A scenic view of a dirt path leading through a forest towards snow-capped mountains. The path is in the foreground, winding through a dense forest of evergreen trees. In the background, a range of mountains with patches of snow is visible under a clear sky. The overall color palette is dominated by greens and browns, with the white of the snow providing a focal point.

FINDING THE ANCIENT PATH

THE HARMONY OF LAW AND GRACE

ED DOSS

Finding The Ancient Path

Joining Law and Faith

By: Ed R Doss Jr.

ISBN: 9798747225671

Cover by Mikaila Doss

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version, Thomas Nelson Publishers (1997). The Hebrew text is from the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. New Testament Greek quotations are from the Greek New Testament according to the Byzantine Text form, edited by Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, 2000 edition; this is the edition by Pierpont and Robinson of a Majority, or Byzantine, text of the NT.

Quotations marked ESV are from the English Standard Version. Quotations marked NIV are New International Version.

All Scripture quotations have been retrieved using the BibleHub Software www.biblehub.com. All emphases of Scripture verses are mine.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author, except as provided by USA copyright law.

First Printing 2021

United States of America

apostasy noun

apos·ta·sy | \ ə-'pä-stə-sē \

plural **apostasies**

Definition of *apostasy*

1 : an act of refusing to continue to follow, obey, or recognize a religious faith

2 : abandonment of a previous loyalty : DEFECTION

“From Adam to the present, the whole history of the world has been one recurring instance of personal and group apostasy after another...Apostasy consists in the abandonment and forsaking of...true principles, and all those who do not believe and conform to them are in an apostate condition, whether they are the ones who departed from the truth or whether they inherited their false concept from their apostate fathers.

— Bruce R. McConkie

CONTENTS

Chapter One	Man's Penchant For Rebellion	27
Chapter Two	Ancient Israel	34
Chapter Three	The Kings	40
Chapter Four	The Prophets	54
Chapter Five	The Early Church	62
Chapter Six	The Church Fathers	71
Chapter Seven	Progressive Christianity	83
Chapter Eight	Majority Rules Theology	107
Chapter Nine	Comfortably Numb	117
Chapter Ten	Doctrinal Myths	141
Chapter Eleven	Love	161
Chapter Twelve	The Feasts Of The Lord	173
Chapter Thirteen	The Sabbath	185
Chapter Fourteen	Food Laws Revisited	207
Chapter Fifteen	In Defense Of The Law	234
Chapter Sixteen	Untwisting Paul	243
Chapter Seventeen	Seeing The Law	267
Chapter Eighteen	Legalism	287
Chapter Nineteen	Embracing The Law	295
Chapter Twenty	The Way	314

INTRODUCTION

The book you are holding in your hand at this moment is my detailed journey to discover the answers to some of my most foremost Biblical questions. Now that it is published, it serves as my declaration of freedom from the man-made traditions and heretical doctrines that have found their way into my Christian faith.

What began as a research paper on religious tradition quickly morphed into a book about how my Christian faith had been hi-jacked by man-made teachings and traditions that are as ancient as the faith itself. Needless to say, the journey has been the most faith-building experience of my Christian life. I simply cannot put into words the excitement of discovering answers to the questions I have had for my entire adult life. It honestly felt like I was being converted to Christ all over again.

Much of my New Testament understanding felt so unrealized. I lived with so many questions that I never thought would be answered until I was with Yeshua. It was not until I finally began to understand my Old Testament that the New Testament blossomed for me, and I could bridge the two together. It was the combination of these bridges that began to open my eyes more and more to the importance of the Law of the Lord as it pertained to my Christian walk. I realize that this may seem alien to you, a Christian advocating for the Old

Testament Law. To see the words 'Christian' and 'Law' in the same sentence is oxymoronic for so many, including me, up until five years ago.

The Law was something that I believed could never be observed in this day and age. I believed this because I was taught that it was impossible to obey and, therefore, not required of me as a disciple of Christ. Like many Christians believe, I believed that the Law was essentially dead and that its purpose was for Israel alone. This position created a mental block for me so that every time I read something about the Law in the New Testament, I would blindly gloss over it. And there is a lot of Law in the New Testament. More than that, there is a lot of lawful obedience in the New Testament.

Realizing that the Law of the Lord applied to me as a believer under the New Covenant was going to require more than just a few scriptures. It had to be absolutely unassailable. If I could not be 100% convinced from Scripture, then I would in no way be persuaded away from my antinomian doctrines. Needless to say, this took years of study and seeking answers to the flood of questions that came as a result of even toying with the idea of being Torah observant. It began with the realization that everything written in the Bible was written by Hebrews and to Hebrews. Seeing the Scripture through the eyes of a person hearing it in that time and place while considering what it meant for them based on their history and understanding of the Torah was a very eye-opening experiment.

Please understand that I am not implying in this book that Christians need to be Jewish or that they must be Torah observant for the purposes of salvation. I am, however, trying to show that evangelicalism has mistakenly rejected something that they believed had been abolished.

Do not stop reading. If you are anything like me, then any mention of obedience to the Law as a Christian is a deal-breaker. Five years ago, I would have dismissed this book at the first mention of such a teaching. If you are tempted to dismiss this book already, let me encourage you to keep reading. But do not just read; read critically and methodically. Scrutinize, and argue if you must. Above all, pray. Pray for wisdom and understanding before you go any further. Like Paul to the Ephesians, I pray that by doing so, you may know Him better.

*NIV Ephesians 1:17 - **17** I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am not what you might consider to be a traditional author. Because of this, I have been assisted, supported and inspired by so many devoted friends and family members. Their love, direction, and assistance cannot go unrecognized..

- ❖ David & Cristine Berensohn (Editing)
- ❖ Mikaila Doss (Cover)
- ❖ Garrett Doss (Insights)
- ❖ Dr. Douglas Hamp (Forward)
- ❖ And Last, but certainly not least, is my bride, Joy Doss and my oldest daughter Alexa. Without your unending patience, support encouragement, and faithful direction, I could have never finished this book.

GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

- **Yehovah** - the name of God (Exodus 3:15)
- **Yeshua** - the Hebrew name of Jesus
- **Type & Antitype** - foreshadowing vs. fulfillment
- **Exegesis** - Critical explanation or interpretation of a text
- **Eisegesis** - an interpretation that expresses the interpreter's own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text.
- **Hermeneutic** - science of Biblical interpretation
- **Heresy** - belief or opinion contrary to orthodox religious (especially Christian) doctrine
- **Gnosticism** - Personal spiritual knowledge (gnosis) elevated above Biblical teachings
- **Antinomian** - relating to the view that Christians are released by grace from the obligation of observing the moral law
- **Preterism** - a view in Christian eschatology which holds that some or all of the biblical prophecies concerning the Last Days have already taken place.
- **Torah** - In Hebrew (instruction), In Pentateuch or five books of Moses (*Genesis thru Deuteronomy*)
- **Diaspora** - the dispersion of the 12 Tribes beyond Israel
- **Talmud** (Oral Law) - Rabbinical collection of writings and commentary on the Law of Moses
- **Apostate** - a person who renounces a religious belief or principle
- **Law of First Mention** - hermeneutical technique used to interpret the Bible based on a concept's first mention in the Bible

FORWARD

I grew up hearing that the Old Testament with its many laws was for the Jews but the New Testament with its grace purchased by Jesus is for us Christians. In fact, we were told if we tried to keep the Old Testament laws then we were in danger of losing our salvation and falling from grace. A major source of this teaching comes from C.I. Scofield who wrote in his popular and influential 1917 study Bible: "Israel rashly accepted the law...at Sinai they exchanged grace for law".¹

Naturally, because we would never want to hold the incredible sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in disrepute, we accepted the notion that the law was done away with - even nailed to the cross. There is a dichotomy between law and grace; It is either law or grace, one or the other but not both and.

Yet, as I continued to study the Bible for myself, I discovered that the Old Testament is full of God's grace. Indeed, shortly after God spoke his commandments and also entered into a covenant with Israel at Mt Sinai, Israel fell into idolatry by worshiping the golden calf. Though God had every right to destroy Israel, instead he passed before Moses and proclaimed:

¹ Scofield Reference Notes, 1917 Edition; Gen 15

“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, “keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.” So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. Then he said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.” (Exod 34:6-9)

God declares that he is merciful, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. It was this very declaration that was on Jonah’s mind when he went the opposite direction God told him to go. He stated this reason when God did not destroy Nineveh because they repented:

So he prayed to the LORD, and said, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. (Jonah 4:2)

The reluctant prophet did not want to bring the message of judgment to Nineveh because he knew that God’s character was such that he would show mercy if Nineveh repented. He wanted God to throw the book at Nineveh and smite them for their heinous sins but God wanted to show grace so long as they repented. This basic message is throughout the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). We see God’s grace again and again long before we ever come to the New Testament.

This abundance of grace in the Old Testament caused me to question whether the dichotomy between law and grace was correct. As I explored in the New Testament, I found passages from Paul himself, the champion of grace through faith, saying things like:

- Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. (Rom 3:31)
- Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. (Gal 6:7-8)
- keeping the commandments of God is what matters. (1Cor 7:19)

The dichotomy between law and grace that I heard much of my life did not seem to be supported by Scripture. God's unfathomable grace was abundantly evident in the Old Testament and Paul taught a continuation of law in the New Testament. Resolving this supposed dichotomy is at the heart of this book.

Ed gently leads us down God's Ancient Path and shows us step by step how, from the very beginning, the path was always built on a foundation of righteousness and truth and yet bursting with grace. You will come away from this book with a greater sense of God's goodness and love while feeling settled that the Ancient Path is the way we are to walk today.

Dr. Douglas Hamp

PREFACE

This book is by no means intended to be an exhaustive effort at explaining in detail every issue that I cover. You may find yourself wishing that I went further in my explanations. My purpose was not to explain every possible angle but to show in fly-by fashion how man has historically and systematically veered away from Yehovah's commandments, statutes, and laws. You will find some chapters brief and direct, while others take a little more time to flesh out my thoughts. Of the many scriptural deviations listed throughout this book, some will be painstakingly obvious to most Christian readers and do not require in-depth scrutiny or explanation other than what is plainly written in scripture. Others are a bit more tricky and do require broader Biblical support to make the case.

I will do my best not to beat around the preverbal bush in my explanations. You will find that I am frank and sometimes blunt in my presentation. Please do not misinterpret this writing style as arrogant or judgmental. In the grand scheme of things, I am just one man writing one book and, at the end of the day, of no great importance. I have no quarrels or bones to pick with any one person, Church, or denomination other than the disputation of our collective rejection of the Ancient Path.

After nearly five years of intense study and seeking answers to some of the most challenging questions that I have ever asked of myself, I can confidently state that evangelicals have been seduced into adopting the greatest lie that our enemy has ever told. God's Law is dead, abolished, and no longer considered authoritative for the Christian believer. This belief is called Antinomianism. Preterism is like Antinomianism in that it holds the belief that most, if not all of the apocalyptic prophecies of the Bible have already come to pass. Thus, the reader need not pay any attention to them. And lastly, once the Law and prophecies are gone, there is no need for Israel, the chosen people of God. The Church has replaced them, or so many believe.

When you combine Antinomian doctrines, Preterism, and Replacement Theologies into one world view, you have systematically invalidated two-thirds of the scripture, i.e.; the Old Testament and most of Revelation. This is precisely what modern Christianity has done. In doing so, modern theology has created an endless loop of contradictions where one teaching under one covenant cannot be used to clarify a teaching under another, thus negating the authority of the former. These positions held jointly create a dynamic in which any teaching from the Old Testament is met with distrust. In other words, if it does not come from the mouth of Yeshua, it holds no weight.

If there is one thing that I would ask you, the reader, to keep in mind as you read this book, it is this; Yeshua and the Father ONE. They are not separate authorities, but they are completely and eternally unified. Yeshua is the physical

manifestation of the Father. He will not stand opposed to or contradict the Father in any way.

John 10:30 - **30**"I and My Father are one."

Colossians 1:15-18 - **15**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16**For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. **17**And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. **18**And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

“Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way *is*, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk *in it.*’ – JEREMIAH 6:16

MAN'S PENCHANT FOR REBELLION

Adam. The first man. The first human son of God. The first leader of God's people. The first apostate. How long did it take Adam to make his infamous decision to rebel against his Creator's direct command? Nobody knows for sure. It could have been a day, a week, a month, or several years. For certain, the order of events in Genesis leads the reader to believe that it was not long.

Genesis 3:1-7 - **1***Now the Serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

2*And the woman said to the Serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; **3**but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

4*Then the Serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. **5**For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

6*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. **7**Then the eyes of both of them*

were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

It has always baffled me as to why it appeared so easy for Adam to disobey. After all, he was with Yehovah, face to face. The moment that he first opened his eyes, he was looking into the eyes of God. Can you imagine that moment? Taking your first breath, then looking into the gaze of the Great I Am that molded you out of the mud. Once he recovered from that moment, he looked around at everything that Yehovah had created before him. Eden, in all of its splendor. All of the animals and beautiful birds and creeping things. All of the colors and aromas had to have been an assault on his senses. His first steps must have been steps made in awe as he beheld Heaven on Earth.

These were Adam's first moments alive. He was awakened into paradise and in perfect fellowship with his Creator. Humanity was not yet incompatible with the presence of God, so Adam could easily see the beautiful unity between the realms of Heaven and Earth. There was no veil, so all things spiritual were there for his eyes to witness. He saw the armies of Yehovah and their Generals, the Cherubim. Satan, Michael, and Gabriel. He saw the Holy Mountain of God, the Tree of Life, and the one tree that would be the source of his rebellion, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Why Would You Do It And Whom Shall You Serve?

We know how the story unfolds. Adam had a choice to make as to whom he would serve. Whomever he chose to obey would ultimately be his Lord and set the course for

humanity forever. I am reminded of that scene from the movie Indiana Jones when the story's villain had to choose the correct grail or pay the ultimate price. He chose poorly and died, as did Adam (Genesis 2:17).

The fall of man began with a single question posed by the Evil One. "*Did God really say?*" The question seems simple enough, but it is the most devious and sinister question that he could have asked Eve when examined. The question is not only an affront to the Lordship of her Creator, but it plants a tiny seed of doubt in Eve's heart. Enough doubt to make Eve wonder what it was that Yehovah actually said, and that tiny seed of doubt, in that single minute, had Eve changing God's commands. Notice that she said "*nor shall you touch it*" in verse 3. When you look back at the account of Yehovah's command regarding the tree (Gen 2:15-17), He never said not to touch it. One could argue that it was here, in the Garden, at the beginning of time, that man's long history of putting words in Yehovah's mouth came to be. A rule, a law, or a standard that had its origin in the will of man based on what he/she *thought* God said but did not say. And Adam was there, watching and listening and being equally persuaded, took the bite.

If this book is about how quickly man turns away from Yehovah and toward human tradition or his own devices, then let this moment, Adam's moment, be proof of the origin of man's unfortunate tradition of disobedience and the swiftness of its appearance.

Neither Will They Be Persuaded

How many times in your life have you thought or even said, "if God would just show Himself to me, I would be more devoted"? How often have you heard people ask, "if God is real, why doesn't he prove it by showing Himself to us?" Yeshua addressed the fallacy of these questions in His parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. The Rich Man was in Hell and begged that something supernatural be sent to his family so that they could see proof of the afterlife and therefore repent before they died. Yeshua's words prove to be an answer to these age-old questions and a clue as to why Adam fell so quickly.

Luke 16:27-31 - **27** "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, **28**for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' **29**Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' **30**And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' **31**But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Sadly, exposure to the supernatural or even to the presence of God is not enough to keep one from serving self. You see, Adam not only obeyed Satan, thus choosing his Lord, he also made a decision that would benefit and exalt himself. By choosing Satan over Yehovah, he committed the same sin of wanting to be like Him. Notice the striking similarity between Satan's sin and that aspect of the Serpent's temptation that drew Adam's heart away from obedience.

Isaiah 14:12-14 - **12**How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! **13**For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; **14**I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

Genesis 3:4-5 - **4**Then the Serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. **5**For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The sad truth is that Yehovah had already given everything to Adam and had made him the ruler of all creation.

Genesis 1:26-28 - **26**Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." **27**So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. **28**Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Despite all of this, Adam wanted to be his own man, make his own decisions, and decide his own path. The idea of having something that only Yehovah had was too appealing to pass by. And just like Satan, he traded his position, authority, and glory for his self-exaltation. Does this story sound familiar

to you? It should. The Serpent attempted this same coup with the last Adam, Yeshua.

Matthew 4:1-10 - **1**Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2**And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. **3**Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." **4**But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" **5**Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, **6**and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" **7**Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" **8**Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9**And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." **10**Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Hence we have a glimpse into the origin of man's penchant for independence from his Creator. In Adam, we not only see his reasons for such an exchange, but we also see the ease in which it was performed. We can also see the *modus operandi* of the Evil One and how he would use his methods on humanity through the ages to get them to trade truth for tradition and ultimately heresy.

ANCIENT ISRAEL

Israel. The Chosen, the Elect, the Holy Nation, the Called Out, the Royal Priesthood, and God's own possession. The people that witnessed the ten plagues of Egypt at the hand of Yehovah and were first-hand witnesses to the miracles of bread and water that Yehovah provided for them in the desert. Their clothes did not wear out, and their shoes' soles lasted the entirety of the 40-year journey. More than all of this, they saw Him. In smoke by day and fire by night, they saw Him. Furthermore, if that was not enough, they watched Him in all of His glory descend onto Mt. Sinai with thunder and lightning and the sound of the trumpet being blown by mighty angels (Exod 19:16). Speaking of Israel, the Bible says:

Deuteronomy 11:7 - **7***your eyes have seen every great act of the Lord which He did.*

What sights to behold! If any people in all of the history of mankind were to be inspired enough to completely and wholeheartedly obey their God based on these experiences alone, it would be the people of Israel! Yet, history does not reveal this about Israel.

Egypt Was Better

Although the people of Israel proved to be a faithless, belligerent, and stubborn people in their early days of the desert journey, it is their actions at Mt. Sinai that I wish to draw your attention to.

Exodus 20:1-3 - **1**And God spoke all these words, saying: **2** "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. **3** "You shall have no other gods before Me.

Yehovah spoke these, the first words of His holy Law, to the people of Israel as they were gathered at the base of Mt. Sinai. He would go on to deliver the entirety of the Law through Moses. All of which the people agreed to obey.

Exodus 24:3-4 - **3**So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord has said we will do." **4**And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.

Once Moses finished teaching the Law to Israel, Yehovah called him back up to meet Him on the mountain. The Bible tells us that he was up there for 40 days.

"Come, Make Us god's"

Exodus 32:1 - **1**Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought

us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Do you recall the first words of Yehovah when He met His people at Mt. Sinai? "*You shall have no other god's before Me*" Yet within 40 days, the people who had witnessed the miracles and had the amazing privilege of seeing the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob resting in all of His glory atop Mt. Sinai, did exactly the opposite of His first and most important command. Just like Adam, they were quick to deviate from the path, regardless of all that they had witnessed.

When you study Israel throughout the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, you find that they lived in a state of disobedience most of the time. Yehovah, through His prophets, was constantly calling the people back to His word while promising the blessings that came with obedience. Yet they strayed. And when I say that they strayed, I do not mean that they just sinned, but that they fell so far as to change their worship to the degree that Yehovah no longer recognized it.

