under grace (Rom. 6:14). Since the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the Law by His person and work at the Cross, church age believers are under a new law, namely, the obligation to walk by the Spirit of Life through faith in the Word of God (Romans 8:2-4). If we are led by the Spirit, then we are not under the Law (Galatians 5:18).

In Romans 8:4, Paul teaches that the Father’s purpose for Christ’s physical death was so that the righteous requirement of the Law, i.e. perfect obedience might be fulfilled in those Christians who conduct themselves in submission to the Spirit rather than the sin nature.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now, as an eternal spiritual truth, never any condemnation, none whatsoever for the benefit of those in union with Christ who is Jesus. 2 Because, the life-giving Spirit’s authoritative power, by means of (the death and resurrection of) Christ, who is Jesus, has set you free from the sin nature’s authoritative power as well as spiritual death’s. 3 Because with reference to the Law’s inability in which it was always powerless through the flesh, God the Father accomplished by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. 4 In fact, with regards to the sin nature, He (the Father) executed the sin nature by means of His (Son’s) human nature. In order that the Law’s righteous requirement would be fulfilled in us, those of us who are not, as an eternal spiritual truth, conducting our lives in submission to the flesh but rather in submission to the Spirit. (Author’s translation)

In Romans 8:4, the noun *dikaioma* means, “righteous requirement” and refers to perfect obedience, which the Law requires. It refers to the Law’s demands for perfect obedience. No human being with the exception of Jesus Christ of course, was able to render perfect obedience to the Law because of the presence of the sin nature in all of humanity. Christ rendered perfect obedience to the Law, which
constituted His loving God perfectly and His neighbor perfectly. The Christian fulfills the righteous requirement of Law positionally because of his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Apart from the Spirit, Christians can’t fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law “experientially” as clearly delineated by Paul in Romans 7:14-25. However, they can when they are in fellowship with God through the power of the Spirit. Therefore, the Christian fulfills the righteous requirement of the Law, i.e. the perfect obedience of Christ to the Law positionally through his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. He experiences this union and identification by appropriating by faith through the power of the Spirit his union and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. This constitutes experiencing sanctification, salvation, righteousness and fellowship with God.

Christ’s perfect obedience to the Law has become the Christian’s perfect obedience because Christ’s death destroyed the sin nature and the baptism of the Spirit identified the Christian with Christ in His death and resurrection. The Father’s purpose for sacrificing His Son on the Cross was so that the righteous requirement of the Law would be fulfilled in Christians experientially. Specifically, it would be fulfilled in those Christians who are not conducting their lives in submission to the sin nature but rather in submission to the Spirit.

**Colossians 2:18** Absolutely no one must be allowed at any time to cause any one of you to be disqualified by delighting in false humility as well as worshipping the angels, by going into great lengths about things which they have supposedly seen. He does this because he is permitting himself to be arrogant for no legitimate reason because of his fleshly thinking. (Author’s translation)

The apostle Paul solemnly issues another command to the faithful Christians in Colossae in order to protect them from the members of the Essene branch of the Judaizers who taught they must obey the Mosaic Law. Obedience to his command is essential in protecting the Colossians from this false teaching of the Judaizers.

Paul orders the Colossians that absolutely no one must be allowed at any time to cause any one of them to be disqualified. When he says “absolutely no one” he has in mind members of the Essene branch of Judaism who were teaching people in the region of Colossae that they must obey the Mosaic Law. When he speaks of the Colossians being disqualified he means being disqualified from receiving rewards at the Bema Seat from the Lord Jesus Christ for faithful service. The Judaizers would cause them to be disqualified from receiving rewards if they obeyed their teaching. The Colossians would be responsible for this disqualification from receiving rewards since they would have to obey the teaching of the Judaizers for this to take place. The Judaizers’ misapplication and misinterpretation of the Mosaic Law would be the ultimate source or cause of the
Colossians losing rewards since their teaching would be the instrument used by Satan to get the Colossians to forsake the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Then, the apostle Paul presents the means by which the false teachers could cause the Colossians to be disqualified from receiving rewards at the Bema Seat. First of all, he asserts that they could be disqualified by the false teachers delighting in false humility. The Judaizers would cause them to be disqualified by adhering to the Essence branch of the Judaizers’ false humility. When Paul speaks of the false humility of the Judaizers he is referring to the appearance of being obedient to God when in reality they were not. They appeared to be humble and obedient to God when in reality they were not because they misinterpreted and misapplied the Mosaic Law and adhered to man-made traditions rather than the gospel. They would have a godly humility which is the product of the Holy Spirit if they had a proper interpretation and application of the Mosaic Law and disposed of their man-made traditions and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. So therefore, the source of the Judaizers humility was not a submission to the gospel but rather a submission to their man-made traditions and a misinterpretation and misapplication of the Mosaic Law. Thus, it was a false rather than true humility which is produced by the Holy Spirit in the believer who obeys His teaching in the gospel concerning Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. So Paul is saying that don’t be seduced or fooled Colossians by the Judaizers delighting in false humility since this humility is not the product of being obedient to the gospel.

Then, in Colossians 2:18 Paul presents another means by which the Judaizers could cause the Colossians to be disqualified from receiving rewards at the Bema Seat. They could be disqualified by the Judaizers worship of the angels. They undoubtedly were worshiping elect angels rather than Satan and his angels. However, Satan and his kingdom deceived them into performing such an action. Paul does not want the Colossians to be deceived into worshipping the angels. This would cause them to forsake the gospel and cost them rewards as a result. So in other words, Paul is telling the Colossians that they must not be seduced or deceived by the worship of angels by the Judaizers since this is idolatry.

The reference to worshipping angels might at first glance appear to refute the idea that the opponents were Jewish (2:18). However, they did have a significant interest in them since Jewish writings reflect speculation about angels. The precise nature of this angelic worship is debated among scholars since some believe angels weren’t actually worshiped but were simply thought of as guiding spirits and intermediators by which men thought they could worship or contact God.10 Whatever the case may be, there seems to be little doubt that in some way, these false teachers in Colossae were advocating occult experiences with these angelic

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10 O’Brien, xxxiii, 143.
beings or guiding spirits or ascended masters as they are sometimes called in the New Age movement. The goal appears to be of having an experience of some kind of religious fullness and gain contact with God.

Paul then asserts in Colossians 2:18 that the false teachers could cause the Colossians to be disqualified from receiving rewards at the Bema Seat by listening to the false teachers go into great lengths about the visions which they supposedly had seen. The apostle does not want the Colossians to listen to the Judaizers tell them at great lengths about their supposed visions that they had alleged to have seen. He does not want them to be deceived by these stories about the visions they supposedly had seen since this would cause them to forsake the gospel resulting in a loss of rewards. Paul does not want them to be deceived with their stories of these visions since the false teachers would use these stories to persuade them that they had received revelation from angels when they in fact had not. Ultimately these visions were to persuade them into adhering to their teaching.

Then, the apostle Paul communicates to the Colossians the reason why these false teachers, the Judaizers went into great lengths about visions they alleged to have seen. They did so because they were permitting themselves to be arrogant. What Paul is saying is that the Judaizers were arrogant in the sense that they had an exaggerated or distorted view of themselves. He also asserts that they had no legitimate reason for becoming arrogant. Thus, Paul is calling the false teachers liars. They had no legitimate reason to become arrogant like he had opportunity to when he was transported to the throne of God at one point in his life and saw visions and heard things he was not permitted to speak on earth (cf. 2 Corinthians 12). Paul mentions in Second Corinthians 12 that he had seen visions of the throne room of God and that the Lord gave him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. He had a legitimate reason to be arrogant because of what he had seen. The false teachers did not have a legitimate reason like him because they did not actually see any visions.

Paul then gives the reason why the false teachers were arrogant. They were arrogant because of their fleshly minds. In other words, their minds were controlled by their indwelling Adamic sin nature which caused them to have a distorted view of themselves or in other words, their minds controlled by the sin nature caused them to become arrogant in the sense that they gave into their sin nature and thought arrogantly of themselves.

**Colossians 2:19** In fact, he absolutely never at any time existed in the state of being united with the Head from whom, each and every member of the body is, as an eternal spiritual truth being abundantly provided for as well as united experientially through the ligaments who act as tendons too. As an eternal spiritual truth, it grows spiritually with a growth which is produced by God the Father. (Author’s translation)
Colossians 2:19 continues the apostle Paul’s discussion regarding those teachers from the Essene branch of the Judaizers who taught Christians that they must obey the Mosaic Law to govern their lives. Not only does this verse continue this discussion of the Judaizers but it also serves as a climax to this discussion of these false teachers.

In verse 19, Paul emphatically asserts that these teachers were unregenerate or in other words, they were not declared justified by the Father as a result of trusting in His Son Jesus Christ as Savior. He asserts that they absolutely never at any time existed in the state of being united to the Head, who is of course Jesus Christ. The emphatic negative adverb *ou* and the meaning of the verb *krateo* make this clear. This verb means “to be united” to someone and does not speak of severing of a relationship. Rather it simply expresses the idea of being united to someone. The verb’s meaning is emphatically negated by the emphatically negated by the emphatic negative adverb *ou* which emphatically denies the reality of an alleged fact occurring. It is a clear cut, point-blank negative which is objective and final. Therefore, these two words express in emphatic terms that these teachers from the Essene branch of Judaism absolutely never existed in a state of being united with Jesus Christ. Thus, they were unregenerate or in other words, they were not declared justified by the Father as a result of trusting in His Son Jesus Christ as Savior.

This interpretation of these two words is further supported by the entire epistle to the Colossians and other passages of Scripture in which the apostles like Paul or John order the church to administer discipline to those teachers in the church who were teaching false doctrine. Nowhere in the Colossian epistle does Paul suggest or explicitly state that these men were Christians or in other words, were declared justified by the Father through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. If they were Christian pastors living in apostasy and teaching false doctrine, Paul would have ordered the Colossian church and Epaphras to administer church discipline to these men just as he did with Timothy and the Ephesian church. In First and Second Timothy, Paul orders Timothy to continue to administer church discipline to those pastors who were teaching false doctrine. He does the same with Titus and the Cretan church. Interestingly both Timothy and the Ephesian church as well as Titus and the Cretan church were dealing with the teaching of the Judaizers. Many pastors had fallen victim to their misinterpretation and misapplication and misuse of the Mosaic Law. So the fact that Paul does not mention administering church discipline to these false teachers in Colossae makes clear that these individuals were unregenerate or in other words, they were non-believers.

The apostle Paul has described for the Colossians in Colossians 2:8-18 the character and teaching of those from the Essene branch of the Judaizers who asserted that one must live according to the Mosaic Law to be pleasing to God. He
also communicated to the Colossians as to how they should continue to respond to these false teachers. Let’s now review Paul’s description of the character and teaching of the Judaizers and Paul’s instructions to the Colossians regarding their response to this false teaching.

Now, in Colossians 2:19, after asserting that the false teachers were unregenerate, the apostle Paul ends this discussion of the teachers from the Essene branch of the Judaizers so as to embark upon a discussion regarding the church and her spiritual growth. In particular, he discusses the importance of the Colossians appropriating by faith their union and identification with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session in order to deal with this confrontation with false doctrine. He immediately asserts that Jesus Christ is the source from which the individual members of the church experience growth spiritually. He reminds the Colossians that each and every one of them as members of the body of Christ is being abundantly provided for as well as united experientially through the ligaments who act as tendons too.

