

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

Emmaus Correspondence School St. Louis P.O. Box 11051 Ferguson, Missouri 63135 www.emmauscorrespondenceschool.org

Restoring the Ten Commandments to Its God-given Place & Purpose

The mystery of the Church is revealed in the New Testament. So it is here that we find the rule of life, or expected behavior, for the Christian. Interestingly, the term "Ten Commandments" is not in the New Testament. It occurs only three times in the Old Testament (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4). Its commands are fully listed in Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 20 only. But they are not called the Ten Commandments. Nevertheless, it has gained a prominent place in the heart and conscience of many Christians, a place Christ should fully occupy. Many Christians wrongly believe that the Ten Commandments applies to them. And it speaks volumes that most Christians have heard of

At the Bible's first mention of the Ten Commandments God defines its place, purpose, and the people it applies to (Exodus 34:27-28). The Ten Commandments are "the words of the covenant" God made with Israel.

the "Law of Moses" but few have heard of the "law of Christ," which is the actual rule of life for the Christian (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21). This is the result of centuries of

teaching that has stopped short of the New Testament revelation. The great light promised by Isaiah has come (Isaiah 9:2, 6; 49:6; Luke 2:32). And He overcomes the darkness of ignorance (i.e. lack of revelation) (John 1:1-5, 9, 14; 12:46). And with the Light comes responsibility to shine it so that others can see (2 Timothy 2:2; Psalm 119:18). So the purpose of this Captive's Corner is to shine the light of Christ on the subject of the Ten Commandments to restore it and Christ to their God-given place and purpose so that Christ can fully reign in and manifest His life through New Testament believers (Christians).

The history of the Ten Commandments is death. Death was the scene of its beginning. While Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, if an Israelite only touched the mountain, he would be executed (Exodus 19:9-13, 18-21). Then Israel disobeyed the Ten Commandments before Moses brought the tablets down. As a result, 3,000 were executed (Exodus 32:15-28). God later struck Uzzah dead because he touched the ark containing the Ten Commandments (2 Samuel 6:3-11). And when the Philistines captured the ark, "there was a deadly destruction throughout the city." To whatever city they moved the Ark, death followed until they gave it back to Israel (1 Samuel 5). The Apostle Paul calls the Ten Commandments "the ministry of death" (2 Corinthians 3:7). And finally, death was also the scene of its end. Read Colossians 2:14.

In the New Testament letters, every reference to the Ten Commandments makes clear that it does not apply to the Christian. Since the Ten Commandments are holy but provide no power over sin in order to obey them, Romans 7:8-9 tells us that they result in sin and death for anyone who tries to live under them as their rule of life. As a Christian trying to live under the Ten Commandments Paul said, "But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." Speaking of the Ten Commandments, 2 Corinthians 3:6 says, "the letter kills." Therefore, the Ten Commandments have been "done away with" and "abolished" (2 Corinthians 3:7, 11, 13 KJV). In Ephesians 2:14-15 we learn that it is Christ who has "abolished...the law of commandments." Christ has "wiped out the handwriting of requirements...and has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). Finally, Hebrews 7:18-19 says, "There is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect." So it is unscriptural and unprofitable to look to the Ten Commandments to produce a holy life (the Christian ~~life~~). Rather, we must look to Christ (Romans 8:2-4).