Isaiah 1:12-15 - **12** "*When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? 13Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. 14Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. 15When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.*

Sacrifice, incense, New Moon observance, Sabbaths, and the Feasts are all commanded by Yehovah, so why does He hate these sacraments here? Why would He hate that which He commanded? It is because, like Eve, they had twisted his commandments to the point that they no longer even resembled the original command. They had changed the dates of the Feasts, invented new Feasts, and blended His holy precepts with those of the nations around them. Included in this twisted worship was even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods and to Yehovah Himself. Something that He never commanded.

Jeremiah 7:30-31 - **30***For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight," says the Lord. "They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. 31*And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.

No people in all of the history of mankind have been as close to Yehovah as Israel. They saw Him in the smoke and in the fire. They saw Him in the rock and in the water. They saw Him in the manna and in the quail, and they heard His holy voice like the thunder. Nevertheless, despite all of this, they strayed off of the Ancient Path.

How many of us can boast of such an experience with God? We are among those who have not seen and yet believe (John 20:29). Israel's journey through the desert on their way to the Promised Land is a Type, and we, who are on our own journey through the desert on our way to the Promised Land,

are the Antitype. What are the chances that we, like them, have strayed from the path as well? Even if just a little?

THE KINGS

Neither our kings nor our princes, our priests nor our fathers, have kept Your law, nor heeded Your commandments and Your testimonies – Nehemiah

9:34

Do you remember where Israel was before their exodus? They were under a kingship system of government (Pharaoh) in Egypt. They were ruled by someone that had no accountability except unto himself. This form of leadership was all that they knew for 400 years. While in the desert, the people began to treat Moses as their new king by bringing every matter and dispute to him until Jethro stepped in (Exod 18:13-23) to teach them what it meant to have a theocratic system of government with Yehovah as their king. However, this did not last very long.

1 Samuel 8:4-9 - **4**Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, **5**and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." **6**But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the Lord. **7**And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. **8**According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out

*of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. **9**Now therefore, heed their voice.*

What caused Israel to long after a human king to replace their true king? The answer is shocking to modern readers like us, but it reveals reality as real for us as it was for them.

*Vs. 5 - **5**Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations*

At the heart of the matter was the fact that although Yehovah had set them apart and called them out of the world, they wanted to be like the world. The nations of the world had kings, and they wanted one as well. What is worse is that they did not have faith that Yehovah would lead them after Samuel's death. So instead of being ruled by a God that they could not see, they preferred to have one of flesh and blood.

This is not only a rejection of Yehovah as their rightful king but a rejection of faith itself. A decision that would prove to lead Israel down some of the darkest paths of human existence. And it started with an answered prayer.

Enter Handsome Saul

The selection of Saul as the new king of Israel reveals something special about Yehovah's heart to love His people despite their rejection of Him.

*1 Samuel 9:1-2 - **1**There was a man of Benjamin... **2**And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.*

When they asked for a king, Yehovah gave them the tallest, most handsome man in the Kingdom. Isn't that just like the Father? But as you know, looks are not everything, and this was just the beginning of a long spiral downward and away from the truth and a slow progression towards apostasy. In the case of the kings, we can see that the outright rebellion to Yehovah's commands went unchecked and unrepented of for so long that it was eventually accepted as tradition and truth.

Saul, David, and Solomon were the only three kings to rule the united tribes of Israel. Of the three, only David was considered to be a good king. Take a look at the spiritual track record of the kings after David below to see how tradition and rebellion reigned in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Kingdom of Judah		Kingdom of Israel	
Rehoboam	Evil	Jeroboam 1	Evil
Abijah	Evil	Nadab	Evil
Asa	Obedient	Ba'ash	Evil
Jehoshaphat	Obedient	Elah	Evil
Jeroram	Evil	Zimri	Evil
Ahaziah	Evil	Omri	Evil
Athaliah	Evil	Ahab	Evil
Joash	Obedient	Ahaziah	Evil
Amaziah	Obedient	Joram	Evil
Uzziah	Obedient	Jehu	Evil
Jotham	Obedient	Jehoahaz	Evil
Ahaz	Evil	Jehoash	Evil
Hezekiah	Obedient	Jeroboam 2	Evil
Manasseh	Evil	Zecharia	Evil
Amon	Evil	Shallum	Evil
Josiah	Obedient	Menahem	Evil
Jehoahaz	Evil	Pekahiah	Evil
Jehoiakim	Evil	Pekah	Evil
Jehoiachin	Evil	Hoshea	Evil
Zedekiah	Evil		

Less than half of the kings of Judah were faithful to Yehovah, and none of the kings of Israel followed in His ways. This is the result of a people choosing a path of their own instead of embracing the path that God gives us.

"You shall be careful to observe"

Deuteronomy 12:1-4 - **1** *"These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. **2**You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. **3**And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. **4**You shall not worship the Lord your God with such things."*

King Jeroboam 1st was where everything began to deteriorate for the Northern 10 Tribes. He would become the metric by which all other kings after him would be measured. And the metric was his blatant disobedience to the command above in Deuteronomy 12.

1 Kings 12:28-33 - **28***So the king (Jeroboam) took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." **29**And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. **30**Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one. **31**He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites. **32**And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in*

*Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. **33**He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he had devised from his own heart. And he instituted a feast for the people of Israel and went up to the altar to make offerings."*

In the chapter before this, Yehovah tells Jeroboam, "Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you." (1 Kings 11:38)

Yet Jeroboam did the opposite. Following the idolatry of Solomon before him (2 Kings 23:13), he not only created idols, but he built alternative locations for worship other than Jerusalem. He also invented his own Feast. God's Holy Feasts are given in Leviticus 23 and are very specific and very prophetic in nature. He, in effect, created his own holiday. How much impact did his actions have on the people of Israel and the generations that came after him? As I said, his idolatry became the metric by which later kings were measured.

1 Kings 15:25-26 - **25** *"Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel ...**26**And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin."*

Vs. 33-34 - **33** *"In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel ... **34**He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin."*

1 Kings 16:25-26 - **25** "Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him. **26**For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols."

Vs. 30-31 - **30** "Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. **31**And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him."

1 Kings 22:51-53 - **51** "Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel... **52**He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; **53**for he served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done."

This standard of disobedience and rejection of Yehovah's law not only continued through the kingships but they had been accepted as normal practices, thus becoming traditions and customs among the people. More and more, the ways of God, as they were actually given, began to be something that the people forgot altogether.

Hosea 8:11-12 - **11** "Because Ephraim (Israel) has made many altars for sin, They have become for him altars for sinning. **12**I have written for him the great things of My law, But they were considered a strange thing."

“They Were Considered A Strange Thing”

How common is this sentiment today among believers who scoff at Old Testament teachings and call it strange? We have called it strange because we did not understand it; we did not understand it because Christianity at large is Old Testament deprived and has been for a long time. Christianity is Old Testament deprived because our leaders have taught that the Old Testament scriptures have no authority for the New Testament believer. If they have no authority, then why should I read it? Why should I know it? Why should I care?

So the Old Testament for many has been relegated to being a source of cool passages that are retroactively applied to our modern faith while denying its modern authority. It also provides spiritual fodder for Pastors who are seeking cool support for their topical sermons. They pick and choose stories that seem to bolster their idea of devotion while disregarding the actual context of the borrowed scripture.

We like the idea of having a Passover Lamb for our salvation but scoff at the idea of actually celebrating Passover. We like the idea of having a Solemn Assembly because it sounds serious but scoff at the idea of living within the framework of the Festivals from which the teaching of the Solemn Assembly originates. We love the idea of rest and maybe even a declared day of rest, but we scoff at the idea of actually recognizing the Sabbath as that day of rest.

Jeremiah 18:15 - **15** *“For my people have forgotten me, they have offered incense in vain, and they fail in their ways, leaving the ancient tracks, to enter upon impassable paths...”*

~ High Places ~

The "high places" is a shorthand term for places of pagan worship, usually on hills or mountains to bring them closer to their false gods. They were centers of idolatry. The greatest time of compromise for God's people in the Old Testament, the Israelites, was when in addition to worshipping Yehovah, the only true God, they worshipped false gods too.

Death By A Thousand Cuts

Satan's efforts to thwart the Father's plan of salvation do not come with one or two significant fronts of battle but a slow dripping of deceit and treachery so as to numb His people to generational sin and rebellion. Even some of our Biblical hero's were numbed to the presence of sinful tradition in their time.

Both Asa and Jehoshaphat, the first two righteous kings after the treacherous kingships of Rehoboam and Abijah, allowed the tradition of High Place worship to exist among the people of Judah.

1 Kings 15:9-14 - **9**"In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah. ... **11**Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David. **12**And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. **13**Also he removed Maachah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron. **14**But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days."

1 Kings 22:41-43 - **41**"Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. **42**Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. **43**And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places."

This evil tradition continued among the righteous kings of Judah that followed.

2 Kings 14:1-4 - **1**"In the second year of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, became king. **2**He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. **3**And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like his father David; he did everything as his father Joash had done. **4**However the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places."

2 Kings 15:1-4 - **1**"In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king... **3**And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done, **4**except that the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places."

Vs.33-35 - **33**"In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of

Judah, began to reign... **34**And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. **35**However the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

It was not until Hezekiah that the altars to Ba'al in the High Places were torn down.

2 Kings 18:1-4 - **1**"Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign... **3**And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. **4**He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan."

This tradition of allowing the High Places to exist where both Ba'al and Yehovah were worshipped together and often mistaken for one another lasted more than 150 years. In fact, Ba'al worship became so prevalent that people began to name their children after the false god. And not just any people, but David the greatest king of Israel amongst other high profile Biblical figures.

1 Chronicles 14:3-7 - **3**"Then David took more wives in Jerusalem, and David begot more sons and daughters. **4**And these are the names of his children whom he had in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, 5Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, 6Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, 7Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet."

~ Beeliada - (בַּעַל יָדַע) - "Baal knows"

In addition to David, both Saul and Jonathan had children named after Ba'al.

1 Chronicles 8:33-34 - **33**“Ner begot Kish, Kish begot Saul, and Saul begot Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal. **34**The son of Jonathan was Merib-Baal, and Merib-Baal begot Micah.”

~ Esh-Baal - (אֶשְׁבַּעַל) - “Man of Ba'al”

~ Merib-Baal - (מְרִיב בַּעַל) - “Advocate of Ba'al”

Thus we can see the lingering impact of tradition and rebellion when left unchecked and un-repenting in the church. Even with Israel's kings and Prophets, we see how destructive and seemingly unnoticed these practices became with time.

That which begins as an abomination eventually becomes accepted. And once accepted, it becomes defended and, in some cases, eventually becomes legislated.

Are we as Christians immune to this kind of secret enemy in our fellowships? Adam's rebellion arguably took weeks, months, or years to unfold. Israel's disobedience happened within 40 days and, as we just saw, continued through the reign of the kings and even infiltrated the offices of prophet and priest. It would ultimately be the reason that the House of Israel was divorced by Yehovah and cast into the nations, as well as the reason for Judah's exile into Babylon.

The church is 2000 years from the cross. Do you think that in that amount of time, we have allowed heresy to form within our worship that at one time would have been unthinkable but

now is accepted, defended, and has even become long-established doctrine?

Some might say that today's believers are somehow beyond this kind of rebellion, but a close study of Revelation 2 and 3 tells us otherwise. Of the seven churches that Yeshua addressed, five had already been corrupted by idolatry and some by outright Satanic practices. We will take a closer look at those churches in a later chapter.

THE PROPHETS

The greatest danger to the church today is not humanism, paganism, atheism, or agnosticism. The greatest danger is not increasing hostility against our faith from the culture. Our greatest danger is apostasy on the inside, arising from false teachers- theological liberals who deny and distort biblical doctrine and lead others down the same path.” — Mark Hitchcock

The Prophets of God. What has been their purpose in the pages of the Bible if not to warn, rebuke, teach, and guide God’s people away from their wanderings and back to the narrow path. One would think that a man chosen to such a high calling would be unswerving to his task and equally obedient to the One that called them. Unfortunately, history has shown us otherwise.

Even amongst those who were called Prophets, did idolatry exist. No doubt as the result of their fathers passing down these traditions from one generation to the other.

Jeremiah 23:25-27 - **25**“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ **26**How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, **27**who try to make My people

forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal."

Amos 2:4 - **4**"*Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they have despised the law of the Lord, And have not kept His commandments. Their lies lead them astray, Lies which their fathers followed."*

Not only were traditions handed down from father's to son's, but the years of tradition and idol worship had progressed so long and so deep into the Israelite culture that men began to confuse the Name of God with the name of Ba'al. In fact, they would address the Father as Ba'al in their prayers. Jeremiah and Amos tell us that this tradition was passed down from their fathers and their fathers before them. It is doubtful that they even knew that what they were doing was an abomination to God. That is how tradition starts. A little here, and little there, which is passed down from one generation to the other, and before you realize it, you have a chosen people doing what they believe is worship, but in reality, is an affront to God Most High.

Strangely enough, this makes me think about the highway tolls here in Dallas, where I live. The politicians that enacted the toll promised that it would only be enforced until the costs of the highway were covered. Twenty years later, we are still paying them with no end in sight. It has become normal for citizens to pay these fees. New drivers have no say in the matter. They are expected to pay homage to that 'temporary' law like anybody else. This is how tradition finds its way into

the church and into the hearts of the Prophets who proclaim them.

Jeremiah 23:9,11-16, 21 - **9**"My heart within me is broken because of the prophets;... **11**"For both prophet and priest are profane; Yes, in My house I have found their wickedness," says Yehovah... **13**"And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria: They prophesied by Baal and caused My people Israel to err. **14**Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; They also strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness."

Vs.16-17 - **16**"Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. **17**They continually say to those who despise Me, 'The Lord has said, "You shall have peace" '; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, 'No evil shall come upon you.' "

Vs.21-22 - **21**"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. **22**But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings."

When false teaching, tradition, and idolatry infiltrate a body of believers, who is to blame and who is responsible for the propagation of the error? Some would say the Prophet is responsible. Some would say that the body or the individual is responsible, but the Father makes it clear.

Jeremiah 23:33-40 - **33**“So when these people or the prophet or the priest ask you, saying, ‘What is the oracle of the Lord?’ you shall then say to them, ‘What oracle?’ I will even forsake you,” says the Lord. **34**“And as for the prophet and the priest and the people who say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ I will even punish that man and his house. **35**Thus every one of you shall say to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, ‘What has the Lord answered?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ **36**And the oracle of the Lord you shall mention no more. For every man’s word will be his oracle, for you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God. **37**Thus you shall say to the prophet, ‘What has the Lord answered you?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ **38**But since you say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ therefore thus says the Lord: ‘Because you say this word, “The oracle of the Lord!” and I have sent to you, saying, “Do not say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ ” **39**therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you and forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and will cast you out of My presence. **40**And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.’ ”

For the error of perverting God’s word and replacing His teaching with the words and traditions devised in the heart of man, the curse is on both the Prophet and on those who accept his teaching. How careful should we be in rooting out these traditions from the Body of Christ and calling them what they are, regardless of our sentimentality towards them?

“Peace, peace when there is no peace”

Jeremiah 6:13-14, 16-17 - **13**“Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is given to

covetousness; And from the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely. **14**They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace. **16**Thus says the Lord: "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' **17**Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not listen.'

The theme passage for this book is borrowed from the passage above. I think it is one of the most profound passages in the Bible. It reflects both the heart of Yehovah for His people to walk after His ways, as well as the heart of His people to reject them. There is none like this in all of scripture that so accurately depicts the chasm between God and man. Yehovah says, 'go here and do this,' and man says, 'we will not, we will not even listen.' Sadly, when it comes to the Law, I have heard many utter such words, as if the Law of the Lord was something to be disdained. How can you pray to a God whose ways you despise? How does this fit into your spiritual world view? Until I learned what I believe to be the truth, I had to force that notion into my worldview, like a square peg into a round hole.

In this passage, we can also see the dichotomy between Yehovah and His Prophets. On the one hand, we have the Prophets (*Pastors, Minister, Evangelists, etc.*) saying 'peace peace,' 'everything is ok', and the Father is saying "No! Everything is not ok. You have left the Ancient Path!"

What is the cause of this separation of God and prophet according to the above passages?

Jeremiah 23:21-22 - **21**“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. **22**But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings.”

Jeremiah 23:36 - For every man’s word will be his oracle, for you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God.

Ezekiel 13:1-9 - **1**And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, **2**“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the Lord!’ ” **3**Thus says the Lord God: “Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! ...**7** You say, ‘The Lord says,’ but I have not spoken.”

Because of time and the disregard of adopted traditions passed down from generation to generation, the truth of the scriptures began to be open to each prophet's individual interpretations. Where they said He spoke, He did not speak. That which they were sure was truth was not truth. The scariest part about this is that the prophets were more than likely sincere about their teachings. I do not get the sense that they were intentionally acting as agents of evil.

The stories about these wayward prophets in the Old Testament are not just history. They are there for a reason.

Romans 15:4 - **4***For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and*

through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Although not everything in the Old Testament is meant to be a Type or a foreshadowing, it is there for us to learn from. We cannot afford to ignore the minute details of where and how those who came before us went astray. A history ignored is a history that is repeated. We need to ask ourselves, are we learning from them, or are they just anecdotal stories that fit nicely within our contemporary sermons? More importantly, we need to take heed of the solution.

Jeremiah 23:22 - **22***But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings.*

The solution to losing our way is to stand in His counsel and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it.

THE EARLY CHURCH

The temple of truth has never suffered so much from woodpeckers on the outside as from termites within.” — Vance Havner

One might think that a church formed within 50 years of the death and resurrection of its Messiah would be one of strength and resolve. A church built free of the tradition and idolatry that Yeshua spent so much energy rebuking during His ministry. Our Lord’s letters to the churches prove otherwise.

Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-6 - **1**“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: **2**“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; **3**and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. **4**Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. **5**Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless

you repent. **6**But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

Of all the churches in Revelation, Ephesus had the most damaging issues and perhaps the most damning. They were commended as a church of labor and good works that stood on a pedestal of truth. Unafraid of standing toe to toe against heretics. All of which sounds pretty good until you see the rebuke. Vs. 4, "Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

What does it mean to lose your first love as it pertains to worship? It means that you have descended into mechanical worship. You do what you do out of duty and a sense of obligation instead of gratitude for the salvation of your souls. Religion, in its ugly sense, is ultimately the result. You end up with a congregation of churchgoers who legalistically show up from service to service in the spirit of loyalty but have no real depth of conviction and usually disappear when life's troubles come upon them. The spiritual anchor in their lives is more about the benefits that come from the church than it is about loving and holding to the truth.

Sadly, the Ephesian church did not repent. Today in modern-day Turkey, the population is 99% Muslim. Their lampstand was removed.

Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-16 - **12**"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: **13**"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did

*not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. **14**But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. **15**Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. **16**Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."*

Pergamum's strengths should immediately remind you of the earlier chapter on the Kings. Unlike Israel, Pergamum did not forget their God's name and held fast to the faith even during the really hard times.

"Just a Few Things Against You"

The church in Pergamum had adopted the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of Nicolaitans, which were in some ways the very same doctrine. Regardless of their similarities, the church had adopted or allowed (*among some*) doctrines that stood directly opposed to the teachings of Yeshua. The least of which was not eating foods sacrificed to idols.

Balaam's teaching was an appeasement to the nation's practices to achieve his selfish goals. In other words, he did not mind bending or twisting the commands of God if it meant that he could satisfy his self-focused ambitions. In Balaam's case, this included enticing the men of Israel to sin with female Ba'al worshipers in the act of sexual immorality, which was their act of worship.