The ligaments and tendons are used metaphorically for the communicators of the Word of God to the church which would include those men with the spiritual gift of apostleship, teaching, prophecy and evangelism. In other words, they speak of those men who are apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists. This is clearly indicated by Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 4:7-16. That the ligaments and tendons are a reference to the communication gifts is also indicated by a couple of other factors. First of all, the Scriptures make clear that the believer’s spiritual food is the Word of God and enables them to grow spiritually (cf. Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2). Secondly, Ephesians 4:11-14 teaches that the major function of these three gifts was to equip the saints for the work of service, to build them up spiritually, to produce unity among the members of the church. The exercise of these gifts was also to provide the church knowledge of the Son of God and to protect here individual members from false doctrine. The church grows numerically through evangelism and the function of the gift of evangelism. Lastly, in Colossians 2:19, Paul asserts that from the head, Jesus Christ, the individual members of the church grow spiritually and are united experientially through the intermediate agency of the joints and ligaments of the body.

Therefore, since the Christian grows spiritually by learning and obeying God’s Word and the function of the gifts of apostleship, teaching and prophets provided the Word of God for the church and the ligaments and tendons of the body enable the growth of the body of Christ, these ligaments and tendons in Colossians 2:19 are a reference to these communication gifts.

The communicators of the Word of God are the intermediate agencies who Jesus Christ employs in order to produce growth in the individual members of His body, the church. This growth is also numerical. The source of the spiritual growth
and numerical growth of the body of Christ is Christ Himself. However, Christ affects this spiritual growth in the believer through the intermediate agency of those men with the gift of apostleship, teaching and prophecy. He affects this numerical growth through the man with the gift of evangelism. Paul asserts that these men with the gifts of apostleship, prophecy and teaching are abundantly providing the church the Word of God. The spiritual growth of the body of Christ is dependent upon the function of the communication gifts.

Then, Paul reminds the Colossians that these men with the communication gifts are the intermediate agencies used by the Lord Jesus Christ to affect unity experientially in the church. Positionally, the body of Christ is already united through the baptism of the Spirit and in a perfective sense it will be united permanently at the rapture or resurrection of the church. Here Paul is speaking of a unity that the members of the body of Christ experience when they learn and obey the teaching of the Word of God as it is communicated to them by those men with the communication gifts.

Therefore, Paul in Colossians 2:19 is reminding these faithful Christians in Colossae that they are to reject the teaching of those from the Essene branch of the Judaizers and instead continue to listen to and obey the teaching of the apostles as well as their pastor-teachers and prophets. He is warning them in Colossians 2:8-19 that they will not continue to grow spiritually listening to the Judaizers misinterpret and misuse and misapply the Word of God to the church. They will not grow spiritually by obeying the teaching of the Judaizers. Paul is encouraging the Colossians to continue doing what they are doing which is being taught by Epaphras and obeying what he is teaching them. He wants to encourage them to continue to obey the apostolic teaching, i.e. the gospel. Specifically, he wants them to continue to obey the commands of the gospel. They are to continue to appropriate by faith their union and identification with Jesus Christ in order to continue to experience victory over the indwelling sin nature and Satan and his kingdom. They are to continue to appropriate by faith their union and identification with Jesus Christ in order to continue to grow spiritually.

Colossians 2:19 ends with Paul asserting that the spiritual growth of the body of Christ is ultimately produced by God the Father. This is the case since it was the Father who sent His Son into the world to become a human being in order to save sinful humanity. It was also the Father’s plan to identify Christians with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session. This union and identification are the foundation and basis for the Christian way of life. It is by appropriating by faith this union and identification with Christ that the Christian experiences fellowship with the triune God and grows up spiritually to become like Christ.
Colossians 2:20 If and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that each and every one of you have died with Christ disassociated from the elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system. Of course, we agree that this is true. Then, why as though all of you are living according to the standards of the cosmic system would any of you at any time allow yourselves to obey its prohibitions: 21 “For your own benefit, do not handle, for your own benefit, do not taste, for your own benefit, do not touch!” (Author’s translation)

In Colossians 2:20-21, the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is solemnly emphasizing with the faithful Christians in Colossae how it critical it is for them to continue to reject the teaching of the Judaizers who sought to have Christians govern their lives according to the Mosaic Law. He attempts to persuade them to do so with a first class conditional statement which contains a rhetorical question. In these verses, Paul is attempting to protect the spiritual freedom of the church at Colossae so that they might continue to grow up spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness.

The first class condition indicates the assumption of truth for the sake of argument. The idea behind the first class condition is not “since” but rather, “if-and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that, then...” Here the protasis is “if and let assume that it is true for the sake argument that each and every one of you Colossians have died with Christ disassociated from the elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system.” This is a responsive first class condition. This would mean that the Colossians would agree with Paul’s premise since they were familiar with his teaching regarding their identification with Christ in His death since Epaphras communicated this teaching to them. The apodosis is “then why, as though all of you were living according to the standards of the cosmic system would any of you allow yourselves to obey its prohibitions: “for your own benefit, do not handle, for your own benefit, do not taste, for your own benefit, do not touch?”

The relationship between the protasis and the apodosis is evidence and inference. The evidence is that the Colossians have died with Christ disassociated from elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system, i.e. the Mosaic Law because they are identified with Him in His death through the baptism of the Spirit. The inference is that the Colossians must reject the Judaizers’ misinterpretation, misuse and misapplication of the Mosaic Law.

Paul is not attempting to prove that his protasis is true rather he is saying with the first class condition that we agree that this doctrine is true that we have died with Christ as a result of being identified with Him in His spiritual and physical deaths, thus we as Christians must reject the teaching of the Judaizers who attempt to persuade Christians to live the Christian way of life according to the Mosaic
Law. The first class condition is thus serving to persuade the Colossians to respond to the conclusion found in the apodosis that they must reject the false teaching of the Judaizers based upon the premise. Therefore, they would have to come to his conclusion if they submit to this line of argumentation.

In the protasis, Paul reminds the Colossians that they have died with Christ disassociated from elementary principles of the cosmic system of Satan. The fact that they have died with Christ refers to “retroactive positional truth.” This means that when Christ died spiritually and physically on the Cross, God considers the believer to have died with Him spiritually and physically as well through their identification with Christ in His death. This identification was accomplished at the moment of their justification through baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual death of Christ resolved the sinner’s problem of being spiritually dead and personal sins. His physical death resolved the sinner’s problem of dying physically and the indwelling sin nature. The verb *apothnēskō* denotes that the believer is no longer under the rulership of the sin nature and the headship of Adam but under the headship of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ died physically in order to deprive the indwelling sin nature its power over the justified sinner. He was raised from the dead to permanently eradicate the indwelling sin nature and to give the guarantee of a resurrection body to those who trust in Him as Savior. Our Lord died spiritually to deal with the consequences of the sinner possessing a sin nature and being spiritually dead as well as for the consequences of the sinner committing personal sins, which perpetuated their status of being spiritually dead. Therefore, Paul is speaking in the context of the believer’s identification with Christ in His spiritual and physical deaths.

“Retroactive positional truth” is one of two different aspects related to “positional sanctification” the other being “current” positional truth. The former means that when Christ died spiritually and physically on the Cross, God views the justified sinner as having died spiritually and physically with Christ as well. The latter means that when Christ was raised from the dead and was seated at the right hand of the Father, God views the justified sinner as having been raised from the dead with Christ and seated with Him at His right hand. Both are accomplished through the baptism of the Spirit.

“The elementary teachings promoted by the cosmic system” refers to the doctrines or the teachings of the Mosaic Law such as dietary regulations, Sabbath observance, observance of the seven feasts of Israel and observance of circumcision. This is indicated by the content of Paul’s teaching in Colossians 2:8-23 which mentions in these verses explicitly or implicitly all these things found in the Mosaic Law. The Judaizers sought to place Gentile Christians under the
Mosaic Law with its 613 commandments. The apostle Paul attempted to address the problem with the Essence branch of Judaism here in Colossians.

Now, another indication that *stoicheion*, “elementary teachings” is a reference to various commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law is the word’s usage in Colossians 2:20. In this verse the word also refers to the various commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law. For instance, in this verse Paul reminds the Colossians that they have died with Christ through the baptism of the Spirit with regards to the elementary principles of the world. Then he poses them a question in relation of this identification with Christ in His death. He asks them why they would want to continue submitting themselves to decrees such as “do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” These decrees are all related to the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law which the Judaizers sought to apply to Gentile Christians. This is indicated by the fact that Paul says all these things are destined to perish with their use in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men. Also, this statement in Colossians 2:20 echoes Paul’s teaching in Romans 7:1-6 which teaches that the Jewish Christian has died to the Mosaic Law and is therefore, no longer under the authority of the Law just as a wife is no longer under her husband’s authority when he dies.

Romans 7:1 Or, are some of you in a state of ignorance concerning this fact spiritual brothers (specifically, I am now addressing those who are very familiar with the Law through instruction), namely, that the Law does, as an eternal spiritual truth, have jurisdiction over a person during the entire extent of time they do live? 2 For example, the married woman is always bound by contract to the husband while he does live. However, if the husband dies, then she is, as an eternal spiritual truth, discharged from the contract with respect to her husband. 3 Therefore, based upon what has been previously stated, if while her husband does live she enters into marriage with another man, then she will, as a certainty, cause herself to be known publicly as an adulteress. However, if her husband dies then she is, as an eternal spiritual truth free from the contract with the result that she is, as an eternal spiritual truth not an adulteress if she enters into marriage with another man. 4 Therefore, my spiritual brothers, all of you without exception have also been put to death by means of Christ’s body with the result that all of you have been entered into marriage with another, the one who was raised from the dead ones in order that we might produce fruit for the benefit of God the Father. 5 For you see, when we were once in a perpetual state of being in bondage to our flesh, the sinful desires, which were aroused by means of the Law were perpetually allowed to be operative in the members of our body resulting in the production of fruit related to spiritual death. But now in our present state, we have been discharged from the Law as a result of having died with respect to
that which we were once in a perpetual state of being bound. Consequently,
we are, as an eternal spiritual truth, forever slaves for the benefit of God the
Father by means of the extraordinary work of the Spirit and never by means
of the useless observance of the letter, which is the Law. (Author’s translation)

Further indicating that the noun *stoicheion* in Colossians 2:8 and 20 is a
reference to the various commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law is that it is
found in a prepositional phrase that stands in apposition to the prepositional phrase
κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, “based upon the tradition produced by
men” which is a reference as we noted to the man-made traditions of this Essence
branch of the Judaizers. In other words, it refers to their teachings which are not
inspired by God. The prepositional phrase κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου describes
another essential element about this Essene branch of the Judaizers, namely they
seek to put Jewish and Gentile Christians under the authority of the Law or in other
words, they apply the various commands and prohibitions of the Law to Jewish
and Gentile Christians.