But some have said that since the Ten Commandments was literally written in *stone*, it is the permanent rule of life for God's people. However, Paul actually uses its medium of *stone* to illustrate the inferiority and ineffectiveness of the Ten Commandments to produce obedience compared to the New Covenant ministry of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:3). The Spirit gives the believer a new *heart* in contrast to the stone tablets of the old covenant. Stone is lifeless, but the new heart is Christ's life, which is effective for producing holiness (John 14:20; 2 Peter 1:3-4). Nevertheless, some actually give the Ten Commandments the title "the unchanging moral law of God." But God never calls it this. And for good reason: there are two versions of the Ten Commandments. It changes from Exodus 20:8-11 to Deuteronomy 5:12-15. And then it was made "*obsolete*" when Christ ratified by His blood a new covenant (Hebrews 8:6, 7, 13). The Christian's commands are certainly moral, but they are a higher standard than the Ten Commandments. Confusion often results when man makes up a term in order to support his own doctrine instead of being satisfied with God's terms and, thus, God's doctrine. God refers to the Ten Commandments by at least five other terms in the Bible: the *tablets of stone*, the *tablets of the testimony*, the *testimony*, the *words of the covenant*, and the *tablets of the covenant*, but never the *unchanging moral law of God*. *Testimony* is singular (not plural) because the Ten Commandments is an inseparable unit, a single covenant document (Exodus 25:15-16; 1 Kings 8:9, 21). This negates the attempt of some to make the Ten Commandments apply to the Christian by removing the Sabbath command. But there is no need to take a hammer and chisel to the *tablets of stone* in order to make them apply to the Christian when the New Testament gives us the complete instructions for the Christian life. Besides, the Ten Commandments minus the Sabbath command still falls far short of God's standard of holy living for the church. The Christian's rule of life includes commands which Moses never could have given because God had not yet become a man and dwelt among us (e.g. Ephesians 4:32; Philippians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21).

At the Bible's first mention of the Ten Commandments, God clearly defines its place, purpose, and the people it applies to (Exodus 34:27-28). The Ten Commandments are "the words of the covenant" God made with Israel. Deuteronomy 4:13 states, "So He (the Lord) declared to you (Israel) His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments, and He wrote them on two tablets of stone." In 1 Kings 8:9, 21 the Ten Commandments is called "the covenant of the Lord." Also read Deuteronomy 9:9-11. Even the New Testament calls the Ten Commandments "The tablets of the (old) covenant" (Hebrews 9:4). I refer to Israel's first covenant as "old" because

According to the Bible, to believe that the Ten Commandments is the rule of life for a Christian today is to believe that all the terms of Israel's old covenant with all its blessings and curses is the Christian's rule of life today.

Hebrews 8:13 says it has been superseded by a "new covenant." I also refer to it as the "Mosaic Covenant" because God gave it to Israel through Moses. A covenant is a legally binding contract between two parties. One party agrees to obey certain terms in exchange

for benefits from the other party. Israel agreed to make God's protection and other benefits depend upon their obedience to His commandments. If Israel disobeyed, they would receive the curses of the covenant (Daniel 9:11). The Ten Commandments are the basic terms of this covenant which established Israel as God's special nation on the earth (Exodus 19:3-8). The document called the *United States Constitution* established our nation of self-governance. The Ten Commandments is the document that established Israel

as a nation governed by God, the only one on the planet and, thus, special (Exodus 25:21-22; 34:1, 10; Hebrews 9:1-8). The importance that Scripture attaches to the Ten Commandments (law) is always connected with Israel's special covenant status before God (Romans 9:4). The place where God physically dwelt within Israel was even called the *tabernacle (or tent) of the Testimony* (Numbers 1:50-53; 7:89; 9:15).

Every sin addressed in the Ten Commandments except the Sabbath was a sin before the Ten Commandments began and also after it ended. But the commands which address these sins were made terms of a legal covenant contract in the Ten Commandments. Specific curses were attached to these commands for Israel only. This makes the Ten Commandments very different from the commands God has given the Christian in the New Testament. This is one of the reasons the Ten Commandments does not apply to the Christian.

If the Christian lives by the Ten Commandments, he is not living the Christian life (the law of Christ). He is living the life God expected of a Jew (the Law of Moses) before Christ fulfilled the Law and abolished it to make a better covenant with a higher standard and the power to live it.