The Nicolaitans doctrine is said to have originated from Nicholas from Acts 6, who was a Gentile convert to the faith. He was one of the seven men chosen to serve in the daily distribution. This theory is not the only theory as to its origination, as one of the early church fathers (*Clement*) believes it was a different Nicholas.

Regardless of how and from whom it originated, the belief was that because a man was both carnal and spiritual, he could enjoy the fruits of both natures. One could serve God with his spirit while serving his carnal nature through sexual immorality and the satisfaction of lustful desires.

Can you imagine this dynamic being tolerated and even taught in a church this soon after Christ's ministry? Yet this was Pergamum.

Thyatira

Revelation 2:19-20 - **19**"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. **20**Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."

The church in Thyatira was similar to Pergamum in that it allowed ancient Ba'al worship to creep into their midst via the teachings of Jezebel. As you may know, she goes back to the days of Elijah. The practice of sexual immorality and the violation of Yehovah's law on eating foods sacrificed to idols was taught and not just accepted. Sadly, today's churches do

the same concerning foods sacrificed to idols. If it was wrong for these post-resurrection churches, it is wrong for us. We do not teach about eating such foods because it comes straight from the Mosaic Law, and God forbid we embrace anything from the Old Testament. Tradition. We will explore foods sacrificed to idols in greater detail in a later chapter.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Sardis

Revelation 3:1-3 - **1***“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2*Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. **3***Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.”*

The dead church. They gather for the purpose of gathering alone. Nothing of real worth is had as a result of their attendance. They may have faith, but their faith is dead because it is not followed up by a lifestyle that proves their faith. In the passage below, we can see James making an argument for true faith, and we can also hear his call back to the Ancient Path. What was *'the word'* for James if not the Hebrew Scriptures that so many believe are dead?

James 1:22-25 - **22***“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23*For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; **24***for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25*But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and

is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

*2:14-18 - **14**"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? **15**If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, **16**and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? **17**Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." **18**But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."*

Some may say that the purpose of the gathering is to encourage one another as we are commanded to do throughout the scripture. However, we forget that the early church was busy changing the world. Sacrificing their lives to advance the Kingdom of God, and if not for the encouragement, they may have failed in that goal. So encouragement has its place, but if it becomes the sum total of our gatherings, we might as well be nothing more than spiritual self-help groups who gather to satisfy our less than valiant sense of accomplishment.

"But Be Doers of The Word"

When James wrote this letter, what was the Word that they had? When he says to look into the "perfect law of liberty", what law was present that a person would be blessed if he pursued it? James did not have what we now call the New Testament. Paul barely had his letter to the churches in Galatia circulated, and the canonization of the scriptures would not take place for two more centuries. What James had and was

referring to was the Hebrew Scriptures or what we call the Old Testament. The Ancient Path. Do you see the pattern?

Laodicea

Revelation 3:15-17 - **15***"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16*So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. **17***Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—"*

The worldly church. Or, as some might say, the materialistic church. The church that had its cake and wanted to eat it too. The church in Laodicea was wealthy because the city was at the center of major trade routes and its membership reflected that cultural reality. More than reflecting it, it seems that the church had based its confidence on the fact that it enjoyed the best of both worlds with one foot in the world and one foot in the church.

Today this trap has caught many believers who claim to not be of the world yet cannot seem to separate themselves from the benefits that the world offers. We drive the same cars, wear the same fad clothing, live in the same posh homes, eat the same food, and besides the fact that we show up to church once or twice a week, we are indistinguishable from the world around us. This is what lukewarm looks like.

If we claim that we are set apart from the world based on the fact that we do not sin as the world does, we have strayed from the Ancient Path. Avoiding sinful, worldly pleasures is only a tiny aspect of what it means to be set apart. It means embracing all of what the Father teaches, commands and

desires for those that would call on His name and not just the teachings from the back of the book.

Thus we see how early tradition and idolatry infiltrated the young church who, just years before, were burying their martyrs. Like Adam, Israel, the Kings, and the Prophets, they were quick to deviate from the Ancient Path.

Again I ask you, the reader, how far do you think we have drifted in 2000 years?

THE CHURCH FATHERS

Perhaps one of the most dangerous dynamics in modern day hermeneutics is the appealing to an extra-biblical authority to arrive at an accepted Biblical position or doctrine. This fallacy lies at the heart of all man made religion and is in its purest form, heretical.

The Church Fathers, Early Church Fathers, Christian Fathers, or Fathers of the Church were ancient and influential Christian theologians and writers who established the intellectual and doctrinal foundations of Christianity. There is no definitive list. The historical period during which they flourished is referred to by scholars as the Patristic Era ending approximately around AD 700. – Christianity in the 2nd century - WikiMili, The Best https://wikimili.com/en/Christianity_in_the_2nd_century

Appealing to the authority, experiences, or teaching of the early church fathers is one of the most common errors among evangelicals. This is not to say that their lives and experiences are void of lessons and should not be studied, but we have left the Ancient Path when their opinion fashions doctrine.

Reasonable argument is impossible when authority becomes the arbiter of truth

Fallacies Of Relevance

Fallacious appeals to authority usually look something like this:

* The authority makes a claim = x

(In the case of the Church Fathers, their authority is due to their exposure to the early church)

* Therefore x = truth

To argue the positions of the early church fathers based on their historical proximity to the cross is to rely on the testimony of fallible men. Testimony, although sometimes helpful, is not fact, especially when it contradicts scripture.

If I have shown you in the previous pages how easy it is for man to deviate from the truth, then logic should tell us that even among the church fathers, the truth began to give way to tradition and outright heresy.

Deuteronomy 13:1-4 - **1**"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, **2**and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' **3**you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. **4**You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.

In case you missed it, there lies within the passage above a formula as well.

- * Prophet teaching against the truth? = Do not listen
- * God is testing you = hold fast to Him or not = pass or fail

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of men

Let us take a look at the early church fathers to determine if we should be taking our cue from them. As you read, see if you can identify the correct teachings and doctrines from the false ones.

IGNATIUS (c. 50-110)

Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch in the early second century. He was arrested in about A.D. 110 and sent to Rome for trial and martyrdom.

He taught that churches should have elders and a ruling bishop; in other words, he was exalting one bishop over another, whereas in scripture, the terms "bishop" and "elder" refer to the same humble office in the assembly (Titus 1:5-7).

He taught that all churches are a part of one universal church. He claimed that a church does not have authority to baptize or conduct the Lord's Supper unless it has a bishop. (Church Fathers: A Door to Rome - Way of Life Literature)

JUSTIN MARTYR (c. 100 - c. 165)

It is in Justin Martyr's writings that we first find the heresy of Replacement Theology. In Dialogue with Trypho, he applied the term "Israel" to the church believing that the Gentile Church replaced Israel. (Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 2007 edition, p.128)

Justin Martyr helped develop the idea of a “middle state” after death that was neither heaven nor hell. Eventually this doctrine became Rome’s purgatory.

IRENAEUS (c. 125-202)

Irenaeus was a pastor in Lyons, France, who wrote a polemic titled Against Heresies in about A.D. 185. He supported the authority of the bishop as a ruler over many churches.

He defended church tradition beyond what the Scripture allows. For this reason he is claimed by the Roman Catholic Church as one of their own.

He taught the Catholic heresy of “real presence,” saying, “The Eucharist becomes the body of Christ.” - (Church Fathers: A Door to Rome - Way of Life Literature)

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 150 - c. 230)

From 190 to 202, Clement headed the heretical school of Alexandria, Egypt, founded by Pantaenus, which intermingled the Greek philosophy of Plato with Christianity.

Clement helped develop the false doctrine of purgatory and believed that most men would eventually be saved. This teaching is prevalent today among many high profile evangelical ministers

He denied the unique Deity of Yeshua and His atonement, saying, “The Logos of God became man so that you may learn from man how man may become God”^a. Yeshua was, therefore, merely the supreme model toward the path of divinity.

(The Presence of God, Vol. 1 - “The Foundations of Mysticism,” p. 107)

TERTULLIAN (c. 155 - c. 255)

Tertullian lived in Carthage in North Africa (located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in modern Tunisia, between Libya and Algeria).

Though he fought against Gnosticism, he also exalted the authority of the church beyond that allowed by Scripture. He taught that the church's authority comes through apostolic succession.

He believed that the bread of the Lord's Supper was Christ and worried about dropping crumbs of it on the ground. He adopted Montanism, believing that Montanus spoke prophecies by inspiration of God.

He taught that widows who remarried committed fornication. Thus he exalted the condition of virginity in an unscriptural way, and this heresy was adopted by the Roman Catholic in its monastic system of unmarried monks and nuns and in its doctrine that priests cannot marry. The New Testament encourages younger widows to remarry (1 Tim. 5:14).

He said that the human soul was seen in a vision as "tender, light, and of the color of air." He claimed that all human souls were in Adam and are transmitted to us with the taint of original sin upon them.

He taught that there was a time when the Son of God did not exist and when God was not a Father.

He taught that Mary was the second Eve who by her obedience remedied the disobedience of the first Eve. This was a stepping stone toward the Roman Catholic Church's many heresies about Mary. - (Church Fathers: A Door to Rome - Way of Life Literature)

ORIGEN (185-254)

Though he endured persecution and torture for the cause of Christ under the Roman emperor Decius in 250, and though he defended Christianity against certain heretics, he rejected the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and taught many gross heresies. Origen founded a school in Caesarea from which he expounded his errors far and wide through his students and his writings.

Origen "disbelieved the full inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, holding that the inspired men apprehended and stated many things obscurely" (Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney, I, p. 383).

He rejected the literal history of the early chapters in Genesis and of Satan taking Yeshua up to a high mountain and offering him the kingdoms of the world (Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. III, p. 614). Durant quotes Origen: "Who is so foolish as to believe that God, like a husbandman, planted a garden in Eden, and placed in it a tree of life ... so that one who tasted of the fruit obtained life?"

Origen denied the literal creation described in Genesis 1-2 and the literal fall of Genesis 3. He denied the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Origen's "opinions on the Trinity veered between Sabellianism and Arianism. He expressly denied the consubstantial unity of the Persons and the proper incarnation of the Godhead" (Dabney, I, p. 384).

He believed that the Holy Spirit was the first creature made by the Father through the Son. (Church Fathers: A Door to Rome - Way of Life Literature)

AUGUSTINE (354-430)

Augustine was polluted with many false doctrines and helped lay the foundation for the formation of the Roman Catholic Church. For this reason Rome has honored Augustine as one of the “doctors of the church.”

He was a persecutor and one of the fathers of Rome’s Inquisition. He instigated persecutions against the Bible believing Donatists who were striving to maintain biblical churches and required that church members give evidence of repentance and regeneration.

Augustine was one of the fathers of a-millennialism, allegorizing Bible prophecy and teaching that the Catholic Church is the new Israel and the kingdom of God. He taught that Mary did not commit sin and promoted her “veneration.” He believed that Mary played a vital role in salvation (Augustine, Sermon 289, cited in Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, IV, p. 69).

He promoted the myth of purgatory.

He accepted the doctrine of “celibacy” for “priests,” supporting the decree of “Pope” Siricius of 387 which required that any priest that married or refused to separate from his wife should be disciplined.

He exalted the authority of the church over that of the Bible, declaring, “I should not believe the gospel unless I were moved to do so by the authority of the Catholic Church” (quoted by John Paul II, *Augustineum Hyponensem*, Apostolic Letter, Aug. 28, 1986)

MARCION OF SINOPE (85-160)

He taught that the god of the Old Testament was not the true God but rather that the true and higher God had been revealed only with Jesus Christ. He therefore rejected the

theology of the Old Testament. Marcion wrote the Antitheses to show the differences between the god of the Old Testament and the true God of the New Testament.

He coined the terms Old Testament & New Testament precisely as a result of his heretical theology.

He is responsible for the first effort at canonization. His version of scripture was void of all Hebrew scripture (Old Testament) and the only gospel was Luke's gospel with all positive reference to Hebrew teaching removed. Paul's letters were the only additional writings that he included in his version of the canon because he believed that Paul taught against the Old Testament demiurge.

So what can we learn from these Church Fathers? Although they each had many great positives regarding their faith, and many were executed as a result, they also perpetuated tradition, and some even heresy—all of which we can still see alive in Christian churches today.

What you believe to be true, is it actually true? Are you absolutely certain that it is true and free of man-made teaching? Or do you believe it is true because you were taught it was true and never looked any further? Do you believe what you believe because you have personally studied all of it, from every angle, and landed on an unassailable position based on scripture alone? Or do your doctrines and beliefs have holes that you do not understand how to fill and teachings that you cannot find in scripture? If so, you may be standing on someone else's sinking sand.

Luke 6:46-49 - **46**“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? **47**Whoever comes to Me, and

*hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: **48**He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. **49**But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."*

In regards to our worship experience, the greatest problem with tradition is the tendency to ignore it. Or worse, defend it when change is suggested or even demanded. My family of churches experienced a firestorm some years back when a very frank and open letter circulated the membership worldwide, detailing some of our weaknesses and faults. As a result, many people around the world demanded change and repentance. Much did change as a result of those demands, but sadly, many things remain the same. It appears that we also have allowed some of our High Places to remain.

Are firestorms the only things that bring about real change? And when I say change, I do not mean a new program or a new process or a new song or worship style. I mean a roots-level systemic change that comes solely from the examples that we see in the scriptures.

When we surrender our notions of what church should be based on tradition and look only to the Word of God for our standard, we will be surprised at how much really needs to change. A change like this will likely make us, as a body of

believers, unrecognizable even to ourselves. And that is what I believe we fear the most—a loss of identity.

Test all things; hold fast to what is good

If the seven churches are a microcosm of evangelical churches today, then the Church Fathers are equally a microcosm of today's influence leaders, writers, and Christian philosophers. Each with their unique spin on what the Bible seems to be saying. It almost feels like we desperately try to find new ways to make the Scripture palatable to the young and still fresh to the old. So we use different English translations interchangeably because one makes our point better than the other, or it has a unique angle, while not considering if it strays too far from the original Hebrew or Greek intention. Traditions are born from such practices; just ask the church Fathers.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 - **20***Do not despise prophecies. 21***Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

Before we attempt to define what the Ancient Path is as it is defined in Scripture, we must acknowledge what we have seen thus far. Humanity has a distinctive penchant for straying from Yehovah's teaching and doing that very quickly. It began with Adam and had never really stopped. Historically, it begins with subtle steps off of the established paths (a bite of fruit). However, as we have seen, those small steps grow into yards, then into miles, and before you know it, the Ancient Path is no longer visible. Eventually, the path is forgotten, or worse, it is redefined. This is exactly what Progressive Christianity attempts to do, redefine.

The progressive mind wants to make a new path, a better path, a more modern path, a path that fits within their lifestyle and culture. A path that makes better sense in its own age and does not offend.

Progressive Christianity

"Progressive Christianity represents a postmodern theological approach and is not necessarily synonymous with progressive politics. It developed out of the Liberal Christianity of the modern era, which was rooted in enlightenment thinking. As such, Progressive Christianity is a "post-liberal movement" within Christianity "that seeks to reform the faith via

the insights of post-modernism and a reclaiming of the truth beyond the verifiable historicity and factuality of the passages in the Bible by affirming the truths within the stories that may not have actually happened.” – (Roger Wolsey (10 February 2012). "Progressive Christianity Isn't Progressive Politics". The Huffington Post.)

The phrase that seems to jump off the page in this definition is “*seeks to reform the faith.*” Reformation is at the core of any progressive movement, be it religious or political, or cultural. Although reformation in and of itself is not a bad thing, it is incredibly presumptuous to apply reformation to the Father’s timeless and *unchanging* commands and ways. Consider the following emphatic, absolute statement for Yehovah’s own mouth.

Malachi 3:6 - **6**“*For I am the Lord, I do not change;*

When churches begin to move into a more progressive way of thinking, feelings begin to trump objective truth. When the Bible is no longer considered definitive truth, what a person feels about any given topic becomes the authority to direct its affairs. You will know when a church has moved in this direction when it begins to overemphasize hurt feelings and insensitivities as it relates to objective obedience to Scripture. Calling sin sin will be replaced with accusative judgment because of its perceived insensitivity. More time will be spent on self-introspection to ensure that one has not somehow offended another parishioner in the name of obedience. It is political correctness finding its way into the church.

Culture Club

Progressive Christianity happens when contemporary culture blends with Christian living and the church bends to the will of the culture rather than maintaining its focus on the paths laid out for them in Scripture. Culture is not the only outside phenomenon that can force a church to bend. New discoveries in science are happening almost daily. More and more science-leaning theologians tell us that these 'discoveries' should somehow change the way we discipline our children, love our wives and husbands, or even how we lead the church. As if Yehovah was not aware of these discoveries when He laid out His directives in these matters. But this is what Progressive Christianity does. It hopes to add to what the Bible says with a sprinkle of science and a dash of culture. The finished product is usually a new tradition with its root in Scripture but is clearly different from what was intended. Unfortunately, anybody espousing these teachings would ever admit to them outright. They are usually shrouded in the cloak of good intentions, and many believers eat it up based on the assumption of the teacher's good heart.

Proverbs 4:25-27 - **25***Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you.* **26**Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. **27**Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

Accommodating Lifestyles

Another side effect of Progressive Christianity is the increasing toleration of cultural lifestyles. We can already see this in its extremes, with some churches embracing homosexual and LGBT pastors, but for most, those examples

are, as I said, extreme and therefore obvious even to non-believers.

It is the subtle acceptance of the more obscure individual lifestyle choices that find their way into the faith. Yeshua said that *"because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold"* (Matt 24:12). Lawlessness is the rejection of the Ancient Paths, and when these paths are rejected, they are replaced with more culturally sensitive standards. Thus, love grows cold even among the most mature believers. This lost love is reflected in the body of Christ as a loss of individual and congregational commitment to its causes. Now the Shepherd struggles to keep the sheep in a manageable straight line where a flock was once easy to steer. Pastors who are not perceptive to this lawless reality will attribute these difficulties to the size or age of the congregation and waste their time on spiritual gimmicks in a fruitless effort to engage their people.

2 Timothy 3:1-8 - **1***But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2*For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, **3***unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4*traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **5***having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6*For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, **7***always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8*Now as Jannes and

Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;

The word 'men' in vs.2 is *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος), and it can be read as 'mankind'. So, in the last days, *mankind* will be lovers of themselves, etc. Should we think that Paul is only talking about non-believers here? In light of Yeshua's words in Matthew 24 about lawlessness abounding in the last days, these words of Paul appear to be describing what lawlessness looks like. And considering the fact that this description is being applied to those who '*have a form a godliness*' vs.5, should we not entertain the possibility that Paul is talking about believers here?

What does '*having a form of godliness, but denying its power*' mean? Paul gives us a clue when he refers to Jannes and Jambres. Well-established Jewish tradition says that Jannes and Jambres were the two chief magicians who withstood Moses and Aaron in Exodus 7.

Exodus 7:8-12 - **8***Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 9*"When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.' " **10***So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.*

11*But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. 12**For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.*

In Paul's words, these men '*resisted Moses*' by displaying their counterfeit enchantments that seemed to match Yehovah's power. There is no question that there was some supernatural (demonic) power here with these Sorcerers. However, the source of that power is what Paul is calling into question that invalidates its authority. How does this apply to our topic on Progressive Christianity?

