

## WHY CHRISTIANS ARE NOT UNDER THE REGULATIONS OF THE LAW OF MOSES

### OVERVIEW

#### *JESUS KEPT THE MOSAIC LAW*

Although Jesus showed himself to be against the oral law that had developed with the Pharisees, he not only kept the actual Mosaic Law in obedience to God but he encouraged others to do so (Matt. 8:4; 15:3, 4; 19:17-19), saying:

- ❖ “Do not think that I have come to abolish *the Law or the Prophets*; I have not come to abolish them but **to fulfil them**. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore **whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven**, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (*Matt. 5:17-20*).

He then went on in verse 21 to the end of the chapter to emphasize the fact that the following of the Mosaic Law should be based on deeper principles so that **the spirit of the Law** was more important than the mere keeping of regulations. This was a reinterpretation of the Law by Jesus and in time such emphasis would supersede the keeping of the regulations of the Law as the New Covenant came into force. NOTE: We will comment on Matthew 5:17-20 later in this study.

#### *THE FIRST CHRISTIANS KEPT THE MOSAIC LAW*

Immediately after Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension Christianity was entirely Jewish and differed only from regular Judaism inasmuch as it promoted Jesus who had fulfilled numerous Scriptures as the Messiah, who had died and had been resurrected and was now sitting at God’s right hand as Lord awaiting his time to return. Other than that there was not much that was noticeably different about these Jewish Christians compared to Judaism. They continued to meet in the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1, to offer sacrifices (Matt. 5:23, 24) and to observe the Law of Moses in all other ways (Acts 21:24). This is undeveloped Christianity. Jesus had yet to direct them further in their development.

#### *THE TRANSITION TO FULLY DEVELOPED CHRISTIANITY*

Jesus had instructed his followers only up to a certain point prior to his ascension. So he was in the process of developing Christianity. There was more to come as he said to the disciples:

- ❖ “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (*John 16:12-13*).

As “the Spirit of truth” [*the advocate*] Jesus (1John 2:1) used some of his disciples, through their various inspired writings, to reveal the further development of Christianity. These included the Pharisee Saul later to become the Apostle Paul. In his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus Paul was commissioned by Jesus as his emissary (Acts 9:3-22; 22:6-11; 26:12-18). At later times Paul had further encounters with Jesus which included instructions and revelatory visions (2 Cor. 12:1). Jesus also provided further revelation through the writer of the letter to the Hebrews on the subject of the Mosaic Law (Heb. 3:5; 7:1-8:13). In other words Jesus was continuing to direct his body of believers through his emissaries to lead them toward developed Christianity. This developing Christianity was to break from the keeping of regulations of the Mosaic Law including the keeping of any of the 3 types of Sabbath – weekly, monthly, and annually. An early stage in this break came after Peter’s commission

to bring Gentiles into the Christian Congregation, namely Cornelius and his household (Acts 10). Shortly after the issue arose concerning whether or not all Gentile Christians should or should not keep the Mosaic Law. The meeting which settled this issue is detailed for us in Acts 15. Here, the Judaizers insisted that all Gentile Christians should keep the Mosaic Law. However, Paul, Barnabas, Peter and James and others reached “one accord” (Acts 15:25) in their decision not to impose the Mosaic Law on the Gentile Christians. More importantly, this was the decision of Jesus in spirit (verse 28).

NOTE; Some forms of Christianity of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries dropped back to being undeveloped Christianity and structured themselves around the Mosaic Law. These denominations were known as the Ebionites and the Nazarenes. Both were heretical forms of Christianity. They failed to take into account Jesus’ directions through Paul, John and the writer to the Hebrews.

The Ebionites, for instance used only the Gospel of Matthew, yet with its first two chapters missing. So they viewed Jesus as having been fathered by Joseph rather than God and as becoming the Messiah only at his baptism. This is known as ‘Adoptionism’; whereby God adopted Jesus as his Son only at his baptism. They did not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus.

Before we examine the position for Christians we need firstly to examine what was the purpose of the Law and what was involved in it.

### WHAT DID THE LAW OF MOSES INCLUDE?

- ❖ *Israel was to “...keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses...” (1 Kings 2:3).*

So there is no regulation or decree set out by Moses that is exempt from the term “*the Law of Moses.*” This was the Law of God for Israel and included circumcision, purification rites, Sabbath-keeping, festivals and all food laws. In the Scriptures there is no mention of any food laws that are applicable to all mankind. However, there were over 600 of these **statutes, commandments, rules, and testimonies** given by Moses. Therefore if someone wished to live the Jewish life by keeping Sabbaths, feast days and food laws they must also follow all of the other 600+ laws such as making the various sacrifices e.g. bringing an offering to a priest so that he may offer it on an altar in a tabernacle or temple. This led Paul to say:

- ❖ “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law” (Gal. 5:3).

### WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE MOSAIC LAW?

#### *IT MADE TRANSGRESSIONS MANIFEST*

- ❖ “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7:7).

#### *IT WAS A GAURDIAN LEADING TO CHRIST*

- ❖ “Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions...**until the seed** would come to whom the promise had been made ... But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law...Therefore *the Law* has become our **guardian to lead us to Christ**, so that we may be justified *by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian*” (Gal. 3:19, 23-25).

*The primary part of the Law was the sacrificial system which would deal with the nation of Israel’s sins “until the seed would come” to permanently remove sin.* Also Israel was being treated as a child at this stage with the Law acting as a temporary **guardian**.

IT WAS A SHADOW OF FUTURE THINGS

- ❖ “No one is to act as your judge in respect to food or...*a festival* or a *new moon* or a *Sabbath* day--- things which are a mere **shadow of what is to come**; but the *substance belongs to Christ*” (Col. 2:16, 17).
- ❖ “For *the Law*, since it has only **a shadow** of *the good things to come* and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near” (Heb. 10:1).
- ❖ “...those who offer gifts according to the Law; who serve as a copy and **shadow** of the heavenly things [*i.e. things pertaining to Christ as originating with God*]” (Heb. 8:4, 5).

The whole Law was a single shadow (1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4, 8:13, 31:3; Neh. 10:33). If we live by the shadow we are denying the substance, that is, we are denying Christ because he was and is “*the good things to come.*”

IT DIVIDED OFF JEWS FROM GENTILES

- ❖ “He [*Jesus*]...who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the **dividing wall**, by **abolishing** in his flesh **the enmity**, *which is the Law* of commandments contained in *ordinances*, so that in himself he might make the two into one new man” (Eph. 2:14, 15).