These sins are not sins for the Christian today because they were in the Ten Commandments. They are sins for the Christian because they are part of the "law of Christ" in the New Testament. To say that they are sins today because they are in the Ten Commandments is to apply the Ten Commandments to the Christian. But since the Ten Commandments consists of legal commands, to apply them is to also apply their curses. In addition, to apply the Ten Commandments is to apply their actual meaning. But this would lower the standard of Christian living. For example, *adultery* in the Ten Commandments meant sexual relations with a married or betrothed woman. Scripture called King David's relations with Bathsheba (Uriah's wife) adultery. But it did not do so when David had several wives and concubines because they were unmarried women (2 Samuel 5:13; 1 Chronicles 3:1-9). It was the same for David's son Solomon. Having foreign wives and many wives was forbidden, but not because it was adultery (1 Kings 11:1-13; Deuteronomy 17:17; Ezra 10:11). Leviticus 18 and 20 lists Israel's sexual relations laws. Relations with another man's wife is forbidden in 18:20 and 20:10. And compare Deuteronomy 21:15-17 with 22:22. But these were God's covenant commands for Israel, not the Christian. Adultery for the Christian is defined in the New Testament as a married person having sexual relations with anyone, married or unmarried (Matthew 5:28).

The term *covenant* is equivalent to *testament*. So we find Israel's old covenant in the Old Testament. The New Testament reveals the blessings and rule of life for the church as part of the new covenant. Therefore, Christians must look to the New Testament to know God's instructions for the Christian life. If the Christian lives by the Ten Commandments, he is not living the Christian life (the law of Christ). He is living the life God expected of a Jew (the Law of Moses) before Christ fulfilled it and then abolished it to make way for a better covenant with a higher standard of living and the power to live it.

As just mentioned, the Ten Commandments are terms of a covenant which was very limited in its application. Although several things that were sin for Israel were also sin for Adam, Noah, Abraham, and every Gentile (non-Jew) nation, the Mosaic Covenant was not made with them and, thus, the Ten Commandments simply did not apply to them (Ephesians 2:11-12). The singular covenant document called *The Ten Commandments* began with Moses and ended with Christ (John 1:17; Romans 6:14; 10:4; 2 Corinthians 3:7, 11, 13; Ephesians 2:14-15; Colossians 2:13-14; Hebrews 7:18-19). It only applied before Christ's death and only to Israel (Deuteronomy 5:1-3; Romans 9:4). It had a specific beginning and end. Therefore, the Ten Commandments, with its blessings and curses, has never been your rule of life. You have never been under the Law, including the Ten Commandments, unless you alone have imposed it upon yourself as the Galatian Christians were tempted to do (Galatians 1:6-9). In this paper, *Law* with a capital "L" is the Law of Moses, which is all the terms (commands) of Israel's first (old) covenant. To apply the Ten Commandments to the Christian is to impose the Law because the Ten Commandments are terms of the Mosaic Covenant which curses and condemns imperfect obedience. But even if you have obligated yourself to the Law, you would not receive its blessings and curses because God has never obligated you to the Law in any sense. However, your conscience would continually remind you of your failure and, thus, condemn you. This is what Paul is experiencing in Romans 7:7-14. All unbelievers are now under sin (Galatians 3:22), but only Israel before Christ's death was ever put under the Law by God.

Interestingly, the term "law" rarely occurs in the Bible until God gives the Ten Commandments to Israel in Exodus 20. But from then on "law" occurs on many Old Testament pages. Romans 5:20 says, "the law entered." The Ten Commandments began

the age of law (John 1:17). From Moses to the death of Christ, Israel was under the Law. But the Law provides no help to enable a person to keep it, and then it condemns those who disobey. Therefore, to be under law (except the law of Christ) means to use one's natural ability to live a holy life and then to be judged by your performance. It is to say, "I will keep the Ten Commandments." Under the "law of Christ" it is God who performs His work in us to produce the Christian life and then rewards us for it (Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 2:13; 4:13). So to be under the "law of Christ" is grace (Romans 6:14). The word *law* in "law of Christ" means *authority*. It does not mean the principle of law (described above) as is meant in every other mention of law in this paper.

