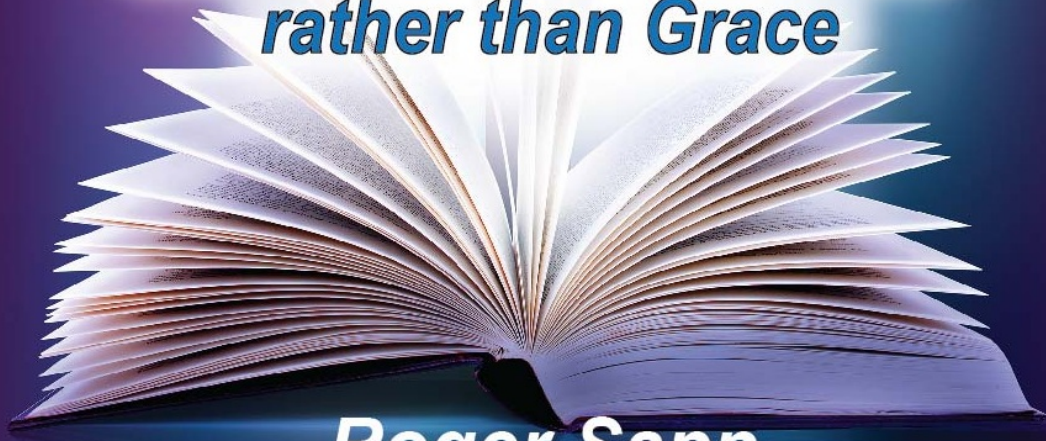


# *Grace in the Gospels*

***Confronting the Error  
that Jesus Christ  
taught the Law of Moses  
rather than Grace***



**Roger Sapp**

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## Foreword by BJ Shockey

*“This false grace has eaten the heart out of the Gospel...”* It was late and thoughts were coming faster than I could type them. *“...it mocks holiness, without which no one will see God, and makes discipleship impossible. Every standard of conduct is attacked and lawlessness now equals godliness...”*

I was very familiar with the concept of grace and the completed work of Jesus on the Cross, both in theory and in experience. I had read many of the teachings of the great Pentecostal pioneers who lived a hundred years before: John G. Lake, Smith Wigglesworth, F.F. Bosworth, E.W. Kenyon. I had a firm grasp on salvation by grace and justification by faith.

So what was it about this ongoing discussion that would so grate at my heart?

*“Am I so full of self-righteousness and pride that I am missing what they are trying to say?”*

I tried to force myself to listen to this new message, but the words struck a foul chord with my spirit every time I heard them. The phrases and the terminology were in line with what I had come to know to be true, but the spirit was different, and so was the fruit. Instead of loving and revering the Word, I discovered that proponents of this aggressive “grace” message were rejecting large chunks of scripture that they did not want to receive.

I found myself immersed in Scripture, listening to the New Testament on mp3 over and over again. It didn't take long to see what was happening; an incomplete message of justification by grace was being presented completely disjointed from the realities of the New Birth! Grace was approached from a completely “legal” perspective, while the scriptures that described the “living” side of grace were dismissed as Law and legalism.

The Pentecostal leaders of the 1900s often used the doctrine of salvation to explain healing. I found myself using healing to explain salvation:

*“Never separate the being from the doing. Do not divide the legal from the vital, or the position from the experience. When God speaks of healing, salvation, or righteousness, He wills that we experience these things in our lives. What good is it that He suffered and carried our sickness if we could only be ‘legally’ healed? Or ‘positionally’ cured?”*

The "legal without the living" perspective treats scripture as an intellectual exercise rather than a life-giving word from the Lord. It becomes a nice idea, and remains just an idea, with no power to bring it to pass.

God intends for us to experience the fullness of all that Jesus has provided for us at the Cross. We are legally healed so that we can enjoy healing in our physical bodies. Likewise, we are positionally made righteous so that we can enter into the fullness of life that the New Testament scriptures describe. To settle for less than this is to be robbed of our privileges as children of God and citizens of the Kingdom.

Much discussion and debate followed in the months after first encountering this new grace doctrine. I was told, "*The Old Testament is for the Jews, not the church!*" This sounded right by today's standards, but was it the attitude of the early church? The apostles never advocated law-keeping for the Gentile converts. Still, their world-view was fashioned and formed by the Old Testament scriptures. They understood that these examples were recorded for the benefit of the church and were used for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. In fact, the Bible of the early church was the Jewish Old Testament, translated into Greek.

I was told, "*John wrote to the Gnostics in First John Chapter 1; and to the Christians in Chapter two!*" This was explained to me over and over, as if such a reason could justify dismissing the fact that it was to Christians that John was writing when he said to confess our sins. Parsing out single lines and phrases, they have become judges of the word rather than doers of it.

*"The New Covenant didn't begin until the Cross, so that means that all of Jesus' teaching is under the Old Testament and not for Christians."* This attempt to dismiss the very words of Jesus is possibly the most disturbing of them all. This is the subject Roger Sapp masterfully addresses in this book.

Meeting Roger was a dose of sanity in the heat of this crazy debate. His practical understanding of grace and his ability to communicate it has been a blessing to me and to countless others.

For years, Roger has ministered the Christ-centered message of transformation by grace. His desire is not to see believers carried off by strange and varied teachings, but to be established in grace, and to experience the full expression of the true grace of God in a holy and victorious life.

A good counterfeit will always resemble the genuine, or else it could not be passed off as the real. Perhaps this is why Peter ends his first letter with these words:

*"I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!"*

I trust that through reading "Grace in the Gospels", you too will be strengthened to stand firm in the grace of God.

BJ Shockey

*"How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard." Hebrews 2:3*

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## Preface

This book was born out of a love for Jesus Christ and the Gospels that describe Him so well. I remember as a child, the red letters leaping off the page at me as the Gospels spoke to me. I saw, but did not understand, as Christ ministered life to those around Him. When I was 22 years old, a wise man named Mike, shared the Good News about Christ with me. Shortly after accepting Christ as my Savior, Mike encouraged me to read the Gospel of John. I remember how much I was amazed by Jesus Christ as I was seeing Him with brand new, born-again eyes.

Two decades later, in 1992, as a full-time minister of the Gospel, once again I found myself abiding in the Gospels with Christ. For two years, I spent many hours a day studying the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. I was transformed by this experience. Healing and miracles became a regular part of my ministry. Nearly twenty years later, I have seen Christ heal thousands of people. Knowing Christ, especially through the Gospels, has been a great blessing in my life. These days, I have found it increasingly distressing to discover that many are disrespectful to the ministry and teaching of Christ found in the Gospels. They teach that He is under the Law. For many of these misguided people, this means that they can claim to be forgiven, but entirely disregard what Christ teaches and demonstrates in the Gospels. Many of them justify continuing to live a sinful lifestyle contrary to the lifestyle that Christ teaches in the Gospels. This, of course, makes them false Christians. They simply do not know what they do to themselves and others by rejecting the teachings of Christ to His disciples.

Over the past two years, I have encountered an increasing number of people that have a serious misunderstanding about the Gospels. Finally, I decided to do something about it and write this book. It was a labor of love and came together pretty quickly. There were many other things that I could have written but decided to keep the book relatively short. I decided to have a single focus to show that Christ in the Gospels is not teaching the Law but is teaching grace.

I was aware of a number of Christians that were passionate about this issue. I formed a private group on Facebook and this group reviewed and edited what I had written. Jillian Styles energetically took on the role of editor and made the majority of corrections and excellent suggestions for clarity in message. BJ Shockey was just a step behind Jillian and noted more issues. He, like Jillian, rephrased some of the paragraphs and sentences to make the message more clear. Robert Short joined the group a few days after Jillian and BJ. He reviewed the book and found some additional errors in the text despite the previous editing. The three of them did excellent work over a ten day period in making this

book an easy read. Thomas Fischer and Jonathan Yeong both brought needed insights throughout the editing process. All five commented on cover design until I settled on a single cover. Gregg Taylor shared a needed concept at just the right time as I began to write the book. Jessie Campbell provided encouragement and spiritual support as we worked through this project. My wife, Ann, patiently endured me writing another book. Her comments were insightful as always. There were a number of other people who, just before we finalized this book, made useful comments and found some additional typos, missing words, missing punctuation, and some unneeded words. In no particular order, they are: Clif Heeney, Greg McCoy, Sharon Bond, Kenneth Bond, Brian Crews, Wendy Huffman Hanely, Eric Hanely, Donna Clark Popovich, Dr. Lyndsey Elizabeth, Noah Pinto, Helen Dowdell, Ryan Miller, Greg Conrad, Troy Kitchen, Jim Baker, Tom Chauvin, Jody Chauvin and Greg Kiser. Additionally, Margaret Pinto used her considerable editorial skills to point out a number of things that were still grammatical problems with the book. She put in several days of work on the book just before it was released. Thank all of you for your excellent work and encouragement.

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## **Introduction**

### **The Middle of a Conversation**

My wife Ann told me that reading this book is like coming into a room where a serious discussion has been happening but you have missed a good part of it. She is right that much discussion has preceded the writing of this book. The creation of the book was partially motivated by discussions which happened in person while engaged in traveling ministry and on Facebook. So this Introduction is devoted to a short explanation of why this book has been written.

There are two popular, but dangerous, movements happening among modern Christians. These movements differ in theological expression but have some of the same erroneous foundations. Heretical movements come and go and will eventually discredit their message by excesses. Unfortunately, this process of discrediting themselves takes a decade or longer to happen. During that time, their heretical teachings will damage many people's lives. Therefore, it is a godly work to disrupt that process in individual lives and, if possible, warn people to avoid the movement entirely.

In considering these movements, it is obvious that they do not describe every individual. There are Christians that have not made clear decisions about what they believe about certain matters. There are other Christians that have accepted some, but not all of the beliefs of these movements. So, it is not really possible to correctly place every person into one of these groups. However, the descriptions of these movements are useful to help Christians understand the truth of these matters.

### **Focusing on the Foundation of the Error**

There are many who teach that what Christ teaches in the Gospels is under the Law of Moses. This erroneous teaching is strong among two groups who are very distinct from each other. Is Jesus Christ under the Law of Moses? Are His teachings and activities, in the Gospels, a reflection of the Law? Or is He revealing grace and teaching His followers what they would need to know after His death on the Cross, His Resurrection, and His Ascension into Heaven?

### **Christian Legalists: They Believe What Christ Teaches is Law**

The first group that teaches that Christ is under the Law (and is teaching the Law) is best described as Christian Legalists. They have been called "Judaizers" in the past. While they believe in Christ and His Cross, they also believe strongly that Christians should keep the Law of Moses. Nevertheless, they do weakly affirm that Christians ought to do what Christ teaches in the Gospels. This

movement is fairly strong today and has Christians focusing on the Old Covenant, thinking that doing so is superior to the New Covenant.

This movement glorifies the Hebrew language, sings songs with Hebrew melodies, dances in a Jewish way, uses prayer shawls, blows ram's horns, and uses Old Covenant names for God rather than the names that Christ taught such as "Father". Some in this movement preach Sabbath-keeping and keeping other aspects of the Law of Moses. When teaching, Christian Legalists make few distinctions between Old and New Testament verses. They often mix the covenants without realizing the differences between the Old and New Covenants. Some Christian Legalists go so far as to reject the authenticity of the Greek New Testament. Christian Legalists are often struggling to be victorious over sin and to receive other New Covenant blessings. This is because attempting to keep the Law of Moses interferes with the operation of grace in their lives. Embracing the Law will not cause Christians to be victorious and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Only grace through faith in Jesus Christ can do that.

### **Narrow Gracers: They Reject What Christ Teaches as Law**

The second popular movement could be described as "Narrow Gracers." They promote a popular, but wrong view of grace that is drawn from a narrow band of verses. They identify themselves as "Pure Grace," "Extreme Grace," "Radical Grace," "100% Grace," "Jesus Plus Nothing," and a variety of other grace labels. However, much of the teaching of these "grace teachers" resembles the heresies of "Antinomianism," "Ultimate Reconciliation," or "Universalism" from the past.

They ignore anything in Paul's writings and elsewhere in the New Testament that contradicts their view of grace. They, like the Christian Legalists, believe that the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ is "under the Law" of Moses. In contrast to the Christian Legalists, they reject Christ's teaching as an expression of the Law rather than grace.

The Narrow Gracers develop interpretative methods that severely limit the amount of the New Testament that they will consider useful for doctrine. When confronted with things in the Gospels that contradict their distorted view of grace, they will say "Not for believers, it is under the Law." If the contradiction is in the Acts of the Apostles, they will say "only for unbelievers, not for believers." If it is in the book of the Revelation, they will say "only for a brief transition but not for today." If the contradiction is in the Letters, they are likely to create an elaborate explanation. They reject whole books of the New Testament because of one or more verses that disagree with their doctrine by saying "not written to Christians." They generally find a way to discard anything that they do not like. To illustrate, in a post on Facebook, a Narrow Gracer wrote this:

*"I color code bible verses with high-lighters: Blue=Holy Spirit, Green=Deity, orange=faith, yellow=important verses, black=verses I don't like."*

This is very antagonistic towards the truth of the inspiration of Scripture. Nevertheless, it does seem to describe how this group handles Scripture. Their doctrine seems to be higher in their minds than what Scripture teaches.

The Narrow Gracers reject the idea that sin is a problem any longer. They don't promote a sinful lifestyle exactly; they simply deny that a sinful lifestyle is possible for those who are not "under the Law." They reject the lifestyle that Christ teaches in the Gospels, including faith in Him, as "legalism" and "works." Likewise, the Narrow Gracers often teach a very shallow view of repentance, either rejecting repentance altogether as a "work"---suggesting that one-time repentance is enough---or redefining repentance to mean "seeing grace in the way that we do." Indeed, they often assert that the only thing that someone need do in this life is accept grace. This leaves them in sinful, unrepentant lifestyles. They are those who theologically claim the grace of forgiveness of sins, but do not seem to be experiencing the life-changing qualities of grace.

### **The All Grace Understanding: Believe that Christ Teaches Grace**

In contrast to these two groups, who are building on an erroneous foundation, are believers who are building firmly on Christ Himself. These believers fully embrace the grace of Jesus Christ displayed in the Gospels. These believers are much more about grace than the Narrow Gracers and more about only doing what Christ teaches than the Christian Legalists. Instead of finding grace only in a few passages in the New Testament, they find grace in every verse in the New Testament. They believe correctly that Christ is not under the Law or teaching the Law. They believe that Christ is teaching and demonstrating grace throughout the Gospels.

This group believes strongly that Christians should not be under the Law or practicing the Law in any way, but should submit wholeheartedly to the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. They believe correctly that practicing these pro-grace teachings of Christ makes them authentic followers of Christ. The All Grace group strongly rejects the idea that the teachings of Jesus Christ are legalisms or Law in any way. They see these teachings of Christ as the pro-grace lifestyle that will continue to receive and maintain grace. They believe that no one can truly be a Christian and reject the pro-grace lifestyle that Christ teaches. Beyond this, they believe that someone who does reject this pro-grace lifestyle is likely not to have experienced regeneration or justification and may still be in their sins even as they argue doctrinally that their sins are forgiven.

## **Comparisons of Narrow Gracers with All Grace**

The Narrow Gracers tend to regard themselves as promoting grace, but they have failed to see that they have strongly limited grace to only a narrow portion of verses in the New Testament. They have misunderstood the position of the All Grace group and wrongly accused them as being “legalists.” This label of “legalist” is certainly wrong and misleading as the All Grace group promotes grace in many ways that the Narrow Gracers do not. The All Grace group obviously sees grace in the Gospels and throughout the New Testament. The All Grace group affirms that there is nothing in the entire New Testament that is contrary to true grace. They affirm that there is nothing in the New Testament that is encouraging Christians to submit to the Law of Moses.

In an ironic way, the Narrow Gracers are more about the Law than the All Grace group. They have placed Jesus Christ and His ministry---His miracles and healings, His training of His disciples, and His life-giving teachings---"under the Law." This certainly makes them much less about grace and much less about following Jesus Christ than the All Grace group. The Narrow Gracers only see Christ as the One who justifies them and not the One who teaches them, from the Gospels, how to live out that justification.

## **The Purpose of the Book**

In order to help Christians avoid embracing the teachings of both the Christian Legalists and the Narrow Gracers, it is necessary to show that Jesus Christ was neither teaching the Law of Moses, nor operating under it when He taught His disciples. Instead of Law, Christ was teaching them about receiving and maintaining grace in their lives. Revealing that Christ was teaching about and ministering grace in the Gospels is the purpose of this book. If it succeeds in fulfilling that purpose, it will expose the false foundation of the teachings of both the Christian Legalists and the Narrow Gracers even if they find clever ways to reject the truth.

