

## The Law of Christ fulfils the Old Testament Law

Some people believe that because the Ten Commands are still applicable today that the Sabbath therefore must still be kept. If the Sabbath must be kept, like they believe, then the more than six hundred other Old Testament laws and regulations must also be kept, because in Scripture they form an integral part of all the commandments and regulations that God gave to Moses:

*"But if you don't obey the LORD your God and faithfully carry out **all his commands and statutes** that I'm giving you today, then all these curses will come upon you and overwhelm you" (Deut. 28:15, my emphasis).*

Those who keep the Sabbath must then also, for example, submit their women to virginity tests, and should they fail the test, they must be stoned! (Deut. 22:20-21). The same will have to be done to children who curse their parents (Ex. 21:17, Lev. 20:9). In the Old Testament God expected that all the laws found in **Exodus** and **Leviticus** had to be obeyed (Deut. 28:15). Those people who "pick and choose" which Old Testament laws to obey, must be asked: which principle of Bible exposition enables them to do so? The law had to be kept as a whole, as Moses also understood it:

*"Then Moses came and reported all the words of the LORD and all the statutes to the people, and they all answered with one voice, **"All the things that the LORD has spoken, we will do."** (Ex. 24:3, my emphasis).*

Old Testament laws are not applicable to New Testament Christians, because "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us..." (Gal. 3:13). About the Law the New Testament declares the following:

*"And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; **having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us**, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, **nauling it to the cross**" (Col. 2:13-14, my emphasis).*

*"So let no one make rules about what you eat or drink or about holy days or the New Moon Festival or the **Sabbath**. All such things are only a shadow of things in the future; the reality is Christ" (Col. 2:16-17, my emphasis).*

*"For Christ has brought the Law to an end, so that everyone who believes is put right with God" ( Rom. 10:4)*

*"He abolished the Jewish Law with its commandments and rules, in order to create out of the two races one new people in union with himself...( Eph. 2:15).*

*"But now that you know God, or rather have been known by God, how can you turn back again to those powerless and bankrupt basic principles?" (Gal. 4:9).*

## Does the word “commandments” in the New Testament always refer to the Torah?

In an e-mail addressed to me, a qualified teacher of the HRTI makes the following statement in Afrikaans:

*“Elke keer wat jy ‘wet’ lees in die NT, is dit maar net Torah (nomos in grieks ...as jy commands of commandments lees, is dit mitzvoth in hebreus). “...toe Jesus die woorde gesê het: ‘do my commandments’ (Joh.14:15), wat was die enigste commandments wat die aan geglo het, waarmee Hy gepraat het? Was dit nie maar net die commandments van Moses nie? Was dit nie maar net Torah nie? Daar was nog nie n nuwe testament nie. Hy kon nie van enige ander commandments gepraat het nie.”*

(Quote left unchanged as in original. My emphasis).

Translated it means:

*“Every time you read ‘law’ in the NT, it refers to the Torah (nomos in Greek...when you read ‘command’s or ‘commandments’, it is mitzvoth in Hebrew). When Jesus said the words: ‘Do my commandments (Joh.14:15), what were the only commandments that those who heard Him, believed in? Weren’t they the commandments of Moses? Was it not the Torah? There was no New Testament yet. He could not have spoken about any other commandments” (HRTI – Hebrew Roots Teaching Institute).*

Does the New Testament use of the words “law” and “commandments” as in **Joh. 14:15** and **1 Joh.2:3-4** always refer to the laws of Moses in the Torah? A study of the context in which these words appear will show that the statement made by the HRTI teacher is completely wrong. A good place to start would be to consider the context of Jesus’ words:

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice...”*

They were spoken by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount that we find recorded in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the book of **Matthew** and the context shows that He was referring to his own words and not to what was written in the Torah. We also see that Jesus makes a clear distinction between the commandments He gives to his disciples that they must obey and the commandments of his Father that He had to obey:

*“If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (Joh. 15:10-12).*

Jesus, up to his death, had to fully obey all the Old Testament commandments in order to fulfil the righteous requirements of the Law so that He could atone for the sins of the world. Jesus did not say that His disciples had to obey the Law of Moses; He commanded them to obey **His commands**.