One of the greatest lessons we can learn from Israel's experience with the Ten Commandments is to never accept it as a rule of life, not from any man or teacher, not even an angel or God Himself (Galatians 1:8-9). The Ten Commandments were given by God as law and this was never changed. So to apply the Ten Commandments as your rule of life is to put yourself under the principle of law. Israel had a choice. God first asked them "if" they would live by the commandments in order to be His special people (Exodus 19:5-7). He did not force these legal commandments upon Israel. God had been dealing with Israel by grace, redeeming them out of bondage in Egypt without any obligation or condition of keeping laws because of the unconditional covenant He made with Abraham¹ (Exodus 19:3-4; Psalm 105:6-22). But Israel chose to

"There is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect" (Hebrews 7:18-19). So it is unscriptural and unprofitable to look to the Ten Commandments to produce a holy life (the Christian life). Rather, we must look to Christ (Romans 8:2-4).

put themselves under law, forsaking grace. Instead of agreeing to keep the Ten Commandments in order to be God's special people, they should have confessed their sinful heart and, thus, the impossibility of keeping the terms of such a covenant. King David later said, "In sin my mother conceived me... Create in me a clean heart" (Psalm 51:5, 10). He also said, "A broken and contrite heart—these, O God, you do not despise" (Psalm 51:17). And God's heart is clear in Isaiah 57:15—He desires to dwell "With him who has a contrite (repentant) and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Finally, "He heals the broken hearted," not the one who thinks he already has a good heart in order to please God by his own resources (Psalm 147:3). The Lord is merciful and gracious to the soul who admits to Him that he is without strength to be holy as God is holy. "God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud" (James 4:6). But Israel simply thought too highly of themselves and, thus, with great confidence agreed to keep all of the terms of the covenant (Exodus 19:8; 24:3-7). It was suicide by pride. They were deceived by their own wickedness. "The heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9). As mentioned, The Apostle Paul learned this lesson even as a Christian. After trying to live under the Ten Commandments he said, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." This caused him to realize, "No good thing dwells within me, that is in my flesh" (Romans 7:18). He needed to learn this lesson to realize Christ as the source, standard, and strength for living the Christian life (Romans 8:2-4; John 15:4-5; Philippians 4:13; Galatians 2:20). So Israel and the apostle Paul learned that living under the law of the Ten Commandments results in miserable failure. It is holy, but it can not produce holiness in a man (Hebrews 7:18-19). Therefore, it has been replaced by a better covenant with a rule of life which is accomplished by God's work, not our work (Hebrews 8:6, 7, 13; Luke 22:19-20). We must possess a holy life to manifest a holy life. The Christian possesses such a life in Christ. And the Spirit manifests Christ's life as we focus on Him in God's Word (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 4:10-11; Philippians 1:21). It is not the Ten Commandments that He manifests but the very life of Christ, a living Person vs. a lifeless list. Christ is our example, pattern, goal, and means of Christian living.

The many laws of the United States flow out of our Constitution: health laws, food laws, criminal laws, etc. Similarly, from the summary document of Israel's covenant (the Ten Commandments) flow many laws which are applications of the Ten Commandments. These laws were written in the "Book of the Law" (Deuteronomy 30:10), also called "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 24:3-7). You can find them throughout Exodus 20—Deuteronomy 33. They are also terms of the Mosaic Covenant which are equal in force to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:12; Deuteronomy 7:11; 8:1; 2 Kings 23:21). We know that the Ten Commandments is the summary document of the covenant because it is called "the covenant of the Lord" and because it, not the "Book of the Law," was placed inside the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 10:2-5; 1 Kings 8:9, 21). When the high priest sprinkled blood on the mercy seat above the stone tablets in the Ark, atonement was accomplished not only for Israel's sins against the Ten Commandments but

also for the hundreds of laws in the Book of the Law because the Ten Commandments represented the whole Law. The Book of the Law was placed beside the Ark to be a witness against Israel when they broke one of its many commands (Deuteronomy 31:24-26).

The nature of Israel's old covenant is such that its terms are inseparable. God said, "If you carefully keep all these commandments..." (Deuteronomy 11:22). In addition to "All," Israel's Law required perfect and continual obedience (James 2:10; Galatians 3:10-13). Think about this, How many terms of a contract must you break in order to break the contract? How many links of a chain must break for the chain to be broken? Of course, just one! So if you put yourself under one commandment of the Law, you are

The Christian's rule of life includes many commands which Moses never could have given because God had not yet become a man and dwelt among us (e.g. Philippians 2:3-8; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21).