Therefore, this author argues that the noun *stoicheion* in Colossians 2:8 and 20
is a reference to the various commands and prohibitions of the Mosaic Law which
the Judaizers taught Jewish and Gentile Christians to adhere to since both the
context in which this word is found in Colossians 2:8-23 provides support for this
interpretation. This usage of the word is well attested in Paul’s day. It is also fits
the context of each relevant passage such as Galatians 4. This word is not a
reference to demonic angels since as Moo pointed out “there is no evidence that
the word *stoicheia* was used to refer to spiritual beings until the third century A.D.”
Also there is no real evidence from the context (Colossians 2:8-23) which would
support such an interpretation.

“The cosmic system” is the noun *kosmos* which pertains to a vast system and
arrangement of human affairs, earthly goods, godless governments, conflicts,
riches, pleasures, culture, education, world religions, the cults and the occult
dominated and negatively affected by Satan who is god of this satanic cosmos.
This system is promoted by Satan, conformed to his ideals, aims, methods, and
character, and stands perpetually in opposition to God the cause of Christ. This
world system is used to seduce men away from God and the person of Christ. It is
anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-Bible, and very anti-humanity though it often
appears as humanitarian as part of Satan’s masquerade as an angel of light.

The noun *kosmos* is not only a system but also an organization. An organization
is that which is organized. Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary
defines the verb “organize”: (1) To form as or into a whole consisting of
interdependent or coordinated parts, especially for harmonious or united action (2)
To systematize. If we paraphrase this definition, we could say that the noun *kosmos*
refers to the “formation into a whole of interdependent and coordinated parts for
harmonious and united action” against God. Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines a “system” as “an assemblage or combination of things or parts forming a complex or unitary whole; due method or orderly manner of arrangement or procedure.” If we paraphrase this definition, we could say that the noun kosmos refers to the “assemblage of fallen angels forming a complex whole” that is under the authority of Satan.

The cosmic system is not a theocratic or Christocentric society, organization or system since it is designed by Satan to seduce men away from worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan uses temptations to incorporate even believers into his system and organization that is independent of God.

In Colossians 2:20, in the apodosis, as we noted, Paul employs a rhetorical question which is presenting a comparison between the Colossians hypothetically for the sake of argument living according to the standards of the cosmic system of Satan and their submitting to the Mosaic Law. In this rhetorical question, Paul hypothetically and for the sake of argument implies the condition of Colossians living according to the standards of Satan’s cosmic system on which the fulfillment of submitting to the Mosaic Law depends. In other words, he is telling the Colossians that they would have to be living according to the standards of Satan’s cosmic system if they submitted to the commands and prohibitions of the Mosaic Law. The Colossians would have to live according to the standards of the cosmic system in order for them to submit themselves to the commands and prohibitions of the Mosaic Law.

In Colossians 2:21, Paul presents three prohibitions which all refer to the Mosaic Law. Specifically, they refer to the various prohibitions in the Mosaic Law which were designed to protect the Israelite from becoming ritually unclean. The first prohibition denies any idea of a Jew coming into contact with something that is ritually unclean. The second denies any idea of the Jew tasting or eating anything which would make them ritually unclean according to the Mosaic Law. The third denies any idea of the Jew touching anything even though only temporarily which would make them ritually unclean according to the Mosaic Law.

All three of these prohibitions speak of basic purity rules which are found extensively in the Mosaic Law. They are not all in reference to the dietary regulations of the Law. There were commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law which governed what a Jew could eat or not eat (see Leviticus 11). That which they could not eat was considered “unclean” and that which they could eat was “clean.”

Let’s take a look at the dietary regulations of the Law. In Genesis 9:3, God stipulated that all animal life was now given as food for people to eat and that the diet of the human race would not be restricted to a vegetable and fruit diet. The
stipulation recorded in Genesis 9:4 was given since the soul life of animals resides in its blood (Lev. 17:11, 14) and by forbidding the eating of the animal’s blood, this regulation instills a respect for the sacredness of life and protects against abuse (Lev. 3:17; 7:2-27; Deut. 12:1-24; 1 Sam. 14:32-34). However, when God gave the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai for the nation of Israel certain foods were designated by God as “clean” and “unclean” (Leviticus 11; 20:15; Deuteronomy 14:3-21; cf. Leviticus 17:10-16; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:15-25).

The ceremonial aspect of the Law contained the list of those land animals, birds, insects and marine life that were designated by God as unclean or unfit for consumption for the Israelites and those which would be clean or fit for consumption. Christ fulfilled the ceremonial ordinances, the shadows and types of His person and work, by dying on the cross for us and in our place. Therefore, these dietary regulations in the Mosaic Law do not apply since Christ fulfilled perfectly the Mosaic Law and is Himself the substance of the ritual aspect of the Law.

These dietary regulations, like circumcision, were given by God to Israel to distinguish her from the Gentile nations, which she was to dispossess in Canaan. The ceremonial aspect of the Law contained the list of those land animals, birds, insects and marine life that were designated by God as unclean or unfit for consumption for the Israelites and those which would be clean or fit for consumption.

The dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law prohibited Israelites from eating “unclean” animals (Leviticus 11; 20:15; Deuteronomy 14:3-21; cf. Leviticus 17:10-16; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:15-25). It also prohibited them from drinking anything offered to idols. The Israelites could only eat animals with split hooves and chew their cud. They could only eat fish with scales and fins. They could eat birds such as chicken and duck. Birds of prey were forbidden such as owl and hawk. Insects were forbidden. Israelites avoided meat if they could not be sure that the meat had been prepared in a “kosher” manner. Daniel and his friends did this in Babylon (Daniel 1:8; 10:3).

The term “kosher” comes from a Hebrew word, the word is kashar, which means “fit” or “right.” Anything that is “kosher” is right, it is fit, it is proper, it is acceptable according to a Jew. Today in an orthodox Jewish home, a kosher animal is inspected as to how it is killed, animal is inspected when it is opened up, and if found less than what it should be like a spot on the lung, it will be rejected. There was a person called a “shoket” who ritually slaughtered animals and is usually very observant and knowledgeable and must pass an examination from board of Rabbis. Respect for the animal when slaughtering the animal is important. A shoket uses a very sharp blade and uses one sharp stroke to the jugular and the animal dies instantly.
Road kill kosher animals are forbidden. For example, if the animal is considered kosher such as deer and is hit by a car and killed and can’t be used. The Shoket uses one swift cut to the trachea esophagus the two Vegas nerves and the arteries. The blade must be nick free and if a kosher animal is killed with a nicked blade it will be rejected, thus knives must be inspected by a rabbi. All internal organs are inspected. The blood of the animal must be drained (Leviticus 17:11).

The term “unclean” is a technical term to describe those foods, which were commonly consumed by Gentile peoples, but the Israelites were forbidden by God under the Mosaic Law to partake. These dietary regulations, like circumcision, were given by God to Israel to distinguish her from the Gentile nations, which she was to dispossess in Canaan.

The ceremonial aspect of the Law contained the list of those land animals, birds, insects and marine life that were designated by God as unclean or unfit for consumption for the Israelites and those which would be clean or fit for consumption. Christ fulfilled the ceremonial ordinances, the shadows and types of His person and work, by dying on the cross for us and in our place. Therefore, these dietary regulations in the Mosaic Law do not apply since Christ fulfilled perfectly the Mosaic Law and is Himself the substance of the ritual aspect of the Law.

The Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles whose teaching is in the New Testament make clear that the dietary laws of the Mosaic law did not apply to the church (Mark 7:2, 5; 14-19; Acts 10). Acts 10 records the Lord teaching Peter that the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law were no longer applicable. The gospels and Acts both record that the Lord Jesus taught no food is unclean (Matthew 15:10-20; Mark 7:14-19; Acts 10:1-15).

Acts 10 records the Lord teaching Peter that the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law were no longer applicable. It is interesting that Peter had interpreted the vision as God accepting the Gentiles, which was true, but it also should have been taken literally by Peter as well. Even though the Lord taught that there were no longer any unclean foods during the church age, Jewish believers like Peter had a difficult time shedding these Jewish practices.

In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul asserted that he had confronted Peter with regards to his hypocrisy in not sitting to eat with the Gentiles when Jewish brethren came into the room, which is another manifestation of Peter having a difficult time understanding that dietary restrictions had been set aside by God.

Paul taught the churches throughout the Roman empire that all foods were fit for consumption (cf. Romans 14:14; 1 Corinthians 10:25-26). He taught Titus the same thing (cf. Titus 1:15). Hebrews 13:9 teaches that the Christian is not spiritually strengthened by eating meat, but by God’s grace. Colossians 2:20-23 teaches that abstinence does not make us more spiritual. The Judaizers were
causing divisions in the church by attempting to impose the ritual of circumcision upon the Gentile believers (Acts 15; Gal. 5) and by imposing the observance of laws of food of the Mosaic Law on the Gentiles (Col. 2:16-17). In Romans 16:17, Paul warns the Roman believers to watch out for those who cause divisions and temptations to sin and apostasy contrary to the doctrine they’ve been taught and that they were to avoid them.

Now, in Titus 1:15, the apostle Paul reminds Titus and the Cretan church that for the benefit of those who are clean, all things are as an eternal spiritual truth existing in the state of being clean.

**Titus 1:15** For the benefit of those who are clean, all things are, as an eternal spiritual truth existing in the state of being clean. However, to the detriment of those who cause themselves to exist in the state of being defiled, yes unbelievers, absolutely nothing is, as an eternal spiritual truth existing in the state of being clean. But rather, they cause both their minds as well as conscience to exist in the state of being defiled. (Author’s translation)

“Those who are clean” is a reference to the Christian who is justified through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. It is a designation for those sinners who have been declared justified by the Father through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Thus, it is a designation for a Christian or a believer. This usage of the word first appears in John 13:10-11 and 15:10.

In Titus 1:15, “all things” is a reference to the various individual members of the animal, insect, bird kingdom and marine life that God created as food for the human race. Therefore, in Titus 1:15, Paul is saying that for the Christian who is clean through faith in Jesus Christ, they can eat all foods and are not under the dietary regulations of the Law. The Judaizers taught that the Christian way of life involved adhering to these dietary restrictions. However, they did not understand that they were marks of identification for the nation of Israel to distinguish them from the heathen nations surrounding them not for the church which was a mystery to Old Testament prophets. Like circumcision, the dietary regulations could not result in their justification or salvation. The apostate pastors on the island of Crete were adhering to these dietary regulations of the Judaizers. Thus, Paul alludes to this subject of ceremonial cleaneness and uncleanness in Titus 1:15.

Then, in Titus 1:15, Paul contrasts the “clean” state of the Christian who can eat all foods without restrictions to the non-Christian and in particular those Jews and Gentile proselytes who believed adherence to the Mosaic Law could justify them in the eyes of God. In contrast to the Christian, absolutely every animal is unclean to the detriment of the non-Christian who cause themselves to exist in the state of being unclean. They cause themselves to be unclean due to their rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior. Everything is unclean for the non-Christian and especially for those Jews who reject Jesus Christ as Savior and erroneously believe the adherence
to the Law can result in their justification since their unclean state defiles even the food they eat in the judgment of God.