COULD ONE PERFECTLY KEEP THE MOSAIC LAW?

- ❖ “But his **delight is in the law** of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:2).
- ❖ “For this commandment which I command you today is **not too difficult** for you, nor is it out of reach” (Deut. 30:11).
- ❖ “In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named **Zechariah**, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was **Elizabeth**. And they were **both righteous** before God, **walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes** of the Lord” (Luke 1:5, 6)
- ❖ “If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I [*Paul*] more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of the tribe of Benjamin*, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; **concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless**” (Phil. 3:4-6).
- ❖ “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived **in all good conscience before God** until this day” (Acts 23:1).

Evidently Jews were keeping the law blamelessly; yet this does not mean that they would never have sinned. There was never the perfectionist standard that was read back into the law that later generations proposed. Clearly a Jew was keeping the law blamelessly when taking his sin offering to the priest.

NOTE: There is a false teaching to the effect that Jesus was the only one to ever keep the Mosaic Law perfectly. Certainly he was the only one who never sinned (Heb.4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). However, as above, others also kept the law perfectly i.e. blamelessly.

JESUS BEGINS THE TRANSITION FROM MOSAIC REGULATIONS  
TO “THE LAW OF CHRIST”

THE FOOD LAWS ARE NO LONGER APPLICABLE

- ❖ “...whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him (Thus he declared all foods clean)” (Mark 7:18, 19).

TEMPLE WORSHIP TO BE SUPERCEDED

❖ “But I say to you that something **greater than the temple** is here” (Matt. 12:6).

*The temple with its priesthood and sacrificial system was the very heart of Jewish worship and as a Jew Jesus kept the Law and directed others to do so.* However, his statement that he, as “something greater than the temple [was now] here,” shows that he was beginning the transition away from the regulatory system of the Mosaic Law. He began this transition by his statements in the Sermon on the Mount where he spiritualized some of the Mosaic Law regulations.

SPIRITUALIZING OF THE LAW

This change involved a spiritualizing of the law in which Jesus showed the greater depth of the Law so that it would be reinterpreted in its radical and more beneficial sense. This would now involve one’s being motivated from the heart. This change was officially completed when Jesus ratified the New Covenant by his death.

Matthew 5:21-44:

**THE LAW**  
“the ancients were told”

**THE SPIRITUALIZED LAW**  
“but I [Jesus] say to you.”

You shall not commit murder.....everyone who is angry with his brother is guilty.  
You shall not commit adultery.....everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already.  
Let him give her a certificate of divorce.....makes her commit adultery.  
You shall not make false vows.....let your *yes* be *yes* and your *no*, *no*.  
An eye for an eye.....do not resist the evil person.  
You shall love your neighbour.....love your enemies and pray for your persecutors.

FURTHER SPIRITUALIZING OF THE LAW

❖ “Christ our *Passover* has been sacrificed. Therefore let us *be keeping (Rotherham) the feast*, not with old leaven...but with the unleavened bread of **sincerity and truth**” (1 Cor. 5:7, 8).

The reference here is to the **Passover lamb**. This is spiritualized to become “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” Rather than an annual physical celebration the **Passover festival** is spiritualized so that it becomes a daily way of life. This is based on the fact that the verb “*be keeping*” is in the present progressive tense. Hence William Barclay translates as: “*Let us live life as if it was a continual festival.*” Furthermore the **unleavened bread** is spiritualized into a continuous feast of sincerity and truth.

THE CHANGE OF PRIESTHOOD, LAW AND MINISTRY

- ❖ “...for when the priesthood is changed [*from Aaronic to Melchizedekian*], of necessity there takes place a **change of law** [*from Old to New covenant*] also” (Heb. 7:11).
- ❖ “...now he [*Jesus*] has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as he is also the mediator of a **better covenant**, which has been enacted on better promises” (Heb. 8:6).

PREVIOUSLY UNCLEAN FOODS ARE NO LONGER TO BE REJECTED

- ❖ “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:4, 5).
- ❖ “One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him ... <sup>14</sup>I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that **nothing is unclean in itself**, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the

one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is **not a matter of eating and drinking** but of *righteousness and peace and joy* in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:2, 3, 14-17).

Paul is here restating what Jesus had previously shown, i.e. that the prohibited foods of the Mosaic Law no longer defile a man (Mark 7:18, 19) and therefore no longer apply. He backs this up by saying:

- ❖ “...it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, **not by foods**, which *have not benefited* those devoted to them” (Heb. 13:9).

#### PETER'S VISION

- ❖ “The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; **for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.**" And the voice came to him again a second time, "**What God has made clean, do not call common.**" This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven” (Acts 10:9-16).

So Peter is no longer to think of these creatures as unclean for food as had been the case under the Law of Moses. They are now declared to be clean by God and so Peter is encouraged to eat them. There can be no argument here that the reference is only to the unclean Gentiles to whom Peter was about to be sent. These cleansed foods were symbolic of cleansed Gentiles. In fact, God would hardly lie to Peter about these animals having been cleansed and thereby encourage Peter to sin by breaking God's laws if they were, in fact, still in effect.

#### “EAT WHATEVER IS SET BEFORE YOU”

- ❖ “If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, **eat whatever is set before you** without raising any question on the ground of conscience” (1 Cor. 10:27).

*Although this is in the context of the meat offered to pagan idols the principle still applies to one's being able to eat the previously “unclean” meats because they have now been declared to be clean.*

#### KEEPING FEAST DAYS OBSCURES THE REALITY OF CHRIST

- ❖ “These are **the appointed feasts** of the LORD, the holy convocations ... <sup>5</sup>In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, is the LORD's **Passover**. <sup>6</sup>And on the fifteenth day of the same month is **the Feast of Unleavened Bread** to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread ... <sup>10</sup>“you shall bring the sheaf of **the firstfruits of your harvest** to the priest ... <sup>16</sup>You shall count **fifty days** to the day after the seventh Sabbath ... You shall **hold a holy convocation**. You shall not do any ordinary work ... In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with **blast of trumpets**, a holy convocation ... <sup>27</sup>“Now on the tenth day of this seventh month **is the Day of Atonement**. ... On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the **Feast of Booths** to the LORD. ... <sup>44</sup>Thus **Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD**”

(Lev. 23: 4-7, 10, 16, 23, 24, 27, 44).