obligated to do the whole Law (Galatians 5:3). This is the nature of a law covenant, and the Ten Commandments were given as such. No man can change this. Furthermore, the terms of the covenant can not be altered. For example, some emphasize the Sabbath (7th day) as a day of worship while under-emphasizing its main character. It may have been a day of assembly ("convocation") for Israel (Leviticus 23:1-8; Deuteronomy 16:8), but the emphasis in the Sabbath command is clearly and constantly on "rest from work," not worship. The curse, or penalty, is always said to be given for working on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-18; 35:1-3; Deuteronomy 5:12-18). Gathering sticks, making a fire, or cooking on the Sabbath were punishable by death. Just think of the contracts you have been under in your life (business, apartment or house, credit cards). How nice it would be to just change the terms, to make them easier, or to meet just 9 out of 10 of them and then still get the benefits from the contract. If the covenant does not work, you need a new covenant. Thankfully, we have one in Christ by which all men (Jew and Gentile) may receive blessings without curses by grace (Christ's work for us) through faith in Him (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6, 7, 13).

Someone once said, "A law without a penalty is simply just good advice." Think about this, would people obey the speed limit or pay all of their taxes if there was no penalty for not doing so? Regarding Israel's laws, Moses said this on behalf of God, "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 27:15-26). Israel's old covenant included curses for breaking laws and blessings for keeping them. They were incentives to keep the terms (Law) of the covenant. A sample of the blessings and curses is in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28:15-68. These passages are very eye-opening regarding the perils of being under Israel's Law. I hope you will read them clear through at least once. It includes unimaginable horrors which result from the curses, like Israel eating their own children because God's protection had been removed and, thus, their enemies were starving them to death. As you read, consider if your own protection and blessing was dependent on how well you obeyed God instead of on Christ's perfect Person and work. For several of the laws the penalty for breaking them is death by stoning (Exodus

It is not the Ten Commandments that the Spirit manifests but the very life of Christ, a living Person vs. a lifeless list. Christ is our source, standard, and strength for the Christian life.

21:12, 15-17, 29; 22:18-20; Leviticus 24:16, 23; Hebrews 10:28). Ultimately, the law promised life for keeping all of the laws and death for breaking just one law (Deuteronomy 30:19; Ezekiel 20:10-11; Matthew 19:17). Paul calls the Ten Commandments "the ministry of death" and "the ministry of condemnation" because this is the unavoidable result for those who choose to live under the Law (2 Corinthians 3:6-9; Romans 7:10). These curses are real, and they are part of the

Ten Commandments. Christ did fulfill the Law and redeem those who were under it (Jews) by becoming a curse in their place (Galatians 3:13-14). But He certainly did not do this to then put redeemed Jews and gentiles under the Ten Commandments as their rule of life. That is one of the problems He died to do away with (Romans 7:4-6; Galatians 3:2-3).

So we have learned that the Ten Commandments are not just commands. They are unlike any command in the New Testament given to the Christian because they have specific blessings and curses attached to them. This is because God made them terms of a legal covenant. As earlier suggested, think of some contracts you have been under. You may have been penalized because you did not meet all of your obligations in the contract. Now to suggest, as some do, that the Christian's rule of life is the Ten Commandments stripped of its authority (curses) is to change God's Law into mere good advice. In the Law

God says, "You shall not add to the Word which I commanded you, nor take from it" (Deuteronomy 4:2). The Christian's rule of life is not an altered Ten Commandments but an entirely new standard. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give you" (John 13:34). God gave the Ten Commandments authority, and man can not take it away. As long as the covenant was in force, those who lived under it received the blessings and the curses. Hypothetically, if God put anyone under the Ten Commandments today as a rule of life, the same would hold true. You are either under the Law or you are not under the Law. There is no Law light (that is, a Law without curses). But we know now that no one, not even Israel, is under the Law today, including the Ten Commandments. The tablets of stone, defined by God as "His covenant" with Israel, have been "abolished" (Ephesians 2:14-15). This can be observed in the life of Israel today. Israel is not keeping the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. Her sacrificial system in Leviticus is not functioning. There is no temple, tabernacle, or high priest. So she can not atone for her sins against the Law by sprinkling blood on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant which also no longer exists. Yet, she is not experiencing the curses of the covenant because it has been done away with.