I am under no illusion that this book will convince all those who are deeply committed to the error that Christ is under the Law and teaching Law. What the New Testament actually says does not seem very important to many of them. It is my hope that others, who are being exposed to these teachings but not strongly committed to them, will be able to avoid this error, be an authentic Christian, be faithful to Jesus Christ and walk in His true grace.

Blessings in Jesus Christ,  
Roger Sapp

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## Chapter 1 Christ Initiates the New Covenant

### **Right About the Cross, Wrong About Other Things**

As revealed in the Introduction, some are preaching that Jesus Christ was teaching the Law of Moses in the Gospels. Likewise, they believe that grace can not be shown in the Gospels without the Cross happening first. They are very wrong about both of these points and there are numerous places where the Gospels make this clear. However, they are not wrong about the extreme importance of the Cross.

The New Covenant could not be made without Christ shedding His blood during His scourging and on the Cross. What some are forgetting is that the making of every covenant requires the laying out of promises and conditions before the covenant is ratified by the shedding of blood. In other words, the covenant is initiated by promises and conditions. It is ratified---in force and valid---when blood is shed. For example, the book of Hebrews declares:

*For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. (Hebrews 9:16-17)*

The death of Christ must happen for the New Covenant to be valid and in force. The writer of Hebrews continues to make his point by illustrating through the Covenant of Law made with Moses and the Children of Israel. He writes:

*Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." (Hebrews 9:18-20)*

The writer of Hebrews notes that every commandment had to be spoken to all the people by Moses according to the Law. The reading of the commandments preceded the application of blood by Moses.

*And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Hebrews 9:21-22)*

## **Prerequisites of Entering a Covenant: Promises and Conditions**

Hebrews reviews the events of Exodus Chapter 24. The prerequisites of entering a covenant are obvious:

*Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 24:3)*

"All the words of the Lord and all the ordinances" are recounted in the presence of those making covenant. The people must agree to what they have heard. They have heard the conditions of the Covenant of Law. These conditions require them to obey the Law. They have also heard the promises in the Law of God's blessings on them for obedience to the Law. Then Moses writes down these words:

*Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. (Exodus 24:4-5)*

Moses created the Book of the Law which recorded God's promises and His conditions (which were His Laws). Then, the blood that finished creating this covenant was offered.

*Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. (Exodus 24:6)*

The altar was consecrated by the blood, and then Moses took the book of the covenant and read it in the presence of the people. Consecrating the altar with blood represents God's side of the covenant. After this, the people's side of making the Covenant is revealed.

*Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" (Exodus 24:7)*

This is now twice that the Children of Israel have heard the words of the covenant. This reading includes God's promises to them and the conditions for receiving those promises in the Law. This is the second time also that they have declared that they will obey the words of the covenant. Now it is the people's turn to be consecrated by blood.

*So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."(Exodus 24:8)*

The people were consecrated by the blood, but only after they had heard the specifics of the covenant that they were entering with God and agreed to the conditions of obedience to the LORD through the Law.

It is important to remember that God was already showing aspects of the Old Covenant even before He formalized the covenant with the Children of Israel. The Children of Israel had already experienced the events of deliverance from Egypt. They had experienced the leadership of Moses, the Passover and the defeat of their enemies by God all before the covenant had been formalized and ratified by blood.

### **The New Covenant's Declaration of Intent in the Gospels**

The New Covenant has both similarities and differences with the Old Covenant of Law. It is different because it is not based on obedience to Law; rather, but grace through faith in Jesus Christ. It is similar in that a covenant is being made with God. It is similar in that the New Covenant requires that the conditions and promises be laid out carefully before the New Covenant is made.

When a couple is entering the marriage covenant, before they take their vows, there is a portion of the ceremony that is called the "Declaration of Intent." If they refuse to agree to this statement, they cannot be said to have entered the Covenant of Marriage and they should not go on to take their vows. Both the groom and the bride agree to conditions in their marriage. Here is a typical "Declaration of Intent".

*Will you have this woman to be your wife; to live in the Holy Covenant of Marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to her so long as you both shall live? If so, answer "I will."*

Traditionally, the groom agrees and then the bride agrees. These are the conditions of the marriage covenant. Shortly afterward, the couple makes vows to each other that further lay out the conditions of their covenant to each other before they are actually in covenant with each other.

Christ lays out the conditions and blessings of the New Covenant in the Gospels through His teachings and supernatural demonstrations of God's grace. This is before He makes formal covenant with the disciples in the event of the Lord's Supper. Even this more formal event of making covenant occurs before the

shedding of Christ's blood. Christ speaks as if the New Covenant is being made at that moment and yet He has not yet gone to the Cross. The Lord's Supper is followed shortly thereafter by the shedding of His blood during His scourging and on the Cross.

### **The Gospels Show the Promises and Conditions of the New Covenant**

The Gospels are exceedingly important because they lay out carefully the promises and conditions of the New Covenant. It is God's way of making a "Declaration of Intent" in the New Covenant that He is making with all who would believe. Thinking that what Christ teaches and supernaturally demonstrates in the Gospels are reflections of the Law of Moses is not only incorrect, but confuses and narrows the concept of grace.

These conditions of the New Covenant reveal the lifestyle of grace. This lifestyle allows for the grace of sanctification to transform the believer's life. It is not enough to be justified from sin. Transformation into the image of Jesus Christ through sanctifying grace is the destiny of every believer. The Bridegroom is returning for the Bride who has been transformed by sanctification to be like Him in every way. Only grace can accomplish this. Only the pro-grace lifestyle that Christ teaches in the Gospels can nurture that transformation by grace. Those who point to the fact that Christ must go to the Cross before the covenant is valid and in force are correct. However, they are wrong in saying that what Christ is teaching is Law or is operating under the Law. The "Declaration of Intent" found in the Gospels is entirely about grace as will be all our dealings with Christ in the New Covenant.

### **Christ Makes the New Covenant Properly**

No one properly initiates a covenant without specifying the terms of the covenant before the covenant is made. Each person entering into the covenant should know what to expect from the other person and what the other person expects from them. It is foolish to enter a covenant without first knowing the exact provisions, promises and conditions of the covenant.

Understanding the specifications of the covenant before the covenant is made is essential to actually making the covenant properly. Through the Gospels, Christ lays out the details of the New Covenant before the Lord's Supper and before the Cross. Those who do not agree with the "Declaration of Intent" in the Gospels cannot enter the covenant. It does not matter what they believe doctrinally, they cannot enter the covenant if they refuse the Bridegroom's expectations revealed in the Gospels.

### **An Illustration of Conditions and Promises of the New Covenant**

There are many verses in the Gospels that illustrate either the conditions or the



promises of the New Covenant. There are a few verses that do both. For instance, the Apostle John writes:

*“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)*

Eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ is a New Covenant promise found in the Gospels. It is part of the Bridegroom’s Declaration of Intent. Obeying the Son is a condition of the New Covenant. It is part of the Bride’s expected Declaration of Intent. Anything less than obeying the Son is certainly unwise and worse, it is unfaithfulness to the New Covenant.

Christ is making covenant with all who would believe in the Gospels. It takes Him three years to make plain the multitude of incredible promises and the simple conditions to enter the New Covenant. Even the casual reader should be able to see that Christ places heavy emphasis on faith throughout the Gospels. For those who have eyes to see, the Gospels are full of the beauty and graciousness of the Bridegroom making covenant with His beloved Bride. The Gospels are full of the expectation of the Bridegroom that His Bride would lead a lifestyle that honors Him and reflects the grace that she is receiving. This is the “All Grace” view of the New Covenant being revealed in the Gospels.

Chapter 2 will show how all this begins with John the Baptist.

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## **Chapter 2**

### **The Kingdom Begins with John the Baptist**

#### **Two Important and Connected Issues**

There are two connected issues that this book is focusing upon. The first is showing that Christ is not preaching the Law, but a message about grace. The second is showing that Christ is not under the Law, but is showing grace in all that He does. In other words, the first issue is Christ's teaching. The second is Christ's actions. This chapter deals with the first of these two issues.

#### **The Timing of the Transition from Old Covenant to New Covenant**

Christ declares the timing of the change of the Old Covenant message of the Law to the New Covenant message of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Christ Himself says that He is not proclaiming the Law as that proclamation ended with the arrival of John the Baptist. Christ says in Luke's Gospel:

*"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." (Luke 16:16)*

Christ reveals the specific time when the Old Covenant's legitimate ministry is concluded from God's perspective. Christ also reveals the beginning of when the New Covenant is being initiated. This reveals the point in history the New and Old Covenants are divided. The Law and the Prophets representing the Old Covenant were proclaimed until John. According to Christ, the Old Covenant proclamation of Law ends at John the Baptist's ministry. Everything that came before John's ministry is Old Covenant (with the exception of Genesis and the first part of Exodus) and everything afterward in the Gospels, such as Christ's ministry and the ministries of His disciples, is Christ originating the New Covenant.

#### **The Grace Loan**

God is allowing these New Covenant things to happen through what could be called a "grace loan." God knew that the full price of our indebtedness would be paid completely by Christ in the near future. The Apostle Matthew discloses this truth about this "grace loan" being extended before the Cross in one of Christ's healing situations. Matthew writes:

*(Christ) healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases." (Matthew 8:16b-17)*

The Apostle Matthew, one of the original twelve disciples, points to the well known Messianic prophecy of Isaiah Chapter 53. This prophecy reveals that Christ “took our infirmities and carried away our diseases” at His scourging and on the Cross. This is important. Christ was healing on the basis of His redemptive sufferings before those sufferings had happened. Christ healed all who came to Him here. This was not because of their obedience to the Law. It was because of the work of the Cross yet to happen.

Grace was being shown by God in healing the sick on the basis of the Cross. God was giving the “grace loan” because of foreknowledge that His Son would pay the price in full. God does this all through the Gospels and it allows Christ to perfectly demonstrate how the New Covenant operates. This “grace loan” allows Jesus Christ to demonstrate the provisions and conditions of the New Covenant all through the Gospels. The “grace loan” is evident before Christ makes covenant at the Lord’s Supper, before His Cross and Resurrection, and before Pentecost. This is because God foreknew all these things in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

### **Matthew Describes John the Baptist’s Ministry**

The Gospels are in complete agreement with the statement of Jesus about John the Baptist. Matthew describes the message of John. He writes:

*Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!’” (Matthew 3:1-3)*

John says nothing about the Law at all. John himself was not preaching the Law, but preaching the Kingdom, repentance, and being prepared for the coming of Christ. Matthew records another detailed statement from Christ about John the Baptist, the Kingdom, and the Law and the Prophets. Christ says:

*“Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.” (Matthew 11:11-13)*

Christ says some surprising things in this statement. First of all, He discloses that John the Baptist was greater than all the Old Covenant believers. This would include Elijah, Moses, Abraham, Noah and a host of others. John was greater

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:23, Romans 8:29, Romans 11:2, 1 Peter 1:2, 20

because he had more revelation about Christ and His Kingdom than all those before him.

Secondly, Christ makes another surprising statement. He says that he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist. Here, Christ is not talking about dying and going to Heaven, but entering the Kingdom on earth. (Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.) This would make all believers today greater than John the Baptist who is greater than Moses and all the Old Covenant believers. Believers are greater than these Old Covenant leaders because they know about Christ and have entered His Kingdom by receiving Him as Savior and Lord of their lives.

Thirdly, Christ again discloses that the Kingdom is being “taken” by some since the days of John the Baptist. This is another expression showing that people were experiencing the Kingdom before the Cross and Resurrection. In Christ’s earlier statement about John the Baptist in Luke’s Gospel, Christ said “everyone is forcing his way into it” (the Kingdom). Because the Kingdom is being preached, people are now entering the Kingdom by faith in Christ. They are experiencing forgiveness of sins, healing, deliverance from evil spirits, and other New Covenant blessings. Christ is in the process of making the New Covenant by revealing the promises and conditions before His Cross completes it.

Fourthly, Christ explains that the Law and the Prophets prophesied until John. Much like what Christ said in Luke’s Gospel, the implication is that the Old Covenant, represented by the Law and the Prophets, has ceased legitimate godly function. Now the Gospel of the Kingdom, as an expression of the New Covenant, is the way to approach God in Jesus Christ. Those who are preaching the Kingdom of God are not preaching the Law according to the Lord Jesus. The message of the Kingdom is essentially about God’s rule on earth through grace. It is the message from and about our ruling King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Precise Moment of Change from Old Covenant to New Covenant**

There is a precise moment in the ministry of John the Baptist where it does seem that the Old Covenant ends and New Covenant promises and conditions begin to be revealed by Christ. That seems to be at the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist. Here’s that account:

*John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. And he was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately coming up*

*out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased." And immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him. And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:6-15)*

This passage reveals once again that the focus in John's ministry was Christ. He had revelation that Christ was coming and would supernaturally change people through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus is baptized by John, the Spirit descends upon Christ and the Father speaks to Him personally. After a 40 day period of fasting and temptation, Christ begins His New Covenant ministry by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom with great power and commanding repentance and faith. When Christ speaks of faith or believing, it is strong proof that Christ is not teaching the Law. Paul says "the Law is not of faith." Believing is a condition of New Covenant.

### **The Making of the New Covenant**

The making of the New Covenant begins historically with the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist. Shortly afterward, Christ begins to preach the Kingdom. This is certainly not the Law that Christ is preaching. Christ reveals the conditions of the New Covenant by commanding repentance and faith.

Everything that Christ teaches and demonstrates in the Gospels is for believers today. To miss what Christ teaches and demonstrates in the Gospels is to fail to become Christ's true disciple. It is a failure to make Christ the Lord of their lives. Anyone who spends time seriously studying the Gospels, with desire to do what Christ teaches, will discover that this will be strongly validated by the Holy Spirit.

These books about Jesus Christ are named "Gospels" because they are full of the "Good News" of the grace of God in Christ. Allowing this "Good News" repeatedly into your heart and mind will produce faith in Christ and a pro-grace lifestyle that will nourish that faith. Christ will become "Good News" to you in a very personal way. The Gospels would be seriously misnamed if they were about Law rather than grace. Thankfully, they are very well named.

The next chapter reveals that Jesus Christ was preaching the same message as John, which was the Gospel of the Kingdom.

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**Christ Preaches the Kingdom**

## **Chapter 3**

### **Christ Preaches the Kingdom**

#### **John the Baptist and Jesus Christ Preach the Kingdom**

As observed in the last chapter, in the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, John the Baptist was preaching the Kingdom of God. He was not preaching the Law. Matthew records John the Baptist saying:

*“Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)*

Not only did John the Baptist preach the Kingdom, but Jesus Christ preaches the identical message. Christ was not preaching the Law and the Prophets. Christ was preaching the Kingdom of God. Matthew records Jesus Christ preaching the identical message. Matthew writes:

*From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17)*

While Jesus Christ may mention the Law at times as does the Apostle Paul, a careful study will discover that Law is not His message. Christ's message is consistently the Kingdom. This is exactly what Christ said would happen when He spoke about John the Baptist.

#### **Message of the Kingdom is the Gospel. Believing is the Response**

Mark's Gospel also records that Jesus was preaching the Kingdom of God. Mark records Christ's saying:

*“The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)*

Christ describes this message of the Kingdom of God as “the Gospel.” Christ indicates in a very simple way that the appropriate response to His message is to “repent and believe in the Gospel.” Christ is asking for a “faith response.” To believe and to have faith are exactly the same thing because these words in the New Testament have a common Greek root.

Faith is a very important subject to Christ and there are more than a hundred references to faith and believing in the Gospels. The Apostle Paul states that “the Law is not of faith.”<sup>2</sup> The great number of times that Christ says something about

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<sup>2</sup> Galatians 3:12

faith or believing reveals that He is not preaching the Law; rather, He is preaching a strong, New Covenant message.

### **An Angel Speaks of the Kingdom and Grace to Mary, Mother of Christ**

The Gospels are full of references to the Kingdom. Luke also writes about the Kingdom of God. The first mention of Christ's Kingdom in Luke's Gospel is by an angel who speaks to Mary.

*And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor (grace) with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His Kingdom will have no end." (Luke 1:30-33)*

Luke reveals the angel speaking about "grace" to Mary. "Grace" is happening in the Gospels. The Greek word "charis" that is normally translated "grace" in the New Testament has been poorly translated as "favor" in this passage. It is unfortunate that some translators can become inconsistent in translation. It should be translated as "grace." This angel makes reference to Old Testament Messianic prophecies concerning the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Christ fulfills these two prophecies and proclaims His fulfillment of them.

### **Christ Describes His Message as the Gospel**

Likewise, Christ, in His home town of Nazareth describes His message and mission early in the Gospel of Luke by quoting a Messianic prophecy.

*The book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:17-21)*

Christ says that He was anointed to preach the Gospel. The passage describes the Gospel that Christ preached, which includes releasing captives and healing the blind. There is nothing about Law here. This strongly resembles what was preached after Pentecost by His disciples.