Paul goes on to say in Titus 1:15 that the non-Christian and in particular those Jews who reject Jesus Christ as Savior and believe adherence to the Law will result in their justification before God cause their minds and conscience to exist in the state of being defiled. This is the result of obeying the lusts of the sin nature so as to practice sin which results in a guilty conscience. Only faith in Christ can purify a conscience defiled by sin.

Therefore, the apostle Paul in Titus 1:15 is teaching that the observance of the dietary regulations of the Law, which the Pharisees and Judaizers taught as a means of being declared justified by God, is not the means of living spiritually since one must be justified through faith in Jesus Christ. He is teaching that a person does not become ceremonially pure and acceptable to God for His use through observance of the dietary regulations of the Law but rather they become ceremonially pure through faith in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Jesus Christ taught His disciples they could eat all foods and nothing was unclean to them since the ceremonial cleanness of a person, i.e. their acceptance by God for His use, is based upon faith in Him alone and not the observance of their dietary laws.

The gospel taught that a sinner is justified through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone and not by the works of the Law. If this is the case, and it is, then those pastors on the island of Crete who were in apostasy from rejecting the apostle Paul’s teaching and thus the gospel were wasting their time and more importantly opposing God and hindering His efforts in the devil’s world. Thus, we can see why Paul wanted Titus and the Cretan church to discipline these apostate pastors because by following the Judaizers’ teaching, they were opposing God. The apostate pastors were free positionally through faith in Christ and had died to the Law. Thus by following the Judaizers’ teaching they were putting themselves under bondage. So it was for the benefit of these apostate pastors that Titus and the Cretan church discipline these men.

So if observance to the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law could not result in the justification of the sinner, then why teach that observance to these regulations constitutes the spiritual life of the Christian? These apostate pastors on the island of Crete were not only putting themselves under bondage with their false teaching which they received from the Judaizers but also those whom they taught in the church.

By stating in Titus 1:15 that for the benefit of the clean, all things are as an eternal spiritual truth existing in the state of being clean, Paul is reminding Titus and the Cretan church to remind these apostate pastors of their freedom they possess due to their identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. They were already clean through faith in Jesus Christ which resulted in their death to the
Law. Thus, why put themselves in bondage by trying to please God with regulations which don’t apply to them because of dying to the Law through faith in Jesus Christ.

So in Titus 1:15, Paul is attacking the fundamental problem of the Judaizers’ teaching which certain unidentified pastors in Crete were following. The fundamental problem with the teaching of the Judaizers is that their teaching did not solve the sinner’s internal problem with sin. Only faith in Jesus Christ could solve this problem. Their teaching only dealt with externals. If the internal was unclean, then that which are person did externally was also unclean. If the mind and conscience of a person are defiled due to sin, then nothing they could do externally could please God. Thus, these apostate teachers in Crete were exchanging the gospel which sets the sinner free from sin, the devil and condemnation of the Law, for man-made commandments which did not set them free from these things or could free other sinners from these things. As Jesus taught His disciples in John 13, only faith in Him can result in the sinner being “clean,” i.e. acceptable to God and useful for His purpose.

The sinner is the problem and not the food they eat. The sinner is unclean in the eyes of God and not the animals He created for their benefit. The sinner’s problem with being unclean is resolved through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. This faith results in the Holy Spirit identifying the sinner with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session. This identification with Christ resolves the problem of being unclean in the judgment of God. Thus, if this is the case and it is, then why teach sinners that they are made clean by keeping the dietary regulations of the Law when faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to resolve mankind’s problem of sin which produces an unclean mind and conscience. The intellect of the unsaved is unclean in the judgment of God because the sin nature controls their thinking or thoughts. Their conscience is defiled because the sin nature and the cosmic system of Satan adversely affects their norms and standards.

**Titus 1:16** They profess to possess an intimate knowledge of God. However, they cause themselves to deny any association with God by their actions. Consequently, they exist in a state of being detestable ones as well as disobedient ones and in addition worthless ones for any kind of divine good work of intrinsic quality and character. **(Author’s translation)**

In Titus 1:16, Paul narrows the discussion down to the state of the unregenerate Jew and specifically the state of the unregenerate Judaizer since they contended that they possessed an intimate knowledge of God whereas this was not the case with the unregenerate Gentile who in some cases denied the existence of God, not so with the unregenerate Jew in Paul’s day. The Scriptures teach that the Jews were chosen by God to be His people and not the Gentiles.
As Paul taught in Romans 9:1-5, the Jews and not the Gentiles were adopted by God as sons. They were given the Shekinah Glory, the covenants as well as the Law, the temple service and the promises and not the Gentiles. The Messiah is a Jew and not a Gentile. Thus because of these privileges the unregenerate Jew in Paul’s day believed he possessed an intimate knowledge of God.

Titus 1:16 begins with the declarative statement “they profess to possess an intimate knowledge of God.” This expresses the fact that the unregenerate Judaizer emphatically asserted or declared that they possessed an intimate knowledge of God so that they possessed a close relationship with Him. This again is due to the privileges given to them by God which are listed by Paul in Romans 9:1-5. The unregenerate Jew was of the conviction that they knew God in the sense that they possessed an intimate knowledge of God and thus a close relationship with Him in contrast to the Gentile.

This declarative statement is followed by an adversative clause “they cause themselves to deny any association with God by their actions.” This speaks of the unregenerate Judaizer renouncing any association with God by their sinful actions which are the direct result of his sinful unregenerate state. It means that they denied God in the sense of that they divorce themselves from any association with God and refused to have anything to do with God by means of their sinful actions, which was the result of their sinful unregenerate state which is mentioned in Titus 1:15. Thus the actions of the unregenerate Judaizer contradicted their profession of possessing a close relationship with God.

Consequently, the unregenerate Judaizer was detestable to God or abhorrent to Him because God is holy and they were sinners by nature and practice. Another consequence of denying any association with God by their sinful actions was that they were existing in a state of being disobedient to God. They would not be persuaded to obey God’s sovereign authority which is expressed through the gospel of Jesus Christ. These individuals were also worthless for any kind of good work meaning that they were of no use to God as a result of their actions which cause themselves to deny any association with God.

Their sinful unregenerate state meant that they could not perform actions which were pleasing to God. It meant that they had no capacity whatsoever to perform an action which was divine in quality and character which was in accordance with God’s will. They had no capacity whatsoever to perform an action that was profitable, useful, and beneficial to others or benevolent because their actions were not based upon and motivated by the teaching of the Spirit in the Word of God.

The sinful state and actions of the unregenerate Judaizer is the direct result of their rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their detestable and disobedient state as well as their being of no usefulness to God for any kind of good work was the direct result of their rejection of the gospel. If they had accepted the gospel by
exercising faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, they would be regenerated which would give them the capacity to perform actions which were pleasing to God. Also they would have been identified with Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session. Thus they would have died to the Law and thus they would no longer be condemned by the Law. Consequently, they would not have been abhorrent to God or detestable to Him. If they exercised faith in Christ, they would have received been indwelt by the Trinity and thus possess eternal life. All of this would have given them the capacity to produce divine good, which is pleasing and acceptable to God. Thus acceptance of the gospel by faith in Christ would have regenerated them and thus given them the capacity to be of use to God and pleasing to Him.

Now, Paul mentions all this about the unregenerate Judaizer here in Titus 1:16 since the Judaizers were leading pastors in Crete away from obedience to the gospel and their freedom in Christ which comes from obedience to the gospel. So he is saying that in effect that if the Judaizers are this repulsive to God, then why adhere to their legalistic teaching? If they are abhorrent to God because of their unregenerate state and sinful actions, what could they possibly teach a Christian which would be a benefit to them. Thus, the sinful state of the unregenerate Judaizer and their sinful actions discredit their legalistic teaching. In other words, if the unregenerate Judaizer was in bondage to sin and Satan, how could their teaching be of any benefit to a Christian and thus why would any pastor want to follow their teaching? Thus, we can see why Paul wanted Titus and the Cretan church to administer church discipline to these apostate pastors on that island.

The sinner must first obey the gospel by trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior so as to be declared justified by God before they can possess an intimate knowledge of God since only faith alone in Christ alone results in the transformation of the sinner to a person who is acceptable to God. Faith alone in Christ alone transforms their unregenerate sinful state to a regenerate state which is acceptable and pleasing to God. The good news for the sinner is that through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone they can be delivered from eternal condemnation, sin, Satan and his cosmic system as well as condemnation from the Law.

The good news for the justified sinner after their conversion is that as a result of their faith in Christ, they are identified with Him in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session. The justified sinner must continue to obey the gospel after their conversion if they want to possess an intimate knowledge of God in the sense that they must appropriate by faith their position in Christ. They must consider themselves as crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ if they are to experience fellowship and sanctification, which results in an intimate knowledge of God. This obedience to the gospel also results in the Holy Spirit producing actions in the justified sinner which are pleasing and beneficial to God and others.
So in Titus 2:1, Paul commands Titus to continue making it his habit of communicating those teachings which are consistent with sound doctrine and by doing so this will produce godly living which stands in stark contrast to the legalistic teaching of the Judaizers which produced ungodly conduct. Adherence to unsound teaching will produce ungodly living in the body of Christ while on the other hand adherence to sound teaching will produce godly conduct in the body of Christ.

In Titus 1:14, “the commandments originating from men” harkens back to Isaiah 29:13.

Isaiah 29:13 Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote.” (NASB95)

Isaiah 29: The sovereign master says, “These people say they are loyal to me; they say wonderful things about me, but they are not really loyal to me. Their worship consists of nothing but man-made ritual.” (NET)

Isaiah 29:13 The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.” (TNIV)

In Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7, the Lord Jesus Christ referred to Isaiah 29:13 in order to contrast the Jewish obsession with rites of purification which were not in the Old Testament and the teaching of the Old Testament. The Pharisees were obsessed with traditions or doctrines which were not found in their Old Testament. In fact, they would use their traditions in order to avoid keeping the Old Testament rules and regulations such as honoring one’s father and mother. The apostle Paul adopted the idea of Isaiah 29:13 in dealing with the situation the Colossian church was facing (Colossians 2:22).

Here in Titus 1:14, “the commandments originating from men” also alludes to Isaiah 29:13 but in reference to the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law, which were not applicable during the church age (cf. Mark 7:15; Luke 11:39-41; Colossians 2:29-23; 1 Timothy 4:1-5). This is indicated by Paul’s statement in Titus 1:15.

The Judaizers’ obsession with dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law were described here by Paul as “the commandments originating from men” even though God did give Israel dietary regulations since the Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 7:14-23 taught that there were no longer any dietary regulations for God’s people. Thus, the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law were nothing but the regulations of men since God no longer commanded adherence to these regulations of the Mosaic Law. The gospel declares that the one who trusts in Jesus Christ as his or
her Savior has died to the Law (cf. Romans 7:1-6). Thus, these dietary regulations are not applicable to the Christian.

In Titus 1:14 Paul says that these Judaizers rejected the truth, which refers to the apostolic teaching of the gospel. In relation to non-Christians, i.e. who have not yet been justified through faith in Christ, the gospel is the good news and God’s victorious proclamation of God’s love in delivering the entire human race from sin, Satan, his cosmic system and eternal condemnation and has reconciled them to Himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This reconciliation with God and deliverance and victory over sin, Satan and the cosmic system that God accomplished through His Son’s crucifixion, burial, death, resurrection and session is received as a gift and appropriated through faith in Christ (John 3:16-18; Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1-2).