Israel's blessings in the old obsolete covenant mainly consisted of protection from enemies, material prosperity, and good health (Exodus 23:20-26; Deuteronomy 6:1-25; 7:11-15; 28:1-7). Some false teachers are now teaching that these blessings apply to Christians. But remember that the covenant came with many laws that had to be obeyed in order to receive those blessings. If they were not obeyed, the curses would result. The false teachers never mention the curses because if they did, their listeners would not send them money. Only the blessings are taught because they appeal to the flesh of the false teachers and their audience (1 Timothy 6:6-10). These covenant blessings only applied to Israel before Christ's death. In 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul told Timothy to drink some wine for his illness, not claim Exodus 23:25, because you can not claim a promise that does not apply to you as a Christian. And the Christians in Corinth were rebuked for living like kings while other Christians were suffering in God's service (1 Corinthians 4:8-13). The Christian is only promised to have his needs met as he seeks first God's kingdom (Matthew 6:31-33). But He possesses every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:8). If a Christian is wealthy, he should use God's money to help others and spread the gospel (1 Timothy 6:17-19; Luke 12:16-21; 16:9; Matthew 6:19-21). And if the Christian lives a godly life, he is promised persecution from enemies of the cross (2 Timothy 3:12). But Christ will be his life, his peace, his joy through it all. And His reward in eternity will far surpass His suffering here (John 16:33; Philippians 4:4, 11-13; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; 4:13-18). Christ set the example for suffering (1 Peter 2:21). And a servant is not greater than his Master (John 15:20). So shall we wear a crown of gold when our Master wore a crown of thorns?

The commands which Christ gives Christians to live by are by nature grace, not law (John 1:17). Grace means that God performs the work for you from within you and then rewards you for it.

It is commonly said that Israel's old covenant contains three sets of laws—the ceremonial, civil, and the moral law (Ten Commandments). But the terms ceremonial law, civil law, and moral law are not in the Bible. And as mentioned, using non-Biblical terms to teach a Biblical truth sometimes results in confusion because man pours his definition into his terms. Biblical terms are defined by God by their context. The Bible is its own best commentary. The light of Scripture shines on every verse and word to give us the meaning. The Bible actually calls the terms of Israel's old covenant laws, commands, judgments, precepts, testimonies, and statutes (Exodus 24:12; Deuteronomy 6:1; 7:11; Nehemiah 9:13-14; 1 Kings 2:3). But the laws are not divided into separate lists under these six (not three) terms. In fact, some laws are referred to by more than one of these terms. And laws which are commonly called ceremonial, such as Sabbaths, are mixed with so-called moral laws (Leviticus 19:23-30; 2 Kings 23:21-24; Deuteronomy 27:15-17). In Leviticus 19:18-19 "love your neighbor as yourself" is followed by "do not wear clothes made from two kinds of material." And in Leviticus 19:28-29 the forbidding of tattoos and giving your daughter as a prostitute are side by side. You could not read through Exodus 20—Deuteronomy 33 (or just Leviticus 19) and color each law using a different color for ceremonial, civil, and moral laws, especially since you will not find these terms defined in Scripture. Israel did not see a distinction of three kinds of law. They were just as obligated to keep the Passover and the Sabbath as they were to not murder or not commit adultery.

The error that there are three sets of laws leads to the additional error, taught by some, that two parts of the law have been abolished, but the moral law (Ten Commandments) is still in force as the Christian's rule of life. The term moral is a set up for the claim that because certain laws are moral they are unchanging and, thus, apply, as written, to all people in all ages. Moral is defined several ways in English dictionaries. One definition is, "has to do with ethical, virtuous, righteous behavior." Romans 7:12 declares