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel 2:44, 7:14, 2 Samuel 7:16

## **Christ Describes His Message as the Kingdom of God**

A few verses later, in the Gospel of Luke, Christ Himself describes what He is preaching. He says:

*“I must preach the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.” (Luke 4:43)*

Christ was sent by the Father to preach the Kingdom of God. He was not sent to preach the Law.

## **Matthew Describes Christ as Proclaiming the Gospel and Healing**

The Gospels have a number of general descriptions of Christ’s ministry. They all state that Christ was proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom with healing following. Matthew writes:

*Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. Matthew 4:23*

This is the ongoing pattern of Christ’s ministry. He proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom and healed every kind of sickness and disease. Healing followed Christ’s preaching of the Kingdom as it does today. Certainly, no one ever preached the Law in Church history and had healing follow consistently.

While Christ speaks occasionally about the Law, He does not preach the Law. The Apostle Matthew describes Christ again proclaiming the Kingdom five chapters later. He writes:

*And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Matthew 9:35*

## **Luke Describes Christ’s Ministry as Proclaiming the Kingdom of God**

Luke also describes this ongoing pattern of Christ’s ministry in a similar fashion. Luke writes:

*(Christ) began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the Kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him... Luke 8:1b*

Christ proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom in both Jewish villages and Gentile villages in the land of Israel. The Gospels do not record Him proclaiming the Law in any place.



### **Christ Describes His Own Message in Luke's Gospel**

In Luke's Gospel, once again Christ describes His message. In this situation, John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Christ if He was the Expected One. Christ replies to John's question by describing His ministry:

*Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Luke 7:22)*

Christ again says that He is preaching the Gospel. He says nothing about the Law and the Prophets.

### **Luke Describes Christ's Message of the Kingdom and Healing the Sick**

Luke also records another description of the message of Jesus Christ. Luke writes:

*(Christ) withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. But the multitudes were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the Kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing. (Luke 9:10b-11)*

Consistently, the Gospels disclose that Christ preached the Gospel of the Kingdom.

### **The Kingdom was the Message of the Risen Christ**

Lest someone think that this was some sort of transitional message, it should be noted that Christ's message did not change after His death and Resurrection. Luke records that the Risen Christ spoke to His disciples about the Kingdom of God.

*To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)*

The contention that what Christ taught them about the Kingdom of God before Pentecost does not apply to believers today is not true and certainly not logical. It conflicts with the fact that, for forty days, just before Pentecost, the Risen Christ was still talking to His disciples about the Kingdom.

### **The Kingdom Presented in Parables**

Added to the wealth of material that Christ teaches on the Kingdom, He also teaches the Kingdom by virtue of the medium of parables as well. While some parables do not mention the Kingdom, there are ten Kingdom parables. These parables begin with a phrase such as "The Kingdom of God is like..." Four

Kingdom parables are repeated in two Gospels. One Kingdom parable is repeated in three Gospels.

It is not our purpose to elaborate the teaching in each Kingdom parable, but to note that they are illustrating the Kingdom and have nothing to do with the Law. Christ Himself explains to His disciples why He illustrates the Kingdom by parables in Matthew 13:1-53, Mark 4:1-34, and Luke 8:4-18.

Here is a list of the Kingdom Parables:

Parable of the Sower: Matthew 13:18-23, Mark 4:3-20, Luke 8:5-15

Parable of the Lamp: Mark 4:21-25, Luke 8:16-18

Parable of the Growing Seed: Mark 4:26-29

Parable of the Weeds: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Parable of the Mustard Seed: Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32

Parable of the Leaven: Matthew 13:33-35, Mark 4:33-34

Parable of the Treasure in the Field: Matthew 13:44

Parable of the Pearl of Great Price: Matthew 13:45-46

Parable of the Net: Matthew 13:47-50

Parable of the Householder: Matthew 13:51-53

### **The Sermon on the Mount is About the Kingdom not the Law**

Some have suggested that even the amazing Sermon on the Mount is under the Law. This teaching of Christ is found in chapters five, six and seven of the Gospel of Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount has eleven references to the Kingdom. It has only three references to the Law of Moses. One of these references to the Law, Christ says that He is fulfilling the Law. In another one of these references Christ says that the Golden rule of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is equivalent to the Law and the prophets. None of these references suggest that what Christ is teaching is under the Law. The Lord’s Prayer is found in the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord’s Prayer itself has two references to the Kingdom in just a few verses but no references to the Law of Moses.

### **Comparisons of the Frequency of Use of “Law” and “Kingdom”**

The word “Kingdom” appears one hundred seventeen times in the Gospels. The word “Law” appears only thirty-one times. There are nearly four times as many references to the Kingdom than to the Law in the Gospels. None of these references to the Law suggest that Christ was operating under the Law or preaching the Law of Moses.

In comparison, the Apostle Paul mentions “Law” ninety-four times in his writings in the New Testament. This is about three times as much as the Gospels. He

mentions the “Kingdom” fourteen times. He mentions “grace” seventy-nine times. In other words, Paul uses the word “Law” more than the “Kingdom” and “grace” added together. Nevertheless, Paul is not in any way suggesting that believers submit to the Law just because he writes about it. Neither is Jesus Christ just because He says something about the Law.

The next chapter shows that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was preached by Christ’s disciples both before and after Pentecost. The Apostle Paul also preached the Kingdom of God. In other words, the very same message of Christ found in the Gospels is going to be seen after Pentecost in the chapters that follow.

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**Christ's Disciples Preach the Kingdom**

## **Chapter 4**

### **Christ's Disciples Preach the Kingdom**

#### **Christ Sends the Disciples to Preach the Kingdom**

In the Gospels, Christ sends His twelve disciples and commands them to preach the Kingdom just as He had been doing. Christ says:

*As you go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give. (Matthew 10:7-8)*

Christ told the Twelve to preach the very same Kingdom message that He Himself was preaching and to do the very same supernatural works. Christ did not send them to preach the Law. The Gospels record these disciples healing the sick, casting out demons, and preaching the Kingdom. The Gospels do not record the disciples preaching the Law. This is the same message and supernatural works that the disciples did after Pentecost.

Luke also records Christ sending the Twelve in a similar fashion. They were to proclaim the same message of the Kingdom that they heard Christ proclaim.

*(Christ) called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and to perform healing. (Luke 9:1-2)*

Again, the twelve disciples were not sent out to proclaim the Law.

#### **Christ Sends the Seventy to Declare the Kingdom**

Christ also sent the seventy disciples out to declare the Kingdom. Being completely consistent, Christ did not tell them to preach the Law either.

*Heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.' (Luke 10:9)*

Luke even records Christ speaking to a man who was not yet following Him. He said:

*"Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the Kingdom of God." (Luke 9:60)*

This statement does reveal how central the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom is to following Christ. Christ said this to a man who was not yet His disciple.

### **The Risen Christ Commands His Disciples to Preach the Kingdom**

Just before His Ascension, the Risen Christ said this to His disciples:

*This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (Matthew 24:14)*

The message that Christ expects His disciples to proclaim today is the Gospel of the Kingdom. It is the same message that Christ and His disciples preached before Pentecost. Christ's disciples knew this message well because they had heard it for three years.

Christ prepared His disciples in the Gospels to preach and do ministry in the same way that they would after Pentecost. He had spoken to them of the Kingdom for forty days just before Pentecost. It was the same message. If there had been a significant change, the New Testament would record that change. If a significant change had happened, the new message would be called something other than the Gospel of the Kingdom. For those who have eyes to see, It is abundantly clear that the message remained essentially the same before and after Pentecost.

Mark's Gospel also records Christ commanding His disciples to preach the Gospel just before His Ascension into Heaven.

*(Christ) said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)*

### **They Didn't Say "What Gospel?"**

Christ told His disciples to preach the message that He had taught them. They didn't respond with "What Gospel?" They knew what Christ was speaking about. It is undeniable that the disciples had more understanding of the basic facts of the Gospel after Pentecost. They certainly understood better about Christ's death and Resurrection. However, Christ had already told them that He would be crucified and raised from the dead. Christ had not neglected these foundational facts even if they did not completely understand them until after His death and Resurrection.

The message that Christ taught them in the Gospels was completely compatible with the facts of His Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost. These

events in Christ's life and the coming of the Holy Spirit did not surprise Christ. He taught His disciples about these things in the Gospels. Christ was full of knowledge about the future and did not fail to tell the disciples about what was going to happen. The Gospel of the Kingdom is the same message that Christ and His disciples had preached before Pentecost.

Christ wanted His followers to preach the Gospel and not the Law. They had not heard much about the Law from Him but a great deal about the Gospel of the Kingdom. The message that Christians should preach today is the same message that Christ taught His first followers. The Gospel is the same message that is recorded in the books that are called the Gospels. This should be simple but some have complicated it to the place of great confusion.

As stated before in this chapter, the Risen Christ commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. He also spent His last forty days on Earth explaining the Kingdom of God to them. It should be clear that Christ meant for them to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom after Pentecost.

### **The Risen Christ and His "Great Commission"**

The Gospels record a number of things that He said during that period. For instance, one of these statements has been called "The Great Commission." At the end of that last 40 days on Earth, Christ said to His disciples:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you... (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Christ told His disciples that they should make disciples of all the nations. Those disciples should be taught to observe all that Christ had commanded the original disciples to do. Christ had taught the original disciples to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Christ had taught them to heal the sick and to cast out demons. Christ commanded His original disciples to teach all future disciples all that He had commanded them. This obviously had to happen after Pentecost. Christ intended for His ministry of grace in the Gospels to continue in Acts and thereafter through the Church age.

### **Philip Obeys Christ's Command and Preaches the Kingdom**

It is not surprising, therefore, that after Pentecost, the disciples preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. Christians after Pentecost submitted to the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels. For instance, here is what the Book of Acts says about Philip preaching the Gospel in Samaria:

*When they believed Philip preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12a)*

Philip preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. This is the same message that the disciples and Christ had preached before Pentecost. Philip preached Christ and the power of Jesus' name. Even before Pentecost, the name of Jesus had been used to cast out demons and heal the sick, just as it was used after Pentecost.<sup>4</sup>

Another reference to the Gospel is found in the Acts of the Apostles. As a result of Philip's successful ministry, two of the Apostles in Jerusalem, Peter and John, came down to Samaria to assist Philip.

### **Peter and John Preach the Gospel of the Kingdom**

The passage states that as Peter and John left Samaria, they preached the Gospel. In the context, it makes complete sense that this also was the Gospel of the Kingdom. The passage says:

*When (Peter and John) had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. (Act 8:25)*

This verse says that Peter and John were preaching the gospel.

### **Peter and John Preached the Kingdom, Which is the Word of the Lord**

There is another description of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom that appears often in the Book of Acts. It is the phrase "the word of the Lord".<sup>5</sup> Peter and John were also speaking "the word of the Lord." This is not to be confused with "the word of the LORD." When the letters are capitalized by translators, they are usually translating a quoted Old Testament reference by the New Testament writer. While the same Greek word for "lord" is being used, the translators are properly creating a distinction between it and other New Testament references. This distinction is necessary to make the reader aware that the reference is probably not a direct reference to Jesus Christ because it is coming from the Old Testament. However, when "Lord" has three lowercase letters, in the great majority of cases, it is a title given to Jesus Christ. There are over six hundred times that "Lord" is used in a verse in the New Testament. There are only a very few times in the New Testament when "Lord" is not referring to Jesus Christ. If we look for "Lord Jesus" or "Lord Jesus Christ," these titles for Christ appear

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<sup>4</sup> Mark 9:38, Luke 9:49, 10:17, Matthew 7:22

<sup>5</sup> Luke 22:61, Acts 8:25, 11:16, 12:24, 13:48, 15:35, 16:32, 19:10, 20, 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 4:15, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 1 Peter 1:25

more than one hundred times.<sup>6</sup> All this shows that the word "Lord" is strongly connected to Jesus Christ and therefore, "word of the Lord" is speaking about the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter and John were speaking the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. They had learned this message from Jesus in the Gospels and had heard more about the Kingdom from the crucified and Risen Christ during the forty days just before Pentecost.

There are other places that reveal that "the word of the Lord" refers specifically to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ spoken before Pentecost. For instance, here is another statement from Peter that reveals this. Peter says:

*I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 11:16)*

These are words spoken by the resurrected Jesus Christ and recorded in Acts Chapter 1. "The word of the Lord" refers to words spoken by Jesus Christ before Pentecost. It is another reference to the Gospel of the Kingdom. Peter believes that these "words of the Lord" before Pentecost are completely true and useful for doctrine. He does not reject the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as being "under the Law" as some are doing today. In fact, Peter says this of "the word of the Lord":

*The word of the Lord abides forever. And this is the word which was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:25)*

Peter says that the words that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke will abide forever. Christ Himself makes this same statement with these recorded in three Gospels.<sup>7</sup> Peter says that this was the word that was preached to the Christians in His day. Believers in that day heard what Christ had taught His disciples. They heard the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. These words were preached to them both before and after Pentecost. The words from Jesus Christ were part and parcel of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

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<sup>6</sup> Mark 16:19, Luke 24:3, Acts 1:21, 4:33, 7:59, 8:16, 9:17, 11:17, 20, 15:11, 26, 16:31, 19:5,13,17, 20:21, 24,35, 21:13, 28:31, Romans 1:7, 5:1, 11, 13:14, 14:14, 15:6, 30, 16:20, 24, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 7,10, 5:4, 6:11, 8:6, 11:23, 15:57, 16:23, 2 Corinthians 1:2, 14, 4:14, 8:9, 11:31, 13:14, Galatians 1:3, 6:14, 18, Ephesians 1:2, 15, 17, 5:20, 6:23, Philippians 1:2, 2:19, 3:20, 4:23, Colossians 1:3, 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 3, 2:15, 19, 3:13, 4:1, 5:9, 23, 28, 2 Thessalonians 1:1,7,12, 2:1, 14, 16, 3:6, 12, 18, 1 Timothy 6:3, 14, Philemon 1:3, 5, 25, James 1:1, 2:1, 1 Peter 1:3, 2 Peter 1:8, 14, 16, Jude 1:4, 17, 21, Revelation. 22:20

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33



## **Paul's Teaching is an Addition but Never a Negation of Christ**

Christ's teaching was not over at Pentecost to be replaced by something else (such as Paul's teachings). Christ's words abide forever. Paul's teaching can only be added to Christ's teaching. Paul's teaching is only an addition to what Christ taught. Paul's teaching is not a negation of what Christ taught. If properly understood, Paul agrees completely with what Christ taught. If Paul didn't agree with Jesus Christ, then believers would have to reject what Paul taught as being wrong. Christ is the foundation of the truth, not Paul. Thankfully, Paul does agree with everything that Christ taught in the Gospels.

Jesus modeled the Gospel of the Kingdom to His disciples before Pentecost. He had commanded them to preach that same message. They submitted to Him as their Lord and did exactly what He said to do.

## **Preaching the Gospel and Interchangeable Descriptions**

The story in this chapter of Acts returns to Philip again. Philip was preaching the gospel to all the cities.

*As (Philip) passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities... (Acts 8:40a)*

Earlier in this chapter (in verse 12), Philip was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. The phrases "gospel of the Kingdom of God," "gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven," "gospel of the Kingdom," "gospel," and "word of the Lord" all mean exactly the same thing here and throughout the New Testament. These phrases are sometimes found together in the same verse or passage. These phrases are interchangeable. They describe only one message. There is only one Gospel, not several. It is the message preached before Pentecost, and afterward in the Book of Acts, and described in the Letters.

The next chapter examines the Apostle Paul. Some had taught that Paul's message was different from Christ's message, but the New Testament describes Paul preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Paul himself writes in his letters that his message was the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The next chapter examines Paul's message in detail.

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## **Chapter 5**

### **Paul Preaches the Kingdom**

#### **The Gospel Preached Before and After Pentecost**

John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ, the twelve and the seventy disciples were all preaching the Kingdom before Pentecost. The Risen Christ commanded that the Kingdom be preached and spent His last 40 days on earth speaking of the Kingdom to His disciples. Philip the Evangelist and the Apostles Peter and John preached the Kingdom after Pentecost as well. The message that is in the Gospels is the same message that is found after Pentecost among the followers of Jesus Christ.

#### **Paul's Message is the Kingdom of God**

Some have mistakenly taught that Law was being preached in the Gospels and then grace after Pentecost, but this is simply not true. They have mistakenly taught that the message of the Apostle Paul was distinctly different from the Gospels, but this is not true either. Luke, one of the closest followers of Paul, describes Paul preaching the Kingdom during ministry near Ephesus. Luke writes:

*(Paul) entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the Kingdom of God. (Acts 19:8)*

Paul was speaking about the Kingdom of God. After receiving a considerable amount of resistance to the message of the Kingdom of God from the Jews in Ephesus, Paul moved his ministry to another location nearby. The next two verses describe this move.