*All these feasts arrived with the Mosaic Law and not before. There is no evidence that any of the patriarchs observed these feasts. So along with the rest of the Mosaic Law the feasts as statutes have ceased to exist, having been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). These feasts now have the spiritualized form that both Jesus and Paul gave them.*

### **Colossians 2:16, 17 ESV:**

“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to *a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath*. ” These are *a shadow* of the things to come, but *the substance belongs to Christ*.”

This does not mean that “no one [is to] pass judgment on you” because you want to keep feasts and Sabbaths, but rather, “no one is to act as your judge” **because you realize that these statutes were only a shadow** and not the real thing i.e. Christ. Therefore you have decided not to keep them. The reference here is to all holy days, annual—monthly—weekly.

## THE TRANSITION FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW COVENANT

### PAUL'S DEFERENCE TO THE JEWS

- ❖ “...we sailed away from Philippi after the **days of Unleavened Bread...**” (*Acts 20:6*).
- ❖ “Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and **circumcised him** *because of the Jews* who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” (*Acts 16:3*).
- ❖ “What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are *under a vow*; <sup>24</sup>take these men and *purify yourself along with them* and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in **observance of the law** ... <sup>26</sup>Then Paul took the men, and the next day he **purified himself along with them** and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and **the offering presented for each** one of them” (*Acts 21:22-24, 26*).

During this transition time Paul did not want to give offence to the Jews to whom he hoped to convey the gospel message. So he did a number of things in deference to Jewish feelings so that he says: “*to the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews*” (1 Cor.9:20). So the transition seems to have been completed by the time the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 because without the temple sacrificial system the regulations of the Mosaic Law became meaningless because “every man who accepts circumcision...is obligated to keep the whole law” (Gal. 5:3). So from A.D. 70 it was impossible for Jews to keep the whole Law so that in “*becoming* obsolete and *growing* old...**ready to vanish away**” it finally became “obsolete” (Heb. 8:13).

NOTE: In Acts 18:21 the KJV and NKJV present Paul as saying: “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem.” However, this is not in the oldest manuscripts.

## THE YOKE AND BURDEN THE JEWS COULD NOT BEAR

The Law died when Jesus died (Col. 2:14). Yet Judaizing Christians required that Gentile as well as Jewish Christians be circumcised and come under the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:5). The assembly of apostles and elders at Jerusalem rejected the Judaizers requirements as can be seen from the statements given by Peter and then James:

- ❖ “...why do you **put God to the test** by placing on the neck of the disciples *a yoke* which neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear?” (*Acts 15:10*).
- ❖ “...it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us to lay no greater burden (*on the gentiles*) than these essentials...” (*Acts 15:28, 29*).

These essentials, which did not contain major parts of the Old Covenant, were in deference to Jewish converts and not permanent; otherwise it would have been a laying on them of the same unbearable

‘yoke.’ But after this assembling of the brothers in Jerusalem there is no further mention of these issues i.e. food regulations, related to the Mosaic Law.

*ONE WHO GETS CIRCUMCISED MUST KEEP THE WHOLE LAW*

❖ “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law”  
(Gal. 5:3).

*Because Circumcision is the rite of entry into the Jewish way of life one who wants to keep the Mosaic Law must also get circumcised. It is a total package.*

THE OLD COVENANT IS NOW ENSLAVING

❖ “Tell me you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had **two sons**, one by the **bondwoman** and one by the **free woman**. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman **through the promise**. This is allegorically speaking, for these women [*Sarah and Hagar*] are **two covenants**: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia [*where the Law was given*] and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is **in slavery** with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother....And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of the promise....we are not children of a bondwoman, but of a **free woman**” (Gal. 4:21-31).

*WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS 4:21-31* by Richard N. Longenecker.

NOTES: This section has been slightly condensed for clarity

Nomism = Religious conduct based on the ordinances of the Law of Moses.

Legalism = adherence to the doctrine of salvation by works rather than by faith.

**21 “Tell me you who want to be under the Law, Do you not hear the Law?”**...In speaking of his addressees as “those who want to be under the law,” Paul implies that his converts had not yet fully adopted the Judaizers’ **nomistic principles and practices** (cf. 1:7; 4:17), though they were beginning to observe the fasts and festivals of the Jewish calendar (cf. 4:10) and were at the point of going further in observing the Jewish law (cf. 1:6; 3:3; 4:11)...The expression “under the law” here obviously has the same meaning as in 3:22 and 4:4, where it refers in context to the **nomistic regulation of life by Mosaic legislation** (both written Torah and oral Torah), but also suggests that since Christ’s coming, **such a reversion to law** for the living of life would really be, at least for Gentile Christians, **a retrogression to legalism**...Paul’s challenge is that if the Galatians would really “hear” the law—that is, understand it fully and respond to it aright—they would **not regress to Jewish nomism**, for, as he argued earlier, the law’s purpose as a pedagogue (*tutor*—“to hold our hand”) was to function until the coming of Christ.

**22 “for it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.”**...Paul is here **responding to the scriptural arguments of his opponents**, for here “it is written” does not identify a specific text but rather it “allows the genuine Old Testament foundation of the Judaizers’ argument.”...**Neither “Sarah” nor “Ishmael” appears at all.** “The wording,” as Barrett observes, “implies that the story is already before the Galatians; they will know that the slave is Hagar, the free woman Sarah.”...The Judaizers had evidently contemporized the Hagar-Sarah story in their argument to prove that since the promises were made to Abraham and his seed, who was Sarah’s son Isaac, Gentile Christians had no share in the promise unless they submitted to the Mosaic law given to Isaac’s posterity and were circumcised.

**23 “indeed, the one by the slave woman was born according to the flesh but the one by the free woman was born as a result of promise.”**...Yet if Paul’s use of the Hagar-Sarah story is seen as **ad hominem** throughout...acknowledging, as it would, his opponents’ rightful emphasis on the differences between the births of the two sons. For they were “indeed” right in seeing the contrast between the two sons as being not only that of

status but also that of the ultimate explanation for their births, though **they were terribly wrong**, as he will spell out allegorically in what follows, **in how they lined up matters and in the implications they drew**.