In relation to the believer, the Gospel message is God’s victorious proclamation regarding the believer’s deliverance and victory positionally from the power of Satan, the old sin nature and the cosmic system of Satan (See Romans 5-7). By positionally, I mean that God views the believer as crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ, which was accomplished at the moment of conversion through the Baptism of the Spirit when the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit placed the believer in an eternal union with Christ.

The Baptism of the Spirit identifies the believer with Christ in the sense that the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit causes the believer to become identical and united with the Lord Jesus Christ and also ascribes to the believer the qualities and characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ. It identifies the believer with Christ in His crucifixion (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20), His death (Romans 6:2, 7-8; Colossians 2:20; 3:3), His burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12), His resurrection (Romans 6:5; Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:10-11; Colossians 2:12; 3:1) and His session (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 3:1). The believer can experience this victory and deliverance by appropriating by faith the teaching of the Word of God that he has been crucified, died, buried, raised and seated with Christ (Romans 6:11-23; 8:1-17; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:5-17).

By continuing to teach adherence to the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law, they were rejecting the apostolic teaching of the gospel in that they contradicted the gospel which says that the Christian has died to the Law. Thus the Christian has died to the dietary regulations of the Law through their identification with Christ in His death on the cross, which freed them from these regulations.

The apostle Paul does not identify if these men were believers or non-believers when he describes them here in Titus 1:14 as rejecting the truth. There is nothing in the context which would indicate their relationship to Jesus Christ. However, more than likely when Paul says that they rejected the truth, he is referring to both Christians and non-Christians since the Judaizers were composed of both
Christians and non-Christians. Furthermore, a Christian can reject the truth of the gospel by adhering to the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law when the gospel declares he has died to the Law through his identification with Christ in His death. The non-Christian rejects the truth of the gospel of course by not exercising faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. You cannot be saved by adherence to the Law. Thus you cannot live by adherence to the Law.

The Mosaic Law also addressed what the Jew could handle or touch. For instance, they were prohibited from coming into contact with lepers (Lev. 13:45-46) and a woman during her menstrual period (Lev. 15:19-24) or a man with a discharge (Lev. 15:2-12), or a corpse (Num. 19:11-13).

Pharisaic and Essene Judaism were very much concerned about purity issues. They both had strict regulations to ensure that no one in Israel impinged upon the purity of the people. In fact, they added their own purity rules which were in addition to those found in the Mosaic Law. Their own rules they even raised to the level of Scripture!

So Paul is teaching in Colossians 2:20-21 that the Mosaic Law which was designed to govern the ritual purity of the citizens of the nation of Israel does not govern the life of the church since the church age believer, whether Jew or Gentile has died to the Law because of their identification with Christ in His death. In fact, he teaches in Colossians 2:22-23 that the Judaizers’ teaching that the Mosaic Law must govern the life of the church is simply the teaching of men rather than God. This is the case since these men were seeking to do what God did not want to do, namely He did not want the life of the church to be governed by the Mosaic Law but rather by the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ. This was not God’s idea that the conduct of the church would be governed by the Mosaic Law since God through the death of Christ and the baptism of the Spirit caused the Christian to die with regards to the Law. The Judaizers were in direct opposition to God by teaching the Law governs the conduct of the church. God’s design was that the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ would govern the conduct of the church.

So in Colossians 2:20-21, Paul is protecting the faithful Christians in Colossae from legalism and asceticism. The former refers to someone seeking to impose rules and regulations upon a Christian which are the result of misinterpretation and misapplication of the Bible. The Judaizers were misinterpreting the Mosaic Law and misapplying it to both the Jewish and Gentile Christian. The prohibition in Colossians 2:16 and the one in Colossians 2:8 seek to address this problem with the Judaizers in Colossae. Satan and his kingdom were behind this legalism since Paul teaches in Colossians 2:8 and 20 that the teaching of the Judaizers was promoted by the cosmic system of Satan.

Asceticism is the idea that abstinence from physical things like food or sex is essential for spiritual purity. The phrase “self-made religion” (Colossians 2:23)
reflect the asceticism of the Essenes as does “self-abasement” and “severe treatment of the body” (2:23).

The teaching that spirituality is attained through renunciation of physical pleasures and personal desires while concentrating on “spiritual” matters. Jesus himself advocated certain practices such as fasting (Mt 9:15) or, for some perhaps, celibacy (Mt 19:12) for the sake of the kingdom; yet some Christians have overemphasized the role of ascetic practices. This prompted the apostle Paul to assert that ascetic practice alone is insufficient as a means of escaping from sin (see Col 2:20–23). Unfortunately, asceticism often proceeds on the assumption that the physical body is evil and is ultimately the cause of sin—a wholly unbiblical concept.11

Colossians 2:22 These are, as an eternal spiritual truth all destined to perish with their consumption. These are, as an eternal spiritual truth all based upon the commandments as well as teachings originating from men. (Author’s translation)

Paul is making two assertions. The first is that the material objects which the Mosaic Law declared as unclean for the Jew are all destined to perish with use. The material objects are of course those animals which the Law declared unclean for the Jew to eat. The second assertion is that all three prohibitions in Colossians 2:21 are based upon the commandments as well as teachings originating from men. This second assertion resembles Paul description of the teaching of the Judaizers in Colossians 2:8 which he describes as being “based upon the tradition produced by human beings.” The difference between this assertion in Colossians 2:8 and the second assertion in Colossians 2:22 is that the latter describes the Judaizers misinterpretation and misapplication of the Mosaic Law to the church while the former describes the man-made traditions of the Judaizers. If you recall, Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their adherence to their own rabbinical traditions rather than the Word of God (Mark 7).

Therefore, Paul is asserting that the Mosaic Law does not apply to the church. In Colossians 2:22, Paul is asserting that the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law do not apply to the church. The second assertion goes a step further than the first in that it makes clear to the faithful Christians in Colossae that the purity laws of the Mosaic Law in their entirety have no application for the church. These dietary regulations do not govern the life of the church. All the purity laws of the Mosaic Law do not govern the life of the church.

All three of these prohibitions speak of basic purity rules which are found extensively in the Mosaic Law. They are not all in reference to the dietary regulations of the Law. There were commands and prohibitions in the Mosaic Law

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which governed what a Jew could eat or not eat (see Leviticus 11). That which they could not eat was considered “unclean” and that which they could eat was “clean."

God gave the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai. He designated certain foods were “clean” and “unclean” for the Israelites (Leviticus 11; 20:15; Deuteronomy 14:3-21; cf. Leviticus 17:10-16; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:15-25).

The ceremonial aspect of the Law contained the list of those land animals, birds, insects and marine life that were designated by God as unclean or unfit for consumption for the Israelites and those which would be clean or fit for consumption. Christ fulfilled the ceremonial ordinances, the shadows and types of His person and work, by dying on the cross for us and in our place. Therefore, these dietary regulations in the Mosaic Law do not apply since Christ fulfilled perfectly the Mosaic Law and is Himself the substance of the ritual aspect of the Law.

These dietary regulations, like circumcision, were given by God to Israel to distinguish her from the Gentile nations, which she was to dispossess in Canaan. The ceremonial aspect of the Law contained the list of those land animals, birds, insects and marine life that were designated by God as unclean or unfit for consumption for the Israelites and those which would be clean or fit for consumption.

The dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law prohibited Israelites from eating “unclean” animals (Leviticus 11; 20:15; Deuteronomy 14:3-21; cf. Leviticus 17:10-16; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:15-25). It also prohibited them from drinking anything offered to idols. The Israelites could only eat animals with split hooves and chew their cud. They could only eat fish with scales and fins. They could eat birds such as chicken and duck. Birds of prey were forbidden such as owl and hawk. Insects were forbidden. Israelites avoided meat if they could not be sure that the meat had been prepared in a “kosher” manner. Daniel and his friends did this in Babylon (Daniel 1:8; 10:3).

The term “unclean” is a technical term to describe those foods, which were commonly consumed by Gentile peoples but the Israelites were forbidden by God under the Mosaic Law to partake. These dietary regulations, like circumcision, were given by God to Israel to distinguish her from the Gentile nations, which she was to dispossess in Canaan.

The Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles whose teaching is in the New Testament make clear that the dietary laws of the Mosaic law did not apply to the church (Mark 7:2, 5; 14-19; Acts 10). Acts 10 records the Lord teaching Peter that the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law were no longer applicable. The gospels and Acts both record that the Lord Jesus taught no food is unclean (Matthew 15:10-20; Mark 7:14-19; Acts 10:1-15).
Acts 10 records the Lord teaching Peter that the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law were no longer applicable. It is interesting that Peter had interpreted the vision as God accepting the Gentiles, which was true, but it also should have been taken literally by Peter as well. Even though the Lord taught that there were no longer any unclean foods during the church age, Jewish believers like Peter had a difficult time shedding these Jewish practices.

In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul asserted that he had confronted Peter with regards to his hypocrisy in not sitting to eat with the Gentiles when Jewish brethren came into the room, which is another manifestation of Peter having a difficult time understanding that dietary restrictions had been set aside by God.

Paul taught the churches throughout the Roman empire that all foods were fit for consumption (cf. Romans 14:14; 1 Corinthians 10:25-26). He taught Titus the same thing (cf. Titus 1:15). Hebrews 13:9 teaches that the Christian is not spiritually strengthened by eating meat, but by God’s grace. Colossians 2:20-23 teaches that abstinence does not make us more spiritual. The Judaizers were causing divisions in the church by attempting to impose the ritual of circumcision upon the Gentile believers (Acts 15; Gal. 5) and by imposing the observance of laws of food of the Mosaic Law on the Gentiles (Col. 2:16-17). In Romans 16:17, Paul warns the Roman believers to watch out for those who cause divisions and temptations to sin and apostasy contrary to the doctrine they’ve been taught and that they were to avoid them.

The Mosaic Law also addressed what the Jew could handle or touch. For instance, they were prohibited from coming into contact with lepers (Lev. 13:45-46) and a woman during her menstrual period (Lev. 15:19-24) or a man with a discharge (Lev. 15:2-12), or a corpse (Num. 19:11-13).

Pharisaic and Essene Judaism were very much concerned about purity issues. They both had strict regulations to ensure that no one in Israel impinged upon the purity of the people. In fact, they added their own purity rules which were in addition to those found in the Mosaic Law. Their own rules they even raised to the level of Scripture!

So Paul is teaching in Colossians 2:20-22 that the Mosaic Law which was designed to govern the ritual purity of the citizens of the nation of Israel does not govern the life of the church since the church age believer, whether Jew or Gentile has died to the Law because of their identification with Christ in His death. In fact, he teaches in Colossians 2:22-23 that the Judaizers’ teaching that the Mosaic Law must govern the life of the church is simply the teaching of men rather than God. This is the case since these men were seeking to do what God did not want to do, namely He did not want the life of the church to be governed by the Mosaic Law but rather by the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ. This was not God’s idea that the conduct of the church would be governed by the Mosaic Law since God through
the death of Christ and the baptism of the Spirit caused the Christian to die with regards to the Law. The Judaizers were in direct opposition to God by teaching the Law governs the conduct of the church. God’s design was that the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ would govern the conduct of the church.