*(Paul) took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. (Acts 19:9b-10)*

#### **Paul Preached the Kingdom, the Word of the Lord and Grace**

All who lived in Asia heard "the word of the Lord". Once again, the message of the Kingdom of God is also called "the word of the Lord". "The word of the Lord" is the same message that Jesus Christ the Lord preached before His Cross and afterward. Paul was preaching the same message that Jesus and His followers preached both before and after Pentecost.

In the next chapter of Acts, Paul describes his ministry to the elders of Ephesus. Paul says:

*...the ministry which I (Paul) received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the Kingdom, will see my face no more. (Act 20:24b-25)*

Here Paul says that he testified to “the gospel of the grace of God.” In the next sentence, he describes this activity as “preaching the Kingdom.” Paul declares that the “preaching the Kingdom” is the same thing as preaching “the Gospel of the grace of God.”

Paul is preaching the same message that Jesus Christ preached before Pentecost. That message was about grace both before and after Pentecost. To say that the Gospel of the Kingdom is not about grace (rather about law) would be disagreeing with the Apostle Paul. The Gospel of the Kingdom found throughout the Gospels is always about grace and has never been about the Law.

### **Paul Preached the Kingdom Under House Arrest in Rome**

A few chapters later in the book of Acts, Paul is now living in Rome and is under house arrest by the Roman authorities. Luke writes another interesting description of Paul’s ministry there.

*(Paul) was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the Kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. (Acts 28:23b)*

Paul’s message was about the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. Paul used the Law and Prophets to show that Christ was the fulfillment, the completion of the Law and Prophets. This is often the way that Christ uses the Law. Paul actually has three times more references to Law in His writings than the Gospels. No one would suggest that Paul is “under the Law” because he teaches using the Law. However, many suggest wrongly that Jesus Christ is “under the Law” because He uses the Law in a similar way as Paul.

### **Paul Preached the Kingdom Consistently for Two Years**

Paul preached and taught the Kingdom of God and about Jesus Christ consistently for two years in this situation. Luke writes:

*(Paul) stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:30-31)*

Not only does the Acts of the Apostles describe Paul as preaching the Kingdom of God, but Paul often refers to the Kingdom in his letters. The word “Kingdom,” often as “Kingdom of God,” is used fourteen times in Paul’s writings, in addition to what is found in the Acts of the Apostles. It is not necessary at this point to list all those verses since the objective here is simply to point out that Paul preached the Kingdom of God just like the Lord Jesus Christ and His other disciples.

### **Paul’s Message is the Same as Christ’s Message**

Luke, who is the writer of both The Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of Luke and a close companion of the Apostle Paul, never draws a distinction between the message of Paul and Christ in the Gospels. He calls the message of both Paul and Christ “the Gospel of the Kingdom” repeatedly in both books. If the messages were different, Luke would have certainly known this and drawn a clear distinction, but he doesn’t. It is very clear that Luke believed that Paul was preaching the same message as Jesus Christ and the Twelve Apostles.

The Apostle Paul himself reveals a concern that his message, his Gospel, would be the same as the message preached by Jesus Christ in the Gospels. In the Letter to the Galatians, Paul writes:

*For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11-12*

Paul tells his readers that he did not receive his message in the same way that the Twelve Apostles received the Gospel. He got it by revelation from Jesus Christ. This, in itself, ought to convince believers that Paul’s message was identical to the message of Jesus Christ in the Gospels since Paul got it from the Risen Christ who was still teaching about the Kingdom of God to His disciples for the forty days after the Resurrection. However, some are still producing confusion on that point by declaring that Paul originated the subject of grace rather than Christ. Paul himself tells a different story. Paul says:

*(Christ called me) that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas (Peter), and stayed with him fifteen days. (Galatians 1:16-17)*

Paul did not immediately go up to Jerusalem and consult with those who were Apostles before him, but he did go up three years later and spent time with Peter for 15 days. It is easy to suppose that much discussion and comparison of Paul’s

understanding with Peter's would have occurred during those fifteen days. A few verses later in this passage, Paul speaks about his reputation among the Jewish churches. He writes:

*And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they were glorifying God because of me. (Galatians 1:22-24)*

Paul's reputation among the Jewish churches was that he "is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." Paul is not disagreeing with his reputation in his statement here. They were right. Paul was preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy. In writing this, Paul is contradicting the idea that he originated the message of grace. Instead, Paul is telling his readers that he preached the message that he had once resisted and persecuted and that had originated with Jesus Christ. Paul then tells his readers about a second consultation with Peter and two other apostles. He writes:

*Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. (Galatians 2:1-2)*

Fourteen years after his first consultation with Peter about his message, Paul did it again with those "of reputation." It turns out that these "of reputation" are the Apostles James, Peter, and John. Paul "submitted to them the gospel" that he was preaching to the Gentiles. He feared that he "might be running or had run in vain." This means that Paul sought validation from the other apostles for his message; he wanted to be certain that he was preaching the same message that Christ had taught them. It is abundantly clear that Paul did not believe that he was originating the message of grace. Paul's submission of his message to the other apostles would make no sense if Paul thought he was originating the Gospel of grace. Instead, Paul believed that his message should be essentially the same as the message taught to these other apostles by Jesus Christ. Paul then reveals the outcome of his submission of his message to these other apostles. Paul writes:

*...those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and*

*John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.*  
(Galatians 2:6b-9)

Paul writes that these apostles “contributed nothing to me.” This is a way of saying that Paul had the correct message that all the apostles were preaching. This is validated further by the fact of the three apostles here affirming Paul’s call to the Gentiles and giving him the right hand of fellowship. Paul is telling his readers that these three apostles approved of his message. This means that Paul’s message was not some new innovation or radical departure from what Peter, James, and John believed to be the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. All this occurred before Paul wrote any of his letters, including Galatians. Paul’s ministry and his writings do not contradict the message of Christ in the Gospels. Paul’s message about grace simply continues and does not depart from what Christ taught in the Gospels.

### **Paul Preached the Kingdom Near the End of His Ministry**

These events in Rome were near the end of Paul’s ministry. While Paul was under house arrest in Rome, he wrote four letters that are part of the New Testament. They are Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. Two of these books contain statements from Paul about the Kingdom.<sup>8</sup> In other words, at the end of his life and ministry, Paul was still teaching and preaching the Kingdom.

Throughout Paul’s ministry, Paul preached and taught the Kingdom of God. Those things that Paul said and wrote about grace were without contradiction to his message of the Kingdom. This is also true of Jesus Christ. Christ’s message of the Kingdom in the Gospels is completely consistent with the message of grace.

The other phrase “the word of the Lord” is often used to describe what Paul was preaching. Again, this phrase means, in so many words, “the things that Jesus Christ taught.”<sup>9</sup> These verses are included because of the widespread, but erroneous idea that Paul was not preaching the things that Jesus had taught; rather that he had some sort of different message. Many think that Paul was only preaching justification by faith through grace. However, Paul’s message was much more than that. Paul’s message included the full counsel of the Lord Jesus as He reveals the New Covenant in the Gospels.

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33

<sup>9</sup> Luke 22:61, Acts 11:16

## **The Word of the Lord is the Word of His Grace**

As Paul and Barnabus turn their ministries toward the Gentiles, Luke describes the Gentiles glorifying “the word of the Lord” being spread through the whole region. The phrase “the word of the Lord” is also interchangeable with the description of the Gospel of the Kingdom.<sup>10</sup> This phrase is used twice in these two verses:

*When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. The word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. (Acts 13:48-49)<sup>11</sup>*

Just a few verses later, Acts includes another description of Paul’s message and calls it “the word of His grace.”

*They spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. (Acts 14:3)*

This is not a surprise. The Gospel of the Kingdom is about grace and was about grace in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. (The next chapter in this book will explore the places where the Gospels have strong references to grace.)

## **Paul and Barnabus Preached the Word of the Lord**

A few chapters later in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabus are again teaching and preaching “the word of the Lord.” This phrase is used twice in two verses.

*Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others also, the word of the Lord. And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” (Acts 15:35-36)*

As before, in the verse above, Paul is proclaiming the word of the Lord. There are a number of places where the New Testament specifically reveals that Paul preached the Kingdom of God. Paul makes reference to “the Kingdom of God” many times in his Letters. There is no contradiction here. The phrase “word of the Lord” is interchangeable with the “Gospel of the Kingdom.” It is the same message. Paul preached the message that was not only about Jesus, but was from His words found in the Gospels.

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<sup>10</sup> Acts 8:25

<sup>11</sup> Acts 19:10, 20, 2 Thessalonians 3:1

## **The Word of the Lord is the Message of Salvation Through Faith in Christ**

The next place that the phrase “the word of the Lord” is used in the book of Acts is Chapter 16. In this situation, Paul and Silas were imprisoned and---through a series of amazing events (including an earthquake) ---the jailer fearfully asks them:

*“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Act 16:30b)*

Paul and Silas respond to this man by saying...

*“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.”  
And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. (Acts 16:31-32)*

This passage reveals that “the word of the Lord” is also the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. “The word of the Lord” is also “the Gospel of the Kingdom.”<sup>12</sup> This means that the Gospel of the Kingdom is also the message of salvation. This should be no surprise, but some false teaching tries to say that the Gospel that Christ taught is not the message of salvation. There is an abundance of scriptural evidence that shows that these messages are one and the same.

### **Paul Writes About the Importance of Christ’s Words**

Not only does the Acts of the Apostles describe Paul’s involvement with the message of Christ, but Paul himself wrote of the importance of Christ’s words. He wrote:

*For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. (1 Thessalonians 1:8)*

Paul places emphasis on not needing to say anything to the believers in Macedonia and Achaia because “the word of the Lord” was being “sounded forth” by them. “Sounded forth” is likely an alternative way to say that they were preaching the Gospel. Paul reveals that if they had not been focused on the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, he would have preached those words to them.

Paul's attitude towards the words of the Lord Jesus Christ found in the Gospels is distinctly different from many who are teaching that these words are “under the Law.” Paul’s attitude is that the words of the Lord Jesus Christ should be known and obeyed. It is ironic that the Narrow Gracers think that they have clarity on

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<sup>12</sup> Acts 8:27



Paul's message of grace and yet have none of Paul's emphasis on the importance of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes in his first letter of instruction to Timothy:

*If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing... (1 Timothy 6:3-4a)*

Paul affirms that any doctrine that does not agree with the sound words of the Lord Jesus Christ is a "different" doctrine. Paul had good reasons to believe that his message and teaching conformed to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels. After all, he had consulted with the previous apostles on two occasions to confirm that he had the same message. Paul describes those advocating doctrine that does not agree with sound words of the Lord Jesus Christ as being "conceited" and that person "understands nothing." This statement reveals Paul's commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

### **Prayer for the Word of the Lord to Spread Rapidly**

In another passage, Paul asks for prayer that his preaching of the word of the Lord Jesus Christ would spread rapidly:

*Pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you. (2 Thessalonians 3:1)*

Paul preached "the Gospel of the Kingdom of God." This message was also "the Gospel of grace" and "the word of the Lord." All these phrases are interchangeable and are describing the same message. The Gospel was about grace and not about Law both before and after Pentecost. The Apostle Paul was preaching the same message that Christ has taught the disciples before Pentecost.

This chapter ends the initial focus of this book. That focus was to show that Christ and His disciples were not preaching the Law, but the Kingdom message of grace. This was happening both before and after Pentecost. The next chapter will explore the many places that the Gospels use forms of the word "grace" to describe the ministry and message of Jesus Christ. Grace in the Gospels should be evident to those who have eyes to see.

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## **Chapter 6**

### **Grace Words in the Gospels**

#### **The Kingdom Message is the Gospel of Grace**

Luke recorded that Paul was preaching the Kingdom. This message was also called “the gospel of the grace of God.”<sup>13</sup> The theology of grace did not originate with the Apostle Paul. The teaching of grace and supernatural demonstrations of grace originated with Jesus Christ. The Risen Christ, who taught the disciples about the Kingdom in the Gospels before Pentecost, was the same Christ that appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and gave him a revelation of grace. The Risen Christ was not contradicting Himself or just discovering grace after His Resurrection.

The idea that Christ in the Gospels is an expression of Law rather than grace is in serious conflict with what is actually in the Gospels about Christ. The Gospels speak often of the grace of Christ. Grace caused Christ to be conceived supernaturally by a virgin. Grace was being shown by Christ as He healed the sick. Christ taught about grace in the Gospels. The overall expression of His life and ministry in the Gospels is described by the Gospel writers as grace.

#### **Translators Hide Some Grace Words in the Gospels**

Translators have hidden some of the grace words that are present in the Gospels. If translators were more consistent in translating the various forms of “charis” as “grace” then the grace being expressed in the Gospels would be more apparent.

“Charis” is the noun normally translated as “grace,” but another similar Greek word for “grace” appears as “charizomai” in the Gospels. This Greek word means literally “to show grace.”

#### **Christ Heals Because of Grace**

For example, in a passage where Christ is doing healing ministry, that word “charizomai” is translated as “granted” Here’s that verse:

*At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He granted sight to many who were blind. (Luke 7:21)*

If translators were consistent in using a “grace” word to translate the last part of this verse, then it would read:

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 20:24-25

*He (Christ) graced sight to many who were blind.*

Or perhaps...

*He (Christ) gave, as a gift of grace, sight to many who were blind.*

In other words, healing was coming through Christ as a gift of grace just like it does now. It was a New Covenant operation of the Holy Spirit and not an expression of the Old Covenant of Law.

This particular Greek word “charizomai” appears twelve times in the letters as well, but it is highly significant that it appears in the Gospels concerning Christ’s ministry.

### **Christ’s Conception in the Virgin Mary was Grace Happening**

There are other places where the Greek words for grace are obscured by translation in the Gospels.

When translators use the word “favor,” it obscures that the Greek word is actually “charis.” “Charis” is translated “grace” elsewhere in the New Testament. For instance, the supernatural conception of Jesus is a matter of the grace of God. Listen to what the angel said to Mary.

*“Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.” (Luke 1:30b-31)*

The word “favor” here is the Greek word “charis”. An alternative translation using the word “grace,” rather than “favor,” would be:

*“Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found grace from God.”*

The conception of Jesus Christ was an act of the grace of God. Grace is happening before the Cross and before Pentecost in the life of Jesus Christ.

### **Grace was upon Christ at Twelve Years Old**

The New Testament also says that Christ as a child had grace upon Him before He was twelve years old.

*And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:40)*

## **Jesus Christ in the Gospels was Full of Grace**

The Apostle John offers this description of the adult Jesus Christ being “full of grace.” He writes:

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

Again, the word “charis” is used in the above verse in the Gospels. John says that Christ was full of grace and truth. In the context, it is the pre-Resurrection Christ because John describes Him as dwelling among them. Jesus Christ of the Gospels is “full of grace.”

## **Christ Teaches the Grace of Forgiveness in the Gospels**

Here is a place where Christ is teaching about grace, but it is obscured by translation as well.

*“When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?” Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have judged correctly.” Luke 7:42-43.*

“Charizomai” appears twice in the passage above. The words “graciously forgave” in the first part of the verse and “forgave” in the second part of the verse are both translated from “charizomai.” This particular Greek word, has as its root “charis”, the word for “grace”, “Charizomai” is often translated “to forgive” or “to freely give.” A translation of the passage revealing the word “grace” would be:

*When they were unable to repay, he showed them grace by forgiving them both. Which of them therefore will love him more? Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he showed more grace in forgiving.” And He said to him, “You have judged correctly”.*

Christ is teaching about grace in this story before the time of His Cross. He is teaching forgiveness by grace and not the Law. Forgiveness through the Law would require someone to go to the Temple and make the appropriate sacrifices and offerings. Forgiveness through grace is a New Covenant teaching. As Christ preaches the Gospel of the Kingdom, that message includes forgiveness by grace through faith.

## **Christ’s Message Described as Words of Grace**

Another place where the Gospels reveal that Christ is teaching grace is in Luke’s Gospel. Luke writes that, at the beginning of Christ’s ministry in His own hometown, the hearers had an initial positive reaction to what He was teaching.

*All were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22)*

The phrase "gracious words" is literally in Greek "words of grace." Again the word "charis" is being used. This shows again, that the message of Christ was about grace and not about Law. Christ was preaching the Kingdom of God and the hearers wondered at the "words of grace" coming from Him. The Kingdom of God is about grace in the Gospels.

### **Christ Teaches His Disciples About Showing Grace in Doing Good**

A third place where the message of Christ is shown to be about grace is also obscured by translation. In this passage, the Greek word "charis" is translated as "credit" rather than "grace."

*"And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount." (Luke 6:33-34)*

Translating Christ's statement to reveal the word "grace," it reads like this:

*"And if you do good to those who do good to you, is this grace that you are showing? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, is this grace you are showing? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount."*

An analysis of the message of Christ should reveal that it is full of grace (whether or not it uses the word "grace.") The content of Christ's message and ministry in the Gospels is all grace (and not about Law). The Gospel of the Kingdom that Christ preaches in the Gospels is very much for Christians today. It is Christ laying out the promises and conditions of the New Covenant. It is Christ's "Declaration of Intent." It is Christ making covenant with those who believe.