**24 “these things are [now] being interpreted allegorically.”**...C. K. Barrett has proposed that Paul’s exegetical practices throughout Galatians:

“can be best explained if we may suppose that **he is taking up passages that had been used by his opponents, correcting their exegesis**, and showing that their Old Testament proof texts were on his side rather than on theirs”...

R. P. C. Hanson is quite right to bring his discussion of 4:21–31 to a close with the following statement:

His [*Paul’s*] motives for using it [*allegory*] were, as far as we can discover, far from being those of the Alexandrians, and especially Philo, who wanted by allegory to avoid the necessity of taking historical narrative seriously; **Paul on the contrary used allegory as an aid to typology**, a method of interpreting the Old Testament which...does at least regard history as something meaningful. It is significant that there is no typology in Philo whereas Paul is full of it (*Allegory and Event*, 82–83).

**“the women represent two covenants. One, indeed, is from Mt. Sinai and bears children unto slavery, which is Hagar.”**...Paul is here acknowledging a connection made by the Judaizers between Hagar, Mt. Sinai, and slavery, which was made in Jewish tradition when talking about the Ishmaelites (Hagar’s posterity) and their settling in the desert regions to the south. But while acknowledging such a connection, Paul goes on in what follows to turn it to his own advantage....

**25 “now Hagar stands for Mt. Sinai in Arabia.”**...Why would Paul have included such a seemingly mundane bit of geographical information in such a highly polemical passage...It is McNamara’s thesis...that not only were *“most of the significant episodes of the desert wanderings and of the further Jewish traditions”* **centered in and around the Nabatean capital Petra, but also that the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai** was believed by some to have taken place in that region; and so Paul, who himself may have resided in this region during his post conversion sojourn in Arabia mentioned in Gal 1:17, perhaps **had this constellation of ideas in mind** when saying *“Now Hagar is (or, ‘represents’) Mt. Sinai in Arabia.”* Basing his argument on Jewish tradition as drawn principally from the Targums, but also referring to Arabic place names and Paul’s own word association, McNamara concludes:

**Hagar, in fact, may have been a designation for Mount Sinai** in the vicinity of Petra and at the heart of Arabia...One may legitimately ask, if the Galatians can be expected to have understood such a reference to Jewish tradition. They probably did not. ...one need also observe that an *ad hominem* interpretation of Paul’s use of the Hagar-Sarah story, which postulates that Paul’s Galatian converts had heard much already from the Judaizers regarding Hagar and her associations, understands that it is the Judaizers’ explication of the story that Paul here responds to. Thus, Paul’s Galatian converts seem to have been caught in a cross-fire of interpreted associations, with Paul’s identification of Hagar with Mt. Sinai being more understandable and meaningful to them than can be demonstrated from the text itself... **“and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in bondage with her children.”**...The spelling *lerosolema* (“**Jerusalem**”) appears in 1:17, 18; 2:1 when Paul refers to his early visits as a Christian to Jerusalem, while here the name of the city is **spelled lerousalhem**. The former is more the profane designation used simply to identify the city; the latter is the Hebraic and LXX name used often **with sacred connotations**...Here, however, particularly in antithesis to (“the Jerusalem that is above”) of v 26, his emphasis is on **the religious significance of the city: the present city of Jerusalem to which the Judaizers looked as the source and support of their gospel**...For Paul, however, slavery and freedom were the most important factors to be taken into consideration when asking how the various participants in salvation history were to be understood. So Paul, in what was undoubtedly a shocking realignment of personages and places in a Jewish understanding of salvation history, **sets out the line of slavery as follows**: Hagar and her son Ishmael, who have to do with Mount Sinai, are to be associated with the present city of Jerusalem and her children, **from whence the Judaizers came**. For, says Paul,

Jerusalem, like Hagar, “is in slavery with her children.”

**26** “but the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.” Structurally, vv 25 and 26 together comprise two halves of a chiasm, though with a lacuna or anomaly in the second part:

A Hagar  
 B Mt. Sinai  
 C slavery  
 D the present city of Jerusalem  
 D’ the Jerusalem that is above  
 C’ freedom  
 B’ (Mt. Zion)  
 A’ our mother.

...The idea of a “heavenly Jerusalem” (“the Jerusalem that is above”) has a rich Jewish background...the realization of **God’s reign in its totality. As such, it is an eschatological concept that describes Jerusalem as it will be at the end of time**, often in contrast to what the city is at present...This concept of a “**heavenly**” or “**new**” Jerusalem also epitomized the hopes of Jewish Christians, as in Heb 11:10, 14–16; 12:22; 13:14; and Rev 3:12; 21:2, where the full realization of God’s kingdom and Christ’s reign is set out in terms of a “heavenly” or “new” Jerusalem that was looked forward to by the patriarchs and is now experienced by Christians in inaugurated fashion. Paul’s description of “the Jerusalem that is above” as being “free” is largely dependent on the statement “who is our mother.” For although the “heavenly Jerusalem” may be presumed to be not in bondage but free, Paul’s argument for the freedom of Christian believers has rested largely on the depiction of the status of **Sarah “the free woman”** in vv 22–23, who, though unnamed, **is the spiritual mother of the Galatians and of all Christians**. There is, however, as noted above, a lacuna or anomaly in Paul’s chiasmic arrangement of correspondences, **for there is in the second part of the chiasm no positive counterpart to Mt. Sinai**. This is particularly striking when compared to the contrasts between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion set out by the writer to the Hebrews in **Hebrews 12:18–24**, where the second part of that depiction begins with the words, “**But you have come to Mt. Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God**” (v 22...Here in his Hagar-Sarah allegory, therefore, Paul conflates two Jewish traditions: the first, that of Sarah, the barren freeborn wife of Abraham, who was destined to be the mother of nations; the second, that of the holy city **Jerusalem, the eschatological Zion, who symbolically is the mother of God’s own**...

