

The Two Laws

Much has been said about the the two laws. Some churches have historically supported the thought that there were two distinct laws given by God for different purposes. Some feel there was only one law given by God, and that the two law concept should be dropped and not taught today.

The purpose of this study is to show that God expects us to understand that there were two laws given and to understand the purpose of each. Each law served a very important purpose.

The Scriptures refer to these two laws as the “Law of God” and the “Law of Moses.” I think we can agree that God is the author of both. One he spoke directly to the people, the other he gave through Moses.

The law of God (the Ten Commandments) was given so man might know what kind of relationship he is to have with God and with his fellowman. The Law of Moses provided a remedy for the poor relationship with God and with people that occurred because of man’s disobedience to the Law of God. The Law of Moses also gave various regulations regarding the nation of Israel.

The Scriptures mentions two priesthoods: the Melchizedek priesthood and the Levitical priesthood. And as we study the two laws, we must also compare the two priesthood’s, as Paul does in Hebrews 7. One law is connected with only one of the priesthood’s, while the other law is observed under both.

In Genesis 14, the record shows that Abraham got caught in the middle of a conflict between two warring kings. After the conflict was settled, “*Melchizedek, king of Salem...the priest of the most high God,*” came out to meet Abraham (Genesis 14:17-20). Genesis then is known and referred to as the time of the Melchizedek priesthood. In Hebrews 7, Paul refers to that priesthood as still abiding (but more about that later).

After God led the children of Israel out of the land of bondage, he instituted a priesthood involving the descendants of Levi, particularly the family of Aaron. To them was given the service at the altar (Numbers 18:21-24). Then for the next 2,000 years, it was referred to as the “Levitical priesthood.” And again Paul refers to it as such in Hebrews 7:11.

These are the only priesthoods in the Scriptures. So their study is important as we study the account of the two laws. Many things occur under one that do not occur under the other. Yet, some things occur under both.

As we take up the study of the two laws, we have to begin with the priesthood of Melchizedek, the first priesthood mentioned in the Bible. What law did the people observe during this period of time, and what effect did it have on the relationship of people toward their God--and God toward His people?

Evidence of observation of the Ten commandments in that time is abundant. When God finished his creation work, he rested on Sabbath: “*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the **seventh** day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the **seventh** day from all his work which he had made. And God **blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it:** because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.*” (Genesis 2:1-3.

Then in Genesis 4:1-8, record of the first murder committed is given. Cain became angry with his brother because God accepted Abel’s offering and rejected Cain’s.

In his jealousy and anger, Cain slew Abel. Now why was it wrong for him to kill his

brother? Because the command “*Thou shalt not kill*” existed under the Melchizedek priesthood. The scriptures say, “...*For by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (Romans 3:20; “...*Where no law is, there is no transgression*” (Romans 4:15); and “...*Without the law sin was dead*” (Romans 7:8).

In Genesis 39, we read where Joseph was being seduced by his master’s wife. Joseph did not consent to such an act, for he said, “...*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” (verse 9). How did Joseph know it was a sin against God? We have no record of God saying to him or his ancestors, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” Yet, Joseph knew it was wrong. Why? Under the Melchizedek priesthood, the commandments were written in their minds and hearts as it is today.

THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

Now we come to the next phase that is recorded in the Scriptures; that is, the relationship of the people under the Levitical priesthood. This begins with the book of Exodus. The people had been in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years in bondage (see Exodus 12:40). In time the burdens became so heavy on the people that they finally called out to God for deliverance. God heard their cry (see Exodus 2:23-25) and raised up Moses to deliver the children of Israel.

Trying to save time, we will not go into too much detail as to what occurred during this time. But after the Israelites left Egypt and came close to Mount Sinai, God apparently felt the time had come, when once again he must reveal to Israel what kind of relationship he desired to have with His people, and the people with him. For his people had been without a prophet or leader, and had forgotten many of the ways of God. Thus, in Exodus 20, God spoke directly to the people. Before this he spoke to them through Moses, but here he spoke directly. What message was delivered to them? It was the Ten Commandments. God spoke and delivered the Ten Commandments personally. Afterward, the people were so scared, they told Moses, “*you go and talk to Him lest we perish.*” Exodus 20:18-22. Then God gave his instructions to Moses to give to the people. But God had already given the commandments to the people.

God not only gave the Ten Commandments directly to the people, but we read that God called Moses up to the mount and gave him two tablets of stone on which God wrote with His own finger. (See Exodus 31:18 and 32:15-16).

Because Moses was up on the mount for such a long time, the people felt sure something had happened to him. So, they asked Aaron to make them a god that they could worship. He made them a molten calf (see Exodus 32:4) and said, “*These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*”

When Moses came down from the mount and saw the image, with the people dancing and worshipping it, his anger intensified and he threw down the two tablets of stone, breaking them as recorded in Exodus 32:19.