No one should let anyone persuade them that the Gospels are not for the age of grace and for today. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and yes, forever.<sup>14</sup> The Jesus Christ of the Gospels is the One seated at the right hand of the Father today. He is the same and His counsel is exactly the same today as it was in the Gospels.

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<sup>14</sup> Hebrews 13:8

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Law is Not of Faith**

#### **Christ's Emphasis on Faith**

The Apostle Paul writes ... "the Law is not of faith" in Galatians 3:12. Since the Law is not of faith, then the strong emphasis on faith in the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ in the Gospels reveals that He is not operating under the Law, but under grace.

Christ's emphasis on faith is more than just a little apparent in the Gospels. For instance, Christ heals the sick by faith. He makes statements about their faith, but never encourages them to obey the Law. The Gospels record Christ saying "Your faith has healed you" or something similar eighteen times in healing situations. Each reference to Christ healing by faith or saving by faith is a contradiction to the idea that Christ is operating under the Law or preaching the Law. It is clear that Christ is showing grace through faith in the same way that it is shown after Pentecost.

#### **The Great Faith of the Centurion**

For example, Christ encountered a Roman centurion who believed that Christ could heal his sick servant. After a short, but revealing conversation with the centurion, Jesus said to the centurion:

*"I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel." (Matthew 8:10a)<sup>15</sup>*

And a few verses later, Christ said:

*"Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very hour. (Matthew 8:13)*

These two verses use the words "faith" and "believed." In Greek, these words come from the same root word. The noun "faith" is "pistis." The verb "believe" is "pisteuo." To believe is to have faith. To have faith is to believe. They mean the same thing exactly. Obviously, Christ is placing emphasis on what He believes is important. While the Law has provisions for Gentiles to be accepted, Christ does not encourage this Gentile man to embrace the Law of Moses.

#### **The Faith of a Woman Receiving Healing**

Christ says something similar to a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years after she had received healing. Christ says:

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<sup>15</sup> Luke 7:9

*“Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” And at once the woman was made well. (Matthew 9:22)<sup>16</sup>*

Christ makes reference to this Jewish woman’s faith. Christ does not bring correction to her because of her obvious failure to obey the Law. Under the Law, she should not have been inside the city because of being unclean. Also by this unclean woman touching Christ, she had made Him legally unclean under the Law.<sup>17</sup> Christ shows no concern about her violation of the Law and says nothing to her about it. Christ shows no concern about His own status under the Law either nor does not seek to become clean under the Law. Christ only refers to her and her faith in a positive way. Christ’s entire concern here reveals that His focus was upon grace through faith rather than obedience to the Law. Faith is not of the Law, but is certainly related strongly to grace in the New Covenant.

### **The Faith of Two Blind Men**

Just seven verses later in Matthew’s Gospel, Christ encounters two blind men and asks them if they believe He can heal them.

*The blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” (Matthew 9:28b)*

Christ then heals them and speaks about their faith.

*He touched their eyes, saying, “Be it done to you according to your faith.” (Matthew 9:29)*

Christ made this statement to them after questioning them about what they believed He could do. He had opportunity to question them about their obedience to the Law of Moses, but said nothing. Christ is healing in the New Covenant way through faith rather than through obedience to the Law of Moses. Because the Law is not of faith and Christ is healing by faith, He is not operating under the Law or promoting the Law in any way.

### **A Gentile Woman’s Faith**

A few chapters later in Matthew’s Gospel, Christ and His disciples meet a Gentile woman who asks for healing for her daughter. After quite a long interaction, Christ says this to the woman:

*“O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed at once. (Matthew 15:28b)*

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<sup>16</sup> Mark 5:34, Luke 8:48

<sup>17</sup> Leviticus 12:2-5, 15:25-27

Christ does not tell the woman that she should become a proselyte to the Law. The Law does allow this, but Christ says nothing about the Law. Receiving healing for her daughter was a matter of faith in Christ rather than a matter of obedience to the Law. Each healing in the Gospels by faith is a contradiction to the idea that Christ was operating under the Law of Moses. This is because the Law is not of faith. New Covenant grace in the Gospels is strongly evident.

### **The Faith of a Blind Beggar in Jericho**

In Mark's Gospel, Christ heals a blind beggar in Jericho. This is what Christ says to him:

*"Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight... (Mark 10:52)*<sup>18</sup>

It is not the works of the Law that have healed this man, but His faith in Jesus Christ. Healing through faith is a function of the New Covenant of grace and not the Old Covenant of Law.

### **A Samaritan Leper is Healed Through Faith**

Likewise, in the story of the healing of the ten lepers in the Gospel of Luke, a Samaritan comes back to thank Christ for healing him. Christ says to him:

*"Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:19)*

It was not obedience to the Law that caused the ten lepers to be healed. It was faith in Christ.

### **A Girl is Raised from the Dead through Faith**

In a similar fashion, in Mark's Gospel, a synagogue official's daughter dies from sickness. Christ encourages the Synagogue official by saying:

*"Do not be afraid any longer, only believe." (Mark 5:36b)*<sup>19</sup>

When Christ arrives where the girl is, He raises her from the dead. Notably, Christ did not commend or correct the synagogue official for his obedience to the Law. He only encouraged him to believe.

### **Christ Reproves a Discouraged Father About Faith**

In a similar situation, a father comes to Christ about his demonized boy. The disciples did not succeed in their ministry to this boy. This discouraged father

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<sup>18</sup> Luke 18:42

<sup>19</sup> Luke 8:50



asks if Christ can help his child. Christ strongly corrects this father and points him back to faith. Christ says:

*“If You can!” All things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father cried out and began saying, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” (Mark 9:23b-24)<sup>20</sup>*

Christ doesn’t say all things are possible if you obey the Law. Christ says “all things are possible to him who believes.” Christ focuses this father on faith.

### **The Disciples Fail Because of the Littleness of Their Faith**

Matthew records that shortly afterward; the disciples ask Christ why they had not succeeded with the demonized boy. They ask:

*“Why could we not cast it out?” And He said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. (Matthew 17:19b-20)*

Christ does not say that their lack of obedience to the Law caused their failure. He says it was because of the “littleness of their faith.” He prescribes prayer and fasting to remedy that weakness. Often Christ corrects His disciples for their lack of faith while teaching or when they do not react to situations in faith. The Gospels never record Him correcting or commending His disciples because they obeyed the Law of Moses.

### **Men of Little Faith**

For instance, while teaching them about their value to the Father. Christ says:

*“But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? (Matthew 6:30)<sup>21</sup>*

Not only does Christ comment on their “little faith” in His teaching, but sometimes corrects their reactions to events. In one situation, the disciples are in a boat and a violent storm comes. Christ corrects them for being afraid in the storm rather than having faith. He says nothing about their obedience to the Law.

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew 17:14-20

<sup>21</sup> Luke 12:28

*“Why are you timid, you men of little faith?” Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and it became perfectly calm. (Matthew 8:26)<sup>22</sup>*

A few chapters later, when Peter begins to sink after a few moments of successfully walking on the water, Christ corrects him and says:

*“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31b)*

Consistently throughout the Gospels, Christ points His disciples (and others that He encounters) to faith---not to obedience to the Law. When those passages where Christ mentions the Law are closely examined, Christ is not encouraging His disciples to keep the Law either.

### **Ongoing Correction on Matters of Faith**

Shortly after Christ has done the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand, Christ corrects His disciples for their lack of faith. He says:

*“You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up?” (Matthew 16:8b-10)*

Christ’s disciples should have learned faith for future provision from the miracles of the feeding of the five thousands and the feeding of the four thousand---but had not. There is so much to learn from Christ in the Gospels about faith. This chapter has only pointed out that Christ does often speak about faith in His interactions with His disciples and other people that He is serving.

It is unfortunate---disastrous even--that many have been discouraged from learning from the Lord Jesus Christ by the idea that what He teaches is under the Law. It is unfortunate that those who think that they are promoting grace have so narrowed grace to only see grace in the Letters. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is very evident in the Gospels as He teaches about faith. The next chapter continues to reveal how central faith was to Christ’s ministry.

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**Christ Teaches About Faith in the Gospels**

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<sup>22</sup> Mark 4:40, Luke 8:25

## **Chapter 8**

### **Christ Teaches About Faith in the Gospels**

#### **Over One Hundred References to Faith-Believe in the Gospels**

The Apostle Paul teaches that “the Law is not of faith.”<sup>23</sup> If Christ were teaching Law or was operating under the Law, then there should not be multiple references to faith in the Gospels. Thankfully, there are about 150 total references to “faith” or “believe” in the Gospels. This is an unmistakable contradiction to the idea that the Law is being promoted in the Gospels. In fact, it amounts to more than a hundred contradictions. It is strong evidence that the Gospels are about receiving grace through faith and have much more in common with the New Testament Letters than with the Law of Moses.

#### **Christ Teaches About Faith Using the Fig Tree**

Christ takes opportunity on many occasions to teach His disciples concerning faith. In a situation where a fig tree has died as a result of Christ cursing it, He responds to His disciples by saying:

*“Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it shall happen.” (Matthew 21:21b)<sup>24</sup>*

Christ does not tell them that this supernatural capacity that He has demonstrated is available to them by the works of the Law. He says that this capacity is available to them through faith.

#### **Christ Teaches About Faith to Forgive**

In one situation, Christ teaches His disciples to forgive those who sin against them repeatedly. The disciples respond to this challenging teaching by saying:

*“Increase our faith!” And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and be planted in the sea’; and it would obey you. (Luke 17:5b-6)*

The Law does not require anyone to forgive anything. God alone forgives in the Law, but does not command anyone else to forgive. Forgiving others is a matter of faith, is showing grace, and is a New Covenant teaching both before and after Pentecost. Teaching that His disciples must forgive others is Christ completing

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<sup>23</sup> Galatians 3:12

<sup>24</sup> Mark 11:23-24

and fulfilling the Law of Moses. There will be more to say about this in future chapters.

### **Christ Teaches that Faith is Persistent in Prayer**

In Luke's Gospel, Christ teaches that faith persists in prayer through the parable known as "The Unrighteous Judge." He ends with this question:

*"Now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:7-8)*

The woman in this story cried out repeatedly to the judge for justice over her adversary and finally received it. Christ's question here reveals that faith acts in the same way. Faith persists in prayer until it receives what is needed.

Christ speaks in passing at the end of this parable about His Second Coming (which does reveal His knowledge of the future).

### **Christ knows the Future**

It is obvious here, and many places, that Christ knows exactly what the future holds. He understands completely what will happen in the future. The events of the Passion were no surprise to Christ. He told His disciples in advance that these events were going to happen. The giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not a surprise either. Christ told His disciples to expect these things. Christ was not ignorant of grace, the New Covenant, or anything else that is important today. He taught about all these things in the Gospels.

### **Christ Prays for Peter's Faith Not to Fail**

Christ displays His knowledge of the future again as He makes another comment about faith. He warns Peter here, and a few verses later, that Peter will deny Him. He encourages Peter by saying that He has prayed that Peter's faith may not fail.

*"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32)*

As stated earlier, the words "believe" and "faith" are the same thing. To have faith is to believe. To believe is to have faith. One is a noun and the other is a verb. They mean exactly the same thing. It is not the purpose of this book to review all the 150 of these references, but to note again that the Law is not of faith. In contrast, the Gospels are very much about faith in Christ and believing in

Christ. A few of this multitude of references have been selected here to show that the Gospels are about grace through faith and not about the Law of Moses.

### **Repent and Believe**

For example, Christ states that repenting and believing is the appropriate response to Him and the message that He is bringing.

*“The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)*

Again, Christ is encouraging faith and not obedience to the Law.

### **Christ wants the Children to Believe in Him**

In similar fashion, Christ comments on the seriousness of offending children who believe in Him. He says:

*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6)*<sup>25</sup>

The importance of not disturbing a child’s faith in Christ by our behavior is the issue revealed here. The issue is not about keeping the Law.

### **The Parable of the Four Soils is About Salvation by Faith**

Likewise, in a teaching called “The Four Soils” that appears in several Gospels, Christ says that some may “not believe and be saved” and “some believe for a while,” but then fall away. For Christ, salvation is not adhering to the Law; rather salvation comes through faith in Him.

*Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved. And those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. (Luke 8:12-13)*

There is not a hint in this passage that obeying the Law of Moses will lead to salvation. Here as elsewhere, the Gospels are about salvation by grace through faith. The Gospels, like the Letters, are about grace, not Law. There are many obvious contradictions to the idea that Christ is preaching Law rather than grace through faith.

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<sup>25</sup> Mark 9:2

## **Believe in Christ and You will Have Eternal Life**

For instance, consider this well known verse in the Gospel of John:

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)*

There is no encouragement to keep the Law here. This verse is about salvation through faith. This verse is completely consistent with everything in the Letters. Later in the same chapter, this verse appears:

*“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)*

## **The Pro-Grace Lifestyle Taught By Christ in the Gospels**

Because Christ did not advocate Law, the Gospels reveal Him teaching and demonstrating a pro-grace lifestyle. This is the lifestyle of “those betrothed to Christ.” It is the lifestyle of those who await His coming. Through this lifestyle, grace transforms believers and sets them free to do all that Christ teaches in the Gospels. The faith that saves believers through grace also enables them to submit to Him as Lord and to obey Him in all matters. He empowers them through the Holy Spirit to live out the lifestyle that He teaches.

## **Christ Teaches that All Should Believe in Him**

Christ teaches that He is the ultimate answer all through the Gospels. He does not teach that the Law is the answer. He says of Himself:

*“I am the Resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies” (John 11:25b)*

Obedying the Law will not cause believers to live even if they die. Believing in Him who is the Resurrection and the life is the only key to eternal life. The Gospels do not teach obedience to the Law of Moses, but faith in Christ. The Gospels do this consistently.

## **Ongoing Promotion of Faith By Christ**

Christ teaches that faith in Him will cause His followers do His works and greater works. He promises this to His followers:

*“He who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.” John 14:12b*

There is no promotion of the Law in the Gospels. In fact, the Gospel of John declares that it was written so that you may believe in Christ.

*These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:31)*

The Gospel of John---along with the other Gospels---were not written to encourage people to keep the Law, but to believe in Christ. The Gospels were all written decades after Pentecost. Each of the writers of the Gospels knew completely about grace. They were not confused about Christ and His relationship with the Law of Moses. In many ways, the writers of the Gospels revealed that Christ was presenting grace through faith in the Gospels. This “All Grace” focus sees not only what Christ has done on the Cross, but understands that submission to His teaching to be the proper wineskin for grace to flourish and increase in a believer’s life

The next chapter examines the fact of people being forgiven of their sins by faith through grace before the Cross and before Pentecost.

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**Saved Through Faith in the Gospels**

## **Chapter 9**

### **Saved Through Faith in the Gospels**

#### **Forgiveness of Sins through Faith Before Pentecost**

The Gospels reveal that Christ grants forgiveness of sins through faith as well. If Christ were under the Law or promoting the Law, He would not do this. If Christ were under the Law or promoting the Law, He would tell these people to receive forgiveness by offering sacrifices according to the Law. Each time Christ forgives on the basis of faith, this shows that grace is being demonstrated in the Gospels.

In one of the passages where Christ healed a man, He also forgave his sins. In this situation, four men overcame the obstacles in getting their friend to Jesus Christ. Their persistence and unwillingness to give up revealed their faith. The passage notes that Christ observed their faith. It says:

*(Christ) seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." (Luke 5:20)*

The man was healed and his sins were forgiven as well. The Law required certain sacrifices to be offered, but Christ is forgiving sins through faith. This is certainly New Covenant. Christ is forgiving sins in advance of the work of the Cross. Again, the Father is granting forgiveness on the basis of the Cross, but also before the Cross. This is the "grace loan" happening again in the Gospels.

#### **Saved by Faith before Pentecost**

Forgiveness of sins by grace through faith is apparent in other passages in the Gospels as well. For instance, Jesus says this of a woman who perfumed His feet with an expensive balm:

*Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. And He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:47b-50)*

Christ forgave this woman her many sins and said that it was her faith that had saved her. "Saved" is translated from a form of the Greek word "sozo." This is the same Greek word used by the Apostle Paul and others in the Letters. Paul uses the same Greek word "sozo" in this verse:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (Ephesians 2:8)*



Christ says that her faith has saved her. Paul says that believers are saved through faith. Paul says that by grace we are saved through faith. There is no instruction or encouragement here to obey the Law to receive forgiveness. Grace in the Gospels is apparent once again.

People like this woman were being saved before the Lord's Supper, before the Cross, before the Resurrection, and before Pentecost. They were being saved by faith in Jesus Christ. They were being saved in the same New Covenant way that they are saved today. Consider that the Apostle Paul described some aspects of salvation and forgiveness in this way. He wrote:

*Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1)*

This woman was justified by faith, forgiven through her faith in Jesus Christ. Christ told her to "go in peace." She received the grace of justification and peace with God, and it happened in the Gospels. Just as Paul's letters are about grace, so are the Gospels.