**27** “for it is written: Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains. Because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”... (“it is written”)...introduces a specific biblical quotation, viz., **Isa 54:1**, which was a prominent oracle in Jewish eschatological expectation that had to do with **the future glory of Zion**. The conjunction *gavr* is used in a confirmatory manner in support of **the identification of Sarah** with “the Jerusalem that is above” and the claim that all Christians (including Gentile believers) **have as their mother both Sarah and the heavenly Jerusalem**... Here the fact that Sarah was **barren allows Paul to connect Sarah with Isa 54:1**, which also contains the word “barren.” Thus the “**barren one**” is also the city of Jerusalem, who, though barren, is the wife of the Lord (54:5–8) and should rejoice because she will be rebuilt by the Lord (54:11–12) and because her sons will be taught by the Lord (54:13)... In Paul’s allegorical treatment of the Hagar-Sarah story, **Sarah is spiritual mother to Gentile Christians in Galatia as well as Jewish Christians (“our mother”)**, for she as the freeborn wife of Abraham bears children who are born free because of God’s promise to Abraham...Moreover, **Sarah** is “our mother” because as “the Jerusalem that is above” she stands in direct contrast to “the present city of Jerusalem,” whose children (like those of Hagar) are children of slavery. Since, therefore, “the Jerusalem that is above” is **an eschatological term expressing a reality that will exist in the future**, Paul’s use of it here for the experience of the Galatian believers implies that, as Paul understood matters, the Galatian believers had come into the eschatological situation of already participating in that future reality, in that the promise made to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ (cf. 3:16; 5:1).

**28** “so you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.”...For against the Judaizers’ claim, Gentiles “in Christ” — apart from any Jewish nomistic lifestyle —are true sons and daughters of Abraham’s freeborn wife Sarah and true children of the heavenly Jerusalem through God’s promise made to Abraham. They are represented by Isaac, not Ishmael.

**29** “and just as it was then, where the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is even now.”...Two features...The first is that here the emphasis is on the **two types of people** the two sons represent, those who live out their lives in terms of legal ordinances and those who live their lives by the Spirit’s direction. The second is that those “like Isaac” are referred to as born “according to the Spirit.”...Thus by reference to what he sees as a confirming historical parallel, Paul identifies the Judaizers with Ishmael, who is of “the flesh” and a persecutor, and the Gentile believers of Galatia with Isaac, who is of “the Spirit” and persecuted.

**30** “but what does the Scripture say? ‘Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will never share in the inheritance with the son of the free woman.’”...Here Sarah’s uncharitable words in Gen 21:10 are applied to the situation in Galatia, though Paul attributes them not to Sarah but to “the Scripture” and adapts them to the Galatian context by changing “my son Isaac” to “the son of the free woman.” Probably the Judaizers of Galatia had themselves used Genesis 21:10 against Paul, whose theology in their view was an “Ishmaelian” form of truth and so should be “cast out.” Paul, however, having re-allegorized the Hagar-Sarah story from his own perspective, now uses the same exhortation against them to “enshrine the basic gospel truth: legal bondage and spiritual freedom cannot coexist” (Bruce, *Galatians*, 225).

The directive of v 30 is not a broadside against all Jews or Judaism. Nor is it a call for Gentile believers to rise up and expel their Jewish Christian brothers and sisters, whoever they might be...Rather, here in v 30 Paul calls for the **expulsion of the Judaizers** who had come into the Galatian congregations from the outside...What Paul is saying here is much more specific: contrary to how the Judaizers may have used Genesis 21:10 against him, in an allegorical treatment of the passage its message is really to be seen as **directed against the troublers of the Galatian believers**, and so the Galatian believers should “cast out” the Judaizers and their influence from the Christian congregations of Galatia.

**31** “Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.” The question that comes directly to the fore in Paul’s use of Abraham in 3:6–9, and that underlies all of his argumentation thereafter in 3:10–4:11, is: **Who are Abraham’s true children and heirs?** Likewise in his hortatory use of the Hagar-Sarah story in 4:21–31 it is **this question that permeates all the discussion**. So in concluding his allegorical reinterpretation of the Hagar-Sarah story Paul makes an affirmation that serves as the conclusion of 4:21– but also sets up the exhortations of 5:1–12 by reiterating the key features of “slavery” and “freedom.”

### **Explanation**

The argument of the Judaizers at Galatia seems clear. It is summarized by C. K. Barrett as follows: “The true descendants of Abraham are the Jews, who inhabit Jerusalem. Here are the true people of God; and it will follow that Jerusalem is the authoritative centre of the renewed people of God, now called the church. Those who are not prepared to attach themselves to this community by the approved means (circumcision) must be cast out; they cannot hope to inherit promises made to Abraham and his seed” (“The Allegory,” 10). In developing their argument, it may be **postulated that the Judaizers themselves allegorized the Hagar-Sarah story**...to use the statement recorded in Gen 21:10, “Cast out the slave woman and her son,” against Paul in some manner...

At least four matters of note must be kept constantly in mind when reading Paul’s Hagar-Sarah allegory. The **first** is that the central question dealt with by Paul in his use of both the example of Abraham in 3:6–9 and the Hagar-Sarah story in 4:21–31 is one of self-identification: **Who are Abraham’s true children?** On this matter the Judaizers and Paul were diametrically opposed. **Second**, Paul is using the Hagar-Sarah story in an **ad hominem** fashion... **Third**, Paul’s words here are specific, being **directed against the Judaizers’ message and activities**, and so are not to be taken as broadsides against all Jewish Christians or Jews. And **fourth**, what Paul says in contemporizing the Hagar-Sarah story is as an explication of his overall exhortation to his Galatian converts given in 4:12: “**become like me!**” For Paul, though himself a Jewish Christian, focused his thoughts and life on being “in Christ” (cf. 2:20), **not on a nomistic Jewish lifestyle** (cf. 3:23–25), and so experienced both freedom and the benefactions of God’s promise to Abraham.

Paul's Galatian letter, it must always be remembered, is not concerned just with "**legalism**," even though sadly it is often understood only in those terms. Rather, Galatians is principally concerned with "**nomism**" or whether Gentiles who believe in Christ must also be subject to **the directives of the Mosaic Law**...**Indeed, any nomistic position can become a legalistic one**, for matters easily become intertwined and confused. **So Paul deals first with legalism in his argumentation of 3:1–18**, but primarily so as to set the stage for his primary polemic **against nomism** in 3:19–4:7. And his exhortations against the Judaizers in 4:12–5:12, particularly his Hagar-Sarah allegory of 4:21–31, are focused on **repelling the call of the Judaizers to view the Jewish law as a necessary appendage or addendum to the Christian faith**.

*THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE POSITION HELD BY THOSE WHO PROMOTE THE KEEPING OF THE MOSAIC LAW*

In saying, "*Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will never share in the inheritance with the son of the free woman,*" Paul leaves us in no doubt about the seriousness of the position of those who promote a keeping of the Mosaic Law. They, as allegorically Hagar's son, are to be "Cast out" i.e. expelled from the Christian congregation because "**legal bondage and spiritual freedom cannot coexist**." Only this action would remove their influence from the Christian congregations.