The Strong’s Concordance gives the meaning of the Greek word **entolé** (commands) used in verses like **Joh. 14:15** and **1 Joh. 2:3-4** as: *“an injunction i.e. an authoritative prescription... **The precepts and teachings of Jesus.**”*

Furthermore, the claim by the HRTI teacher that the word nomos also always refers to the Torah, has no truth to it, because the words law, commandments, *entolé*, *nomos* and

*mitzvah* can etymologically refer to the laws of God, the laws of Christ or the laws of man. The meaning of the word is determined by the context in which it is used. This becomes clear when we look at a verse like **Rom. 8:2**. If the word *nomos* always means Torah when used in the New Testament, as the HRTI teacher claims, this verse just doesn't make any sense; does it mean the Torah frees people from the Torah? Logic and the wider teachings of the New Testament make it clear that the meanings of the word *nomos* that is used twice in **Rom. 8:2**, comes out in the contextual meaning:

*"...because through Christ Jesus the law (nomos) of the Spirit of life set me free from the law (nomos) of sin and death."*

The contextual meaning shows that it is impossible for *nomos* (law), as used in **Rom. 8:2**, to "always mean" Torah. Does the Torah set people free from obeying the Torah? *Nomos* in this verse refers to two completely different sets of law! To further confirm that these commands of His do not refer to the commandments of the Torah, we also quote **Joh. 13:34** where Jesus says:

*"A new commandment (entolé) I give you: Love one another."*

Does "commandment" in this verse refer to the Torah? Where is such a law found in it? – and by the way, if it does refer to a law found in the Torah, how can it be new?

**How did the apostles understand the commandments of Jesus? Were they under the impression that they had to teach people to keep the Law of Moses?**

Let them speak for themselves.

*"You know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:2-12. instructions – paraggelia – commands, Complete Wordstudy Dictionary – Zodhiates).*

We don't have to wonder what these commands were that Paul received from the Lord.

He tells us. They are given in the context of **1 Thessalonians 4:**

**v.3**...they must avoid sexual immorality

**v.6**...no one should wrong his brother

**v.9**...they must show brotherly love

**v.11**...they must lead quiet lives, work with their own hands and not be dependent on anybody.

In another letter he declares:

*"If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command" (1 Cor. 14:37).*

The whole context of the letter indicates that "Lord" in this verse is the Lord Jesus Christ. Does Paul instruct believers in his letters to keep the Torah? The opposite is true. To the Christians in Rome he writes:

*“Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”*

And to the Colossians he says:

*“He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us...**He took it away, nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:14, my emphasis).***

In another letter he writes:

*“**Circumcision is nothing** and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands (entolé) is what counts” (1 Cor.7:19, my emphasis).*

What does Paul mean? In the context of Mosaic Law circumcision wasn’t nothing! It was a very important part of the Torah! Paul must have had important commands in mind to declare that in comparison to them, circumcision was not important. Which commands can be more important than the Torah? *“Keeping God’s commands”* in **1 Cor. 7:19** can only refer to the authoritative teachings of Jesus Christ. Reading Paul’s writings, especially his letter to the Galatians, leaves one with no uncertainty about the fact that Old Testament law is not applicable to Christian believers. (**Eph. 2:15, Col. 2:14, Rom. 10:4, Gal. 4:9-10, Rom. 13:8**).

**Are New Testament believers without law?**

**The Law of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21)**

*“ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:36-40, my emphasis).***

These two laws should govern a Christian’s life – love for God and love for his neighbour. The Law of Love is the fulfilment of all that God requires. Paul expresses it like this:

*“The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” (Gal. 5:14).*

This law is called the *“Royal Law”* because it was introduced by the King Himself (**James 2:8**). Paul also refers to it as the *“Law of Christ”* (**1 Cor. 9:21**).