Paul says that Jannes and Jambres resisted the truth. How did they do this? Their displays of power were an effort to minimize Yehovah's authority over them and Pharaoh. They could get along just fine without Him, thus eluding the authority and judgment of the God of Moses and Aaron.

I have heard Christians say more than once that all they needed was Yeshua and the cross. They did not need to pay attention to anything that Yehovah expected of Israel. Their power and inspiration came from Christ and the New Testament. Although there is an absolute truth to the point that we all need Yeshua and what He accomplished on the cross, we cannot reject everything that Yeshua stood for and ultimately died for. He lived in perfect accordance with the Ancient Path and showed us what it looks like to walk therein. We marvel and wonder at Him as His disciples precisely because of how He walked and lived. And yet, we reject the idea of actually walking like Him because we think that the New Covenant somehow exempts us from it.

Luke 6:46-49—**46** "*But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?* **47** *Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: **48** He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and*

laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. 49But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

No Sacred Cows

There are no sacred cows to the Church embracing the Progressive approach, and they would be proud to say that. To them, that which is sacred is open for re-interpretation and, thus, open to being altered based on a more contemporary understanding.

This approach can be clearly seen in my family of churches in regards to the appointment of Elderships. Elders are an integral part of the ecclesiastical leadership structure, and the requirements for the Elder's role are specifically laid out in Scripture, more so than any other office. Based on what you have already read up to this point, should it surprise you to see that the Church has opted to progress beyond what it is written?

Titus 1:5-9 - **5***For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— 6**if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.* **7***For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8**but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded,*

just, holy, self-controlled, 9holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 - **1***This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2***A***bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3***not** *given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4***one** *who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?; 6***not** *a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7*Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.**

Of the many requirements for the man who would be Elder, having faithful children is key among them as Paul teaches Titus. His instruction to Timothy tells us why. Vs.5 "*for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?*" The parallels are apparent. The Elder would be responsible for the Church's affairs and is required to show that he can do so, as he did with his own family.

I am afraid that this standard has become the first domino to fall for some of our churches in regards to their Eldershops. As clear as these directives appear to be, some churches have found their way around them. Speaking as a man who has seen his children leave the faith, I can tell you that it has a

profound impact on a man's heart. Self-doubt and confusion are the dominant emotional reactions, and they never really go away. How can a man who has painfully witnessed his children turn their back on everything he has taught them since birth confidently and faithfully lead the church? He simply cannot unless he denies and suppresses these emotions in the spirit of soldiering up for the faith. This, of course, creates another dynamic in the heart of the elder, cognitive dissonance, in which he represents a standard that he can not himself obey.

Embracing Cultural Shifts

When Biblical boundaries are no longer guarded, the Church will begin to mirror the ever-changing cultural shifts, trends, and fixations of the world around them. If the clergy is not mindful of these cultural shifts, then the likelihood of adoption among the membership only increases. Clerical ignorance of worldly trends means that there is not timely teaching of Scripture in response to these threats. Once these worldly fixations are allowed to take root in the Church psyche, they create subtle divisions among those that have embraced them and those that have not. When they are introduced to the body via leadership or persons of influence, the damage is exponentially aggravated. Below are some very common cultural phenomena that have recently taken root in Christian churches.

Being Woke

To be "woke" according to Webster's Dictionary is to be: *aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues* (especially issues of racial and social justice).

Sadly, this phenomenon has infiltrated the Church in matters of divisive politics and racial disparity. Both are wounds of our history that will never be allowed to heal as long as they are joined together. They will forever be joined together in the minds of worldly authorities, but they should not be seen thus as believers in Christ. The American Media has increasingly and systemically stoked these fires in the people's hearts for no other reason than to garner better ratings. However, the outcome has been division, even among God's people, silently separating people into two groups; those who are woke and those who are not.

Clergy members were not sensitive to this growing trend until it was too late, so their reaction was from a weakened position, whereas a proactive reaction would have been one of strength and resolve. Initial responses to this phenomenon fell on deaf ears and put Pastors in the position of not satisfying the concerns and feelings of both sides of the debate. No matter what they said, they were insensitive to somebody. In this case, the tail wagged the dog.

Sadly, this cultural trend has been used by some Teachers in an effort to unify Christians by helping others to become woke, but this 'woke' dogma cannot be defended with Scripture unless the reference is taken way out of context. It is worldly wisdom, and if it cannot be defended with Scripture, it should not be supported or recognized as any standard.

1 Timothy 6:20-21 - **20** *Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," **21** *for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.**

Colossians 2:8 - **8***See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*

My Body My Choice

I realize that an entire book could be written on the topic of abortion, but I only wish to make a point on this one sentiment that has increasingly found its way into the church.

Many believers today are not aware of the history behind this subject. Abortion is not as simple as ridding oneself of unwanted pregnancy; it is a profoundly spiritual issue. The practice of infanticide goes back as far as the book of Genesis as a sacrament of Ba'al (Satanic) worship. It was common among Ba'al worshippers to offer their infant children to Molech as a form of devotion. The statue of Molech was a figure that had its hands opened up in the same manner that a mother might hold her child, except the hands of Molech were bronze and positioned over a fire pit. This, of course, caused the hands of Molech to get red hot. The infants were placed in the open hands of the idol as a sacrifice of innocence. The idol was surrounded by many drummers who would pound their drums in an effort to shield the sounds of the screaming children from the parent's ears.

Leviticus 18:21 - **21***You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.*

Deuteronomy 12:31 - **31***You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.*

Ezekiel 16:20-21 - **20***Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, **21**that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire?*

Deuteronomy 18:10-11 - **10***There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, **11**or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.*

In the so-called 'civilized world,' the outright practice of child sacrifice would not be tolerated, or would it? Satan, in his scheming, has tricked the world into believing that the sacrifices are not called children but fetal tissue, and it is not called sacrifice; it is called women's rights. Regardless of your position on the issue, the practice of abortion is still the taking of innocent life. The Evil One has also hijacked the concept of what constitutes life. The baby is not considered to be life until it is born, they say. Should it not concern us that the world is at



this moment poised to discover bacteria on Mars while calling it life, but a heartbeat in the womb is not considered to be life?

Proverbs 6:16-17 - **16***These...things the Lord hates...Hands that shed innocent blood*

Still, a growing number of women in the church have adopted the worldly sentiment that it is their body and they can do whatever they want with it. However, as a believing woman, your body is not your own. You were purchased at a costly price.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - **19***Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20*For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Racial Unrest

I could say with all honesty that my family of churches is the most diverse body of believers worldwide. Yes, I know that sounds hyperbolic, but I believe it to be true. Our congregations are literally filled with people of all backgrounds and ethnic groups. It truly is amazing. As disciples of Christ, we do not see color; we see people created after the image of their Creator. In our fellowships, we celebrate the many unique cultures and glory in our unified differences. We have raised up leaders of all colors to lead and inspire congregations around the world and continue to do so. This is what it means to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20).

When an individual comes to the cross of Christ he/she is called to give up everything.

Luke 14:33 - **33***So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*

What does everything mean? It means *everything* that makes you who you are. Your everything is your time, money, family, friends, career, wife, husband, children, dreams, ambitions, and any other entity, creed, or culture that you use to identify yourself, including your ethnic background. All of it is laid at the foot of the cross. When you come to Christ, you are a naked, empty vessel with no allegiances to anyone or anything. You are not male or female, black, white, yellow, or brown. You are simply a soul that is offering itself to be filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is utter and complete surrender.

If this is the case, how can a Christian take up arms against another in matters of racial unrest simply because of the actions of the godless world around us? At what point is it ok for any one of us to pick up those racial or cultural monikers again after we had surrendered them to Christ? If we do, we have forgotten who we are. We have forgotten that we have been called out of the world and everything that it stands for. It is the world that cannot stand absolute unity, and it will be the world that makes every effort to break the bonds of brotherhood.

Psalm 2:1-3 - **1***Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2*The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, **3***“Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.”*

According to its own wisdom, the world will continually tell you that it is time to do the ‘next right thing.’ The ‘next thing’ is usually shrouded by prescribed methods of adherence, and if one does not observe this wisdom in the prescribed manner, then it is not being observed at all. This is the way that worldly truth brokers force compliance to their so-called standards, and the believer must avoid it at all costs.

Ecclesiastes 7:18 - *Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes.*

More than avoiding it, the Church and the believer must reject all notions that demand cultural acceptance or bowing of the knee to trendy fascinations of what some call truth. For the Christian, verity can only be absolutely verified through the lens of Scripture and not modern opinion.

Romans 12:2 - **2***And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

To the progressive, to not conform is antithetical to their worldview. In their mind, one should always be looking forward instead of looking back to the Ancient Paths. For some, adaptation and obedience to the ever-changing cultural norms is the standard for maturity instead of holding to the ancient biblical models, regardless of how the culture changes. After all, in their mind, the biblical model is antiquated and no longer applicable to the modern-day believer. Such is the response from many when a return to the Ancient Path is suggested.

Redefining Sin

When ancient standards are no longer considered to be true or relevant, then anything and everything is fair game. The most frightening aspect of this mindset is the potential breakdown of defining sin. When sin cannot be defined biblically, human tradition steps in disguised as guidelines and customs, and history has shown us that this is precisely how damning traditions start. So how is sin defined in the Bible?

1 John 3:4 - **4***Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*

Sin is defined as a transgression of the Law. What law? The only law they would have known in that day, the Mosaic Law. Sin is a transgression of the Ancient Path, and this definition is

coming from John, a New Testament writer. How can this be? Why is John teaching that the Law is the standard for defining sin if the Law went away after the cross? More importantly, if the old ways are no longer applicable to the modern believer (as some believe), how can we define sin under the New Covenant? If there is no Law, then there is no sin. And Paul confirms this in his letter to the Romans

Romans 4:15 - **15.**; *for where there is no law there is no transgression.*

Sin cannot be defined outside of the Ancient Path. When we read verses like 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21, which are Paul's lists of sins, we must understand that Paul did not just make these sins up. He fully understood the path and drew from his understanding of the Law, where sin is defined.

In Love With the Latest New Ideas

Acts 17:19-21 - **19***And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? **20**For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." **21**For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.*

Like the Athenians and Epicureans of Acts 17, today's culture is constantly craving fresh content and hearing and seeing new things. Social Media has recreated this exact scenario but on a much larger scale, a global scale. Any information can be had with the touch of a button, and

because of this, the Internet has made philosophers and seers out of everyone that spends any amount of time on it. There is a very curious passage in Daniel 12 that makes me wonder about this phenomenon.

Daniel 12:4 - **4***"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."*

In Daniel's vision of the end of days, he is told that knowledge will increase. Although it does not specify which knowledge or for which purpose, it does make a person wonder. It could easily be said of our generation that knowledge has dramatically increased. One could learn just about anything they wished to learn by Googling it, whereas just a short twenty years ago, this required a library visit. As a result of this simplicity, more and more people seek answers to their life questions and are being misled by popular thought rather than by truth.

Unsurprisingly, progressives tend to lean toward the ideology of science, be it natural science or popular thought science, and the most recent sentiments of their culture. For them, the truths of scripture have become nothing more than metaphors and similes. Just like with the prophets and kings, these opinions get passed down to the next generation, becoming more and more cemented as truth, thus harder and harder to convince those who hold to them that they are holding to tradition. The generational gaps between truth and tradition, knowledge and ignorance are at their greatest in this current age, and the Ancient Paths (God's ways) are getting harder and harder to find.

To seek biblical truth and understanding is not a one-time event. Too many treat their Christian walk in this manner. They search and seek to find Him, but once they are converted, they go into maintenance mode and never grow beyond the basics of their faith. Like a child that never weens off of its mother's milk, they live on spiritual milk.

You Were Not Able To Receive It

Milk is ok for young believers as Peter says:

1 Peter 2:1-2 - **1***Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, **2**as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, **3***if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.**

However, we should grow beyond it in order to get to solid foods. A deeper understanding of Godly knowledge and understanding as Paul says:

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 - **1***And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. **2***I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; **3***for you are still carnal.***

Notice here that Paul was unable to teach them certain truths because they had not matured. They had not moved on from their fundamental faith. A basic faith is for newborns, but what newborn does not eventually crave what the adults are eating? If a young Christian does not eventually crave solid

food from the Scripture, it is a sign of immaturity or stunted growth. Consider what the Hebrews writer says:

Hebrew 5:12-14 - **12***For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13*For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. **14***But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

Discerning good from evil is a matter of maturity for the believer. This spiritual ability helps one perceive the Ancient Path in Scripture and understand whether or not they have veered from it. Hebrews says "by reason of use" (vs.14) - use of what? By use of "The Word of righteousness (vs.13) who thereby have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

You cannot afford the luxury of living on milk any longer. You cannot afford to embrace a theology simply because someone else does or because that is what your church believes. You need to know what you believe and why you believe it.

Do you consider yourself to be a mature Christian? If so, how would you define this maturity? Do you define it by the length of time that you have been a believer? Certainly, Hebrews 5 warns us against this. Or do you define it because you have a firm, almost scholarly grasp of what you believe and why? If I were to ask you why Yeshua had to die to save humanity, could you answer it with Scripture without using the

customary “because of my sin” answer? Why was His death necessary for our salvation? He could have done a million things to save us. The least of which is just snapping His fingers. Why death? If you cannot answer this question, then I would disagree that you are a mature believer. You must move way beyond the faith that is defined by memes and spiritual catch-phrases.

Remember what Paul taught Timothy.

2 Timothy 2:15 - **15***Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Closing Thoughts

Historically, when conquering nations invade a land, one of the first things that a new King or Ruler will do is to tear down the sacred artifacts, statues, and anything that the conquered people can hold to, either physically or emotionally. They do this because there is no room in a conquered heart for old allegiances when new demands are made of them by the invading Ruler. Progressive approaches to faith will demand no less of you. Only it accomplishes this task much slower. One small conviction at a time so as to go unnoticed, and before you realize it, you and your church are so far off of the Ancient Path that any attempt to find it again will seem to be an impossible task. Once the enormity of the task is realized, debate sets in among the clergy and laity as to how significant such an effort really is to them. And if they are not up to the task, they will opt instead to take a number among the denominations of the world.

So I end this chapter with a quote from John Mason that does a fair job of summing it up.

"Christianity does not progress with the times. If it did, it would be a false religion. Do not be deceived into thinking there is a progressive form of Christianity. It does not exist because the truth never changes." – John Mason

MAJORITY RULES THEOLOGY

A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right, and evil doesn't become good, just because it's accepted by a majority" – Booker T. Washington

Unity among believers is of utmost importance, to be sure. It was the subject of Yeshua's prayer in John 17 when He prayed that we would be one as He and the Father were one. One in deed, one in the Spirit, and one in the truth. It is no wonder why Yeshua prayed for unity and no wonder why that prayer was recorded in scripture. Unity is not easy. It is especially difficult when you add into the mix every factor that tends to divide us: race, culture, creed, sex, personal experiences, politics, and even theological differences. He understood the obstacles to complete unity.

For our discussion on Majority Rules Theology, I would like to focus on unity regarding our theological differences for a moment.

Ephesians 4:11-15 - **11**And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, **12**for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, **13**till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; **14**that we should no longer be children,

*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, **15**but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ*

Paul's teaching on unity in the above passage not only mirrors Yeshua's sentiments in John 17, but it also provides an end game to the unity. He says that we no longer should be children, tossed around by every wind of doctrine. Thus maturity is the goal, and when differences arise, and they will always arise, speaking to another in love is always the answer. Unfortunately, with man, this has not always been the first reaction or response to differences of theology. Accusation, judgment, and condemnation have been the knee-jerk reactions of many, especially in the more conservative ranks of Christianity.

Although unity is desired, what happens when a church has collectively adopted an unbiblical teaching, custom, or doctrine that has been accepted and taught for such a long period of time that any attempt to change it from within is interpreted as disunity? Should unity be preserved at the expense of truth? Is there ever a time for disunity among believers? Like I said, differences arise. Sometimes these differences are as simple as matters of opinion (Rom 14:1), but others can be foundational arguments with the power to divide. Do we purposely ignore them in order to preserve unity?

Theological differences are nothing new to the church and Yeshua Himself said that He came with a sword.

Matthew 10:34-36 - **34**"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. **35**For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; **36**and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'

Yeshua prayed that we would be unified in purpose, but He also knew that it would be that purpose of teaching and living by truth that would also ultimately cause division. His sword of truth is sharper than any two-edged blade that cuts straight to the heart of any matter. It separates truth from tradition, fact from fantasy, and relationship from religion. It should always be the sword of truth that divides and not the hostile pride of men. Yeshua had thousands of people following Him at one time, but He swung a huge sword of truth that called His followers to profound sacrifice (Luke 9:23-26, 14:25-33). By the time He was arrested, He was virtually alone. What began with thousands of prospective disciples ended with 120 (Acts 1:15). Yeshua was unwilling to bend on the truth to keep the peace (*unity*) or maintain His following.

So I ask again, do we preserve unity at the expense of the truth? Do we embrace false doctrine because so many others in the church believe that doctrine, and to point it out would cause division? Are we safe in the numbers? In other words, are we acceptable to God when we all hold to a false doctrine believing it to be the truth? I think that you know the answers to these questions

Groupthink

Exodus 23:2 - **2***You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice.*

In my experience, and certainly within the pages of scripture, the majority has never been a measure for truth. As a matter of fact, with Israel, the truth bearer was almost always a single prophet who was warning them of their deviation from the ways of the Lord, and they killed many of them (Acts 7). Still, we find solace in the knowledge that others see the world as we do, and then we use that knowledge to bolster our position on any given topic or doctrine. Others rely on more educated people, i.e., theologians, and rest on their conclusions rather than putting forth any of their own effort to understand their bibles truly. This is groupthink, and I am pretty confident that this is one of the reasons that we have 33 thousand denominations in our world.

Recently, while bringing questions of the Old Testament Law (Ancient Paths) to the attention of a brother that I love and respect, he asked, *"How could Christian Theologians have missed something this big over the last two thousand years?"* This is a good question. How could they? Based on what you have seen thus far, is it possible that Christianity missed something huge in the early days of its inception that has lasted these two millennia? When compared to actual Biblical truth, does it matter how many people stand opposed to it, as if by sheer numbers and time something might be true?

The truth of a doctrine or belief is not affected in any way by the number of people that believe it, the length of time that

these ideas have been around or the level of trust or confidence that people may have in these beliefs. We have to ask ourselves, are we in compliance with the best Biblical explanation that does not force us to compromise any other teaching or mandate? Otherwise, we abandon the possibility of error because our proof has become more about who else believes what I believe instead of a careful examination of the entire subject matter available to us all. This is what Paul warned us about in his letter to Timothy.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 - **3***“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths”.*

Paul said, *“the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching.”* Based on what we have discussed already, it would have been fair for Paul to say, *“the time has already come,”* but he did not say that. Remember, these were young disciples in newborn churches, and just like Adam, Israel, the Kings, Prophets, Church Fathers, and us, they were beginning with pure hearts and intentions. Nevertheless, Paul knew that it would not be long before the honeymoon wore off and the enemy would creep in with tradition and apostasy. Sound teaching would be replaced with what feels good (Progressive Theology), and sound teachers would be replaced by Pastors and Evangelists that teach what everyone wants to hear (Groupthink).