NO FURTHER NEED FOR THE GUARDIAN

- ❖ "Therefore *the Law* has become our guardian to lead us to Christ ... But now that faith has come, we are **no longer under a guardian**" (*Gal. 3:24, 25*).

As Professor Emeritus James Dunn states with reference to the numerous statements in Galatians about the Mosaic Law:

The fulfilment of the promise meant that Israel no longer needed the special protection of the law, no longer needed the law as a guardian angel ... It was time for the heirs to enter upon their inheritance, to leave behind the slavlike status of the under-age child (4:1-7). In contrast, their clinging to the law was a clinging to an underprivileged status. And the attraction of the law to Gentile believers was the attraction of the detention room, equivalent to putting themselves under the old no-gods, the *stoicheia* (4:8-10).

*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* p.144.

THE OLD COVENANT IS NOW DEATH-DEALING

- ❖ "...a New Covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit; **for the letter kills**, but the spirit gives life....But if **the ministry of death** came with glory ... how will ***the ministry of the spirit*** fail to be even more with glory? For if **the ministry of condemnation** has glory how much more does ***the ministry of righteousness***. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if **that which fades away** was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory" (*2 Cor. 3:6-11*).

This is not to say that the Mosaic Law covenant was always death-dealing. It was previously life-giving as a guardian and for the regulation of life for Israel; but now it had completed its work with the coming of Messiah. And yet Israel failed to realize the temporary nature of the Mosaic Law covenant and the fact that it had now been surpassed with the arrival of Christ. By this failure Israel turned the Mosaic Law covenant into "the ministry of death" and "the ministry of condemnation."

THE MOSAIC LAW OF REGULATIONS IS NOW  
ABOLISHED – CANCELLED – OBSOLETE - ENDED

***Ephesians 2:14, 15:***

- “He [*Jesus*]...who made both groups [*Jews and Gentiles*] into one and broke down the barrier of the **dividing wall**, by **abolishing** in his flesh **the enmity**, which is **the Law** of commandments contained in *ordinances*.”

***Colossians 2:14:***

- “[*God*]...having **cancelled** out *the certificate* of debt consisting of **decrees** against us; and he has taken it out of the way, having **nailed it to the cross**.”

***Hebrews 8:13:***

- “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes *the first one* **obsolete**. And what is *becoming* obsolete and *growing* old is **ready to vanish away**.”

***2 Corinthians 3:11:***

- “For if what was **being brought to an end** [*the Mosaic Law*] came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.”

***Romans 6:14:***

- “...you are **not under law** but under grace.”

*ALL CHRISTIANS ARE RELEASED FROM THE MOSAIC LAW*

- ❖ “Likewise, my brothers, you also have **died to the law** through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now **we are released from the law**, *having died to that which held us captive*, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and **not in the old way of the written code**” (*Rom. 7:4-6*).
- ❖ “...he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the spirit, **not by the letter**...” (*Rom. 2:29*). *This is a SPIRITUALIZING of circumcision.*
- ❖ “For in Christ Jesus **neither circumcision** nor uncircumcision means anything, but *faith* working through *love* ... For **neither is circumcision anything**, nor uncircumcision, but *a new creation*” (*Gal. 5:6, 6:15*).

MATTHEW 5:17-19 DOES NOT MEAN WE MUST KEEP THE  
REGULATIONS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

- ❖ ““Do **not think** that I have **come to abolish the Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but to *fulfil* them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, **not an iota**, not a dot, **will pass from the Law** until **all** (Gk. *panta* = everything) is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these **commandments** and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but **whoever does them** and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven...”” (*Matt. 5:17-19*).

In *The Expositors Bible Commentary* Volume 8, D. A. Carson states:

For that is what “Law or the Prophets” here means: **the Scriptures**. The disjunctive “or” makes it clear that neither is to be abolished. The Jews of Jesus’ day could refer to the Scriptures as “The Law and the Prophets”

(7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 28:23; Rom 3:21); “The Law..., the Prophets, and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44); or just “Law” (5:18; John 10:34; 12:34; 15:25; 1Cor 14:21); the divisions were not yet stereotyped. Thus even if “or the Prophets” is redactional, the referent does not change when only Law is mentioned in v.18, but it may be a small hint that law, too, has a **prophetic function**...

1. The focus of Matthew 5 is the relation between the OT and Jesus’ teaching, not his actions. So any interpretation that says Jesus fulfils the Law by doing it misses the point.

2. If it is argued that Jesus confirms the Law, even its jot and tittle, by both his life and his teaching ... the first Gospel...is rendered inconsistent.

...The best interpretation of these difficult verses says that Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets in that they **point to him**, and he is their fulfilment. The antithesis is not between “abolish” and “keep” but between “abolish” and “fulfil.” “For Matthew, it is not the question of Jesus’ relation to the Law that is in doubt but rather it’s relation to him!” Therefore we give *pleroo* (“fulfil”) exactly the same meaning as in the formula quotations, which in the prologue (Matt. 1-2) have already laid great stress on the prophetic nature of the OT and the way it **points to Jesus**. Even OT events have this prophetic significance. A little later Jesus insists that “all the prophets and the Law prophesied” (11:13) ... Here Jesus presents himself as the eschatological goal of the OT, and thereby is the sole authoritative interpreter, the one through whom alone the OT finds valid continuity and significance ...

... The word *panta* ...cannot very easily refer to all the demands of the law that must be “accomplished,” because (1) The word “**law**” almost certainly refers here to **all Scripture and not just its commands** - but even if that were not so, v. 17 has shown that even imperatival law is prophetic; (2) The word *genetai* (“is accomplished”) must here be rendered “happen,” “come to pass” (i.e., “accomplished” in that sense, **not in the sense of obeying a law**). Hence *panta* (“everything”) is best understood to refer to everything in the law, considered under **the law’s prophetic function** ... Verse 18d simply means **the entire divine purpose prophesied in Scripture** must take place; not one jot or tittle will fail of its fulfilment ...