### **Believers Enter the Kingdom before Pentecost**

Consider that Christ revealed that some were entering the Kingdom long before Pentecost. Some were taking the Kingdom by force. Some were forcing their way into the Kingdom from the time of John the Baptist. Christ said:

*"From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John." (Matthew 11:12-13)*

And also...

*"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." (Luke 16:16)*

Both verses say that people are "taking it by force" and "forcing their way into it." In both cases, the "it" is the Kingdom. Believers were entering the Kingdom from the time of John the Baptist. Again, the "grace loan" is happening before the Last Supper, before the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and before Pentecost. The New Covenant's promises and conditions were being revealed before it was completely inaugurated.

Consider that Christ teaches that unless a person is born again, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Because this is true, it follows that people were born again in the Gospels. In a conversation with Nicodemus, Christ says:

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ (John 3:5-7)*

Believers were being healed by faith in Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Believers were being saved by faith in Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Believers were entering the Kingdom of God by faith in Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Believers were being born again in the Gospels. All this was happening before the Cross. The “grace loan” was happening throughout the Gospels.

### **Believers Cleansed of Sin before Pentecost**

Christ declared to His disciples:

*“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” (John 15:3)*

The disciples were already forgiven and spiritually clean before the Lord's Supper, the Cross, and Pentecost. They believed the word that Christ had spoken to them. They believed in Him and His words. Grace in the Gospels is obvious again.

### **Zaccheus Receives Salvation before the Cross**

In Luke's Gospel, Christ meets a man named Zaccheus who makes a distinctive commitment to Him involving his wealth. Christ responds very favorably to this man and says to him:

*“Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:9b-10)*

Salvation came to Zaccheus when he believed and made this commitment to Christ. It was “today” and not sometime after the death and Resurrection of Christ. Salvation came to Zaccheus in the Gospels. “Salvation” is translated from the Greek noun “soteria.” It appears four times in the Gospels. This particular Greek word often appears in texts that describe the time after Pentecost. For instance, it appears six times in the Acts of the Apostles. It appears seventeen times in the writings of the Apostle Paul. It appears sixteen times in the other Letters. The point is that “salvation” is described both before and after

Pentecost. "Salvation" was happening in the Gospels through faith in Christ and without being related to the Law of Moses.

### **Gospels Contain More References to "Saved" than Paul's Writings**

There is another Greek word that is closely related to "soteria." This Greek word "sozo" that is translated as "saved" all through the New Testament appears an amazing forty-nine times in the Gospels. It is also translated as "healed," "delivered," "set free," and a few other things. It is distinctly a New Covenant word because it often appears in sentences that have the word "faith" or "believe" in them. It appears thirteen times in The Acts of the Apostles. It appears twenty-eight times in the writings of the Apostle Paul. It appears eleven more times in the Letters that were written by the Apostle Peter, the Apostle John, and the remaining Letters. This is a total of fifty-two times in the Letters.

This means that the Gospels speak more about being "saved," "healed," and "delivered" by faith than the Apostle Paul does. The amount of references to "sozo" is nearly the same in the Gospels and the Letters. People were being "sozo-ed" in the Gospels. They were being saved, healed, and delivered both before and after Pentecost. Each of the forty-nine times that "sozo" appears in the Gospels is a contradiction that the Gospels reflect the Law rather than Grace. Grace in the Gospels is evident once again.

The next chapter elaborates on how Christ completes the Law of Moses.

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## **Chapter 10**

### **Christ Completes the Law**

#### **The First of Two Passages that Create Confusion**

There is a widespread, but erroneous, belief that Christ is operating under the Law of Moses during His ministry. There are many things to contradict this idea. There are many excellent reasons to believe that Christ was perfectly revealing grace in the Gospels. Hopefully, this book has already presented enough to reveal that there are significant problems with rejecting the teachings of Christ as being “under the Law.”

There are two passages in particular that people point to when they state that Christ is operating under the Law. The first is found in Luke 16:16-17. The second is found in Matthew 5:17-20. This chapter will examine these passages in detail to show that they have been misunderstood. This chapter will illustrate that Christ is not teaching His disciples to practice the Law of Moses. In the first of these passages, Christ says this about the Law and the Prophets:

*“The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.” (Luke 16:16-17)*

Christ does have some strong statements about the Law. Like all Scripture, to be properly understood, these statements must be considered in their context. The Law and Prophets were preached until John the Baptist appeared. John did not preach the Law according to Christ. John preached the Kingdom of God. Additionally, Christ and His disciples---in the Gospels and after Pentecost---preach the Kingdom. Christ is not preaching the Law either.

In the verses above, Christ says that the Law has not passed away and nothing of it has failed. This is what has created some confusion in people’s minds. Christ is not saying that He is preaching the Law or was under the Law. He is only saying that the Law is still in force.

#### **The Law is Obsolete But Still in Force**

The Law, despite it not being preached since John the Baptist, is still in force, but a greater covenant with a better message has been given through Jesus Christ. This is the New Covenant and the Gospel of the Kingdom. These divine facts about the Law still being in force are consistent with what is stated concerning the Law in the Book of Hebrews:

*When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. (Hebrews 8:13)*

The writer of Hebrews relates that the first covenant, which is the Covenant of Law, is "obsolete." The fact of the Covenant of Law being "obsolete" certainly fits with Christ's statements about the Law being preached until John the Baptist. The Covenant of Law being obsolete is consistent with the fact of the Gospel of the Kingdom being preached since John the Baptist. The Gospel of the Kingdom is not under the Law and is an aspect of the New Covenant.

The writer of Hebrews says that this Old Covenant of Law is "growing old" and "ready to disappear." This Covenant is "growing old," but is not dead and has not yet disappeared. This is consistent with what Christ said. He made it even more specific. Christ said that it would be easier for Heaven and earth to pass away than for any aspect of the Law to pass away. The Law, while obsolete, is still very much in effect. Despite this, Christ was not preaching this obsolete message, but was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Christ was not under the Law of Moses in any fashion. Declaring that the Law is still in force is not the same thing as preaching the Law or being under the Law.

### **The Second Passage that Creates Confusion**

The other passage that many will point to when someone says that Christ was under the Law in the Gospels is found in Matthew 5:17-20. For purposes of clarity, this passage will be divided into segments of a few verses each to consider it carefully phrase by phrase.

In this passage, Christ says something that does seem to strongly affirm the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament. He says:

*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:17-18*

Here Christ affirms the Law once again (as He did in the other statement earlier in this chapter). There are several points in these verses to consider.

### **Christ Fulfills and Completes the Law**

Christ is not abolishing the Law and the Prophets, but fulfilling them. The Greek word translated "fulfill" is used quite often in the New Testament in reference to fulfilling Messianic prophecy, but has other uses as well. It is sometimes translated as "complete." It is "pleroo" in Greek and means literally "to make full or to complete." If one substitutes the word "complete" into this statement, it

would mean the same thing, but it also suggests some additional thoughts about the statement. Christ then would say...

*"I did not come to abolish the Law, but to complete it."*

*Or "I did not come to abolish the Law, but to fill it up."*

This would indicate that the Law is incomplete and unfulfilled until Christ completes it.

### **Christ Completes the Law Here in a Particular Way**

There are several ways that Christ completes the Law. For instance, He takes the death penalty incurred by violation of the Law upon Himself in His death on the Cross. Another way is that He fulfills all the prophecies and prophetic types concerning the Messiah in the Law. Christ fulfills the Law in both those ways. However, in this context, Christ is speaking about another way of fulfilling or completing the Law. This particular completion of the Law by Christ is often overlooked, but is found in this chapter.

As before, Christ affirms that the Law will not pass away in any measure before heaven and earth pass away and "until all is accomplished." This particular phase in Greek doesn't really help much in understanding this passage. It comes from a very common Greek word "ginomai" that is used hundreds of times in the New Testament. It means "to happen," "to come into being," and "to become." It is translated by dozens of English phrases. This Greek word doesn't reveal what Christ is referring to that must be accomplished. Despite this, there are things in this passage that are quite clear. For instance, the Law is still in force. However, this does not mean that Christ is preaching the Law. It should be evident by now that Christ is preaching the Kingdom.

### **These Commandments Should Not Be Annulled**

The next two verses do seem stern and seem to reinforce the fact that the Law is still in force and has not yet passed away. Christ says:

*"Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:19-20*

Christ makes it abundantly clear that no one should annul or teach others to annul "these commandments." The Greek word translated as "annul" is "luo." This Greek word means literally "to loose," "to release," or "to dissolve." It is

translated as “annul,” “break,” “destroy,” “loosed,” “putting an end to,” and a few other things.

Christ says that “these commandments” should not be annulled by anyone. Christ also says that the righteousness of Christ’s disciples must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees or they will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The Pharisees were highly committed to keeping the Law despite their characteristic hypocrisy.

All this seems to be saying, on the surface, is that believers should keep the Law of Moses. A closer look at it may discover something else. It does not take much study of the Gospels and the Letters to discover that believers are not encouraged to keep the Law of Moses elsewhere. Future chapters of this book will explore other passages in the Gospels that show that Christ was not encouraging His disciples to keep the Law nor did Christ Himself keep the Law.

### **Important Keys to Understanding This Passage**

There are several keys in understanding this passage. The first is Christ saying that He will “complete” the Law. The second is the phrase “these commandments.” The next few paragraphs will elaborate on how these are the keys to understanding the passage.

Christ has said that He has come to fulfill or complete the Law. What Christ will do in completing the Law will enable His disciples to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. One of the ways that Christ fulfills the Law is by taking upon Himself the punishment for sin according to the Law. The biblical doctrine of justification by faith in Christ would be an explanation of how followers of Christ will exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. However, in this context, Christ is speaking about another aspect to His completing the Law. Christ is completing the actual commandments in the Law and speaking about changed attitudes and behavior rather than justification by faith.

### **Christ Completes the Law against Murder**

For example, Christ says in the next two verses:

*“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ‘But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.” (Matthew 5:21-22)*

Christ quotes a portion of the Law. He says “You shall not commit murder” and “Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.” Christ then completes and fulfills the Law of Moses concerning murder. He says, “But I say to you” and then begins to discuss actions coming from anger such as insulting someone.

Christ has moved murder from an action violating the Law to the matter of being angry. The Law says nothing of this. There is nothing in the Law restricting anger. Christ “completes” the Law by changing the matter from outward actions to inner issues of the heart. Christ tells His disciples that if they first deal with anger in their hearts then murder will not become a problem to them.

For Christ’s disciples, it is not enough that the Law says not to murder. Christ’s disciples must control their anger which can lead to murder and other serious problems. Christ is completing and fulfilling the Law by teaching what His disciples can only do through the grace of God. Christ’s disciples must be transformed inwardly and have control over their anger. By the grace of God giving them control over their anger, their righteousness will exceed the Pharisees. Christ is teaching His disciples a lifestyle that is empowered by grace and will nourish grace.

### **Christ Completes the Law against Adultery**

There is a repeating pattern in what Christ says here. He quotes the Law and then says, “but I say to you” and teaches something important that completes and fulfills the Law. Christ uses the phrase “but I say to you” six times in this short passage, but has much more than this to say that fulfills and completes the Law. Because of this chapter’s limitations, one more example of how Christ completes the Law will be offered.

Christ quotes the Law and then makes adultery not simply a matter of two people having improper sexual relations, but then Christ transforms it into a matter of the heart lusting.

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)*

Christ deals with the heart issue of lust that can lead to the outward action of adultery. Christ is moving His disciples from Law to being transformed by grace. The Law has nothing to say about resisting lust. Christ transforms, fulfills and completes what is incomplete and missing from the Law. Dealing with lust through the power of grace will allow the righteousness of Christ’s disciples to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees.



## **Do Not Annul Christ's Completed Commandments**

This is what Christ means by "these commandments." He does not mean the uncompleted, the untransformed commandments of the Law; rather, He is referring to the commands that He is completing and fulfilling. These are the commands that Christ warns about annulling. Obeying these completed commands through the grace of God will allow our righteousness to exceed the Pharisees.

Christ expands and changes the nature of these commandments in the Law. Anyone who does not keep them in the way that He teaches them will be considered least in the Kingdom. Anyone who teaches what Christ teaches here and handles the Law the way that He does will be considered great in the Kingdom.

For instance, if someone teaches that Christians need not resist lust, they are annulling "these commandments" that Christ is completing. Grace takes believers beyond what the Law does. Grace does not reduce their responsibility for righteousness, but increases it and the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to meet that responsibility.

Our righteousness in behavior and heart attitudes has to go beyond what the Scribes and Pharisees experienced and practiced. Keeping the Law will not be enough. The Law does not transform the believer and does not make them righteous enough in their hearts. The Law will fall extremely short of what the New Covenant delivers as far as change of behavior and attitudes. Grace must transform believers and enable them to do all that Christ teaches. Therefore, embracing any teaching that allows a person to disregard what Christ teaches as He completes the Law will ensure that that person will be considered least in the Kingdom if they experience the Kingdom at all.

The next chapter examines whether or not Christ considered Himself under the Law.

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## Chapter 11

### Christ Declares Himself Not Under the Law

#### Christ and the Temple Tax

Did Jesus Christ consider Himself under the Law? Christ's attitude towards submission to the Law is revealed in a variety of ways. For instance, Christ is confronted with submission to the Law when the tax collector comes to collect the Temple Tax. In this situation, the Law commanded a tax to be paid by every man over 20 years old. This is the commandment in the Law of Moses:

*“The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, When you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them. This is what everyone who is numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as a contribution to the LORD. Everyone who is numbered, from twenty years old and over, shall give the contribution to the LORD. The rich shall not pay more, and the poor shall not pay less than the half shekel, when you give the contribution to the LORD to make atonement for yourselves. And you shall take the atonement money from the sons of Israel, and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the sons of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.” (Exodus 30:11-16)*

The leaders of the Temple had discovered how to use this passage to raise money. A census was taken yearly in order to raise money for the Temple. While this does seem to be a questionable use of this passage, the tax was required. In Matthew's Gospel, the tax collector has come to receive these taxes for the Temple in accordance with the Law. Here's what happened:

*And when they had come to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter, and said, “Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?” He said, “Yes.” And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers? And upon his saying, “From strangers,” Jesus said to him, “Consequently the sons are exempt. But, lest we give them offense, go to the sea, and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.” (Matthew 17:24-27)*

As a result of this situation, Christ asked Peter an important question about who is subject to taxation. Christ asks whether kings tax their families or strangers. Of course, the answer is that kings only tax strangers. The family members of kings are always exempt or free from taxation. Because Christ and Peter are children

of God (who is the real King), they are exempt from this tax from the Law. However, the tax collectors do not understand this. Therefore, Christ pays the tax in order to avoid offending them.

Christ included Peter in His statement by twice using the word “we” and by using the word “sons.” This means that Peter was already a son of God, a son of the King. This is occurring before Pentecost and before Christ’s death and Resurrection. Again, the “grace loan” is happening.

The Temple Tax was paid in obedience to the Law of Moses. No one under the Law was exempt from it. Since Christ says that both He and Peter are exempt, it means that they are neither under the Law nor subject to the Law. Christ paid the tax---not because the Law says He must---but to avoid offending those Jews who would not understand.

The principle of submission to the Law in certain situations to avoid offense is seen sometimes in the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul.<sup>26</sup> This suggests that, at times when it appears that Christ is submitting to the Law, His real objective may be to avoid unnecessary offense.

### **The Woman Caught in Adultery**

In another situation, Christ does not do what the Law commands. A woman has been caught in the act of adultery and brought to Jesus. Here’s the story:

*The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst, they (the Pharisees) said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” They were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. And straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” And she said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more.” (John 8:3-11)*

This is a situation where Christ seems to be completing the Law once again and bringing to light a New Covenant principle. If Christ were keeping the Law in the way that it was actually written, He would not have the option of not killing this

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<sup>26</sup> Acts 16:1-3, 21:23-26, Romans 14:19-21, 1 Corinthians 9:20

woman. The Law would require her death. The Law is very matter of fact and clear on this subject. This is what the Law says:

*‘If there is a man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, one who commits adultery with his friend’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.’ (Leviticus 20:10)*

Christ has introduced the element of the need for a perfect accuser who is without sin to exact the punishment of the Law. The Law does not have a provision that requires a perfect accuser (without sin) to make the accusation. If a perfect accuser were required, then none of the death penalties in the Law could have ever been obeyed or implemented. Perfect accusers, without any sin, would not have been found on any matter which would have nullified all the death penalties in the Law.

Christ is not operating under the Law of Moses in this situation or He would have had to agree that this woman should be stoned. There is obviously something else happening here beyond keeping the Law of Moses. Christ has shown her New Covenant forgiveness, mercy and grace.