Challenging The System

Imagine for a moment the exact opposite of what Paul is saying here in 2 Timothy 4. Instead of having itching ears and gathering like-minded teachers around themselves, they would have open and objective ears to teaching that may challenge their assertions. It would be an environment where free discussion reigned without fear of condemnation or judgment. It would be an environment built on and backed by the Bible in its entirety and not feelings, traditions, and otherworldly "*wisdom.*" Sadly, the truth is, people, do not like being challenged, especially Biblically educated people. Once a church or a group of scholars have decided on an agreed-upon doctrine, any opposition to that groupthink is considered to be heretical, and the tables are turned to make the challenger the object of Paul's warning instead of humbly pausing to consider that they may be the ones in error.

Sadly, arbiters of religion reject healthy dissent and resent the hard questions when confronted with their scriptural misgivings. I guess nobody likes to have their theology challenged, and it has a weird way of pricking one's pride. But if nobody is the voice of Godly dissent, then the hard conversations will never happen, and they need to be always happening. Spiritual stagnation is the cradle for religion, and stagnation happens when a church believes it has arrived, as it relates to the entire truth of the Scripture. But we will never, ever arrive at understanding everything.

1 Corinthians 13:9-12 - **9***For we know in part and we prophesy in part.* **10***But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

11When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. **12**For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Why are we not open to the possibility that we may have missed something in our theology? I recently asked a close friend of mine to write a forward in my book on Job. He is a learned brother and author of many books. He wrote, "Normally, I feel a red flag rising inside me when I hear or read of someone who has "discovered" some new viewpoint, some novel interpretation. It reeks of pride most often. However, on rare occasions, I do hear something new that strikes me as a truth that I had somehow overlooked." He then went on to praise my fresh perspective on the book of Job. It dawned on me that there in his statement lies the heart of the problem for many Biblically educated brothers like him. It is called 'prideful' by the learned when someone else learns something that they have not yet learned, and it is only the 'rare occasion' that something gets through to them because they "somehow overlooked" it. I am pretty sure that this position is the one of pride. I am reminded of the numerous exchanges between Yeshua and the Pharisees, who were certain that they knew it all and could not possibly have missed something.

Speaking of the Pharisees, Why did Yeshua have so much trouble with them? It was because these men were Teachers of the Law. They were studied and learned men, who in their mind, could not possibly have missed something as important as the coming of the Messiah, even when He was standing directly in front of them. Most importantly, they resisted the

notion that they might have something yet to learn or that they were wrong about their current theology. Are we like them? Were the Pharisees and Sadducees recorded in scripture for no reason, or are they there as a warning for what any one of us could become in our theology if we lost our childlike heart?

If you or your church believe that you have nothing else to learn, then you my friend, have fallen prey to Gnosticism. As you move forward in this book, you will most certainly see things that challenge your belief system and contradict your spiritual worldview. Do not be a Pharisee and raise your defenses. Read, pray, and check everything against the Word.

COMFORTABLY NUMB

THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Unlike the heroes of Hebrews 11 who held onto nothing of this life, dying churches hold onto everything, at least everything that made them comfortable and happy. Such is the reason we speak of them in the past." — Thom S. Rainer,

Why is the Biblical model for worship not considered in our current structures? We do not have definitive instructions for how a corporate worship service (holy convocation) was handled in the Scriptures, but we do have clues. Aside from the commands to have such a gathering in Leviticus 23, we have Paul's letters to the church in Corinth and an example from Yeshua Himself.

1 Corinthians 14:26-35 - **26**How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. **27**If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. **28**But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. **29**Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. **30**But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. **31**For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. **32**And the spirits of the

*prophets are subject to the prophets. 33*For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

34Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. **35**And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

Along with Paul's teaching on orderly worship, we cannot ignore Vs.34 'as the Law also says. Women's role in the worship service is a huge topic, and I will not attempt to cover that in this book, but it is curious that Paul refers to the Law (Ancient Path) as a standard in this regard. If the Law was gone, why would Paul do this? It appears to me that Paul is encouraging Corinth to obey the Law in this matter.

When reading Paul's descriptive words about worship here in chapter 14, we can see what seems to be a more communal service than what we have today. Today we have an atypical top-down worship structure with one man at the top doing all of the teaching and preaching. This is not what we see here. *"29*Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. **30**But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. **31**For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged."

This kind of interaction could only happen in an environment where people freely speak openly and in turn, much like a house church service. There is no question that more benefit comes from the intimacy of such a service rather than sitting and listening to one man for 45 minutes. I have

spent a considerable amount of time as of late asking people what they remembered from the sermon from the week before. Most are hard-pressed to remember it, but they do remember those that they were personally involved in, which makes sense because Paul says that the goal is that “*all may be encouraged*” (Vs. 31). We can see in Luke 4 where Yeshua was accustomed to this kind of gathering.

Luke 4:16-20 - **16***So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. 17*And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

18*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19*To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” **20***Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.*

Yeshua did not go into the synagogue to preach a sermon where everyone had to sit and listen and then have discussion groups afterward. He went in and participated with others who were sharing and teaching. He was handed the scroll of Isaiah and did not come prepared with a lesson from Isaiah. When He finished, He handed it back to the attendant so another could share or teach. Do you see the difference in this structure from our current evangelical practices?

Our current structure is what it is precisely because our Pastors and Evangelists are employed, and this is the duty of the hired man, or so we think. How much more effective at interpersonal and evangelistic efforts would our Pastors be if they were not consumed each week with what they have to teach or preach for 45 minutes? After all, we do not pay them just to preach do we? No, we do not, or we should not. If a man is going to have the Biblical office of Evangelist, then that is where his leadership should direct the church, evangelism. If he is a Pastor, then let him shepherd the hearts of the flock. These titles mean something in Scripture and are not just obligatory. I imagine that in Paul's description of orderly worship in 1 Corinthians 14, the balance of what was being taught each week was brought about by the differing gifts of each of the brothers that held office, i.e., Evangelist, Pastor, Deacon, and Elder. Each would have a different exhortation based on their gifts that served to create well-rounded encouragement instead of topical sermons.

When I was a young minister, my mentor Joe Silipo once taught me something that I will never forget. He said, "*You cannot change the church from the pulpit; you must be among them. You must know them, and they must know you.*" Is that not how Yeshua lead? In Yeshua's entire ministry, he only taught one sermon (Matt 5), not weekly sermons, but he was among the people for the rest of the time. He knew His sheep, and the sheep knew Him (John 10:14).

Let us return to this model. Let 'Church' go back to being what it was in Scripture, a Holy Convocation where mutual encouragement is had by each and every participant and where your voice is not the only voice of instruction.

Numerical Growth is an Idol

Hebrews 4:12 - **12***For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

The first thing that we need to see in this passage, as it relates to the Ancient Path, is that the author says that the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) is "*sharper than any two-edged sword.*" It is the Old Testament that "*divides soul from spirit, joints and marrow and the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" As modern-day believers, we like to use this passage to explain the power of the New Testament (and it is), while not considering the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) were the only Scriptures that they had at this time.

The Bible is rich in powerful themes and teachings. Creation, Torah, Grace, Marriage, Discipleship, Money, Leadership, Redemption, Hope, Baptism, Evangelism, and the like. It is funny to me that denominationalism tends to choose one theme that will be their flagship message, and then every lesson, message, or sermon is taught through the lens of that theme. I have been to churches where the most preached about subject is grace. Other churches are more focused on things like gifts of the Spirit and end-times theology. None of these themes in and of themselves is wrong, but ungodly traditions can often be born from a church that over-emphasizes any one teaching. My Church, for example, was founded with a focus on world evangelism. A noble goal, to be sure, but what began with sincerity slowly turned into a religion. Every sermon was either fully about or colorfully

peppered with evangelism. We became experts at finding evangelistic themes just about anywhere in the Scriptures, regardless of the original intent of the passage. And herein lies the problem. Everything we read was somehow about making disciples, even when it was not. Add to this dynamic the insatiable need for personal and numerical Church growth, and a humanistic tradition was born. Twenty years after our humble beginnings, we were so weighted down with numbers and stats that our Christianity felt like a full-time job. We were so consumed with numerical growth that our members were handing in stat sheets that recorded who visited the Church that day, who was studying to become a member, and who had left the Church. Our voluntary leadership group had become administrators who were consistently admonished for low attendance, and our Evangelists were graded on how much their Church grew that year. Many were even fired as a result of poor growth.

2 Samuel 24:10 - **10***And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."*

Thankfully those extreme days are behind us, but it took a firestorm to do it. Like David, we had begun to measure our strength and our right standing before God through the metrics of growth and numbers. If we were not growing numerically, we were not doing well spiritually. Conversely, if we were growing, we were doing great spiritually. Both viewpoints are drivel. They are performance-oriented measures that run the risk of seriously damaging the faith of

those who cannot seem to step up to the expectations of the Church.

Although the practices of stat sheets and counting for the general membership are gone, I am afraid that, like the Kings, the High Places have not yet been taken down. Our leadership still pays homage to this practice. Not a month goes by that the membership is not informed of the yearly growth, and although I am 15 years removed from weekly staff meetings, I get the feeling that growth is still a constant focus among the clergy.

Where are we instructed to do this in scripture? Yes, we are called to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18:20), but nowhere in scripture do we see such rigorous attention to any church's growth. Nor are we instructed to use it as a measure of our spiritual health. Certainly, Yeshua did not use such a measure when He addressed the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 so how does this help anyone or anything except to puff up our spiritual egos? It is a tradition that not only needs to be torn down but publicly acknowledged as to what it is, a man-made tradition and deviation from the Ancient Path.

But Numbers Mean Something

Yes, they do, but in the book of Acts, it is not about growth. I have heard that because the book of Acts takes the time to mention the great numbers of converts, we should. I have heard Evangelists tout the 3000 conversions in Acts 2 as some kind of benchmark for a healthy young 'fired up' church. Many fail to understand that the book of Acts is both a fulfillment of ancient foreshadowing and a beginning of something new.

Why does Acts record the conversion of 3000 people? It was not just some random number, nor was it allegorical; it was prophetic. When the Law was given at Mt. Sinai, the people agreed to be obedient with a resounding “*All that the Lord has spoken we will do*” (Ex 19:8). But they did not do. Instead, they built a golden calf and worshipped it. As a result of this, 3000 people died that day at the hand of the Levites.

Exodus 32:25-29 - **25**Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), **26**then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, “Whoever is on the Lord’s side—come to me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. **27**And he said to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’” **28**So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. **29**Then Moses said, “Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother.”

In the book of Acts, the promised Holy Spirit was given (Acts 2:1-4), and instead of rebelling, the people responded with open hearts and humility (Acts 2:37). As a result, 3000 people were baptized that day.

Acts 2:40-41 - **40**And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” **41**Then those who gladly received his word were

baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

This was the physical manifestation of Paul's words to the church in Corinth.

2 Corinthians 3:6 - **6***for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

To those paying attention to the times, this event would have triggered something in their hearts that caused them to realize that this day was significant. It had nothing to do with numerical growth.

Meetings of the Body

Hebrews 10:24-25 - **24***And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25***not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**

What did a meeting of the Body mean to early Christians and their forefathers? If we think that it meant midweek services, Sunday services, and small group gatherings as we know them today, we would be wrong. I will show in a later chapter titled The Feasts of the Lord that Yehovah had given specific times and dates for their corporate gathering. They were called Holy Convocations.

Leviticus 23:1-3 - **1***And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2***"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts. 3***Six days shall work be*

done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.

All in all, eight commanded corporate gatherings include seven for the individual Feasts and one weekly gathering on the Sabbath. You may be thinking that eight congregational meetings in a year are not that many, and you would be correct. Yehovah reserved those holy gatherings for His special days. Unfortunately, Christianity has taken the liberty to teach and enforce mandated 'meetings of the body' that have no origin in Scripture. Midweek services are considered a meeting of the body, as is Sunday worship, but we see this taught or expected nowhere in Scripture. These traditions came from a method of interpretation called eisegesis, which I go into greater detail in the chapter on the Sabbath.

If you recall the chapter on the Kings, creating your own holy days is exactly what Jeroboam did when he created his own feast. It was a serious offense then, and it still is today. The day that Christianity disavowed the Old Testament as authoritative for Gentile believers was when it began to invent its own worship traditions. The when, where, and how of Christianity became open for debate, and the best ideas won the day. So for the last several hundred years, Church leaders have been stuck in a never-ending loop of how to get their members to be more productive, closer to one another, and less divided. All of these are great goals, to be sure, but when we refuse to look at the Ancient Paths that Yehovah gave us, it remains a chasing after the wind.

When the author of Hebrews states that we should “*not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,*” He is not talking about your Midweek Service or Sunday Worship Service. He would have been referring to the only commanded gatherings they knew in that day, the Sabbaths and the Feast Days. Return to the Ancient Paths.

Communion

The practice of modern-day communion rituals goes back to Yeshua on the night before His crucifixion. Within two to three hundred years, the early Catholic Church had perfected the practice of bread and wine consumption as symbolic of Yeshua’s body and blood in the form of their Holy Eucharist. But is this what Yeshua had in mind on that faithful night? Let us take a closer look.

Luke 22:7-20 - **7***Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. 8*And He sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat.”

9*So they said to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare?”*

10*And He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. 11*Then you shall say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?” ’ **12***Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready.” 13*So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. 14When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. **15**Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this

Passover with you before I suffer; 16for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

17*Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."*

19*And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 20Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."*

In case you missed it, the word "Passover" is mentioned five times in this short section of scripture. Yeshua was sharing the Passover meal with His disciples. This was something that he had done every year of His life, and this was no exception, other than the fact that it was His last Passover. Every Passover meal included bread and wine as they were symbolic of so much of Israel's history, especially their journey through the desert. It was Israel's deliverance from Egypt that they were commanded to remember.

Exodus 12:14 - 14'So this day (Passover) shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.

The Feast of Passover was celebrated to commemorate the liberation of the Children of Israel who were led out of Egypt by Moses. This event was a foreshadowing of Yeshua leading the world out of captivity from sin and death. Thus Yeshua says, "*do this in remembrance of me*" (Vs.19). Yeshua was the

new Moses but on a much larger and much more significant scale. His coming for this purpose was foretold.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 - **18***I will raise up for them a Prophet like you (Moses) from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. 19*And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.

So this is Type vs. Antitype, Israel was commanded to observe the Passover as *"a memorial"* for their deliverance from Egypt - a Type (Ex 12:14), Yeshua commanded that we observe Passover as *a memorial* for His sacrifice that delivered us from sin - the Antitype (Luke 22:19).

When He said *"do this,"* He was not instituting some new practice or ritual, as many believe. He was saying *"do Passover,"* not in remembrance of Egypt, but of me. Remember, His accomplishment on the cross was the Antitype or fulfillment of the shadow that the escape from Egypt represented. The fact that Christianity turned this into something that was done weekly with no respect to Passover is just another tradition. But to be clear, taking communion on a weekly basis is not wrong as Paul clearly states:

1 Corinthians 11:26 - **26***For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

So one could do it as often as he or she wishes because any time is a good time to remember the Lord.

The Bread of Life

John 6:41 - **41**"I am the bread which came down from heaven."

Yeshua is once again declaring here that He is the fulfillment of ancient omens when He says that He is the Manna from Heaven. He goes on to make the connection between that Manna and Himself.

Vs. 47-51 - **47**Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. **48**I am the bread of life. **49**Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. **50**This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. **51**I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

It was the Manna from the earth that sustained Israel for forty years in the desert. This fine flaky substance appeared overnight on the ground like the early morning frost on a winter day (Exod 16:14). Yehovah provided it until they reached the Promised Land. Again, see the parallels. Yeshua is the bread that sustains us until we get to the Promised Land, and this is to be remembered on the day of Passover. Is it any wonder that Yeshua was born in Bethlehem (בית לחם), the City of Bread?

Book Worship

One of the most disturbing practices that I see as of late in the churches is the constant promotion of one book after

another as “must-read” material. Books that are paid for by the church and handed out freely to the masses then discussed for weeks or even months from the pulpit and within small groups. We end up getting to know the author of the book more than the Biblical author from which he is teaching. This kind of approach is laziness on the part of the pastors and teachers who promote it, and it belittles their calling. Instead of preaching and teaching, they are relegated to being discussion monitors.

2 Timothy 4:2 - **2***Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching.*

To some degree, I understand the draw to books. As we age spiritually and physically, we tend to want something more than that same passage of Scripture that we have read a thousand times already. We desire something more in-depth from the Word, or at the very least, a deeper understanding of what we already know. As believers, we mostly have a shallow understanding of our New Testament Scriptures because we do not understand their Old Testament origins. Instead of pursuing that knowledge, we waste countless hours discussing someone else’s fresh new spiritual idea with little to no actual exposition of Scripture.

The irony of that statement is not lost on me as I realize that at this moment, you are reading another book. But what I hope to do in this little book is to point the reader away from authors, writers, and prognosticators and to re-direct their attention toward the Ancient Path of Scripture.

Romans 3:4 - **4**...*let God be true but every man a liar.*

This is not to say that there is no benefit to reading books. However, when it becomes the norm for congregational consumption of Biblical concepts and exposition, it only perpetuates the increasing chasm between truth and tradition in the church.

As stated before in an earlier chapter, Christians today are Old Testament illiterate and thus stunted in their understanding of New Testament teaching. They cannot fully understand New Testament truths without first understanding their Old Testament pedigrees. As a result, we end up with Christians that do not even realize that they are living in a constant state of Biblical deviation because they do not know enough of the truth to know the difference.

The Christian Talmud

The Talmud is a collection of writings covering the full gamut of Jewish law and tradition, compiled and edited between the third and sixth centuries. The main text of the Talmud is the Mishnah, a collection of terse teachings written in Hebrew, redacted by Rabbi Yehudah the Prince, in the years following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. – (Chabad.org)

It is, for lack of a better description, centuries of Rabbinical commentary on the Law itself. It covers more than the Torah (*Gen - Deut*); it also covers the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. Many of the commentaries contradict one another because one Rabbi disagreed with another, while others demand adherence to their teachings even when no such command is found in the Scripture.

We can see two examples of this practice in the New Testament. In Mark 7, we read the story where Yeshua challenges the assertion from the Pharisees that hands must be washed in a certain way. I will cover this in more depth in my chapter on the Food Laws.

We see it again in Acts 10 when Peter says *"You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation..."* Yehovah actually never commands this, but it is a common teaching in the Rabbinical writings.

I have heard many Christian teachers and preachers disparage this Rabbinical practice, and for a good reason. It is at the heart of all human tradition. But how are we different? How many Christian books do you have on your shelf, each with its own opinion on Scripture? Do you find yourself reading more books than Bible? Do you have your favorite authors because they see things the way that you do? And finally, how many Christian traditions have been perpetuated or even born in these books? Who knows for sure, but if you use them as your guide to truth without vetting them against Scripture, are you any different than the Pharisees?

Church Leadership **The Age of 50 For Good Reason**

Nehemia 4:1-3 - *1*Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: *2*"Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house, *3*from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.

Nehemiah 8:25-26 - **25**and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more. **26***They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall do to the Levites regarding their duties."*

In the two passages above, we can see explicit guidelines for those serving in the priesthood as it pertains to their age and duration of service. These were guidelines for the Levitical Priesthood, which we no longer have, and they require the presence of the Temple, which we also no longer have, but there is wisdom in the precept nonetheless.

Why did Yehovah set the age limit to fifty? Could it be that He knew that the man's passion and drive dwindle after the age of fifty? Speaking as a man over fifty, I can attest to this reality. I no longer live as I did when I was a younger man. It is not my fault per se, but natural. Could it be that He knew that men could no longer genuinely relate to the younger generations once a man is past a certain age? Or more importantly, that the younger generations can no longer relate to him? Could it be that He knew that with age comes a loss of faithful risk-taking?