that the entire law is holy, not just one part. *Holy* would mean that it is moral. Furthermore, every law, if broken, results in a curse, or punishment. And punishment is associated with immorality. Finally, one of the most heinous sins a Jew could commit was to not keep the Sabbath. As mentioned, death by stoning was its penalty. But the Sabbath law is not a moral law; it is a ceremonial law according to those who support such terms and divisions. The conscience of a Gentile would not have convicted him for working on the sabbath because the Ten Commandments were not given to the Gentile. So to him it is not immoral to do so. But since God commanded Israel to not work on the Sabbath or die, all doubt is removed about the Sabbath being a moral law for Israel. But, this most heinous sin and most repeated command for Israel is not a command or a sin for the Christian. In fact, God tells Christians to not let anyone judge them for not keeping sabbaths (Colossians 2:14-17). The conclusion is that the entire Law is moral because God defined holiness for Israel as obedience to all of it. But since the Mosaic Law has been abolished, it is no longer in force in any sense for anyone. God defines a holy, moral life differently for a Christian than He did for a Jew before Christ's death (1 Peter 1:15-16; e.g. Leviticus 21:5 and Numbers 6:5 with 1 Corinthians 11:14; Leviticus 24:19-20 with Matthew 5:38-39).

The Sabbath command is included in the Ten Commandments because it is the sign of Israel's first covenant (Exodus 31:12-18). The Noahic Covenant had the rainbow as its sign (Genesis 9:17) and the Abrahamic Covenant had circumcision² (Genesis 17:11). For Israel to reject the sign of the covenant was to reject the entire covenant itself. So the most severe penalty of death was given for merely picking up sticks on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36). And although Israel had committed many heinous sins, it was not until they profaned the Sabbath that God sent them into Babylonian captivity. The length of their captivity was measured by the number of years Israel had refused to obey the Sabbath-year law to let the land lie idle (see Jeremiah 29:20 with 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Leviticus 26:32-35, 43). But as the old covenant has been superseded by the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6, 7, 13), the Sabbath command has been superseded by the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19-20). The old covenant Ten Commandments were a reminder of sin and its penalty, but the new covenant in Christ's blood (celebrated by the Lord's Supper) reminds us of our assurance of forgiveness (Matthew 26:26-28). The Sabbath reminded Israel of the old creation (Exodus 20:8-11). The Lord's Supper reminds the Christian of the new creation² in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Sabbath also reminded Israel of being liberated from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). The Lord's Supper reminds the Christian of being liberated from sin (John 8:32-36; Romans 6:1-7).

In conclusion, God's appointed place for the Ten Commandments is Israel's old covenant. God actually calls the Ten Commandments "*His covenant*." To say that the Ten Commandments applies to Christians is to say that "*the tablets of the (old) covenant*" apply to Christians or "*the testimony of the (old) covenant*" applies to Christians. But God

God's plan for the Ten Commandments was not to restate it or recycle it in order to apply it to the Christian. His plan was to fulfill it in Christ, and for Christ to die under its curse in order to deliver those who were under it, and for them to also die to it in Christ so that they could be married, or obligated, to Christ instead of the Ten Commandments.

made this covenant with Israel only, not Gentiles and not Christians. In addition, as terms of a legal covenant, the Ten Commandments is law, and this was never changed. So to make the Ten Commandments your rule of life is to put yourself under the law principle. To believe that the Ten Commandments applies to the Christian is to believe that all the terms of the old covenant given to Israel with all their blessings and curses applies to the Christian. Obviously, this is not the case. It is also incorrect to believe that the Ten Commandments minus their curses applies to the Christian. The Bible simply does not give us this option. You are either under the Law or you are not. It is also not enough to say that the Ten Commandments in grace form is the Christian's rule of life because we are told to not let anyone tell us we must keep the Sabbath. And the Christian's rule of life is far more demanding than the Ten Commandments regarding our conduct toward one another (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 33-44; Ephesians 4:28).

The Christian's rule of life is literally to imitate Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 11:1). Jesus told His disciples to teach those who believe in Him to obey what He had taught them, His commands, not Moses' commands (Matthew 28:18-20). His teachings and life are recorded in the gospels and the epistles by the New Testament apostles and prophets (John 14:26; 1 John 1:1-4; Ephesians 2:19-20). Jesus said, "*A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you*" (John 13:34). Moses' law demanded love that was motivated by fear of punishment

(Deuteronomy 11:13-17, 22-28). Christ's law is love motivated by God's love and life within us (1 John 4:7; Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 5:14). Christ is the new life of the believer, and His love compels us to walk as He walked, putting the interest of others ahead of our own (Philippians 2:3-5; 1 Corinthians 2:16).