Some have speculated that Christ did not condemn her according to the Law because there should have been a male adulterer condemned and executed as well. However, Christ does not say a word about this and points instead towards the hypocrisy of her accusers in condemning her when they have sin.

### **Judging Others Forbidden in New Covenant Teaching**

The Law has no provision for not doing the Law. The Law commands complete obedience and has no escape clauses that allow someone living under the Law to choose not to do something in the Law. If a person living under the Law chooses not to do something that the Law commands, he is in violation of the Law.

There is simply no option, no provision in the Law to do what Christ has done. Christ has clearly not kept the Law as it was written. Instead, Christ has fulfilled and completed the Law once again by adding this new element of the need for a perfect accuser. This seems very consistent with other New Testament, New Covenant teaching. For instance, Christ forbids judgment of other people in the Sermon on the Mount:

*“Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of*

*your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:1-5)*

Christ has forbidden judgment of other people. He warned that judging others will create judgment for the person doing the judging. Christ illustrated the need for a perfect judge again in this passage. He revealed that no one can adequately judge another person because they will have the same problem. In fact, the person judging is likely to have the same problem in greater degree as the person that they are judging.

Christ was teaching a human phenomenon that has been noted by psychologists and has been called "projection." "Projection" means that if we are angry, we are likely to judge everyone else as angry---including God. If we are lustful, we are likely to judge everyone else as lustful. Whatever flaws that we have, we are likely to project them on other people. This human phenomenon makes all people poor judges of other people.

Christ describes judging this woman for her adultery as "hypocrisy." He calls the person who judges others in the passage above "hypocrite." Christ focuses the Pharisees who are judging this woman back upon their own sin. In the passage above, Christ focuses His disciples back on taking "the log out of your own eye." Christ is not operating under the Law. He is completing the Law and consistently teaching the pro-grace lifestyle.

### **Christ Declares All Foods Clean**

Christ, in a discussion with His disciples, said that what goes into a man cannot defile him, but what comes out of his heart is what defiles him. He says:

*"Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.) (Mark 7:18b-19)*

The Law forbids completely the eating of various foods. Christ, however, is completing the Law and moving the focus from the outward eating of foods to matters of the heart. Mark reveals that, in this way, Christ declared all food clean to a Jewish audience. This happened well before the Lord's Supper, the Cross and Pentecost. Christ was revealing grace (and not the Law in the Gospels). The next chapter takes another look at Christ's attitude toward the Law. It explores His attitude toward keeping the Sabbath.

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## **Chapter 12**

### **Christ is Lord of the Sabbath**

#### **Keeping the Sabbath is Important in the Law of Moses**

Keeping the Sabbath seems to be an important aspect of the Law of Moses. Violation of the Sabbath incurred the death penalty while Israel was under the leadership of Moses. Here is an example of this:

*Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation; and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." So all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him to death with stones, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. (Numbers 15:32-36)*

This event does not explain why the man was gathering wood. The worst case would be that he was doing it to sell for money. The best case would be that he needed the wood to keep his family warm or to prepare food. In either case, he was in violation of the Law and died because of it. Here are the actual commandments in the Law.

*"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. (Exodus 20:8-10)*

A few chapters later, the death penalty is attached to violations of the Sabbath Law.

*'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 31:14-15)*

The phrases "shall not do any work" and "does any work" seem pretty plain as does "complete rest."

Carrying a load and doing any sort of buying and selling were considered violations of the Law. Various passages from the Prophets and the Book of Nehemiah make that clear. There are few specific commands in the Law concerning what activities were forbidden, but one of them is very plain. It says:

*“You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day.” (Exodus 35:3)*

The man who was executed for gathering wood might have been doing it for this purpose. Both gathering wood and kindling a fire would be clear violations of the Sabbath. Not kindling a fire would also preclude preparing food on the Sabbath. This seems to be a part of the Sabbath drawn from the time of the gathering of manna. The Children of Israel gathered twice as much manna on the sixth day. They did not gather Manna at all on the seventh day which was the Sabbath. On the Sabbath, they ate the extra manna that was gathered the previous day. Apparently, eating is not a violation of the Sabbath Law.

### **Christ Challenged by the Pharisees for Not Keeping the Law**

Christ was challenged by the Pharisees on numerous occasions about his supposed violations of the Sabbath Law. Often it was because Christ healed people on the Sabbath, but sometimes it was for other matters. Here is one of those occasions:

*At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grain fields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, “Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” (Matthew 12:1-8)*

This accusation of Christ’s disciples has come because they are picking the heads of grain and then eating them on the Sabbath. It does seem that picking the heads of the grain is a clear violation of the “no work” clause in the Law of Moses. Eating this grain, however, would not be a violation of the Sabbath. Remembering that food was to be prepared before the Sabbath (and not during the Sabbath), the Pharisees do seem right about this activity being a violation of the Sabbath.

## **Christ's Answer to the Accusation of Violating the Sabbath**

Christ does not yield to this accusation, correct or not, and reminds them of David's violation of the Law in eating the Showbread. Christ Himself says what David did was a violation of the Law. Christ is not disagreeing with the Pharisees that His disciples have broken the Sabbath Law. Christ is agreeing with them, but has much more to say about this matter. Christ is going somewhere important in His explanation.

Christ notes that the priests must violate the Sabbath in order to do their prescribed duties on the Sabbath day and are innocent as a result. In other words, some things commanded in the Law are more important than strictly keeping the Sabbath or the priests would not be innocent.

Then Christ arrives at His amazing answer to this accusation. He says:

*"But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here."*

Christ says to them that He, His mission, and His disciples are greater than the Temple. Since the Temple is the most obvious symbol of the Law and the Prophets, Christ is saying that His disciples can violate the Law because God's purpose through His disciples is greater than the Law. Likewise, David's call and purpose was greater than the Law in His day and therefore it was acceptable for David and his men to break the Law. Christ then says:

*But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.*

In this statement, once again Christ is completing and fulfilling the Law in the Gospels. He is encouraging New Covenant compassion rather than Old Covenant sacrifice. The Pharisees thought that the hungry disciples should not eat if it violated the Law. They condemned the disciples for taking care of this need. They thought that the disciples should make that sacrifice and not eat for the sake of the Sabbath. Instead, Christ revealed that the Pharisees should have reacted in compassion toward the disciples. Christ is once again transforming the Law into grace. Christ makes another amazing statement. He says:

*"For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."*

Christ declares that He rules over the Sabbath. Christ, in His pre-incarnation form as God the Son, was certainly the originator of the Law with the Godhead. He certainly has the right to transform the Law and the right to teach compassion. Christ has said that in spite of His disciples' violation of the Law, they are



innocent. It is His right to do so. Christ is not under the Law, but Lord over it in the Gospels.

### **Christ and His Disciples Must Work on the Sabbath**

In another situation, Christ declares that He and His disciples must work as long as it is day because night is coming when no man can work. This is a declaration of the need to do the will of God while opportunity exists because that opportunity is limited. He says:

*We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam “ (which is translated, Sent). And so he went away and washed, and came back seeing. (John 9:4-7)*

Christ declared that He and His disciples “work the works” of the Father in healing. When Christ declared this and healed this blind man, it was the Sabbath.

*Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. (John 9:14)*

Christ works on the Sabbath. His disciples work on the Sabbath. Christ transforms and completes the Law. Christ says that He is working on the Sabbath in other places as well. For instance, in the story of the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda, Christ says:

*“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working. For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. (John 5:17b-18)*

Christ undeniably says that He is working on the Sabbath, but He is Lord of the Sabbath. He is not under the Law. He is demonstrating grace where He goes, even on the Sabbath. These apparent violations of the Sabbath are Him simply demonstrating that He is not under the Law.

### **Compassion is More Important than Sabbath-Keeping**

Christ was often accused of breaking the Sabbath Law by healing the sick. In each case, He offers compassion as the reason. For instance, on the Sabbath day, Christ is criticized for healing a man with a withered hand. Christ explains why He will do this on the Sabbath by saying:

*“What man shall there be among you, who shall have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it, and lift it out? (Matthew 12:11b)*

Christ once again completes the Law. The ordinary care and compassion of someone (similar to rescuing a farm animal from a pit) is what is desired by God. Healing is showing that kind of care and compassion for people.

In a similar situation on the Sabbath, Christ encountered a woman who was bent over because of a sickness caused by a spirit. He healed her. Shortly afterward, He was rebuked by the Synagogue leader for healing on the Sabbath. Christ replied to him saying:

*“You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to water him?” (Luke 13:15)*

Leading a farm animal to water is ordinary care and compassion. Healing this woman is ordinary care and demonstrates the compassion of God. Again, Christ is completing the Law and revealing New Covenant compassion and grace in the Gospels. Christ is not under the Law, but Lord over it.

The next chapter examines and compares what Christ says about His words being eternal with what He says about the Law not being eternal. This again shows that what Christ teaches is not under the Law.

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## **Chapter 13**

### **Christ's Everlasting Words**

#### **Comparing What Christ Says About His Words and the Law**

A comparison of what Christ says about the enduring nature of the Law and what He says of the enduring nature of His words is interesting. Christ says that His words will not pass away, even when Heaven and earth pass away. This is recorded three times in the Gospels:

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33)*

However, the Law will pass away when Heaven and earth pass away---when all is accomplished.

*"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished." (Matthew 5:18)*

Once again, there is convincing evidence that what Christ is preaching and teaching is not the Law nor is it under the Law. What Christ says will be everlasting. The Law, on the other hand, will pass away in the future. However, presently the Law is still in force.

#### **Christ's Words are the Ones Spoken to His Disciples**

Some would want to broaden the meaning of "My words" by logic and say that since Christ is God, then all of the Law and the Prophets are Christ's words. While this is logically true, it is not what Christ is saying in these passages. When Christ says "My words" in the Gospels, He is not speaking of the Law, or anything else of the Old Covenant. Christ is speaking exclusively of those things that He was teaching and preaching while present with His disciples. These things are recorded in the Gospels. Christ uses the phrase "My words" in that way as He speaks to the disciples after His Resurrection. He says:

*"These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you." (Luke 24:44a)*

When Christ says "My words," "My word," "My commandment," or "My commandments," He means those things spoken by Him while He was with His disciples. These statements are recorded in the Gospels. Christ intends for all believers to do all that He preached and taught in the Gospels.

## **Promises to Those Who Keep Christ's Words**

Here is one of the many promises about keeping Christ's word in the Gospels:

*"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." (John 14:23-26)*

Those that keep Christ's words in the Gospels will have Christ's and the Father's love in a specific way. That person will be the abode of God. God will indwell them. Keeping Christ's words is so important to the Father that He will send the Holy Spirit to remind believers of all that Christ has said to His disciples. Obviously, God intends for those after Pentecost to do all that Christ taught before Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit has been sent to remind of what Christ has said. Every believer needs to submit to Christ's teaching in order to live the life of grace. Christ's words are not under the Law. They are for the age of grace, which begins with John the Baptist in the Gospels and extends to the present day. Just two verses before this, Christ says:

*"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." John 14:21*

When Christ says "My commandments," He means the same thing as "My word." He is not speaking about the commandments in the Law, but the words that He spoke while He was with the disciples. Christ says that keeping His commandments---found in the Gospels---is characteristic of those who love Him. Christ promises that believers, who love Him by keeping His commandments in the Gospels, will be loved by the Father. Then Christ says that He will disclose Himself to the one who keeps His commandments. As noted before, this promise is followed by the promise of the indwelling presence of Christ and the Father and the promise of the work of the Holy Spirit. It is clearly a New Covenant promise for the age of grace. It is not Christ teaching the Law of Moses. It is unfortunate that those who reject Christ's commandments will not experience what Christ is promising here.

Christ makes a powerful promise to those who abide in Him and allow His words to abide in them. He says:

*“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.” (John 15:7)*

This amazing promise of answered prayer is for those who take Christ’s words to heart and let those words dwell in them. In the Gospels, Christ’s words are words of grace.

The promise of eternal life is strongly connected to hearing and believing Christ’s words in the Gospels. Christ says:

*He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)*

### **Warnings About Not Keeping Christ’s Words**

Hearing, believing, and keeping Christ’s words ensure that believers will not come into judgment. However, for those who do not keep Christ’s sayings, their eternal situation is precarious:

*If anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. (John 12:47-48)*

On the last day, the word that Christ speaks in the Gospels, His “sayings,” will judge those who do not receive them and keep them. Christ’s words will not pass away. Christ expects His followers to live the pro-grace lifestyle by doing all that He says.

Christ warns His disciples in a variety of places about the importance of listening to and acting upon His everlasting words. He says:

*Everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.” (Matthew 7:24-27)*

This is both a promise and a warning. The one who hears Christ’s words in the Gospels and acts upon them will have a strong foundation that will enable them to deal successfully with the inevitable storms that come to every life. Those who

fail to hear and act on Christ's words in the Gospels will experience collapse and ruin.

Consider what Christ says about His second coming:

*“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38)<sup>27</sup>*

Christ's attitude towards people at His Second Coming will be equivalent to the attitude that they have towards Him and His words in the Gospels. Anyone suggesting that Christ's words are under the Law, and need not be obeyed, is in serious spiritual danger. They need to repent deeply of this attitude, receive forgiveness, and submit themselves completely to what Christ teaches. Christ's words are not under the Law and are eternal. That last day, the Day of Judgment, will be a very bad time to discover this.

The next chapter will examine the fact that Christ and His followers are not under the Law, but are not lawless.

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<sup>27</sup> Acts 16:1-3, 21:23-26, Romans 14:19-21, 1 Corinthians 9:20

## **Chapter 14**

### **Christ Teaches the New Covenant Revelation of God**

#### **The New Covenant Revelation of God in the Gospels**

This chapter is not intended to teach or defend any particular doctrinal view of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The focus of this chapter, like the other chapters in this book, is to show that Christ's teaching on God is New Covenant, and is not an expression of the Law of Moses.

There are many New Covenant revelations, doctrines, and truths that are revealed, first of all in the Gospels. You would not expect to see this if Christ was simply teaching the Law. The most obvious New Covenant doctrine in the Gospels is the doctrine of faith. This book discussed that doctrine in the Gospels in several earlier chapters. Another obvious New Covenant teaching is the teaching of Christ that God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is fairly obvious that Christ teaches New Covenant details about the triune nature of God in the Gospels. These details are completely missing from the Law of Moses. This is strong proof that the Gospels are not an elaboration of the Old Covenant Law of Moses, but an expression of the New Covenant.

#### **The New Covenant Doctrine of God as Father**

There is little in the Old Testament on this subject. In fact, there is only one reference to God as Father in the Law of Moses, one reference in the Psalms, and three references in the Prophets. None of these references contains much in the way of specific information about the Father.<sup>28</sup> In striking contrast, the Gospels have more than one hundred and fifty references to God as Father. The New Covenant teaching of God as Father is not found in the Law, but is heavily referenced in the Gospels.

The Apostle Paul also strongly elaborates on God as Father. Nevertheless, there are only forty-four references to God as Father in all of Paul's writings. In other words, the Gospels have more than three times as many references to this New Covenant truth than Paul has in his writings. The other writings of the New Testament contain thirty-four references to God as Father. One can say---without any equivocation---that the Gospels contain the greatest part of the New Covenant revelation of God as Father.

#### **The New Covenant Revelation of the Son of God**

Likewise, things are even less clear in the Law of Moses concerning the Son of God. There are no references to God as a Son in the Law of Moses, and no

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<sup>28</sup> Deuteronomy 32:3-6, Psalms 89:26-29, Isaiah 63:16, Isaiah 64:8, Jeremiah 3:19

references to God as a Son in the Prophets. There is only one reference in the Old Testament to God being a Son, and that is found in the Psalms.<sup>29</sup> However, when the New Covenant doctrine of the Son of God is considered, there are numerous references to cite. For instance, just considering the one phrase “Son of God,” it appears twenty-five times in the Gospels and eighteen times in the rest of the New Testament. Clearly, the Gospels are teaching the New Covenant doctrine of the Son of God just like the rest of the New Testament teaches about Christ.

### **The New Covenant Revelation of the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is called by a number of names in the Scriptures. However, the name “Holy Spirit” must be considered the primary name because of ninety references to that name in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned at all by this name in the Law of Moses. The Holy Spirit is mentioned by this name only twice in the Old Testament, once in the Psalms and once in the Prophets.<sup>30</sup>

There may be other references to the Spirit in the Old Testament, but none explain His New Covenant work as does Jesus Christ’s teaching about the Holy Spirit in the Gospels. The name “Holy Spirit” appears twenty-five times in the Gospels with Jesus Christ often teaching specifics about the Holy Spirit. This phrase “Holy Spirit” appears a striking forty times in the Acts of the Apostles and thirty-five more times in the rest of the New Testament. What the Gospels teach is the New Covenant revelation of the Holy Spirit. This has nothing to do with the Law of Moses. Again, the idea that Christ is teaching the Law is strongly contradicted by the actual New Covenant content of the Gospels.