I think it could be all of these and more. So why do we not adhere to this standard? Aside from the fact that it is Old Testament teaching and Christian Teachers do not feel it necessary to honor them, too many Pastors wish to be like Abraham who served into his old age, but that is just not feasible in this day and age, is it? Although I applaud the heart of any man who desires to serve until he dies, we must consider the ramifications of this decision and reconsider the

commands of Nehemia 4 & 8. Older brothers must welcome the idea of stepping aside and embracing the Biblical model for older men, as stated in Nehemia 4.

*Vs. 26 - **26**They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they themselves shall do no work.*

For too many contemporary churches, it is the aging leadership standing in the way of maturity and growth in the name of remaining relative. Remaining relative as we age is a normal desire for everyone, I think, but not at the cost of hurting the church. Although 1 Corinthians 9 tells us that paid leadership is allowed, we have to ask if this meant lifelong tenures where the Pastor has his every egg in the full-time ministry basket. Paul was supported, but for how long? He obviously had other skills as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) that he employed while in service. This is not true for many modern-day ministers. If you take away their position as a paid minister, they are back to square one if they have no skills to fall back on.

When I was a young convert at Arizona State University, I regularly saw our young Pastor on the campus sharing his faith and studying the Bible with 3-6 people a day. After school, I would visit his home, where he was with others studying to become Christians. He was the busiest man in the church. Sadly, this is not the case these days because those young Pastors are now old Pastors, and the majority of their time is spent on administrative endeavors and long meetings with other Pastors.

If you are a Pastor, how much time are you really spending doing the work of the Lord? Would the people that you lead feel great about where and how you spend your time if they knew? Do you spend time among them or just over them? Is your time spent discussing the latest ministry methods or actually doing ministry? You call your people to be evangelistic; are you leading the way by showing them how? In the real world, people are required to justify their incomes to their superiors, can you? Or are you just a per-functionary figurehead that manages the yearly calendar of the Church?

These are hard questions to be sure, but is this not the argument that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians where he is justifying his gifts of money and support?

1 Corinthians 9:7-12 - **7**Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? **8**Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? **9**For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? **10**Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. **11**If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? **12**If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?

Paul makes his claim by declaring that he' *plants, tends, treads, plows, threshes and sows*' and should also reap. Too many Pastors reap where they have not sown or otherwise

done the work according to their calling. Or perhaps they once did, but age has caused them to fall into being the Minister Emeritus. It may be time to step aside. I know that this may be scary for some, but your responsibility is to the church and not your financial wellbeing.

And by the way, Paul is again using the Law here as the standard (Vs.9).

Today's Pastors and Evangelists have no incentive to step aside. They have no incentive to hire or train their replacements if it means that they are out of a job.

I realize that this may sound harsh to some. Nevertheless, we must understand that we are here precisely in our ministry structure because we have ignored Biblical models. These are self-imposed wounds that will require much work to correct if we are up to it, and we must be up to it to survive.

Thus we can see a handful of practices and inventions from the heart of man that has infiltrated or even taken over in the modern-day church. And some of them are centuries old. We can let sleeping dogs lie or work to find our way back to the Ancient Path. The change will not happen overnight, and many will oppose any efforts at change. Some might even decide to leave your church in search of more tradition. Are you afraid of this? If so, why are you afraid of it? Search your heart before you answer this question. If the answer is because you are afraid of how such an exodus from your membership would cost you in regards to income and manpower, i.e., losing staff. Then you may be a part of the problem. However, if you are not afraid to take a stand on the truth, regardless of the uncomfortable conclusions, then I invite you to embrace the

heart of Moses when he said, "*Whoever is on the Lord's side—come to me!*" (Exod 32:26)

DOCTRINAL MYTHS

Mýthos' - a myth; a false account, yet posing to be the truth; a fabrication (*fable*) which subverts (*replaces*) what is actually true. (Websters Dictionary)

As the definition above suggests, a myth poses as truth and over time subverts (*replaces*) what is actually true. Is it too hard to believe that Christians all around the world have bought into myths and hold them to be absolute truth? Myths can be harmless in the grand scheme of things, but some can be damning.

"If you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed." – Adolf Hitler

"Adam & Eve ate an apple," "good things come to those who wait," "money is the root of all evil," "cleanliness is next to godliness," "God works in mysterious ways," and "God helps those who help themselves." Every one of these is a Christian myth. Some are partly true, and some are a complete fabrication, yet they are all woven into our Christian psyche to the level of absolute truth by many. These are all harmless enough, but it shows us how a lie can become embedded into our idea of truth over time. Below are two examples of popular Christian myths of a much more dangerous nature that I have experienced in my journey.

The Sinner's Prayer

Praying Jesus into your heart, or accepting Jesus into your heart. More commonly known as the Sinners Prayer. This tradition arose in the great missionary movement of the eighteenth century and sadly is found nowhere in the Bible. This myth is loosely based on scriptures like Romans 10:9-10, where Paul speaks of the House of Israel's need for a belief in Christ as their savior. At the same time, it ignores many other scriptures that tell us that simple belief is not enough (Jam 1:19-20). As a young man, I bought into this myth hook, line and sinker, but was also bewildered as to why there seemed to be no Holy Spirit power in my life. As a result, I found myself saying this prayer repeatedly, hoping that eventually, it would stick. It never did until I discovered why. I was not Biblically converted simply by reciting a prayer that has no origin in scripture. Like so many millions, I had followed a myth.

Pastor David Platt famously outed this popular teaching as a superstitious and vacuous incantation damning millions of souls in a room full of pastors at the Verge Conference in 2012. He said:

"Making disciples is the natural or maybe better yet, supernatural overflow of being a disciple. Proclaiming the love of Christ is the overflow of sharing in the love of Christ and... I'm convinced many people in our churches are just simply missing the life of Christ and a lot of it has to do with what we have sold them as the Gospel, i.e. pray this prayer, accept Jesus into your heart, and invite Christ into your life. Should it not concern us that there is no such superstitious prayer in the New Testament? Should it not concern us that the Bible never uses the phrases "accept Jesus into your heart or accept Christ

into your life? It's not the Gospel we see being preached. It's modern evangelism built on sinking sand and it runs the risk of disillusioning millions of souls. It's a very dangerous thing to lead people to think that they are Christian when they have not Biblically responded to the Gospel. If we're not careful, we will take the Gospel, the lifeblood out of Christianity and put kool-aid in its place so that it will taste better to the crowds. It's not just dangerous, it's just damning". – David Platt 2012 Verge

Needless to say, it shook the listeners enough to spark many debates. This is a good thing. Honest and open dissent by one bold man who was willing to speak the obvious truth, sparking hard conversations that lead to change is always a good thing. The conclusion of the Southern Baptist Convention debate was amazing. It read in part:

"A 'Sinner's Prayer' is not an incantation that results in salvation merely by its recitation and should never be manipulatively employed or utilized apart from a clear articulation of the gospel" ^a (Olsen, Ted. "Southern Baptists Debate the Sinner's Prayer." Christianity Today 1 (2012).

For all who came to this conclusion, this was a paradigm-changing event. Since then, pastors worldwide are not only re-thinking their theology; some are re-thinking their own salvation.

Willing To Unlearn

One of the most inspiring things about this event is that they were willing to explore the possibility that their theology was missing something. Having explored it, and in many cases debated it, they unlearned the myth and embraced the truth.

Are you willing to unlearn? Are you able to unlearn? Are you willing and able to pursue and follow the truth wherever it leads you without fear of uncomfortable conclusions? Or are you waiting for the truth to become popular? The willingness to seek out and learn the truth and the resolve to unlearn the myth is the first barrier to finding and walking the Ancient Path. The second barrier is humility. We need the humility to admit that there may yet be something to learn and the humility to admit that what we thought was truth may not be the truth at all, but instead, it is heresy. Why else would Paul warn us to test ourselves if not for the purpose of constant evaluation?

2 Corinthians 13:5 - **5***Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.*

“The problem facing the Christian Church is not that people lack a complete set of beliefs; the problem is that they have a full slate of beliefs in mind, which they think are consistent with biblical teachings, and they are neither open to being proven wrong nor to learning new insights. It may well be that spiritual evaluation is so uncommon because people fear that the results might suggest the need for different growth strategies or for more aggressive engagement in the growth process. No matter what the underlying reason is, the bottom line among the clergy and the laity was indifference toward their acknowledged lack of evaluation.” – Barna Group

The One True Church

Ephesians 4:4 - **4***There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;*

One of the most damaging of Christian Myths comes from the claim that your church is THE ONE. The Bible does tell us that there is one body (*church*), so truthfully every believer ought to embrace this at some level. The problem arises when someone or some church lays claim to it at the exclusion of every other Christ-believing church simply because they do not believe what you believe. I once held to this myth in the spirit of transparency, and I taught it, even while having a deep-down inner conflict with the teaching. I knew in my heart that it puts God in a box.

Built into this claim for those who own it is the ungodly belief that they and they alone have the correct understanding of scripture, and it is because of this so-called knowledge that they can make such a boast. This position is elitist and arrogant at best and narcissistic at worst.

To make such a bold claim is to inherently assume, or otherwise believe that every other church or human for that matter, is without salvation and therefore in desperate need of your knowledge. And therein lies the greatest fallacy of this belief system; judgment. To believe that you and your church are the only true church, you have to believe (*at some level*) that everyone else is lost. Unfortunately, this puts you in the judgment seat of Christ. A place where you do not belong. You and I are never the judges of someone's eternal destiny. Yeshua has a firm lesson for us in this regard in the book of Mark, and you may be surprised to learn the meaning of the word 'Raca.'

Mark 5:22 - **22***And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Have you ever wondered why Yeshua's words here seem to be so strong? Hellfire as a result of calling someone a fool? That is really strong! At least it is to our Western Greco ears. Could there be something else here that we are missing? Something that the hearers of that time, in that place, would have understood? What is it about the word "fool" that seems to put one's soul in jeopardy if used towards another?

Yeshua is using a "Hebraism" to make a point about judging someone's eternal state. A Hebraism is something that His hearers would have understood that others most likely would not have. Similar to when an American might say that something "costs an arm or a leg." An outsider might take this literally unless he understood the idiom.

So what is Yeshua saying that His listeners would have known?

Psalm 14:1 - **1***The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."*

Psalm 53:1 - **1***The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."*

Proverbs 17:21 - **21***To have a fool for a child brings grief; there is no joy for the parent of a godless fool.*

Ecclesiastes 10:2-3 - **2***A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. **3***Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool.**

Ecclesiastes 2:14 - **14***The wise have eyes in their heads, while the fool walks in the darkness*

In the minds of the Hebrews, fools were those that did not have any relationship with God. They might be an atheist, although that is not what the word "naval" (נָבֵל - fool) means. It means more to be lost or separated from God. So to call someone a fool was to make a statement about their spiritual condition before God and, therefore, putting yourself in the seat of judgment.

James 4:12 - **12***There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?*

No wonder Yeshua's words are so strong. Who are we to say to another human that they are lost, and yet we have said it, I have said it. We use the Gospel message in such a way as to wield it as a tool for convincing another that he is lost and thus needs saving. This conversion method depends on the person seeing his lostness, so that is what we set out to prove. Of all of the conversion stories that we see in the book of Acts, none of them follow this pattern. From Pentecost to Paul, every conversion was predicated by the knowledge and instruction of who the Messiah was and what He came to do. Forcing or otherwise persuading an individual to admit that they are lost leaves no room for the Holy Spirit to truly begin the process of repentance. It does, however, help our self imagined idea of how fast an individual can or should get to the baptismal. When that person fades away or, worse, converts only to fall away from God quickly, we wonder why the seed that was planted in that heart failed to take root.

For genuine conversion to happen, this realization needs to come solely from the individual's understanding of scripture and the amazing gift of Yeshua's sacrifice. Consider these Biblical examples of such a response.

Acts 2:37 - *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*

Acts 8:12 - *But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.*

Acts 8:35-36 - **35***Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. **36**Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"*

Acts 16:14-15 - **14***The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. **15**And when she and her household were baptized...*

Each of these responses reflects a response from the heart once hearing about the Messiah. "Cut to the heart," "when they believed," "what hinders me?" and "the Lord opened her heart." We do not see in these interactions that judgment is assessed on the part of the teacher(s) as to the individual's eternal condition before God.

It took more than two months for me to be converted to Christ. Two months of prayer and unlearning the false teachings of my past. Two months of wrestling with the

Scripture and dealing with my sin. I praise God for the brothers that were there and were patient with me. They were unwilling to give up on me while also being unwilling to tolerate my sin. They patiently waited for the Holy Spirit to do His work on my heart, and by doing so, I came to my own conclusions about my condition before Yehovah. That was love for the lost.

The Law Was Only For the Jews

Needless to say, this myth was a huge part of my understanding of Scripture for most of my life. I had no reason to challenge its validity as it seemed right for me, a Western Gentile, to assume that if the Law was given to the Jews, it must be *for* the Jews. But it was not given to the *Jews*; it was given to *Israel*. If you think that what I am saying is a matter of semantics, I would understand because many do not understand the difference between those two peoples. They are both the same people and at the same time, different people. The word 'Jew' is derivative of the word Judah. Judah is one of the 12 tribes of Israel. The nation of Israel was divided into two Houses during the reign of Rehoboam near or around 932BCE. The House of Israel was comprised of 10 tribes and the House of Judah, which included the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin. This was roughly 500 years after the Law was given to the united tribes of Israel, and it was during this time that the House of Judah became known as Jews.

That is a lot of history, but necessary to understand this issue. The Law was not given to Judah (The Jews) but all of Israel. So, allow me at this point to remind you that if you are a

disciple of Yeshua, you have been grafted *into* Israel as the wild olive branch.

Romans 11:17-22 - **17***And if some of the branches were broken off, and you (Gentile), being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, **18**do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.*

19*You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." **20**Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. **21**For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. **22**Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.*

In other words, you ARE Israel. Yeshua is the root, Israel is the Green Olive Tree (Jer 11:16), and you are the wild branch that was grafted into that tree. Thus, if the Law was given only to Israel, then that includes anyone grafted into it. But, was the Law only FOR Israel? Let us explore that a bit.

Who Fled Egypt?

It may surprise you to know that it was not just the people of Israel that fled Egypt in the Exodus.

Exodus 12:37-38 - **37***Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. **38**A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock.*

The mixed multitude is עֲרָב (ereb, or Arab) which translates to mongrel or mingled race, not of Israel. This means that these 'others' were with Israel at the Red Sea crossing. They also witnessed the mighty hand of God as He revealed Himself to Israel along the way. As Yehovah was explaining His law regarding the Passover, He included these non-Israelites when He said: *"One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you."* – Exodus 12:49. One law for both Israel and the multitude, the same law.

In Leviticus, Yehovah is giving His directions on the Feast of Atonement and gives the same instruction concerning the non-Israelites.

Leviticus 16:29 - **29** *"This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.*

So, among the ranks of Israel were these Arab's who were counted as Israel and even given a place in the tribes. I bet you did not know that the famed Caleb was an Arab and yet was considered to be a head of the tribe of Judah.

Numbers 13:3-6 - **3** *So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the Lord, all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel. **4** Now these were their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur; **5** from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori; **6** from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh;*

We learn who Caleb is from the book of Numbers.

Numbers 32:12 - **12***except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite*

The Kenizzite's were of Arab descent and not born of Israel.

More than this, when the Law was read every seventh year, everyone was expected to hear it and obey it. Even the foreigners and strangers among Israel.

Deuteronomy 31:12-13 - **12***Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, 13and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."*

And again, speaking of the Gentiles, Yehovah says in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 12:16 - **16***And it shall be, if they (Gentiles) will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As the Lord lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of My people.*

The requirement for a Gentile to be 'established among God's people was that they 'learn carefully the ways of His people', which were the ways of the Lord.

And finally, we see evident proof that the Law of the Lord was not just for Israel in the book of Deuteronomy when Yehovah was reviewing His covenant before Israel as they entered the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 29:10-15 - **10**"All of you stand today before the Lord your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, **11**your little ones and your wives—also the stranger who is in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water – **12**that you may enter into covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath, which the Lord your God makes with you today, **13**that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **14**"I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, **15**but with him who stands here with us today before the Lord our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today.

Now, after reading the above passage, let us ask a couple of critical questions.

1. Who was there that day? Answer? All of Israel. There were no Israelite stragglers as they all had just completed their 40-year journey across the desert. Included in their number were all of those 'mixed multitudes' that had joined themselves to Israel.
2. Who was not there that day? (Vs.15) Answer?
Everyone else other than Israel. Everyone on the planet.

Thus we can see that Yehovah is making His oath, based on the covenant, with not just Israel but everyone else who would call on His name.

I can already hear some of the rebuttals to what I have shown you. You might be thinking that this *covenant* was only for the Israelites, but we are excused under the New Covenant.

To you, I would ask; if the Old Covenant was only for Israel, then who was the New Covenant for, the Church?

Jeremiah 31:31-33 - **31**“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah– **32**not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. **33**But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Both covenants, Old and New, were between Yehovah and Israel. If this is the case, and it is, where do you fit in if not with Israel? There is no covenant with the Gentiles.

Replacement Theology

Replacement Theology teaches that the church somehow replaced Israel in importance in the grand scheme of things. This cannot be supported in Scripture. The flagship Scripture used by some to support this notion can be found in Matthew 21.

Matthew 21:43 - **43**“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

The implied teaching being that Yeshua has removed the importance of Israel due to their rejection of Him and reassigned it to the Gentile church that would come as a result

of His ministry. The claim is that the 'nation' mentioned here is the 'goyim' (Gentile) nation(s).

However, a closer look at this passage tells us something different. First, we need to understand whom Yeshua is speaking to specifically. In verse 23, we get the answer to this question.

*Vs.23 - **23**Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching..*

We can also see this in vs.45, directly after the moment that Yeshua uttered these words.

*Vs.45 - **45**Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.*

Yeshua's words were directed to the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees of the people as they were the ones who ruled the people. They were in charge as it was. Why is this important? As we read the parables of Yeshua that precede this statement, we get a better picture of what He is saying, to whom it is being said, and what it means.

In Vs.33-42, Yeshua tells us the parable of the vineyard and has some harsh things to say about the vinedressers (those put in charge). Yeshua did not just make this story up. He is teaching from the book of Isaiah (5:1-7) and ultimately making a statement about them. Up to this point, they had allowed the vineyard to fall into disrepair through their tradition and lawlessness. And now, these vinedressers (the leadership of Israel) were rejecting the Son Himself as the parable describes.

Vs. 42 - **42** Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

Who were the builders? Peter gives us the answer in his address to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4.

Acts 4:8-11 - **8** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: **9** If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, **10** let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. **11** This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

The position of the builders stood in stark contrast to the regular, everyday Israelites who were much more inclined to accept Yeshua. In the verses leading up to this moment, we can see the striking difference.

Vs. 8-9 - **8** And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9** Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!"

Thus, Yeshua was not removing the Kingdom from the Jewish people and giving it to the Gentiles, as Replacement Theologians would have you believe. He was removing it from the hands of the rulers, elders, and Pharisees and with it

creating a new nation. If Yeshua were removing the Kingdom from Israel, He would be invalidating the everlasting, unilateral covenant that Yehovah made with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3, 15:1-4). Nonetheless, something new was indeed afoot. What was this nation that Yeshua spoke of in Matthew 21:43, and who produce its fruit?