Therefore, the Christian should not look back to Moses (the Ten Commandments) to get his commands for Christian living anymore than he looks back to Aaron (Israel's high priest) to get forgiveness for sins. As Christ has replaced Aaron as High Priest (Hebrews 7:1—8:1) and Moses as the Mediator of a far better covenant (Hebrews 3:1-3; 8:6), Christ has also replaced Moses as the law-giver of a far better rule of life (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23; John 6:14). The Ten Commandments were a mere shadow, or picture, of the good thing to come, Christ. He is God. So He is the actual substance of the revelation of God's holy character. You only cling to someone's picture when the actual person is absent. So it is high time that Christians put away the Ten Commandments (as God already has) and cling to Christ who has come in flesh and is always present (Matthew 28:20; John 14:20). He is the truly complete, permanent, and unchanging moral pattern to live by (Colossians 2:9-17).

So we know now that God's plan for the Ten Commandments was not to restate it or recycle it in order to apply it to the Christian. His plan was to fulfill it in Christ, and for Christ to die under its curse in order to deliver those who were under it, and for them to also die to it in Christ so that they could be married, or obligated, to Christ instead of the Ten Commandments (Galatians 3:13; Romans 8:2-4; 7:2-6). Therefore, look to Christ, and point other Christians to Christ, not the Ten Commandments. He is both the pattern and the power for the Christian life. His life is manifested through us, not by our own effort (which is law principle) but by the Spirit within us. We rest from our self-effort to produce the life because we have learned that we can not produce it. Only God can produce this supernatural life demanded of the Christian. As we focus on Christ and yield to the Spirit, we know that He will manifest the life of Christ for us. This is grace. Finally, preach Christ to unbelievers, not the Ten Commandments, in order to convict them of sin (2 Corinthians 4:3-6). Jesus said, "*If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however they have no excuse for sin*" (John 15:22). Christ is the greatest revelation of God's holy standard of which all fall short (John 1:1, 14, 18; Romans 3:23). When they see Christ, they have the best opportunity to realize they do not measure up. Then they have opportunity to repent and turn to Christ for life. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin because they do not believe in Christ, not because they have broken the Ten Commandments (John 16:7-9).

The Christian should not look back to Moses (the Ten Commandments) to know his commands for Christian living anymore than he looks back to Aaron (Israel's high priest) to get forgiveness for sins. As Christ has replaced Aaron as High Priest and Moses as the Mediator of a far better covenant, Christ has also replaced Moses as the law-giver of a far better rule of life.

¹ The nation of Israel will enjoy special earthly covenantal status with God again after "the fullness of the Gentiles have come in" (Romans 11:7-32). This will occur after Christ takes the church from earth to heaven (2 Thessalonians 4:13-18). At this time, Israel, as a nation, will enjoy the complete fulfillment of the earthly benefits of the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant which God made with Abraham 430 years prior to the Mosaic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18; 17:1-8, 15-19; Galatians 3:13-18). Israel will also enjoy the earthly and spiritual blessings of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-40; Ezekiel 36:26-38). Because of these unconditional covenants, Israel was preserved and shown mercy by God when she failed to keep the terms of the conditional law covenant of Moses (Leviticus 26:42-45; Deuteronomy 7:7-9; 8:18; 9:5-6, 26, 27; 10:11, 15; Micah 7:19, 20). This will continue because God must fulfill His unconditional covenant promises to Israel (Psalm 105:6-11; Romans 11:28-29).

² On the eve of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God threatened to kill Moses because he had not circumcised his son (Genesis 17:1-14; Exodus 4:21-26). And throughout Israel's Old Testament history, if an Israelite neglected this sign, they were to be cut off from the covenant and, thus, cut off from Israel (Joshua 5:2-9). But now, "*Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. What matters is a new creation*" (Galatians 6:14-15).

Take the Emmaus Road to Bible knowledge
Are you presently taking our Bible courses?
If not, write us today for a free course!