God did not leave his work undone or incomplete. He told Moses to hew another two tablets of stone and he would again write the Ten Commandments on them. This is found Exodus 34:1-4; also Deuteronomy 10:1-4.

After receiving the Ten Commandments the second time, Moses went down from the mount and **put the tablets of stone in the ark** (see Deuteronomy 10:5), as God instructed (verse 2). We want to keep this in mind where the tablets were put. Some feel it is no big deal where they were placed. But I believe there is a special reason they were put **in the ark**. We

will say more about this later.

In Deuteronomy 4:10-13, Moses describes how God spoke the Ten Commandments. Then in verse 14 he says, “*And the Lord **commanded me at that time** to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.*” Notice it says, “**the Lord commanded me** to teach you.” Again this is something important to remember as we go further in the study of the two laws.

Deuteronomy 31:24 explains that the instructions which Moses referred to in Deuteronomy 4:14 were written in a book. Now a book (or scroll) is quite different from tablets of stone. A book (or scroll) normally has a short duration compared with something written on stone. There is no doubt that God was saying that the book was for a time or era, whereas the stone was a sign of longevity or duration. Also, the book was placed “*in the side of the ark.*” (See Deuteronomy 31:26).

Since two individuals wrote these two laws on two different materials and put them in two different places, should we pass over this lightly? I rather think not. It is something to note with careful consideration.

The scriptures are telling us there were two sets of laws, which the people were to adhere to or keep under the Levitical system.

Is this something that man has decided is a good way of explaining the two laws? I hardly think so. God did it. And when God says something, that is a good reason to listen. When God does something, that is a very good reason for man to place confidence in it.

You may be surprised to learn that God himself separated the two laws. One He had put “in the ark”; the other he had put “in the side of the ark.” One he wrote on stone; the other Moses wrote in a book (a scroll). If God separated the two laws, then we should not hesitate to separate them.

God made a promise to Israel, but that promise (as all of God’s promises) was based on a condition. In 2 Kings 21:8, we find the promise and condition: “*Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers, **only** (here is the condition) if they will observe to do according to all that **I have commanded them** and according to all the law that **my servant Moses commanded them.***”

Here God very clearly divided the two laws--“*All that I commanded*” and “*all the law that my servant Moses commanded.*” He could very easily have said (since He was the author of both, “If they will do all that I commanded them” and stopped right there. But he didn’t. He divided what he had spoken directly to the people from that which he had spoken to Moses to give to the people.

PRESENT-DAY PRIESTHOOD

Since the Bible speaks of two different priesthood’s, can we determine which priesthood we are under today? I think we can.

Turn to Hebrews 7, and we will read some interesting thoughts. Begin with verse 11, “*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law...)*” We will pause here and notice it says that under the Levitical priesthood they received the law. We have shown the Ten Commandments existed from the creation of the world, even in the very beginning. So this is not referring to the Ten Commandments; it is referring to the law God gave “**through Moses.**” It was a different law, a new law, a new administration.

Now back to Hebrews 7. Verse 11 continues, “*...What further need was there that*

another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" Paul is explaining to the people that a new priesthood has risen and the old one has passed away. But he is not finished yet. Notice verse 12; *"For the priesthood being changed..."* He speaks in the past tense. Now verse 15; *"And it is yet far more evident: for that after the **similitude** of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest."* Paul is speaking of another priest who had come forth whom the people were refusing to accept. The new "high priest" is Jesus, the Son of God. This is made very clear in verse 17; *"For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."* A fair question can be ask here, "why is Paul making such an issue over the two Priesthood's? Not only is he talking about two Priesthood's, but also the law, in relation to these two Priesthood's." To understand about the Law, one has to understand the priesthood's. For the law went with one, but not the other.

It is not hard to determine which priesthood we are under today. It is the *"after the similitude (likeness) of Melchisedec."* Under the Melchisedec priesthood you find the Ten Commandments in practice, but you do not find any feast days, holy days, ceremonial, uncleanness of man or woman, circumcision for the sake of salvation or a tabernacle service---all of which they had during the Levitical priesthood.

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

As we study the new testament Scriptures, we soon notice that the Church had two main problems in evangelizing the Jewish community. There were other problems, but mainly two great ones. First, the people were hesitant about accepting Jesus as the Messiah, whom they had been seeking for many years. The apostles had to prove to the people through signs and miracles that Jesus was the Messiah who was to come. However, a greater problem was that of getting the people to give up the Law of Moses." This they were very reluctant to do, and Paul, as well as others, had to deal with this matter.

Even Jesus had to deal with it, though for a slightly different matter, before His death. When the rich ruler came to Jesus, asking what he should do to be saved (see Matthew 19:16-18), Jesus said, *"...If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."* Up to this point the rich ruler seemed to be sincere, really wanting to know. So he ask Jesus, "Which?"