In Romans 7:1-6, Paul taught the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome that Jewish Christians are not under the authority of the Mosaic Law because they are identified with Christ in His death on the cross and thus Gentile Christians are not under the authority of the Mosaic Law as well.

Colossians 2:23 Prohibitions such as these are possessing an appearance of wisdom in accordance with a self-imposed standard as well as false humility, harsh treatment of the human body. Prohibitions such as these are by no means in accordance with a code of conduct of any value opposed to gratifying the flesh. (Author’s translation)

The apostle Paul in verse 23 is making two assertions regarding the Judaizers’ strict observance of the purity regulations of the Mosaic Law. The first is that this observance possesses the appearance of wisdom in accordance with a self-imposed standard as well as false humility, and harsh treatment of the human body. The second is that observing these purity regulations are by no means in accordance with a code of conduct of any value which is opposed to the gratification of the indwelling Adamic sin nature. In other words, observing these regulations by no means resolves the problem of the indwelling Adamic sin nature which resides in the genetic structure of every human being.

When Paul asserts that the Judaizers’ observance of the purity regulations in the Mosaic Law possesses the appearance of wisdom, he means that the observance of these laws is thought by many people and specifically the Jews to be the means by which one pleases God and do His will but such is not the case. The wisdom which Paul is speaking of is of course God’s wisdom. Specifically, it pertains to the application of the Word of God which reveals God’s wisdom or we can say obedience to the Word of God which reveals the will of God. The Word of God reveals the wisdom and will of God. Thus Paul is saying that the Judaizers’ observance of the purity laws of the Mosaic Law possess an appearance of being the application of God’s Word or obedience to God’s will.

The apostle Paul asserts that the Judaizers’ observance of these purity regulations in the Law is in accordance to a particular standard, which is man-made and does not originate from God. This observance is according to a set of religious beliefs, convictions and practices resulting from one’s own desires and initiative rather than from God’s desire or initiative.

Paul then describes this human standard as “false humility” since the Judaizers observed the purity laws of the Mosaic Law erroneously thinking that it was God’s will for them to do so. They would have a godly humility which is the product of
the Holy Spirit if they had a proper interpretation and application of the Mosaic Law and disposed of their man-made traditions and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. They would have a godly humility if they obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. So therefore, the source of the Judaizers humility was not a submission to the gospel but rather a submission to their man-made traditions and a misinterpretation and misapplication of the Mosaic Law. Thus, it was a false rather than true humility which is produced by the Holy Spirit in the believer who obeys His teaching in the gospel concerning Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection.

Paul goes even further in describing this human standard as “harsh treatment of the human body,” since observance of these purity regulations in the Mosaic Law involves abstaining from physical things like food or sex for the purpose of attaining spiritual purity. It refers to asceticism which is the idea that abstinence from physical things like food or sex is essential for spiritual purity.

Warren Wiersbe writes “The people who practice asceticism have a ‘reputation’ for spirituality, but the product does not live up to the promotion. I am amazed at the way educated people in America flock to see and hear gurus and other Eastern spiritual leaders whose teachings cannot change the human heart. This ‘self-imposed worship’ is not the true worship of God, which must be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Their humility is false, and their harsh disciplines accomplish nothing for the inner man. While it is certainly better to exercise self-control than to yield to the physical appetites of the body, we must not think that such self-control is necessarily spiritually motivated. The ascetics of many non-Christian religions give evidence of remarkable self-control. The stoics and their ascetic philosophy were well known in Paul’s day. Their adherents could duplicate any discipline that the gnostic teachers cared to present. The power of Christ in the life of the believer does more than merely restrain the desires of the flesh: it puts new desires within him. Nature determines appetite. The Christian has the very nature of God within (2 Peter 1:4), and this means he has godly ambitions and desires. He does not need law on the outside to control his appetites because he has life on the inside! The harsh rules of the ascetics ‘lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence’ (Col. 2:23, NIV). If anything, they eventually bring out the worst instead of the best. In the closing two chapters of this letter, Paul explained how the new life functions in the believer to give him purity and victory.”

Lastly, in Colossians 2:23, when the apostle Paul makes the assertion that the Judaizers’ observance of the purity regulations of the Mosaic Law are by no means in accordance with a code of conduct of any value which opposes the flesh, he means that this observance by no means resolves their problem with their indwelling Adamic sin nature.

V NIV New International Version
The only solution to the problem of the sin nature is Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. Specifically, this problem is resolved at the moment the sinner is declared justified by the Father through faith in His Son Jesus Christ as Savior. This results in the Holy Spirit identifying the justified sinner with Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and session. This ministry of the Holy Spirit is called the baptism of the Spirit. This identification with Christ results in the justified sinner being delivered from eternal condemnation, condemnation from failing to keep the Law perfectly, spiritual death, the sin nature, personal sins, Satan and his cosmic system.

To be identified with Christ means that the Holy Spirit has made the justified sinner identical and united with the Lord Jesus Christ and also means that the Spirit ascribes to the believer the qualities and characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean that the believer becomes the second person of the Trinity, but rather it means that God views the believer has having been crucified, died and buried with Christ two thousand years ago as well as raised and seated with Him.

The baptism of the Spirit results in positional sanctification and the potential to experience sanctification in time and the promise of perfective sanctification at the resurrection of the church. This ministry of the Spirit never took place before the day of Pentecost in June of 33 A.D. and will not take place after the rapture of the church.

So the apostle Paul in Colossians 2:23 is in effect telling the faithful Christians in Colossae that the Judaizers’ strict observance of the purity regulations of the Mosaic Law is nothing but hypocrisy.

*Paul’s Use of the Law in 1 Timothy 1:8-10*

The apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 1:8-10 teaches one of the uses of the Mosaic Law, which was being misapplied by certain pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of the Law. These verses belong to a section that begins in 1 Timothy 1:3. Paul wrote this epistle to address a problem with certain pastors in Ephesus teaching false doctrine, which was directly related to the misuse of the Law. In this verse Paul reveals that when leaving Macedonia, he urged Timothy to stay on in Ephesus to command certain Ephesian believers to not teach false doctrines.

1 Timothy 1:3, Since I requested you to stay on in Ephesus when I myself was about to depart for Macedonia in order that you may command certain individuals not to teach at any time, false doctrine, continue making it your habit of performing this task. (My translation)

This verse is an elliptical causal clause meaning that Paul does not explicitly command Timothy to command certain Ephesian men to not teach false doctrines but rather he only presents the basis or the reason for doing so. This verse is an
urgent request for Timothy to fulfill the task of confronting the false teachers in Ephesus. It presents the basis for Timothy commanding certain Ephesian believers to stop teaching false doctrines. The emphasis is not upon a comparison between Paul urging Timothy when leaving Macedonia to stay on at Ephesus in order to instruct certain men not to teach false doctrines and Timothy doing exactly that now that Paul has left him in Ephesus. Rather, his emphasis is that he wants Timothy to continue commanding certain Ephesian believers to not teach false doctrines because he commanded him to do so upon leaving for Macedonia. His emphasis is as to why he wants Timothy to confront these false teachers. This is to help support Timothy in this task since he is emphasizing in this causal clause his apostolic authority that he received from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. To reject Paul’s instructions was to reject the Lord Himself.

“To stay on in Ephesus” implies that Paul wanted Timothy to continue confronting those teaching false doctrines in Ephesus. It expresses the concept of perseverance.

“When I myself was about to depart for Macedonia” refers to Paul traveling from Ephesus to the Roman province of Macedonia. It emphasizes the immediacy of Paul departing for Macedonia indicating that Paul requested that Timothy remain at Ephesus in order to command certain Ephesian not to teach false doctrines when he was about to depart for Macedonia. It also implies that Paul was in Ephesus when he urgently made this request of Timothy.

“In order that you may command certain individuals not to teach at any time, false doctrine” is a purpose clause that indicates that Paul’s purpose for urgently requesting that Timothy stay on in Ephesus was so that he could command certain Ephesian believers not to teach false doctrine. The purpose is further described in verse 4 indicating that Paul wanted these Ephesian believers who taught false doctrines to also not occupy themselves with myths and interminable genealogies. It implies clearly that Paul has delegated authority to Timothy to rebuke and hold these false teachers accountable since this word indicates that the false teachers in Ephesus are under Paul’s apostolic authority and are thus Christians. The fact that Paul is commanding these unidentified individuals to stop teaching false doctrine clearly implies that they are believers since Paul would not have authority over a non-believer. It also indicates that they were pastors since Acts 20:28 records Paul predicting to the pastors in Ephesus that some of them would become apostates.

“Certain individuals” refers to unidentified Christian pastor-teachers who taught false doctrines in fulfillment of Paul’s prophesy recorded in Acts 20:28. It means that there was more than one pastor in Ephesus who was teaching false doctrines. However, it does not mean that all the pastors were doing so.
“Not to teach at any time, false doctrine” speaks of the act of teaching that which is contrary to the apostolic teaching of Paul. It does not refer to the style of teaching or manner of teaching but the content of teaching. It describes the content of the teaching of these pastors in Ephesus as fundamentally and essentially different than Paul’s apostolic teaching. This prohibition denies any idea of these Christian pastors in Ephesus teaching heretical doctrines.

Verse 4 further describes the purpose for Paul urgently requesting that Timothy stay on in Ephesus. In this verse, Paul states that not only did he not want these Ephesian pastors at any time to teach false doctrine but also not to occupy themselves with myths and interminable genealogies. He goes on to state that these myths and interminable genealogies merely promote speculation rather than help them fulfill their responsibilities of administrating God’s household. So this verse begins a description of the content of what these pastors in Ephesus taught who had strayed from Paul’s teaching.

This verse is connecting Paul’s prohibition that certain Ephesian pastors were not to teach at any time, false or heretical doctrine with the prohibition for these same pastors to not pay attention to myths and useless genealogies. It makes clear that Paul does not want these unidentified pastors in Ephesus to at any time “occupy their minds” with myths.

“Myths” describes the content of the teaching of these unidentified pastors in Ephesus as falsehood in contrast to Paul’s gospel, which is absolute truth since it is inspired by the Holy Spirit as well as rooted in historical events (crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ) and an historical individual (Jesus of Nazareth). It has nothing to do with Gnosticism since the phrase “teachers of the Law” and Titus 1:14 describing these myths as Jewish indicate that the myths and genealogies mentioned by Paul in I Timothy 1:4 were Jewish in nature.

“Useless genealogies” refers to a listing of descendants of a particular individual. Specifically, it refers to the genealogies in the Old Testament. Paul was not against the study of the genealogies of the Bible since they can teach us quite a bit about God’s creation, His desire to redeem mankind, and His sovereign control over history. The apostle was against the misuse of genealogies.

Though it is true that the Old Testament genealogies were important with respect to the claims of Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Jewish Messiah and taught the sovereignty of God over the human race, they did not promote the administration of God’s household by these pastors. They would not help these pastors to fulfill their responsibilities.