But what are “**these commandments**”? It appears, then, that the expression must refer to the commandments of the OT Scriptures. The entire Law and the Prophets are not scrapped by Jesus’ coming but fulfilled. Therefore the commandments of these Scriptures – even the least of them – must be practiced. But **the nature of the practicing has already been affected by vv. 17-18**. The law pointed forward to Jesus and his teaching; so it is properly obeyed **by conforming to his word**. As it points to him, so he, in fulfilling it, establishes what continuity it has, the true direction to which it points and the way it is to be obeyed.

pp. 142-146.

#### COMMENTS

- In other words the phrase “*the Law or the Prophets*” simply means **the OT Scriptures in their prophetic aspect** that would be fulfilled by Jesus rather than ever being abolished.
- And the commandments to be obeyed are those of the whole O.T. as reinterpreted by Jesus. So this does not mean that a Christian is to obey the various decrees as set out in the Mosaic Law, but rather to obey Jesus.

#### IS IT ACCEPTABLE FOR CHRISTIANS TO KEEP THE JEWISH PASSOVER?

Some may feel that, because the first Passover occurred before the giving of the Mosaic Law, it is acceptable for Christians to keep it even though the regulations of the Mosaic Law were cancelled by Christ’s sacrifice. However, for several reasons it is not acceptable to God for Christians to keep the Jewish Passover:

It was **the celebration in commemoration of the Passover that was commanded in the Mosaic Law**. One cannot keep the one historic Passover (and history cannot be cancelled) which occurred just prior to Israel’s leaving Egypt; all other ‘passovers’ were celebrations in commemoration of the historic Passover. It was these celebrations, as part of the Mosaic Law, that were cancelled and replaced by Christ’s sacrifice.

1. Christ's one-time sacrifice as the Passover Lamb is the Passover for Christians. Our celebration of this is not an annual Jewish celebration, but a celebration throughout daily life as shown in several grammatically correct translations of 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8:

- ❖ "Christ our *Passover* has been sacrificed. Therefore let us *be keeping (Rotherham) the feast*, not with old leaven...but **with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**" (1 Cor. 5:7, 8).

2. So this concerns "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" and performed with **unleavened bread** which has been spiritualized into a continuous feast of sincerity and truth, and not an annual physical celebration.

3. If a Christian celebrates the annual Jewish Passover he would be living in "the shadow of the good things to come" (Heb. 10:1), "the **shadow of the heavenly things**" (Heb. 8:4, 5), rather than the reality" (Col. 2:16, 17). Only Christ is the substantial reality because: "... **a festival** ... [is] a mere **shadow of what is to come**; but the *substance belongs to Christ*" (Col. 2:16, 17).

4. According to Galatians 5:1-5 if a Christian celebrates the annual Jewish Passover (it being part of the Law) he would be re-entering the **slavery** from which Christ once freed Christians and would be **severing himself from Christ.**

#### ALL SCRIPTURE - INCLUDING THE TORAH - IS BENEFICIAL

Does all of the above discussion mean that the Torah is of no benefit to the Christian? Absolutely not! However, modern-day scholars recognize that the translation of the Hebrew word *torah* in the Greek Septuagint as *nomos* meaning 'law' is an overly restrictive and inadequate translation. Rather the meaning concerns that of '**instruction**' or 'guidance' so that it is comparable to a path of life. Walter Kaiser notes that:

The legal sections of the Torah are a relatively small part of the total of the Pentateuch...they form only 58 chapters out of a total of 187 chapters. In other words, there are 129 chapters in the first five books of the Bible that are not included in the legal portions of the total Torah. ...

So what was the Torah really about? Scholarly research has made it evident that, rather than being legalistic, the Pentateuch presents five 'faith themes':

1. "Abraham **believed**" (Gen 15:6).
2. "This is so that they [*the Israelites*] may **believe** that the LORD...has appeared to you." (Ex. 4:5).
3. "The people put their **trust in him**" (Ex. 14:31).
4. "How long will they refuse to **believe me**" (Num 14:11).
5. "Because you [*Moses and Aaron*] did not **trust me** enough..." (Num. 20:12).

So, contrary to popular opinion, a thorough study of the Pentateuch reveals that its purpose is to teach **faith** with the focus being on God's promises (blessings) which have priority over 'torah' – instruction. Nevertheless although obedience was never a condition attached to these promises God did give 'instructions' to the parties involved e.g. "Go back to the land of your fathers" (Gen. 31:3). Yet, the fact that God brought Israel out of Egypt, and at Sinai remembered his covenant with Abraham for Israel's benefit - all for no merit on the part of the Israelites, demonstrates that God was operating **according to his gracious favour**. So evidently there was an integration of 'instruction' with 'gracious favour' from God and therefore a goal of helping them develop faith.

So the way that "**all Scripture is beneficial**" when it concerns the Torah concerns the concept of *general equity* so that laws apply in more cases than the particular one addressed in the particular circumstances of the biblical passage. This means that each law has a *general or moral principle*

behind it. Having identified the particular principle one moves to **the contemporary situation** and applies the principle to it. This was what Jesus did in his day as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount etc. For example, Jesus reapplied Hosea 6:6, "I [*Yahweh*] desire mercy, not sacrifice," (Matt. 9:10-13) to show that it was fine to eat with sinners and to pluck the grain on a Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-7). So here we can see that higher principles must over-ride laws that were made for original particular circumstances.

CHRISTIANS LIVE BY THE LAW OF CHRIST  
(1 COR. 9:21, GAL. 6:2)

- ❖ "love is the fulfilment of the law." (*Rom. 13:10*) / "law of faith." (*Rom. 3:27*).
- ❖ "For the kingdom of God is **not eating and drinking** [as concerning the forbidding of certain foods], but of **righteousness** and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (*Rom. 14:17*).

These are all qualities of the heart requiring motivation rather than simply following a set of rules.

THE LOSS FOR THOSE WHO RELY ON KEEPING THE  
REGULATIONS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

*Galatians 5:1-5:*

- "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a *yoke of slavery*. Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, **Christ will be of no advantage to you**. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are **severed from Christ**, you who would be justified **by the law**; you have fallen away from grace..."

*Ephesians 2:14-16:*

- "For he [*Jesus*]...has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by *abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances*, ...*and might reconcile us both [Jews and Gentiles] to God in one body through the cross*, thereby killing the hostility."