Ephesians 2:11-13 - **11***Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—***12***that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* **13***But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

This newly restored nation of Israel would not only include Judah but because of the cross, now included the House of Israel who had been previously divorced by Yehovah and cast into the nations (Gentiles). It would also include the Gentiles themselves, thus 'creating' a new nation, a new kingdom of priests that was just the beginning of Yehovah's promise to Abraham. In this new kingdom, Yeshua was and remains the only door through which believers can enter.

John 10:7-9 - **7***Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8**All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. **9**I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*

Conclusion

My goal in this chapter was to cover some of the most damaging Christian myths alive today. In doing so, I hope to spark an honest, open debate on how to move forward. Some of what I will present in the following chapters represent a monumental paradigm change, while some represent simple cultural changes. Either way, I hope that both will be received with a child-like heart of discovery and willingness to submit to the Father's amazing, eternal word.

LOVE

THE HEART OF THE LAW

Without the law, humans cannot know what is sin and we would celebrate it and wallow in it and dive into the deep end of the pool.” – R. Albert

Mohler Jr

One of the most impactful lessons that I learned along the way while studying the Law was that it was all about Yehovah’s love for His people. This was a huge revelation for me. It is too easy to see the Law as a collection of legalistic chores or spiritual hoops that one must jump through to maintain any semblance of devotion. It is also human nature to convert our endeavors down to more systemized structures of pass or fail methods. We do it with everything. Seeing the Law, or any commandment or teaching for that matter, in this manner is to see it without faith and love. When you look at any commandment in the scriptures through the lens of love, you begin to have the eyes of your heart opened.

Psalm 119:18 - **18***Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.*

The easiest way to explain how I learned this lesson is to suggest a human scenario that we are all familiar with, parenthood.

Being a dad has been one of the most fulfilling parts of my life, and as a dad, I had what you might call rules or guidelines in my home that I expected my children to obey. Why? If you have ever been a parent, then you know the answer to this question. The heart behind my rules was love. Why did I command my children not to touch the oven, the outlets, strange dogs and cats, or strange objects on the ground? It was not because I found joy in depriving my children of their freedom. It was because I loved them, and I knew what was best for them at each stage of their lives. I knew the result of them touching an oven or an outlet. They did not, at least not yet. As a loving parent that wished to steer my children away from harm or even destruction, I commanded adherence to my instructions. If one of my children disobeyed my command by touching the oven anyway, they were not only guilty of *sinning* against me and my instruction, but they were also facing the painful physical consequences of doing so.

So my commands and rules were a tutor for my children that served to teach them wrong from right until they matured and could understand these dynamics for themselves. By the time they matured, my instructions were embedded deep in their hearts and minds and, thus, no longer needed me to remind them that the oven was hot. This helps me understand Paul's words in Galatians a bit better.

Galatians 3:24 - **24***Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ,*

I will discuss this chapter in Galatians in greater detail in a later chapter. However, I hoped to show here how the Law was an act of love on Yehovah's part, as a parent, to show us right

from wrong, helpful from harmful, safe from unsafe, and ultimately blessings from curses.

We also cannot ignore the Law from the child's perspective. We can all attest that we have rebelled against our parent's rules once or twice as children. Of course, I say that with a grin because the truth is that the rules were broken a lot more often than once or twice. Sometimes we did not like the rules, especially as we grew older and more independent. If we are all honest, we might say that we hated the rules and often dreamed of how we might usurp them. Some of us may have felt that the rules were outdated and unnecessary, and some of us, with rebellious intent, would often push ourselves as far as we could to see how much we could get away with.

When my youngest daughter was just a toddler, she loved to tease her older brother. He knew that he could not even raise a hand to her, so it would frustrate him to no end. I have memories of reprimanding Mikaila not to touch her brother, and when I did, she would stick her finger out towards Garrett as if to touch him, getting closer and closer without actually doing it. She was trying to see what she could get away with and playing with fire while doing it. A perfect example of how we all deal with commands and rules as children and even some as adults.

As adult Christians, we can see the Law in the same way that a child sees his or her parental rules, and if Christianity represents freedom from these rules, then we emotionally and even subconsciously choose a faith with no law. Unfortunately, this has become the modern expression of what it means to be free in Christ.

A Lawless Gospel

For any one believer or any one church to live a life of faith that overemphasizes grace, the result is most often using that grace as a license to sin (Jude 4). Conversely, a believer or church that stresses only Law runs the risk of becoming legalistic and ignoring the cross of Christ that saves us from the penalty of breaking the Law (Rom 3). This balance of obedience by faith is what Paul worked so hard to teach in his letters. There have been those, especially within scripture, who sought to be justified by their observance and obedience to the Law. To those who take this position, Paul has said:

Romans 3:20 - **20***Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

One cannot be saved simply by observing the Law or by obedience to any Biblical mandate, for that matter. On the flip side of this coin, some claim that all they need is faith and grace, and obedience does not matter at all. To them, freedom in Christ means that they are free from being held accountable for their rejection of any command. If that were true, there would be no need for a coming judgment and certainly no need for discipleship, which at its core is a tool to help us form Christ in one another by encouraging change and repentance. So how does Paul explain this balance?

Romans 3:28-31 - **28***Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. 29**Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30**since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised*

*through faith. **31**Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*

Paul clarifies to those on both sides of the argument that neither position in and of themselves stands alone. Do we void the Law because we are saved by faith? Certainly not! We still uphold the Law while understanding that it is not our obedience to it that saves us. It is our faith in Christ that saves us. Our righteousness does not come from how well we obey, but because of our faith on Him who justifies the ungodly. But that does not mean that we do not continue to obey. Grace and mercy do not free us from obedience; it forgives us when we fail to obey.

As a believer in Christ, all of this grace and mercy talk may be very familiar to you. Like many sermons that you have heard in the course of your Christian life. However, there is a strange phenomenon in the Christian heart once the idea of obeying the Law is thrown into the mix. As if obeying the Law requires a more strict adherence than any New Testament command. As if grace and mercy somehow do not apply when trying to be obedient to the back of the book. Nothing could be further from the truth. You will not be perfect in your obedience to Torah, just as you are not perfect in your obedience to New Testament teaching. The love of Christ covers them both. I am just an evil human father (Matt 7:11), but I notice when my children are making an effort at obeying their daddy, even when they are not doing it to spec. And therein lies the issue. Jehovah is watching our hearts more than He is watching for the perfect execution of His commands. He is watching our desires, our motives, and our

intentions. Are we making an effort to obey? Are we meditating on His Law? Are we considering His ways?

1 Samuel 16:7 - *7For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

Old Testament Wrath New Testament Grace?

It saddens me to say that I have heard many seasoned Christians and not a few tenured Pastors and Elders confess that they struggle to understand the perceived dichotomy of what appears to be an angry, wrathful Old Testament God and a merciful and just New Testament Christ. Yeshua Himself tells us that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father (John 14:9). So there must be more to this perception than we realize. And maybe it is what we do not see that is the problem.

There are two things that I would like to share here. First, we need to understand that many things in the Old Testament scriptures can be understood as a Type. Yehovah demonstrated in explicit detail in physical realities the utter depth and importance of spiritual truths.

- The horror of Leprosy is depicted so that the reader cannot imagine being inflicted with such a horrible disease. Yet, the spiritual truth is that you are inflicted with such a condition, sin.
- The lengths at which ancient Israel was required to go in order to prevent themselves from being in an unclean state was a physical reality to show us the importance of our need to be spiritually cleansed of our sin.

- The seemingly harsh physical reality of the death penalty for intentional and continual acts of disobedience to the Law shows us the very real spiritual truth that sin brings death (Gen 2:17, Rom 6:23).
- The Altar was the most bloody part of Israel's community. A place where countless bulls, cows, sheep, and doves were sacrificed. The physical reality of this constant scene shows us the spiritual truth that One died similarly for our sin.
- The flood that killed all humanity on Earth minus eight is a seemingly harsh physical reality that shows us the spiritual truth that Yeshua will again start over with the new Earth and the new Jerusalem at His return.

The physical harshness reveals the hard spiritual truth, and if we can see such stories through this prism, then we can realize the purposes of our loving King in opening the eyes of our hearts. And it is ALWAYS about His love.

Is it difficult for you to see Yehovah's love in the Hebrew Scriptures? Was it difficult for you to see your parents' love as a child when disciplining you? Of course, it was. For many, it is easier to see and feel the pain when reading stories of human tragedy in the Bible than to perceive the love behind the hand of discipline that brought it about. Discipline, whether soft, harsh, or terminal, always comes from love.

Hebrews 12:7 ESV - **7***It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*

Secondly, as Christians, we must admit that we have all largely ignored the Old Testament. We have all been taught that the back of the book was not authoritative for our Christian faith, so if we are honest, we can admit that we have not read enough of it to see the love within its pages. And it is there. Everywhere you look.

Nehemiah 9:17 - **17***But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness...*

Isaiah 54:10 - **10***For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the Lord, who has mercy on you.*

Exodus 34:6-7 - **6***The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,*

Psalms 145:14-18 - **14***The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. 15The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. 16You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing. 17The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. 18The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*

Psalms 146:7-9 - **7***who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; 8the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up*

those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

9The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless,

I could go on. A great study for anyone wanting to see this on a broader scale need only search words like “mercy,” “love,” and “forgiveness” in their Old Testament. That last passage in Psalm 146 reminds me of the fact that within the Law itself, Yehovah shows His love and concern for the disadvantaged with laws expressly written for the widows, orphaned, and foreigners (Deut 24:10-22).

The truth is, Yehovah expressed His love over and over again in His dealings with Israel, but they did not understand it in their hearts. The world around them was filled with gods, and none of them was known for their love. I have already shown you how Israel confused Yehovah with Ba’al in their worship so it makes sense that they would also believe that He was no different than any other pagan god. It was this lack of understanding that was at the heart of their constant rebellion.

Yehovah As Father

In our contemporary Christian world, to address God as Father is normal and customary. It is a term of endearment, love, and respect. I have heard many Christians use words like Abba, Dad, and even Daddy a time or two. We do this in hopes that it will draw us nearer to Him or Him to us, but this was not the case for early Israel. Yeshua was the first Rabbi ever to call Yehovah “Father” and it was a massive departure from tradition for His listeners. In all but one of Yeshua’s prayers, He used the term Father instead of the traditional

“HaShem” or “Adonai.” This, of course, enraged the Pharisees because they had never truly enjoyed that level of familiarity with their God (John 5:18).

The formal and stoic forms of addressing God like HaShem or Adonai were not in any way the desire of Yehovah, as we have many examples in the Hebrew Scriptures of the more endearing address of “Father” being expected.

Jeremiah 31:9 - *9I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a **Father** to Israel,*

Jeremiah 3:19 - *19“And I said: ‘You shall call Me, “My **Father**,” And not turn away from Me.’*

Deuteronomy 32:6 - *6Do you thus deal with the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your **Father**, who bought you?*

Nevertheless, despite this, the people of Israel did not see it, did not accept it, or did not believe it. This is not to say that all of Israel’s prophets and leaders were blind to Yehovah’s love, as the Psalms are more than proof enough to show that they were not. However, it is a sad fact that most did not understand this nature of God, and it would take the greatest act of love on the part of Yehovah Himself to show His deep and profound love.

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

In John’s first letter we see a very curious passage.

1 John 4:16 ESV - **16***So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

Even John recognizes that their history was not one of intimacy with the Father. It was only after Yeshua modeled love on a daily basis and ultimately made the greatest sacrifice in love that they fully understood.

How much are we like them today? We forget that the loving, merciful Christ in the New Covenant is the same loving, merciful God of the Old Covenant. Everything that Yeshua did during His ministry comes from love, just as everything Yehovah did and commanded for Israel was from love.

In the chapters to follow, we will be looking at teachings and commands that you once might have considered odd for contemporary believers. The Feasts of the Lord, Food Laws, and Sabbaths are strange and outdated concepts for most Christians. As you move forward through the book, always remember that every command and every teaching given to the children of Israel reflects Yehovah's love for His chosen people. They each demonstrate and reveal His values, principles, ethics and collectively reveal His heart and what it means to be set apart.

Leviticus 20:26 - **26***And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.*

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD

YEHOVAH'S HOLIDAYS

I think most Christians today would be surprised to learn that Yehovah had created His own set of holidays or 'Holy Days' that He desired for His people to honor and obey.

For many years, when I read of a Feast in my Bible, I would assume that it was just some Jewish barbecue or ritualistic food party. I had no idea that the Feasts of the Lord meant so much more than that. I was equally surprised to learn that every one of the Lord's Feasts pointed to or is fully centered on Christ. Did you know that? Did you also know that they are prophetic, foreshadowing future events?

Let us talk about the Feasts and learn their origins and what they mean. The origin of the Feasts begins in the creation story.

Genesis 1:14 - **14***Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;*

At first glance, this verse appears to tell us that the Sun and the Moon would be used to understand the seasons, but when understood from the original Hebrew language, it takes on a new meaning.

Signs And Seasons

The word for 'signs' here is (אוֹת) "oth" which means omen or foreshadowing. Something that is pointing us to a future event. The word for 'season' is (מוֹעֵד) "moed" which means appointed meetings. It can be understood as rehearsals or Holy Convocations (holy gatherings).

So signs and seasons can be read as scheduled gatherings to rehearse the future. Do you see that? So God would use the Sun and Moon in His calendar to remind the people of His holidays. These were His meetings of the body.

Leviticus 23:1-2 - **1**And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **2**"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.'

The word for 'feasts' here is also (מוֹעֵד) "moed", so feasts and seasons are the same word. And more importantly, they are His feasts. A common misunderstanding in evangelicalism is that the Feasts were only for the Jews. No, they are the Lord's Festivals, and He is calling Israel to observe them. He goes on to say in verse 4 that they will also have set dates.

23:4 - **4**'These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.'

As we will see, the seven Feasts are Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits in the Spring, Pentecost, then Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles in the Fall. You can almost see in the titles how they point to Christ, but let us look a little closer. Remember, these are appointed days.

Feast of Passover

Leviticus 23:5 - **5***On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover.*

The first month in the Hebrew calendar is called Nissan, so this would be Nissan 14th at twilight. It is important to remember that in the Hebrew 24 hour period, the day begins at twilight each day instead of at midnight for the Roman calendar.

Now let us look at the events that build up to Passover and watch how Yeshua fulfilled Passover and every Spring Festival during the Passion Week.

Exodus 12:1-3 - **1***Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, **2**"This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. **3**Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.*

*Vs.5-6 - **5**Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. **6**Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.*

In the passage above, we see three different directives for the lamb that would be sacrificed at Passover.

1. A lamb inspected for blemish
2. Introduced to the family four days prior
3. Killed at twilight

As we look at the Spring Feasts, we need to keep a running list of these directives and events so that we can compare them to what happened to Yeshua.

Feast of Unleavened Bread

Leviticus 23:6-7 - **6**And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. **7**On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.

One day after Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins. These Feasts are customarily celebrated as one.

Exodus 12:15-20 - **15**Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. **16**On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you.

Vs. 18-20 - **18**In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. **19**For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. **20**You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.' "

Leaven is a metaphor for sin, so there is something about this Feast of Unleavened Bread that is dealing with sin.

1. Vs. 15 - Get it out of your house!
2. Vs.18 - Do not consume it!

Feast of Firstfruits

Leviticus 23:9-11 - **9***And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **10**"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. **11**He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.*

This festival was a celebration of the first fruits of the land that was given to the Priest to be '*accepted on your behalf*'. Does this sound familiar?

So what do we have so far in these first Feasts?

1. A lamb inspected for blemish
2. Introduced to the family 4 days prior to Passover
3. Killed at twilight
4. Get leaven out of your home
5. Celebration of the first fruits offered on our behalf
6. First Fruits accepted on your behalf

Now let us turn to the Gospels to see how our Lord fulfilled each of these directives down to the hour.

John 12:1 - **1***Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.*

Here we are six days before the Passover. Now, remember, their days are different than our days, so Passover would have been the 13th going into the 14th with the Passover beginning at that twilight. So six days before would have been the 8th going into the 9th. Are you following that?

John 12:12-13 - **12***The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13*took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out:

"Hosanna!

'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

The King of Israel!"

The next day! If you are tracking with me, you know that this is the 9th going into the 10th! What is the 10th? Four days before the Passover. What happens four days before the Passover? The lamb is introduced to the family after having been inspected. This is exactly what is happening here. Yeshua is being ushered into the Temple courts via the East Gate while being welcomed by those who knew who He was, His family.

Now keep in mind, the national celebration of Passover was also happening in Jerusalem at the very same time. This means that at the Sheep Gate, the High Priest was ushering into the Temple the chosen lamb for their yearly observance at the very same time.

Inspection of the Lamb

The Lamb needed to be inspected for blemish. Where do we see Yeshua fulfilling this directive for Passover? We actually see it all over the synoptic gospels.

Yeshua before the Pharisees and Herodians:

Mark 12:13 - **13***Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words.*

Yeshua before the Sanhedrin:

Matthew 26:59-60 - **59***Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, 60*but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.

Yeshua before Pilate:

Luke 23:4 - **4***So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man."*

Removal of the Leaven

How does Yeshua fulfill this requirement of the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

Matthew 21:9-13 - **9***Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:*

"Hosanna to the Son of David!

'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Hosanna in the highest!"

10*And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?"*

11*So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."*

12*Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13*And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be

called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "

Yeshua cleansing the Temple was not just a snapshot of His half-human nature, as many believe. He was cleansing His house of leaven (*sin*) while being introduced as the spotless lamb.

The Lamb Slaughtered at Twilight

Did you ever wonder why the Bible takes the time to mention little details like the time of the day or night? Remember that these are appointed days and times set in place since the days of creation. Leviticus 23:4 *"you shall proclaim at their appointed times."*

Matthew 27:45-46 - **45** *Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.* **46** *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

At the ninth hour, the national lamb was offered up for sacrifice, and it was at the ninth hour that our Lord breathed His last words before giving His life. Speaking of last words, when the national Passover was complete, the High Priest would sound the Shofar and announce, "It is finished." The sacrifice of the lamb for *covering* the sins of Israel was complete. At that exact moment, outside the gates, Yeshua our lamb was laying down His life, providing forgiveness for the world. And it was truly finished.

First Fruits

To help you understand the timing of these events and how they line up with the requirements of Leviticus 23, look at it this way.

Passover - *Crucifixion*

Unleavened Bread - *In the Tomb (overcoming sin)*

First Fruits - *Resurrection*

1 Corinthians 15:20 - **20***But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

Yeshua fulfilled the requirements of the Spring Feasts in the course of the Passion Week, down to the hour. To understand the Feasts of the Lord is to have a new understanding of the events in the New Testament and a new respect for the old.

Why do we not observe these Feasts?

Every one of them is about Yeshua, as are the Fall feasts, which are all about the second coming, and yet for two-thousand years Christians have rejected them, and do you know why? It is because they are Old Testament commands and, according to many, just for the Jews. Let me remind you that they are the Feasts of the Lord and not the Feasts of the Jews.

If we are not supposed to honor these Festivals, why does Paul tell us to keep them?

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 - **7***Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for*

*us. **8**Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

We will see how Paul embraced more of the Law in a later chapter titled 'Untwisting Paul.'

Thus we can see how truth was replaced by tradition in regards to Yehovah's Holy Days. Easter replaced Passover, and Christmas replaced the Feasts of Tabernacles. It is time for disciples of Christ to rediscover these timeless festivals and embrace their celebration of our Lord. Tear down the High Places of Christmas, Easter, and Halloween and return to the Ancient Path.