Did you ever consider what the rich ruler wanted to know? He was wanting to know "Which commandments---the commandments of Moses or the commandments of God? Jesus then quoted enough of the Ten Commandments so that the rich ruler had no doubt. Jesus was referring to the commandments God spoke from Mount Sinai. In doing this Jesus was diving the two laws.

Now turn to Acts 15, starting with the first verse See the problem? It was a matter of salvation. : *"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, **except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.**"* Should they be circumcised? And they were right; for God had told them more than once that if they didn't keep the rite of circumcision they would be cut off. Then in verse 2, the record says, *"When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them..."* The debate was sharp, very sharp. It was so sharp something had to be done; so the brethren told Paul, Barnabas and others to go up to Jerusalem and settle the matter, which they did.

You can read on in chapter 15 how the debate went, and what reasons were given for not continuing to keep the law of Moses. Then I would like for you to notice verse 10; *"Now therefore why temp ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our*

fathers nor we were able to bear.”

Did you ever consider why it felt like a yoke (something heavy) upon their necks? Let me give you some thoughts to consider.

1. Consider how many animals each family had to sacrifice each year to fulfill the law of Moses.
2. At least three times a year (and perhaps more), no matter how far away from Jerusalem they lived, they had to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the festivals.
3. The law of uncleanness of women, as well as men, for various things was a burden on the family.

Perhaps you can think of other reasons it was a hardship on them. But at least these will cause you to think.

Now notice, it does not say, “part of the law” was a yoke on our necks. It was the “law of Moses” that was a yoke. (See verses 1 and 10.)

God’s law is spoken of and referred to as “*holy, just and good*” (Romans 7:12). The Law of Moses is referred to as “a yoke” upon our necks.

In Acts 15:24, we read of some who insisted on keeping the Law of Moses in order to be saved. Why did “certain of the brethren” go about saying this? Because for two thousand years “obedience” to the Law of Moses was mandatory in their relationship with God. The brethren were correct as far as they went, but they did not recognize the Messiah who had come. They failed to recognize they were on this side of the cross, which the law pointed to. The apostles, though, recognized they were on this side of the cross and thus knew that the Law of Moses had come to an end. Under the Levitical priesthood, if they did not obey the Law of Moses, they were **cut off**. Their salvation was no longer assured. They no longer enjoyed a lovable relationship with God. So it was a problem and one that would not go away.

It was such a great problem that Paul devoted almost the whole book of Galatians to it. Though Paul makes a beautiful defense of the New Covenant in Christ, he has to deal with the Law of Moses to make his point. Even though it may sound like his main thought is the New Covenant in Christ, actually his main thought is the law of Moses and its termination. In Gal. 3:17, he speaks of the law which was given four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul, the promise through Christ. Moses’ law was given four hundred and thirty years after Jacob had gone into Egypt.

Now notice verse 19; “*Wherefore then serveth the law?...*” Notice this peaks in the singular--“the law.” If you say there was only one law, you get into a very difficult position here, for as you read on it says, “*...it was added because of transgression, till the seed should come...*” It speaks of a law coming to an end; “*till the seed should come.*” That is, a law that was given only for a period of time, only until the seed (Christ) came.

If we say there was only one law, then the Ten Commandments also came to an end when Christ died. We cannot get around it. You may try to explain it away, but it will not fit the scripture. It does not say “part of the law” was done away; it says “the law, “ the entire law, was done away. In each and every instance, when the writers explained that Moses’ law was no longer in effect, they always say “the law,” never parts of the law, is no longer binding.

Now which law is Paul talking about in Galatians 3? I have stated that it is Moses’ law.

But one could suggest, that this is just my idea. Is it?? Notice verse 10, “...*Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the **book of the law** to do them.*” Was it just my interpretation? No, Paul himself tells us which law he is writing about; it is the law written in a book. And Moses wrote his law in a book. (See Deuteronomy 31:24)

Now let’s look again at Galatians 3. We refer to verse 24; “*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us **unto** Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*” Those who are saying we ought not to separate the two laws claim that the law spoken of here is the Ten Commandments that reveal our sins and cause man to turn to Christ. This is not what Paul is stating or referring to. This schoolmaster (tutor) was to bring them “unto Christ.” This verse is explained to us by verse 19, where Paul says, “...*It was added until the seed should come...*” Verse 24 is about that “time period. Notice the scripture says “unto Christ” not “to Christ. “The law was to bring believers “unto Christ” or “down to Christ”, then it was to be no longer. It pointed toward Christ, but then when Christ came, it could point no further, for that which it pointed to had come. This is the point that Paul is debating in the Galatian letter.

Lets look at some other translations of Galatians 3:24.