New Testament believers are under a new law, the *“law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”* (**Rom. 8:2**).

Between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ there is a big difference. To become accepted as a Jew depended on subjecting oneself externally to laws and regulations (**Ex. 12:48-49**); in the New Testament it works the other way round – You don’t become a Christian by living a Christian lifestyle; you must first be spiritually born again **so that** you can become a Christian!

Moses could not change the hearts of people by giving them laws. Christ can, because His Spirit works in the hearts of those who are submitted to Him (**2 Cor. 5:7**).

Rather than trying to keep Mosaic laws, Christians are called to submit to a much higher Law – the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which sets us free from the law of sin and death (**Rom. 8:2**).

### The fulfilment of the law

**Matt. 5:17-18** is the passage that is used by many to justify the keeping of the Law of Moses:

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

In order to use this passage to explain that the law must still be kept, much other information given in the New Testament must be ignored. So for instance, before His death, Jesus said to His disciples:

*“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth...**He will tell you of what is still to come**” (Joh. 16:12-14, my emphasis).*

What were the things that were yet to come? In the context of **Matt. 5:17-18** the words *“until everything is accomplished”* play a very important part in understanding what Jesus meant. What had to be accomplished before the Law could pass away? – All the shadow types and Old Testament prophecies concerning Him as the Messiah, had to be fulfilled. What Jesus said to the two men who were on their way to Emmaus, helps us to understand the *“everything”* that had to be happen:

*“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, **he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself**” (Luk. 24:27, my emphasis).*

All the shadow types in the Old Testament concerning Jesus would stand until they were fulfilled. In **Matt. 5:17-18** Jesus does not say that He came to uphold the law so that it must be obeyed; He said that He came to **fulfil** it. (*“Fulfil – to fill out, complete, make perfect, accomplish an end”*- The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Zodhiates).

Everything was fulfilled on the cross. There He cried out: **“It is finished”** (Joh. 19:30). This period of time in which Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament types is called **“the fullness of the time”** (ASB, KJV).

*“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Gal. 4:4).*

Another Scripture which alludes to the fulfilment of the Law is found in **Luke 16:16**:

*“The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John” (Luk. 16:16).* This means that the Old Testament system was still preached by John the Baptist who was last of the Old Testament prophets. Does the beheading of John have symbolic significance in the sense that it represents the cutting off of the Old Testament?

The end of the Old Testament law is confirmed by **Heb.1:1-2**:

*“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...” (Heb.1:1-2, my emphasis).*

### **How did Jesus fulfil the Law?**

In the Sermon on the Mount (**Matt. 5, 6 and 7**) Jesus repeatedly refers to the Law of Moses and then contrasts and “fulfils” it with the higher moral standards of His teachings. So for instance He “fulfils” Moses’ law which says that you may not commit adultery, with a much higher moral standard:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery. **But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart**” (Matt. 5:27-28, my emphasis).*

Jesus not only condemns the deed, but also the attitude even before the deed has taken place. Jesus does the same with the sixth Commandment:

*“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment’ (Ex.20:13). **But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.** (Matt. 5:21-22, my emphasis).*

Jesus does not abolish the Law, He adds a higher moral requirement to it. Because Jesus requires an inner attitude of holiness, one needs to be spiritually born again so that with the help of the indwelling Spirit of God, one is able to live up to what He requires (**Gal. 5:16**).