### **The Relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit**

There is little in the Law of Moses or elsewhere in the Old Testament that can explain or describe the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and yet the Gospels do this frequently. There are twenty-two verses in the Gospels that contain both “Father” and “Son” in them. There are eight verses in the Gospels that have both “Father” and “Spirit” in them. Every one of these verses teaches a New Covenant doctrinal context. Every one of these verses, therefore, is a contradiction of the idea that the Gospels are under the Law and Christ’s teachings do not apply to believers.

There are some statements of Christ that speak of both the Father and the Spirit with Christ including Himself. It is not the purpose of this book to lay out all the

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<sup>29</sup> Psalms 2:7-12

<sup>30</sup> Psalms 51:11, Isaiah 63:10-11



New Covenant content found in those verses concerning the nature of God, but for purposes of illustration, this chapter will consider a few verses that reveal the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For instance, Christ says:

*“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” (John 14:26)*

None of this information can be found in the Law of Moses in any way. Christ is also revealing facts about future events that will transpire after His death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven. None of these things took Christ by surprise. He understood grace and the work of the Spirit completely while teaching before His death and Resurrection.

Christ is revealing facts about the New Covenant work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels. Christ refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Helper.” This word in Greek literally means “One who is called to render aid.” It is translated as “Advocate” once in the New Testament and four times as “Helper.” The Holy Spirit is rendering aid to the believer by “bringing to remembrance all that I (Christ) have said to you.” When Christ has ascended, the Holy Spirit will continue Christ’s ministry of instruction and correction by reminding believers of the things that Christ taught in the Gospels.

The New Covenant’s “Declaration of Intent” by Christ in the Gospels has been completely fulfilled by Him. The idea that all of the teachings of Christ do not apply any longer is simply incorrect and acceptance of this antichrist idea will create disaster in the life of a believer. The Narrow Gracers cannot legitimately eliminate Christ’s teachings from Christianity. Not only do these teachings apply, but the Holy Spirit is presently bringing them to remembrance in the lives of true believers.

This “remembrance ministry” of the Holy Spirit today does bring into question the salvation of the Narrow Gracers. Can they continue to resist the work of the Holy Spirit who is actively bringing Christ’s teachings into remembrance and actually be saved? Perhaps God alone can answer that question concerning the individuals who have been captured by the false Narrow Gracers’ teachings.

In close examination of the verse above, aspects of the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be seen. The Holy Spirit is sent from the Father. The Holy Spirit is teaching believers “all things” and this includes all that Christ taught in the Gospels. There is another verse in this Gospel that speaks of the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus says:

*“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me...” (John 15:26)*

In this passage, the name “Helper” is used as again by Christ and Christ also uses another name for the Holy Spirit. Christ refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of Truth.” There are several truths about the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit present in this verse. Again, the Holy Spirit comes from the Father. However, in this verse, Christ says He “will send to you from the Father...” Christ is intimately involved in sending the Holy Spirit from the Father to believers. The Holy Spirit will not only bring Christ’s words to remembrance, but will bear witness of Christ in every way. The Law has nothing to say about the details of the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, Christ is giving believers New Covenant information in His teaching in the Gospels.

There are two more related verses that also show aspects of the relationships between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Luke’s writings. The Risen Christ says to His disciples at the very end of Luke’s Gospel:

*“Behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)*

Luke also records a similar statement by Christ at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. There Christ says:

*And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”(Acts 1:4-5)*

Taking these two statements together, there are several New Covenant truths present. The Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father. The Holy Spirit baptizes believers. The Holy Spirit clothes believers with power. The Holy Spirit’s ministry of giving power to a believer is confirmed a few verses later in this same chapter in the Acts of the Apostles where the Risen Christ says:

*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you... (Acts 1:8a)*

The point here is that the statements in the Gospels about the nature of God and the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit are New Covenant doctrines. They are confirmed, repeated, and elaborated upon in the Acts of the Apostles (and all

throughout the rest of the New Testament). Christ's teachings in the Gospels are not under the Law, but expressions of New Covenant truth.

The final chapter in this book discusses that, while Christians need not keep the Law of Moses, they are not lawless.

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## Chapter 15 Christians Should Not Be Lawless

### Free from Keeping the Law of Moses

While Christians are free from keeping the Law of Moses, they can never be properly described as without law or lawless. In fact, the New Testament offers several descriptions of the New Covenant using the word “law.”

The Apostle Paul compares the Covenants and calls both “law.” Paul refers to the New Covenant as the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” He refers to the Law of Moses as the “law of sin and death.” He writes:

*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (Romans 8:2)*

Believers are under the Law of life in Christ Jesus. James also calls the New Covenant a kind of “law.”

*But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25)<sup>31</sup>*

James also calls the New Covenant “the Royal Law” meaning that it was given by the King, the Lord Jesus Christ. He writes:

*If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. (James 2:8)*

This is consistent with what Christ, Paul, and others teach about love fulfilling the Law of Moses. Love is a central theme throughout the Gospels and in the Letters. Ultimately, love is the central motivation in all that Christ teaches His disciples to do.

Christ’s disciples are never lawless. The love of God, the love of others, and themselves, should instruct their behavior. Not only are they set free by what Christ teaches, they are also taught a specific, pro-grace lifestyle that will restrain them from practicing lawlessness while encouraging them to practice righteousness.

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<sup>31</sup> James 2:12

## **Christ Hates Lawlessness and Will Judge the Lawless**

The writer of Hebrews says this about how Christ feels about lawlessness:

*“Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness”. (Hebrews 1:9a)*

Christ loves righteousness and hates lawlessness. This is abundantly clear as Christ warns His disciples repeatedly about practicing lawlessness. For example, Christ teaches on “that day” of judgment, He will declare His rejection of those who were casting out demons and doing miracles in His name, but had rejected His words about living a godly lifestyle. Christ says that He will say to them:

*“I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” (Matthew 7:23)*

The teaching that forgiveness of sins removes the responsibility to do what Christ teaches is a popular, but false, doctrine. True grace will restrain believers from a sinful lifestyle and enable believers to live in a Christ-honoring manner. Paul says that grace will instruct believers:

*The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, (Titus 2:11-12)*

Paul writes that grace instructs believers to deny sinful lifestyles and to adopt a sensible, righteous, and godly lifestyle. Christ not only justifies believers through grace, but also enables those same believers to live in a godly way. Failure to do this has dire consequences.

## **Lawless Deeds of the Unrepentant Will Be Remembered**

Quite often, when discussing the need to submit to the Lordship of Christ and adopt the lifestyle that He teaches, someone will state this well-known verse from Hebrews as if it frees them from the responsibility to live a godly lifestyle. They will say:

*“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” (Hebrews 10:17)*

They may even interpret this verse to mean that God no longer is able to be aware of their sinful lifestyle and that they are forever forgiven no matter how they might live. However, this verse cannot mean that at all when considered in the light of other passages in the New Testament, particularly these warnings from the Lord Jesus Christ.

A lifestyle that does not embrace true repentance from sin will not experience forgiveness of that sin. Thankfully, the converse is also true. Christians who

submit seriously to the teachings of their Lord and seek forgiveness of their sins will experience the Father remembering their sins no more.

Lest someone think that they can escape responsibility by clever theological loopholes, consider that Christ warns again about events related to His Second Coming and says:

*“The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness”. (Matthew 13:41)*

Those who claim to be Christians and yet live lawless lifestyles, rejecting the teaching of Christ for any reason, will cause unbelievers and new converts to stumble. Many today do not receive Christ as Savior because they have been offended by the ungodly lifestyle of some claiming to be a believer.

It will not matter if people believe that God does not remember their ongoing, unrepentant lifestyle. Those who commit lawlessness will be gathered out of Christ's Kingdom on that last day at the end of the age of grace. For some who would like to redefine lawlessness in a way that removes responsibility for practicing sin, consider that the Apostle John already gives believers a clear definition of lawlessness:

*“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4)*

It is pretty simple. A person who continues to justify and practice sin is lawless. There is no getting around it even with a choice selection of verses. The clever use of Scripture and the creation of theological loopholes will not sustain anyone on that last day. They will stand before the One who hates lawlessness. A deep and sincere submission to the teaching of Christ that will involve repentance is the only solution to lawlessness for a Christian. They simply must cease to be lawless and receive forgiveness.

### **Lawlessness Harms the Lawless Person**

One of the great dangers of lawlessness is what it does to the lawless person. Christ warns about the lawlessness of the end times. He says:

*“Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12)*

Lawlessness and love are polar opposites. The person who lives by love will not be lawless. They will restrain themselves in many matters and focus themselves

on doing the right thing. Their behavior will be informed by what Christ teaches in the Gospels.

The lawless person is in the process of negative transformation. Before long, they will not love God, others, or themselves. When they choose no longer to be lawless and repent, then they can legitimately claim the promise of God's forgiveness of lawlessness.

*"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered." (Romans 4:7)*

The promise of forgiveness is only for those who chose to live a life in submission to the teachings of Christ. Those who continue to be lawless may claim forgiveness, but are more like unbelievers than believers. Paul makes that relationship plain when he writes:

*Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)*

Unbelievers are lawless. Believers are righteous. Unbelievers are of the darkness. Believers are of the light. True Christians cannot be lawless. They must submit to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone who claims Christ and continues to be lawless is a false Christian.

Paul describes the choice that every believer has to make. Paul writes:

*Just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. (Romans 6:19b)*

Paul states that they had been slaves to impurity and lawlessness and this resulted in further lawlessness. Paul is describing a process that is making a person more unrighteous. He also describes how Christians become Christ-like. They present themselves as slaves to righteousness. They present themselves by submission to the teachings of Christ. They make Christ the Lord over their lives in every area.

When Christ the King is allowed to rule over a life in His Kingdom, that life is positively transformed. Sanctification is the glorious result. Sanctification means being "set apart for special service to God." Sanctification means that the Holy Spirit is transforming that life into the image of Jesus Christ.

Grace cannot be used legitimately as a justification for continuing in sin. Clever arguments will not change the truth. Believers should never accept a view of grace that allows lawlessness to continue in their lives. Jude warns about ungodly persons twisting the teaching of grace into permission to sin. He writes:

*Ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 1:4b)*

Jude warns about some who would turn grace into licentiousness. Licentiousness is living without restraint particularly in sexual matters. It is lawless behavior. The true grace of Jesus Christ does not grant permission for lawlessness.

Jude also says that these people are denying the Lord. When people reject Christ's teachings, they deny Christ the right to rule over them. Anyone doing this is described by Jude as an ungodly person. Anyone who is teaching that sin no longer matters in the lives of believers will think that sin no longer matters in their own life. Making that decision makes them an ungodly person according to Jude. Believers should not listen to anyone who is not submitting themselves to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Christ had much more in mind than providing a justification for lawlessness when He went to the Cross. Paul writes:

*(Jesus Christ) who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:14)*

Christ intended that believers would be redeemed and purified from every lawless deed. He intended that the behavior of His disciples would be so transformed that they would not give themselves any longer to lawlessness, but have zeal for good deeds. Let it be so in every believer's life.

### **The Same Jesus Christ Before and After Pentecost**

The Narrow Gracers want believers to accept the idea that the Christ of the Gospels is very different and teaching a different message than the Risen Christ and the rest of the New Testament. While in varying degrees, the Narrow Gracers tell believers that there is no longer any issue with sin in the lives of believers. They say that the repentance that Christ teaches is a legalism and that no one need confess their sins any longer. This is, of course, blatantly disrespectful to the teaching of Jesus Christ in the Gospels and is declaring that the Risen Christ no longer cares about these things. It is declaring that the writer of Hebrews is incorrect when He writes:

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)*



The Jesus Christ of the Gospels is the same as the resurrected Jesus Christ when this verse was written (decades after Pentecost). He has not changed His mind about His teachings that have been recorded in the Gospels. If Christ had changed His mind, then He would not be the same. The Risen Christ told His disciples to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The Risen Christ who completely understood grace said:

*That repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations... (Luke 24:47)*

### **The Risen Christ Tells the Church at Ephesus to Repent**

That same Risen Christ called believers in the Church of Ephesus to repentance--not just once---but again, decades after the planting of this Church. He said to them:

*But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. (Revelation 2:4-5)*

If there were no issues of sin or need to repent any longer in the lives of believers, someone needs to inform the resurrected Jesus Christ because He apparently is not aware of this and He is making statements that tell believers today that they may need to repent.

### **Some Believers in Pergamum Must Repent of False Teaching**

The Risen Christ says to the believers in the Church at Pergamum:

*Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 'Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. (Revelation 2:15-16)*

Some were teaching something very false and offensive to the Lord and they needed to seriously repent. Christ is very stern in warning them that He will fight against them if they do not repent.

### **Some Believers in Thyatira Must Repent of Sexual Sin**

To the church in Thyatira, the Risen Christ says:

*But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I*

*will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. (Revelation 2:20-22)*

The Risen Christ corrects His disciples as He did in the Gospels. He is concerned about His bond-servants committing sexual sin, just as He warned about in the Gospels. This is still the same Jesus Christ. He calls both the woman Jezebel and His misled disciples to repentance from sexual sin and warns them sternly. Again, the Risen Christ is just as concerned about sin in the life of His followers as He was in the Gospels. This was written well after Pentecost.

### **The Risen Christ's Message to the Apostle Paul**

The Apostle Paul also had first-hand experience with the resurrected Jesus Christ. In a Heavenly vision, the Risen Christ said to him that He was sending him to the Jews and Gentiles...

*"to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." Acts 26:18*

These people had to turn from darkness and Satan to light and God so that they could receive forgiveness of sins. Paul further elaborates on this and confirms that what Christ said to him means that these who are receiving forgiveness must repent. Paul says:

*(the Jews and Gentiles) should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. (Act 26:20)*

The Risen Christ confirms to the Apostle Paul the many things that He had to say about repentance in the Gospels. It seems appropriate to cite just one instance, but the reader is encouraged to explore the Gospels for all that Christ says about repentance. Christ says:

*"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3b)*

The salvation of believers is strongly connected to their repentance. Any message that says believers do not need to repent from sin is an antichrist message and no believer should listen to someone teaching such an eternally dangerous, false idea. Instead, listen intently and submit to the Savior's message in the Gospels and experience abundant life now and eternal life in the future. Discover all the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that is in the Gospels.

Perhaps, as you read this book, you have become aware that Jesus Christ needs to be more important in your life than He has been previously. I offer this prayer of commitment to all who have read this book:

Father, I bow the knee and submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I fully intend, by Your grace, to do all that Christ teaches in the Gospels. I will also follow the instructions of His apostles in the New Testament. Give me grace to be His disciple in the same way as James, Peter, and Mary were His disciples. Protect me from error. This I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

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[Biography of Roger Sapp](#)

## Biography of Roger Sapp

Roger Sapp received Christ as his Savior and Baptizer in the Holy Spirit in a Youth With A Mission coffeehouse ministry for American soldiers in former West Germany in 1972. For next twenty years his experience of physical healing was unpredictable, unreliable and mysterious. In 1993, he had a breakthrough that changed his understanding of healing by focusing him on Christ as the perfect example of healing ministry. Since that time, more than twenty-five thousand healings, deliverances, and creative miracles have accompanied his ministry.

For the past fifteen years, he has been equipping other believers to do Christ-like healing. He is the author of ten books and many booklets and articles. His most popular books are "Performing Miracles and Healing," a comprehensive biblical guide to developing a Christ-like supernatural ministry, "Beyond a Shadow of a Doubt," a shorter book dealing with the doubts that block healing and "Paid in Full," a radical series of three books on grace in biblical finances.

His background includes the Eagle Scout award earned in his youth. He has served local churches as an elder, assistant pastor and pastor. He has been an Army Artillery officer, a prison, hospital, troop and pastor chaplain. He honorably retired from the U.S. Army in 1993 and was a theology professor until 1997. He holds earned Bachelor, Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Many have commented favorably on Dr. Sapp's relaxed style of ministry. He was frequently a guest speaker at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. He has appeared as a guest on John & Carol Arnett's television program. He has been a guest on several national Christian radio programs including Sid Roth's Messianic Vision and his television program "It's Supernatural." He has spoken in more than 300 churches worldwide during the last two decades.

Dr. Sapp presently travels full-time in ministry by invitation of local churches, conferences and house churches. He is associated with and recommended by the leaders of several networks of churches. He has been happily married to his high-school sweetheart, Ann for more than forty years. Ann, a registered nurse has frequently traveled with Dr. Sapp. They and their grown children and their spouses live in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Dr. Sapp can be reached at 1-817-514-0653, All Nations Ministries, P.O. Box 620, Springtown, Texas 76082 USA, website: [www.allnationsmin.org](http://www.allnationsmin.org) or by email at [contact@allnationsmin.org](mailto:contact@allnationsmin.org).

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