The causal clause “because the nature of which, as an eternal spiritual truth, promote pointless arguments rather than the administration of God’s household” refers to these unidentified individuals in Ephesus fulfilling their
stewardship as pastor-teachers. Specifically, it refers to the administration of God’s household, which is the church. It refers to leading the church in Ephesus.

“Continue making it your habit of performing this task” is a supplied ellipsis and should be inserted into the translation at the end of verse 4. It refers to Paul commanding certain pastors in Ephesus not to at any time teach false doctrine. It implies that Timothy was already about performing this task when this letter arrived from Paul. Timothy was being faithful!

Verse 5 records Paul writing to Timothy that the goal of his and Timothy’s instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

1 Timothy 1:5 However, the result, which this command produces is, as an eternal spiritual truth, divine-love from a pure heart as well as a conscience that is divine good in quality and character and in addition a sincere faith. (My translation)

This verse is contrasting the negative ungodly results of some unidentified pastors in Ephesus teaching false doctrine and being occupied with myths and useless genealogies and the positive results if they are faithful in administrating God’s household. The negative result of the former is that the church in Ephesus will be involved with pointless arguments. The positive result of the latter is the church will function in God’s love for one another since the result of obeying Paul’s apostolic teaching is love for God and love each other.

The noun telos in 1 Timothy 1:5 does not mean “objective” or “purpose” but rather “result” since Paul is contrasting the negative ungodly results of these pastors in Ephesus teaching false doctrine and being occupied with myths and useless genealogies and the positive results of their being faithful in administrating God’s household. The negative result of the former is that the church in Ephesus will be involved with pointless arguments. The positive result of the latter is the church will function in God’s love for one another since the result of obeying Paul’s apostolic teaching is love for God and love each other.

In 1 Timothy 1:5, the noun agape means “divine-love” and refers to the Ephesian believers’ divine-love as it functions towards each other since Paul is contrasting the negative ungodly results of these pastors in Ephesus teaching false doctrine and being occupied with myths and useless genealogies and the positive results of their being faithful in administrating God’s household.

“From a pure heart” teaches that a pure heart is the source from which God’s love is exercised towards one’s fellow Christian. This prepositional phrase teaches that when the Christian obeys the command to love one another as Christ loved him it is from a heart that is experiencing fellowship with God and being influenced by the Holy Spirit. This prepositional phrase refers to the state of the Christian’s soul that does not have any known sin in its stream of consciousness. It refers to the believer experiencing fellowship with God and being influenced by
the Spirit. It speaks of the believer bringing his thoughts into obedience to the Spirit.

“A conscience that is divine good in quality and character” refers to the Christian’s conscience or whose standards are in accordance with the Father’s will because the Christian is being influenced by the Spirit. The Christian is filled with or influenced by the Spirit when they bring their thoughts into obedience to the teaching of the Spirit, which is heard through the communication of the Word of God.

Therefore, the conscience, where the norms and standards reside, is divine in quality and character because the teaching of the Spirit as recorded in the Word is the basis for the norms and standards. It describes the Christian’s conscience as being intrinsically valuable, intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefitting others, benevolent because their norms and standards are based upon the teaching of the Spirit in the Word of God.

This prepositional phrase indicates that loving one’s fellow Christian as Christ loved all men also finds its source in a conscience that is divine good in quality and character. This means that loving one’s fellow Christian as Christ loved all men originates from not only a pure heart but also a conscience that is divine good in quality and character, which is the result of being filled with the Spirit and letting the Word of Christ richly dwell in your soul.

“A sincere faith” speaks of the Christians’ post-conversion faith in the Word of God or in other words, their faith in the Spirit’s teaching that is revealed through the communication of the Word of God. It does not refer to saving faith or faith in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation but rather the Christian’s faith in the Word of God after their conversion since in context Paul is addressing the conduct of Christians as a result of their pastors teaching sound doctrine rather than false doctrine.

Also, in context, pistis is used in relation to the Christian obeying the command to love his fellow believer as Christ loves, which is accomplished by exercising faith in the Spirit’s teaching in the Word of God and specifically, the command to love one another as Christ loves. Obedience to the Spirit’s teaching in the Word of God to love one another as Christ loved is the direct result of the believer exercising faith in the Spirit’s teaching since obedience to the commands of the Word of God are the direct result of exercising faith in the Spirit’s teaching in the Word of God.

Next, in 1 Timothy 1:6, Paul points out to Timothy and the Ephesian church that because some pastors in Ephesus have deviated from practicing divine-love from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith, they turned aside to pointless talk.
1 Timothy 1:6 Certain individuals, because they have deviated away from these things, turned aside to pointless talk. (My translation)

“Certain individuals” refers to a particular group of unidentified pastors in Ephesus. The causal clause “because they have deviated away from these things, turned aside to pointless talk” means that the reason why these pastors turned aside to pointless talk was because they deviated from practicing God’s love in the power of the Spirit from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Therefore, the reason why these unidentified pastors in Ephesus were teaching false doctrine and were occupied with Jewish myths and genealogies was that they themselves were not obeying the command to love one another. The reason why they were failing to administrate the household of God by teaching the church to love one another from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith is that they themselves were not doing so. They were out of fellowship with God themselves and as a result they were not fulfilling their responsibilities to teach the Christians in Ephesus to love one another from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. The fact that they did not obey the Lord’s command to love one another is reflected by the fact that they were not fulfilling their responsibilities to teach the church in Ephesus to love one another from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Furthermore, they were out of fellowship and not exercising love towards their fellow Christians. Thus, they were not fulfilling their responsibilities to the Lord to administrate the church at Ephesus by teaching the command to love one another because they were no longer operating in faith.

So because these unidentified pastors in Ephesus strayed from obeying the command to love one another, which stems from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith, they turned aside to fruitless discussion, which in verse 4, Paul describes as “pointless arguments.”

“A pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith” are related to the mind and the way the Christian thinks, his or her mindset. Therefore, these pastors did not operate in God’s love and administrate God’s household in Ephesus by teaching the command to love one another because they were not thinking right and they were not thinking right because of a lack of faith in the Word of God.

Thus because these pastors were not exercising faith in the Word of God and as a result were not obeying the command to love their fellow Christians as Christ loves and not fulfilling their responsibilities to teach the same, Paul exhorts Timothy to fight the good fight of faith and issues the following exhortations throughout the epistle. Therefore, these unidentified pastors in Ephesus were not exercising faith in the Word of God, which manifested itself through false teaching, being occupied with Jewish myths and genealogies resulting in pointless arguments. This lack of faith manifested itself by not fulfilling their responsibilities.
to administrate the household of God, which is accomplished by teaching the command to love one another.

Then, in verse 7 Paul further describes these unidentified pastors in Ephesus who were teaching false doctrine because they were occupied with Jewish myths and useless genealogies. Thus, they were failing to fulfill their duties of administrating the church in Ephesus by communicating Paul’s apostolic teaching.

**1 Timothy 1:7 by desiring unsuccessfully to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either the things which they are making a habit of communicating or the things concerning which they make a habit of confidently asserting for the benefit of only themselves. (My translation)**

In this verse, he identifies this particular group of pastors as wanting to be teachers of the Law but yet they don’t understand what they are saying or the things they confidently affirm. This further indicates quite clearly that these pastors had fallen victim to the Judaizers who dogged Paul throughout his ministry. Therefore, the heresy in the Ephesian church was of a Jewish nature.

This verse is connected to verse 6 in the sense that it describes how this “certain individuals” mentioned in that verse were turning aside to pointless talk. As we noted these individuals were pastors in Ephesus who Paul describes in verses 3 and 4 as teaching false doctrine because they were occupied with myths and useless genealogies that were Jewish in nature. Thus, they were victims of the Judaizers.

In verse 6, Paul describes why these pastors turned aside from Paul’s gospel to pointless talk, namely they deviated from obeying the command to love their fellow Christ as Christ loves and were not fulfilling their responsibilities to administrate the household of God by teaching this command to their congregations.

Now in verse 7, Paul describes how or the means by which they turned aside to pointless talk, namely, by desiring to be teachers of the Mosaic Law. So the expression “by desiring unsuccessfully to be teachers of the Law” is participial clause that expresses the means by which these unidentified pastors in Ephesus were turning aside from teaching the command to love one another to pointless talk.

“Even though they do not understand either the things which they are making a habit of communicating or the things concerning which they make a habit of confidently asserting for the benefit of only themselves” is a concessive clause that implies that these unidentified pastors in Ephesus lacked understanding or were simply ignorant of the true purpose of the Mosaic Law even though they desired to be teachers of it. This implication is indicated by Paul’s statements in verses 8-10, which deal with one of the usages of the Mosaic Law.
So as Mounce correctly observes “verses 3-7 set the historical state for the epistle.” (Page 28) Certain pastors in Ephesus were not faithful in fulfilling their responsibilities to administrate the household of God (verse 4) by teaching false doctrine (verse 3) because they were occupied with myths and useless genealogies (verse 4) that were Jewish in nature as implied by their desire to become teachers of the Mosaic Law (verse 7).

Paul’s purpose for urgently requesting that Timothy prohibit these pastors from doing these things was love. If they obeyed this prohibition and again fulfilled their responsibilities to administrate the household of God, they would communicate Paul’s gospel and teach the command to love one another.

So by attempting to be teachers of the Mosaic Law and not communicators of the gospel and sound doctrine, there were disputes and arguments taking place among believers in Ephesus. On the other hand, if they had remained faithful, no such thing would have occurred unless their audiences rejected the apostolic teaching in the first place. These individuals were not faithful because of a spiritual problem that they had, namely they were out of fellowship with God and had rejected Paul’s apostolic teaching themselves.

In verse 8, the apostle Paul begins a brief discussion of the correct application of the Law by rebuking the misuse of the Law by those unidentified pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of it. He begins this discussion of the Law by affirming that what he writes about in this discussion is the accepted and common understanding and teaching of the apostles and the Christian community.

1 Timothy 8 But we affirm as a confirmed and accepted fact that the Law does, as an eternal spiritual truth exist in the state of being useful, if one at any time does for their own benefit make use of it lawfully. (My translation)

This verse presents a contrast with Paul’s previous statements in verses 6 and 7. In verse 6, Paul describes why certain unidentified pastors in Ephesus turned aside from Paul’s gospel to pointless talk, namely they deviated from obeying the command to love their fellow Christ as Christ loves and were not fulfilling their responsibilities to administrate the household of God by teaching this command to their congregations. Then, in verse 7, he describes how or the means by which they turned aside to pointless talk, namely, by desiring to be teachers of the Mosaic Law. Now, in verse 8, he makes the statement that the Law is good if one uses it lawfully or correctly applies it. In verses 9-11, he presents who the Law was intended for and presents a vice list to characterize those who the Law is intended for.

Therefore, the apostle is contrasting the misuse of the Law by these pastors in Ephesus who aspired to be teachers of the Law with the correct application of it, which he and Timothy and the other apostles taught and was accepted by the Christian community throughout the Roman Empire in general.
It is introducing a series of statements that end in verse 11 that stand in direct contrast with his statements in verses 3-7, which describe certain unidentified pastors in Ephesus who desired to be teachers of the Mosaic Law and were teaching false doctrine by being occupied with Jewish myths and the pointless application of the genealogies of the Old Testament. So the contrast is between Paul’s apostolic teaching with regards to the proper use and accurate application of the Mosaic Law with the improper use and misapplication of it by these unidentified pastors in Ephesus. The misapplication of the Law by these pastors makes it absolutely imperative that he presents the proper application of it.