### **Do the words of Jesus as spoken in the Sermon on the Mount refer to the Torah?**

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matt. 7:24).*

Did Jesus say that if you put the words of Moses, or the words of any other prophet into practice, that you would be wise? No, He specifically says that if **His** words are put into practice, you are building on a firm foundation. The context clearly shows that **“these words”** refer to the words found in what is commonly called “The Sermon on the Mount” (**Matt. 5, 6 and 7**). *“These words”* were authoritative statements that in the New Testament are called His commandments (**Joh. 13:34, 1 Joh. 1:3, Luke 6:46**).

In the His teachings we see that Jesus ignores certain things like circumcision, holy days, feasts and the paying of tithes, all things pertaining to the Law, whilst on the other hand

things like easy divorce and the taking of oaths, all permissible under the Law, He openly prohibits. Then again He commands certain things that are not even mentioned in the Law, like having to love your enemies and having to pray for them. If you look at what God commanded what had to be done to the enemies of Israel in the Old Testament, you could come to the conclusion that God wanted the Israelites to hate them.

A supporter of the Torah once said to me in a very self-satisfied manner, “You can find all Ten Commandments in the teachings of Jesus.” I agreed with him, “but,” I said to him, “**you don’t find all the teachings of Jesus in the Ten Commandments!**”

Because God was not satisfied with the conditions of the Old Testament, He sent His Son to come and initiate a better one. This is confirmed by what is written in **Heb. 7:22**:

*“Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of **a better covenant**”* (my emphasis).

The following two columns illustrate how the old law was “fulfilled” by Jesus and the New Testament.

#### **The Old Testament**

#### **The New Testament**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1.</b> You shall have no other god (Ex.20:3)</p>                         | <p><b>1.</b> “I am the Way...” (<b>Joh.14:6</b>).<br/>“Salvation is found in no one else...no other name under heaven by which we must saved” (<b>Acts 4:12</b>).</p> |
| <p><b>2.</b> No idols in any form</p>  | <p><b>2.</b> The glory of the image of God may not be exchanged for the image of man or anything in nature (<b>Rom.1:21-25</b>).</p>                                  |
| <p><b>3.</b> May not take God’s Name in vain (<b>Ex.20:7</b>)</p>              | <p><b>3.</b> Not only judged for taking God’s Name in vain, but we will be judged for every careless word spoken (<b>Matt.12:36</b>).</p>                             |
| <p><b>4.</b> The Sabbath – One day in seven to be kept holy and to rest on</p> | <p><b>4.</b> The Sabbath a shadow type of a holy life of rest in Christ (<b>Heb.4:10, Joh.6:28-29</b>).</p>   |
| <p><b>5.</b> Honouring of parents (<b>Ex.20:12</b>)</p>                        | <p><b>5.</b> Not only must children honour parents, but parents are instructed not exasperate their children (<b>Eph.6:1-4</b>).</p>                                  |

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>6. You shall not murder (Ex.20:13).</b></p>                    | <p><b>6. Will have to give an account of every insulting word and wrong attitude (Matt.5:22).</b></p>                              |
| <p><b>7. You shall not commit guilty before the deed is</b></p>      | <p><b>7. By looking with lust, we are adultery (Ex.20:14) committed (Matt5:28).</b></p>  |
| <p><b>8. Thou shalt not steal must be productive in order to</b></p> | <p><b>8. Must not only stop stealing, (Ex.20:15) share (Eph.4:28).</b></p>   |
| <p><b>9. Shall not give false must be no (Matt.5:33-37).</b></p>     | <p><b>9. Your yes must be yes, and no testimony (Ex.20:16)</b></p>   |
| <p><b>10. Shall not covet (Ex.20:17).</b></p>                        | <p><b>10. Lives must be kept free of love for money and one must be contented with what you have (Heb.13:5, 1 Tim.6:6-10).</b></p> |

### Conclusion

*"Then some of the believers...said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and **required to obey the law of Moses.**" ...Peter...addressed them...'Why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ...It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality." **(Acts 15, my emphasis).***

**Nick Maartens  
 Jeffreys Bay  
 0827826074  
 E-mail: nickmaartens@hotmail.com**