When someone keeps any of the Mosaic Law's regulations he is, in effect, saying that Jesus' sacrifice is insufficient to bring about his salvation and that he needs something extra. *We possess the substance—Christ (his teachings and actions)*. So Paul discounts all but one thing when he says:

- ❖ "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (*1 Cor. 2:2*).
- So to cling to the prophetic shadow is to obscure the reality. This is highlighted in Henry Alford's Commentary on Colossians:*

On Col 2:16, 17: "The substance, of which the other [sabbath, holy days and new moons] is the shadow, belongs to Christ (i.e. the substantial blessings which these legal obligations *typified*, are attached to, brought in by, found in union with Christ (see on the whole figure Heb. 8:5; 10:1). We may observe that if the ordinances of the sabbath had been *in any form*, of lasting obligation on the Christian church, it would have been *quite impossible* for the Apostle to have spoken thus. The fact of an obligatory rest of one day, whether the seventh or the first would have been directly in the teeth of his assertion here; the holding of such would have been still to retain the shadow, while we possess the substance. And no answer to this can be given to this by the transparent special pleading that he is speaking of only that which *is Jewish in such observances*, the whole argument being general, and the axiom of v. 17 being of universal application" p. 225).

## SUMMARY

Below are 58 statements from: Jesus (in Matthew, Mark, and Luke), John, Peter, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, and James all telling Christians that they are not under the Mosaic Law (only Jude makes no comment on the subject of the Law). This shows the pervasiveness throughout the New Testament of the teaching that Christians are no longer under the regulations of the Mosaic Law.

Matt. 5:21-48 ----- In this part of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus replaces Moses as law-giver by each of his statements beginning with, "But I say to you" (Matt. 5:21-48). These statements, which are taken from **the ten commandments** as well as other parts of the Law, supersede the Mosaic Law regulations by driving at the spirit of the law which is now "the law of love" to be followed, rather than regulations.

Matt. 9:16, 17 ----- New patch/old garment; new wine/old wineskin — reference to Mosaic system.

Luke 5: 36, 39 ----- same as Matthew.

Mark 7:18, 19 ----- Contamination from inside — all foods clean.

John 1:17 ----- Law from Moses — Grace and Truth from Jesus.

Acts 10:15 ----- Peter's vision — all foods clean.

Acts 15:1, 5, 10 ----- Gentiles not to keep Law — a Yoke Jews couldn't bear.

Rom. 5:20 ----- Law's purpose — to increase sin.

Rom. 6:15 ----- Christians are not under the Law.

Rom. 7:4 ----- Jewish Christians died in relation to Law.

Rom. 7:6 ----- Jewish Christians have been released from Law.

Rom. 10:4 ----- Christ — the end of the Law.

Rom. 13:10 ----- Love fulfils the Law.

Rom. 14:14 ----- No food is unclean.

Rom. 14:17 ----- The Kingdom is not about eating or drinking.

1 Cor. 5:7, 8 ----- Passover lamb — sincerity and truth.

1 Cor. 9:20 ----- Paul not under the Law — therefore no Jewish Christian is under it.

1 Cor. 10:25 ----- Eat anything sold in a meat market.

1 Cor. 15:56 ----- Sting of death is sin — power of sin is the Law.

2 Cor. 3:6 ----- The letter kills.

2 Cor. 3:7, 11 ----- Old Covenant — Ministry of death — fading away.

Gal. 2:3 ----- Titus not compelled to get circumcised.

Gal. 2:11 ----- Peter fears those of the circumcision party.

Gal. 2:15, 16 ----- No approval by deeds of Law.

- Gal. 2:18 ----- Paul a transgressor if he rebuilds things he once destroyed.
- Gal. 2:21 ----- Christ died for nothing if a right standing with God was through Law.
- Gal. 3:2 ----- We receive the spirit through faith not deeds of Law.
- Gal. 3:13 ----- Redeemed from the curse of the Law.
- Gal. 3:19 ----- Law added until the arrival of the seed.
- Gal. 3:24, 25 ----- The Law — a guardian leading to Christ — no longer under guardian.
- Gal. 4:5 ----- Jesus redeemed those under the Law.
- Gal. 4: 9-11 ----- Enslaved again — in observing days and months, seasons, years.
- Gal. 4:24-30 ----- Drive out the slave woman & son — son will not inherit with son of the free.
- Gal. 5:1, 2 ----- Yoke of slavery if circumcised Christ of no benefit to you.
- Gal. 5:3 ----- If circumcised — obligated to keep the whole Law.
- Gal. 5:11 ----- If Paul was proclaiming circumcision - why was he persecuted?
- Gal. 5:14 ----- Entire Law summed up as: love your neighbour.
- Gal. 5:18 ----- If led by spirit — you are not under Law.
- Gal. 6:13 ----- The false brothers in Gal. 1 want to get you circumcised so they can boast.
- Eph. 2:15 ----- Abolishing...the enmity...the Law of commandments...in ordinances.”
- Phil. 3:9 ----- Not having one’s right standing with God as based on Law.
- Col. 2:14 ----- Jesus wiped out the written code of decrees against us — nailing it to the cross.
- Col. 2:16 ----- Foods and festivals i.e. annual, monthly, weekly **Sabbaths** — a shadow.
- Col. 2:21-23 ----- Don’t touch, don’t taste — human commands — of no value.
- 1Tim. 1:9 ----- Law not for those approved by God — but for the lawless.
- 1Tim. 4:3 ----- Teachings of demons — requiring abstinence from foods.
- 1Tim. 4:4 ----- Everything in God’s creation is good.
- Titus 1:10 ----- Deceivers — the circumcision party.
- Heb. 3:3-6 ----- Moses a servant in God’s house, but Christ is over God’s house as a son.
- Heb. 4:10 ----- Whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from own works.
- Heb. 7:18 ----- Former covenant set aside — ineffectiveness (the law made nothing perfect).
- Heb. 8:13. ----- Jesus makes the first covenant obsolete.
- Heb. 9:15 ----- New covenant is for the promised inheritance of the age to come.
- Heb. 10:1 ----- The Law has only a shadow — not the realities.

Heb. 12:18 ----- Not approached what may be touched — but, rather Mt Zion/heavenly Jerusalem.

Heb. 13:9 ----- Strengthened by God's grace — not by rules about food.

James 2:10 ----- Whoever keeps whole law, but fails in one point — is guilty of all of it.

James 2:12 ----- Christian life is under the law of freedom.

The very few texts which some use to contradict this mass of evidence usually concern particular situations and are dealt with above.

*By Raymond C. Faircloth*

[www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk](http://www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk)

§