Revised Standard Version: “So that the law was our custodian until Christ came...?”

The New English Bible: “Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ came...”

The Living New Testament: “Let me put it another way. The Jewish laws were our teacher and guide until Christ came...”

Good News for Modern Man: “So the Law was in charge of us, to be our instructor until Christ came...”

There are others I could refer to, but I think you can see that I am not alone in this interpretation of Galatians 3:24. The law of Moses was a law of “types and shadows.” When the Israelites left Egypt, they began following the shadow, which led them to the cross and there stopped. A shadow is thrown only one way. On this side of the cross, there is no shadow.

Let’s go back to Galatians 2:16 and notice this: “*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*”

Some feel this is referring to the Ten Commandments, but it isn’t. The Jews never looked to the Ten Commandments for justification. There is no justification in the Ten commandments. But the Jews thought there was justification in the law of Moses. In Galatians 3:10, Paul again tells us what law he is referring to. It is “the book of the law.” Paul is still dealing with the problem that existed in the church. Some wanted to go back to the Jewish faith, to the practice of the law of Moses.

Paul finally has to get stern with the church at Galatia. In chapter 5, there are two very important thoughts he addresses. In verse 1, he ask them why they want to go back under that “yoke.” In verse two he says, “...*If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.*” Now he is getting down to the nitty-gritty of the thought. Here he is getting close to saying, they were losing their salvation.

Notice verse 3: *'For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.'* You see, they did not want to do everything that Moses said, just be circumcised. But Paul is saying, you can't pick and choose.

Some today feel the same way; they don't want to do everything, just a point or two of Moses' law. But Paul says it all goes together. If you do one aspect of it, you have to do it all. If one aspect of it is still in effect, then it all is in effect. Paul said, "the law"--all of it--was helpful till the seed (Christ) came. It came to an end when Jesus died.

As to the seriousness of it, in verse four (Galatians 5), Paul says, *"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, **ye are fallen from grace.**"* Now when a person falls from grace, he or she does not have salvation. So it seems, going back to the law of Moses is a serious thing, much more serious than most folks seem to think today.

Why does he say this? The law pointed them toward the Christ to come. Now, he had come; yet, they continued to observe that which pointed toward him. By holding to the law of Moses, they were saying that he had not yet come, and they were still expecting him.

Man needs to learn that God says what he means, and means what he says. He told Israel to observe the Law of Moses till Christ came and then stop. But as a nation, they did not do it, and the Jewish people are in the shape they are today because of it.

Apparently, there was a need for Paul to speak of the same thing to the brethren of Colosse, for in Colossians 2:4, he says, *"And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words."* Verse 8 says, *"Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."* He explains in verse 10 that we are *"complete in Christ."* Then in verse 11, that we are circumcised by *"putting off the body of the sins of the flesh."* And in verse 13, that we *"have been quickened (given new life) together with him."*

Having said all this, Paul moved to the "meat" of the matter in verse 14; *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances **that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.**"* And in verse 16; *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days."* And in verse 17; *"Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."*

Paul was telling the brethren at Colosse, the "handwriting of ordinances" (the law with its rules and regulations explaining how it ought to be kept) was nailed to the cross; it had come to an end when Christ died. In verse 16, he is telling them "Let no man judge you for not keeping the law of Moses." If he had to remind them, then it was a problem and it was bothering them; "should I or should I not?" Also Paul is speaking in the same language as Peter did in Acts 15:10, that it was against them, a yoke on their necks, a law that had come to an end--a law the apostles no longer supported. In fact, they were adversely opposed to it

In Hebrews 7:12, Paul says, *"For the priesthood being **changed**, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."* Yes, the priesthood was changed; we are no longer under the Levitical priesthood, which included the law of Moses. We are under the priesthood of Melchisedec where only the Ten Commandments, the Law of Tithing and the Law of the Clean and Unclean Meats existed. These three laws were from the creation of the world. They flowed through the Melchisedec priesthood, pointing out sin, and continued to flow through the Levitical priesthood, pointing out sin. Through the Levitical priesthood these laws pointed out sin that were covered by the sacrificial system (Moses' law) and continue to flow through the likeness of the Melchisedec priesthood today, pointing out sins which are atoned for by the death of Christ (by faith in His death).

Jesus said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). In Matthew 19:17, He said, *“...But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”* In 1 John 5:2-3, we read, *“...For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous.”* Then in James 2:10-12, we are told we cannot break even one and still please God.

Obedience is, and has always been the key word in the relationship between man and God. If some try to sell you the idea that there is such a thing as unconditional “love,” don’t believe it. There is no such thing in the natural life, or in the spiritual. Being faithful is the only way that true love is shown.

Yes, my friend, there were two laws under the Levitical priesthood. God Himself recognized it, the apostles recognized it, and to rightly divide the Word, we also must recognize it.