1 Timothy 1:8 is a fifth class condition that teaches the spiritual principle that the Law is useful if one uses it correctly.

The protasis: “if one at any time does make use of it lawfully.” The apodasis: “we affirm that the Law does, as an eternal spiritual truth exist in the state of being useful.”

The protasis of this fifth class condition that helps to compose verse 8 indicates that for the Mosaic Law and in particular the moral code aspect of the Law to have its proper result it must be used in accord with this three-fold purpose. This principle helps to expose the error of those pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of the Mosaic Law. In other words, it is useful if one understands and applies its three-fold purpose. In particular if one understands that it reveals God’s perfect standards, personal sins committed by man and his sinful nature as well as his need for the Savior. This usage of the Law is reflected in Paul’s statements in verses 9-10.

In the apodasis, what Paul is asserting about the Law in verses 8-11 is inspired and confirmed by the Holy Spirit and accepted by the apostles and their disciples in contrast to those pastors in Ephesus who sought to be teachers of the Law and were not using it properly.

When Paul speaks of the Law in this verse, he is referring to the Mosaic Law and specifically to the moral code or Ten Commandments. This is indicated by the fact that when Paul uses the term nomos he usually has the Mosaic Law in mind or the Old Testament as a whole. Secondly, when he speaks of the law in verses 8-10, it has the same ethical concerns as those of the Mosaic Law.

The list of vices in verses 9-10 is similar to the Decalogue as Knight points out (page 81) who also points out that “when Paul elsewhere speaks of ‘law’ and gives ethical lists, it is the Mosaic moral law that is in view (cf., e.g., Rom. 13:9ff.)” (page 81).

Thirdly, in verses 4, Paul has already mentioned that these pastors in Ephesus were occupied with myths and useless genealogies, which we noted were Jewish in nature. The noun nomodidaskalos means “teachers of the Law” which is another clear indication that nomos in verse 8 refers to the Mosaic Law.
The fourth reason why *nomos* is referring to the Law is that Paul is contrasting his use of the Law with these unidentified pastors who misused the Law and wanted to be teachers of the Law. The reference to genealogies in verse 4, which occur in the Pentateuch indicate that *nomos* refers to the Mosaic Law.

Lastly, the word’s articular construction indicates to the reader that *nomos* is “well-known” to them and not Roman law or law in general.

When Paul says that the Law is “good,” he means that it is “useful.” This is indicated in that Paul is contrasting his use of the Law with that of those pastors in Ephesus. Also, this word appears in the apodasis of a fifth class condition. The protasis speaks of using the Law correctly and the apodasis affirms that the Law is useful if one uses lawfully. He is saying that the Law is useful if it is used correctly.

1 Timothy 1:9-10 continue the discussion of the Mosaic Law and in particular the Moral Code portion of the Law, i.e. the Ten Commandments. Paul is speaking about the Law from its condemnatory purpose meaning that the Law was designed to reveal man’s sinful nature and God’s holy character and that man does not measure up to God’s perfect holy standards. This condemnation by the Law was to lead the sinner to Christ.

1 Timothy 1:9 For you see, one must affirm this fact, namely that the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth, by no means established for the benefit of the righteous but in fact, for the benefit of those who break the Law, for the benefit of those who are insubordinate, for the benefit of those who are irreverent and for the benefit of those who are sinful by nature and practice, for the benefit of those of those who are unholy and for the benefit of those who are worldly, for the benefit of those who murder their father and mother, for the benefit of murderers, 10 for the benefit of those who are fornicators, for the benefit of those who are homosexuals, for the benefit of those who are kidnappers, for the benefit of those who are liars, for the benefit of those who are perjurers and in addition, if, and let us assume that it is true for the sake of argument that any other does oppose itself to that which is sound doctrine and we agree that there is. (My translation)

So in these verses he teaches that this moral code does not apply to the Christian who has been declared righteous through faith alone in Christ alone. Rather, it is for those who are non-Christians who need the Law to show them their sinful nature and that they don’t measure up to God’s perfect standards and that they are in need of the Savior.

Paul is not implying that Christians are at liberty to break the Ten Commandments, i.e. the Decalogue, rather he is merely pointing out that the Christian’s way of life is not governed by this aspect of the Mosaic Law. Again, he
is speaking about the Law from the perspective that it was designed to condemn
the sinner and thus lead them to Christ.

He teaches in his other epistles and mentions in 1 Timothy 1:5, the Christian’s
life is governed by the Spirit and in particular the command of our Lord to love
God with one’s entire being and love one another as He loves through the power of
the Spirit. These two commands summarize the teaching of the Word of God.

Therefore, those pastors emphasizing obedience to the Ten Commandments to
live righteously are missing the point or misapplying the Law. The Christian’s
lifestyle is to be governed by walking by faith in the Spirit’s teaching in the Word
of God and in particular obeying the Lord Jesus Christ’s command to love one
another as He loves through the power of the Spirit and not simply by obeying the
Ten Commandments. These apostate pastors in Ephesus were following the
Judaizers’ doctrine and were being selective with regards to their obedience to the
Law by emphasizing strict observance to the Ten Commandments.

So Paul is teaching in verses 9-10 that the Decalogue is not for the “righteous,”
i.e. the sinner justified through faith in Christ, i.e. the Christian but rather for those
who are unsaved since this moral code is designed reveal God’s holy character,
man’s sinful nature and lead the sinner to Christ for salvation. These pastors were
teaching in error that observance of the Law is to govern the Christian’s lifestyle.

“For you see, one must affirm this fact” is an epexegetical clause meaning
that Paul is defining or explaining more explicitly why the Law is useful if one
makes use of it lawfully. He is defining how this principle is true or in other words,
he is attempting to define in explicit terms this principle, or how this is the case. It
indicates that Paul is explaining more explicitly this principle that the Law is only
useful if one makes use of it lawfully.

“The Law” refers to the Mosaic Law and specifically to the moral code or Ten
Commandments. The anarthrous construction of nomos is emphasizing a particular
aspect of the Mosaic Law, namely, the moral code or Ten Commandments. This is
indicated by the fact that the first three couplets are offenses against God that
correspond to the first four of the Ten Commandments and the remaining vices,
which are offenses against people, correspond to the next five commandments.

“Namely that the Law is, as an eternal spiritual truth, by no means
established for the benefit of the righteous” is emphatic presenting a spiritual
axiom that the Law was by no means established by God for the righteous.

“The righteous” refers to the Christian and describes their state of possessing
the “absolute” righteousness of God through imputation as a result of exercising
faith alone in Christ alone. It describes those sinners who have been declared
justified as a result of receiving the imputation of righteousness as a gift the
moment they exercised faith alone in Christ. It speaks of the positional stage of
transforming the Christian into the image of Christ.
The adjective *dikaios* does not refer to the Christian living in the righteousness of God or in other words experiencing divine righteousness but rather it refers to the positional aspect of righteousness. In other words it refers to the state of the sinner who possesses divine righteousness as a result of being declared justified by God as a result of receiving the gift of righteousness through imputation the moment they exercised faith alone in Christ alone.

This is indicated not only by the meaning of the word, which we noted above in detail, which is emphasizing the state of possessing righteousness but also because Paul is contrasting this word with the unsaved. In the adversative clause, he presents a list of sins that are in violation of the Ten Commandments and characterize the unsaved.

The Law was designed to reveal God’s holy character, man’s sinful condition and lead the sinner to Christ. The Christian, i.e. the justified sinner is already convinced that they are a sinner and have come to Christ. Thus, they benefited from this purpose of the Law. The unsaved have not. Thus, when Paul presents the vice list in verses 9b-10, it is a list of sins that characterize those who have not yet responded to this three-fold purpose of the Law. Paul is saying that those who have already been declared righteous have no need for this three-fold purpose of the Law. However, those who are characterized by the lists of sins in verses 9b-10 still have need of the Law since they have not yet come to Christ, which the Law was designed to lead them to. Therefore, the unidentified pastors in Ephesus who were attempting to be teachers of the Law and were teaching adherence to the Ten Commandments were misapplying the Law by emphasizing obedience to the Law as the basis for the Christian way of life.

1 Timothy 1:9b-10 is an adversative clause. It is contrasting those who are righteous, i.e. the Christian with those who are not. This contrast is also emphatic emphasizing that the Law is for the unsaved. It is expressing an emphatic contrast between the Christian’s relationship to the Law and the relationship that the unsaved have with respect to it.

In this adversative clause Paul employs a rhetorical device known as a vice list in order to make clear to the Ephesian church, which particular group of people that the Law benefits. This vice list does not emphasize sin but a certain group of people, namely the unsaved in contrast to the Christian who is righteous through faith in Christ. This list identifies the unsaved as benefiting from the three-fold purpose of the Law. This vice list corresponds to the Ten Commandments, i.e. the Decalogue. Specifically this corresponds to nine of the Ten Commandments.

The vice list that appears in 1 Timothy 1:9b-10 is given in four pairs, followed by a series of six individual terms and concluded with a general catch-all category. This list characterizes the unsaved since it stands in contrasts with *dikaios*, “for a righteous person” which speaks of the sinner who is declared righteous through
faith in Christ, i.e. the Christian. Thus, for these unidentified pastors in Ephesus to attempt to apply this moral code to those already in the Christian community through faith in Christ was in error.

The noun didaskalia, “doctrine” refers to the content of what the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles taught. This term appears often in the Pastoral letters referring to the content of Christ’s teaching and His apostles in contrast to those who taught false doctrine or doctrine that was not in accord with the Lord’s teaching and His apostles (1 Timothy 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Timothy 3:10, 16; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7, 10).

The verb hugiaino, “sound” describes apostolic teaching as being free from error or falsehood and is used to describe Paul’s apostolic teaching in contrast to the false doctrine taught by certain unidentified pastors in Ephesus who were occupied with Jewish myths and useless genealogies of the Old Testament. Like didaskalia which it modifies, this word also appears often in the Pastorals to describe the soundness of the content of the Lord Jesus Christ’s teaching and His apostles in contrast to those who taught false doctrine and were occupied with myths and useless genealogies and being teachers of the Law (1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2).

These two words together refer to accepted and authoritative apostolic teaching that is free from error or falsehood since it is inspired by the Holy Spirit and promotes spiritual growth in the body of Christ. This is in contrast to the false doctrine taught by these unidentified pastors in Ephesus who were occupied with Jewish myths and useless genealogies and sought become teachers of the Law.

Conclusion

So in this study we learned from the Scriptures that the purpose of the Law in relation to the unsaved is to reveal God’s perfect, holy standards and man’s sinful and depraved condition and that an infinite gulf separates them from God. It is ultimately designed to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ to deliver them from condemnation. In relation to the Christian, the basis for their spiritual life is not obedience to the Law. Since the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law by His obedience and since church age believers are in union with Him, the Christian is under a new law, namely, the obligation to walk by the Spirit through faith in the Word of God (Romans 8:2-4). If we are led by the Spirit, then we are not under the Law (Galatians 5:18).