THE SABBATH

THE LORD'S DAY

Exodus 20:8-11 - **8**"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. **9**Six days you shall labor and do all your work, **10**but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. **11**For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it".

From my earliest days as a believer, I have wondered why the 4th commandment is the only commandment that seems to be disregarded, disobeyed, and hotly contested among evangelicals. More recently, as an observer of the Sabbath, I have been told by leaders in my own fellowship that they did not care if I observed it, but I should not encourage anyone else to do so. I guess that they feared that a person like me, a teacher type, might corrupt other souls. Of course, I say this tongue-in-cheek, but it is pretty telling as to where most believers stand on this issue.

Did the requirements of the Sabbath go away under the New Covenant? Let us look deeper.

“Sabbath is that uncluttered time and space in which we can distance ourselves from our own activities enough to see what God is doing.” – Eugene H. Peterson

The questions that I will answer in this chapter are:

1. Who was the Sabbath for?
2. What is the purpose of the Sabbath?
3. What day is the Sabbath on and does it matter?
4. When and why did it change?
5. Which day is the Day of the Lord?

I have come to the conclusion that ignoring the Sabbath is one of the greatest Christian traditions in the world today.

Who Was The Sabbath For?

*Genesis 2:1-3 - **1**Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. **2**And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. **3**Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.*

The Sabbath was not something invented for Israel at Mt. Sinai, as many believe. It was a crucial part of creation itself long before there were any Israelites in the world. The teaching that the Sabbath was only for Israel stemmed from the Antinomian belief system, and somewhere along the way, as with any tradition, the idea became embedded into our heritage.

If you were to ask the average believer who the Sabbath was for, the answer would be, more often than not, for the

Jews. It was not long ago that I would have given that answer because I had never really studied it for myself. And therein lies the problem for many with this issue, ignorance of the truth due to a lack of real study. As I said, this is true for the average believer. It is a much bigger problem for learned disciples, Pastors, Teachers, and the like because, for them, the idea of embracing the Sabbath is to go back 'under the law.' Remember, it is precisely because they believe that the law is abolished that they stand so vigorously against obeying Sabbath laws.

Strange theology, I think. The one commandment that Yehovah said to remember (*Exod 20:8*) is the one commandment that the Church forgets and even fights to reject. Anyway, back to who it is for.

As we have already seen, the Sabbath has its origin in creation as a day that Yehovah created, made holy, and set apart for man to have as a gift (*Mark 2:27*). He knew the tendency for man would be to distract himself with so many duties and responsibilities, and thus he needed one day out of the week to rest and re-center his heart on his Creator. Although we have no record of it, it is safe to conclude that Adam honored this practice as well based on the evidence that Sabbath observance existed before Mt. Sinai.

Genesis 26:4-5 - *4And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."*

Here we see that Abraham was commended as one who obeyed Yehovah's commands, statutes, and laws. Would that have included honoring the Sabbath? There is no Biblical reason to assume otherwise. Some believe that the laws that were given to Israel at Mt. Sinai were somehow different from any laws given or otherwise expressed before then. If this is the case, then every scripture that we see that tells us that God does not change is not to be believed.

Malachi 3:6 - **6**“*For I am the Lord, I do not change;*

As I have already shown, God's 'ways' have always existed, and He has either verbally communicated them (up to Mt. Sinai) or written them down with His finger (at Mt. Sinai).

Psalms 103:7 - **7***He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.*

This passage in Psalm 103 tells us that Yehovah had 'His ways' (*that never change*) before Moses and Israel, so simple logic suggests and even demands that His laws, including Sabbath, would have been honored long before Israel.

Nehemiah 9:13-14 - **13**“*You came down also on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven, And gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.* **14***You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, By the hand of Moses Your servant.*

Again, Yehovah made known to Israel that which was already in place, His Holy Sabbath.

Finally, we need to look at Yeshua's own words in this matter. Whom does He say the Sabbath is for? In Mark chapter two, a verse that we will look at in greater detail a little later, Yeshua's words are very clear.

Mark 2:27-28 - **27**And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. **28**Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

It was for who? Israel? Jews? Seventh Day Adventists? No! It was made for humanity and it was to be honored forever.

Exodus 31:12-18 - **12**And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **13**"Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. **14**You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you... **16**Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. **17**It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.' "

18And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

"Throughout your generations," "forever," and a "perpetual covenant." Did you know that the Sabbath is a covenant of its own and not just part of the Mosaic Covenant? It stands alone as a perpetual covenant for mankind forever. Those who hold to antinomian positions will try to discount that word "forever" by saying that it does not really mean forever.

What is the Purpose of the Sabbath?

The answer to this question is straightforward. The Sabbath has two purposes. First and foremost, as the above passage tells us, it stands as a sign between God and His people forever, and second, it is for rest.

Imagine your boss saying that he wanted to give you a paid day off. Are you going to say no? Why would you say no? Yehovah says, take a day off and rest. I have created this day off so that you can rest and focus on what matters most. And we say *'no thanks; I've got more important things to do.'* Is it any wonder that we spend millions of dollars each year on antacids and stress relievers? Is it any wonder that we try to cope with the stresses of life with addictions to drugs and alcohol? Do you think that online gaming is at an all time high among adults for no reason?

Again, we are trying to deal with life on our terms by choosing our own lords while rejecting the solutions Yehovah Himself built into our existence for our good. In everything, He desires for us to have a balanced life. Yes, there is a time for work and sweat and building for the future. However, there is also a time for rest and family and worship. If there is anything that I have come to understand, as one who has failed in this area like anyone else, is that when I get busy, it is attention to God that is forgotten first.

So Yehovah says, I will build into creation a solution for this. Stop, no calls, no work, nothing that you would typically do on any other day. Read the Word, pray, and focus on family. Does that not sound awesome? That is what Sabbath is for. Isaiah says my favorite words about the Sabbath.

Isaiah 58:13-14 - **13**“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the Lord honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, **14**Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

What an amazing promise! Unfortunately, it is a promise not fulfilled for many evangelicals because the Sabbath is rejected and dishonored and in no way a delight.

What Day is the Sabbath on and does it matter?

This question needs to be addressed for two reasons. First, in an attempt to minimize its importance, the argument has been made that over time and due to calendar changes, the real seventh day cannot be known for certain. And second, there is a fundamental misinterpretation by the Church as to which day is the Day of the Lord.

We need to address the obvious. Every culture in the world has a seven-day week. The reason? It is because that is the way God created it in Genesis. In more than 105 languages worldwide, the word for the seventh day is some version of the word “Sabbath.” Here are just a few.

Subota, Sabatu, Sobota, Samedi, Sabado, Samstag, Szombat, Sabato, Samschdeg, Sambata, Senbe, and Shanba.

Coincidence? Of course not. It is universally understood (*except in America*) that Saturday is the seventh day and has always been the seventh day. Yes, there have been changes in the calendar over the years, but these changes have no impact on the weekly cycle. That is simply a myth and an excuse used by many not to observe the Sabbath. It is also of utmost importance that we remember that we have an enemy and that enemy desires to break down everything Yehovah sets in motion. In Daniel's apocalyptic vision, we learn something very critical to this argument.

Daniel 7:25 - **25***He (Satan) shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law.*

The 4th commandment is the only commandment that is both a time and a law. It is the only commandment that is called holy, blessed, sanctified, and set apart. Now, do you understand why the enemy opposes it? Now, do you understand how he has been able even to seduce the church to reject it?

Although there have been numerous attempts to change the calendar, the continuity of the seven day week has been the only constant. Seven consecutive days are always seven consecutive days. One can even look in a dictionary and see that the seventh day is Saturday. – <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Saturday>

The Day of The Lord, The Sabbath

The phrase "The Day of the Lord" has more than one meaning throughout the Bible. There is also a distinction

between this phrase and the phrase "The Lord's Day." The Day of the Lord in the Old Testament was usually, but not always, a reference to the end-time coming of the Messiah like we see in Joel 2.

Joel 2:1 - **1***Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the Lord is coming, For it is at hand:*

Other uses of this phrase appear when mentioning actual battle campaigns that the Lord instituted, such as we see in Ezekiel 13.

Ezekiel 13:4-5 - **4***O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in the deserts. 5 You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord.*

We see this phrase being used at least six times in the New Testament, each time in reference to the second coming of Christ, such as in 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 - **2***For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*

But what is the Lord's Day, and how have Christian traditions changed it over the years?

In a popular book written for my family churches, the author objected to the idea that the Sabbath has any importance for the New Covenant believer, saying that the Sabbath was never bound on Christians. He says in his introduction to this teaching that the "day of worship" was changed after the Church was established in Acts 2. Sadly, every support that he offers to this claim is inference, meaning

that his conclusions are inferences from the Scripture that do not directly say what he wants them to say. This should sound familiar to you, as we discussed in an earlier chapter, the fact that the practice of the Sinner's Prayer came as a result of the same distorted hermeneutic. *Example:* Romans 10:9-10 says that all I need to do is believe to be saved (*paraphrased*), so if I say this prayer claiming my belief, I am good to go. Thus we insert into our interpretation what we think the Scripture is telling us to do, and a doctrine is born.

Although I love and respect this brother, I feel that his introduction to his chapter on the Sabbath is a little audacious. "The way that Sabbath-keepers influence other religious people is to convince them that they have been totally misled about worshipping on Sunday. Then, once they have their foot in the door on that issue, they work on other issues such as the food laws. Given the biblical ignorance of the general religious population in America, it is no wonder that these groups are able to unsettle others." – Gordon Ferguson "Prepared to Answer"

Here we see a great example of what I discussed earlier in my chapter called Majority Rules Theology. Not only is his statement incredibly overconfident, making the reader believe that only his interpretation is to be trusted, but it also eliminates any possibility that he may be in error. In addition to this, he immediately sets up the reader to distrust or minimize any person that may come along one day with a genuine biblical conviction about the Sabbath. He makes it sound like Sabbath-keepers are out to get you, and as soon as one of his readers encounters such a person, the walls of defense spring up, eliminating any open and honest discourse on the subject.

So I will ask this again, do you think it is possible that the Christian Church got this wrong? If it is possible, should we not have an open, honest and non-judgmental discussion about it without such inflammatory and dismissive rhetoric? I think we should; I think we can.

Going forward, I will share my thoughts in juxtaposition to his book as his teaching in this matter is widely accepted and taught throughout evangelical churches. This is in no way intended to be an attack on him as a brother in Christ. We are all on a journey. His writings provide us a look at both sides of this argument. I will break this down into segments for the sake of clarification.

New Covenant, New Lord's Day?

The argument is being made that because so many spiritual events happen to fall on a Sunday, it must be God's intention to make the change from Saturday to Sunday. The examples given were things like when the brothers gathered to eat and the fact that Pentecost always falls on a Sunday. Remember what I said about inference? This is exactly what is being done here. In the world of theology, it is called eisegesis, where the interpreter is reading into the text something that he already believes. In this case, it is the perceived command to change the Lord's Day from Saturday to Sunday based on the fact that such and such happens so often on a particular day. Based on this logic, the third day should have more importance than the first. Here is how the days of the week add up in scripture.

The First Day appears 8 times in scripture. The second day appears 15 times in scripture. The third day has 48 references

in scripture with 16 of them being in the New Testament. This is twice as much as the first day appearances. What special significance should we assign for the third day based on this hermeneutic? After all, Yeshua was in the grave for three days. I would think that is the most important day if we are going to interpret scripture like this. It just does not add up. This is not an exegesis of the scriptures; it is opinion.

The author offers more support to prove the importance of Sunday being the new Lord's Day by quoting Matthew 26:26-29. He says that Yeshua commanded the observance of the Lord's Supper on a Sunday. There are a few things here that are problematic for me. First, as we know it today, the Lord's Supper is born of man and not Yeshua. Yeshua was celebrating Passover as He had done every year of his life up to this point. In fact, this was His last Passover celebration. For 1500 years, the Passover lamb was slaughtered on this day, and Yeshua, being our spotless Lamb, was the fulfillment of this practice. He is saying, 'remember THIS'! Secondly, when you read the passage in Matthew 26, it says nothing of the day of the week. It does say in verse 17, "Now on the first *day of the Feast* of the Unleavened Bread." Looking at a Hebrew calendar would tell you that this was on a Thursday going into Friday, the fifth day of the week.

He goes on to say that 1 Corinthians 16:2 clearly says, "*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*" The fact that we (*Christianity*) turned this into a part of what we call Church today has no bearing on what is actually happening here. So Paul urged them to set aside money for collections a Sunday. This, in no way, is a

command to change the Day of the Lord. Christianity has fashioned the contemporary Church service by using bits and pieces from scripture all glued together. It is a far cry from what it actually was.

Acts 20:7 is also used as proof of this change.

Acts 20:7 - **7***Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread*

First, it is a common misunderstanding that every time the Bible uses the phrase "break bread," it means that they are taking communion. Breaking bread was a common metaphor for having a meal together, but there is something much deeper going on here.

We need to not only understand the original Greek in Acts 20:7, but we also need to understand the Old Testament pedigree to what Paul is saying.

"on the first (day) of the week" - In the Greek, the word for 'week' is σαββάτου (*sabbaton*) or Sabbaths. So it becomes 'on the first of the sabbaths' because the word 'day' is not in the original text. What could this mean? To the surprise of many Christians today, there were/are more Sabbaths than just the weekly Sabbath. Paul gives us a clue as to what is going on here in the verse before this one.

Vs.6 - But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

This tells us that what he was saying was said during the Feast of Firstfruits; why? Because it comes *after* the days of Unleavened Bread. After Firstfruits, we are commanded to count seven Sabbaths to Pentecost.

Leviticus 23:15-16 - **15***And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. **16**Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.*

So Paul is saying that they came together to eat on the count of the first of the seven Sabbaths. What does this tell us? It not only clarifies what is actually happening here but, more importantly, it tells us that Paul is honoring the Old Testament Feasts, the very thing that Christianity says is dead.

The author ends his section by conclusively saying, *"therefore, the first-century church assembled on the first day of the week,"* which is a huge jump based on the evidence that I have already given. However, he offers Revelation 1:10 as further proof.

Revelation 1:10 - **10***I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,*

So, based on his assumptions. he automatically concludes that this day must also be a Sunday. Unfortunately, there is absolutely no biblical support for this statement. Not only is it poor exegesis to infer something this grand using the foundation that he has chosen, but it is an even bigger deal that man decides to change something as holy and set apart as the Lord's Day. This is no small thing indeed. This, my friend, is heresy.

No, the Lord's Day never changed. It was never dismissed, canceled, or commanded away by any New Testament author. The fact that Christianity changed this day to Sunday is just

more proof of our collective deviation away from the Ancient Paths.

When Did it Change and Why?

The truth about this change is perhaps one of the clearest examples of how long a tradition can exist in the church. The answer to the question is surprisingly simple. I could have spent the time detailing the history for you, but this information is readily available, as it is a historical fact and can be Googled by anyone interested in learning about it.

There are two factors that brought about this change.

Constantine The Great

"On the venerable Day of the Sun (Sun-day^{-emphasis mine}) let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost. (Given the 7th day of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls each of them for the second time [A.D. 321].)" – Source: Codex Justinianus, lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol.3 (5th ed.; New York: Scribner, 1902), p.380, note 1.

"Constantine's promotion of Sunday observance was part of his definite strategy to combine paganism with Christianity: "The retention of the old pagan name of dies Solis, or 'Sunday,' for the weekly Christian festival, is in great measure owing to the union of pagan and Christian sentiment with which the first day of the week was recommended by Constantine to his

subjects, pagan and Christian alike, as the 'venerable day of the Sun.'" – Stanley's History of the Eastern Church, p. 184

Although history shows that Constantine The Great became a Christian, he was violently anti-Semitic. He was convinced that the Jews had murdered Yeshua and wanted nothing to do with the Jewish religion.

"Let there be nothing in common between you and the detestable mob of the Jews! ... when after that murder of the Lord, that parricide, they have taken leave of their senses, and are moved, not by any rational principle, but by uncontrolled impulse, wherever their internal frenzy may lead them?" –

Eusebius Life of Constantine

Constantine's hatred for the Jews was not only the impetus behind his changing of the Sabbath to Sunday, but he disavowed every Jewish practice, including the Feasts. He wanted to remove all 'Jewishness' from his worship.

The Early Catholic Church

"Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ." - Council of Laodicea, canon 29 (336AD)

A common thread between Constantine and the early Catholic Church is this notion that celebrating the Sabbath is not only considered to be 'Judaizing' but also somehow against what Christ stood for. The hatred for all Jewish practices is unmistakable. Anti-Semitism is at the root of these changes, and it continues today in the form of Judaistic

hostility, which is a phenomenon that I will discuss in greater detail in a later chapter. Thus we can see that this deviation from the truth is almost 1700 years old. By far the longest living tradition in Christianity and, therefore, the hardest to repent of. By the time of the Reformation Movement, this change was so embedded into the Christian culture that it was allowed to remain. Just like the kings before them, the High Places were not removed in this regard.

In Defense of the Sabbath

Let us take a look at some very common passages used to teach against Sabbath observance for Christians.

Romans 14:5-6 - *5One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it.*

The first thing we need to address with this passage is that the word 'Sabbath' does not appear, neither here nor the entire chapter. It is assumed that the day in question is the Sabbath day. When read in context you will see that this entire section is talking about days to eat versus days to fast. The very next verse says:

Vs.7 - 7He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

In fact, when you highlight the number of times that eating is mentioned in the chapter, one can see that the context is

clear. So this is not, in any way, a scripture validating the Church's current position on the Sabbath.

Yeshua Broke the Sabbath?

*John 5:18 - **18**Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.*

The glaring problem with the idea that Yeshua broke the Sabbath here in John 5 is the fact that Yeshua could not have sinned against the Father by breaking the Sabbath because He would no longer be the spotless Lamb by doing so. He came to fulfill the Law, not to break it. So there must be another explanation for this passage. We find our answers by taking a closer look at the context. In the verse prior, we are told that the Pharisees had reasons to want to kill Yeshua.

*Vs.16 - **16**For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.*

So what were these things that Yeshua did that were supposedly against the Sabbath requirements?

*Vs.8-10 - **8**Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." **9**And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. **10**The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."*

Unfortunately for the Pharisees and anyone else that subscribes to the idea that Yeshua broke the Sabbath, these two actions of healing and carrying your mat are not violations

of the Sabbath. They are, however, violations of the Oral Law which has its origins in the will of man. By this time in history, the Pharisees had twisted the law into something that it was never meant to be, a list of legalistic do's and do not's that placed heavy burdens on the people. Hence Yeshua's words in Matthew 23.

*Vs.4 - **4**For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

Contrary to what many believe, the Law was not the heavy burdens that the Pharisees laid on men's shoulders; it was their additions to the Law that burdened men.

Don't Judge Me!

*Colossians 2:16-17 - **16**So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, **17**which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*

It is easy to look at this passage and walk away thinking that Paul settles this argument once and for all. I did for many years. However, there are a few things to consider. As with any difficult passage, we need to ask some questions to arrive at what Paul is and is not saying. "Who, what, and where."

Who was Paul talking to or about? The letter's opening does not tell us specifically whom the letter was written to, nor does it reveal any one group. We can only deduce that the recipients were believers in Christ, but what kind of believer, Gentile or Jewish? The difference is key to understanding what Paul is saying. We know for sure that this letter was written to

the church in or around 60-62AD, and Colossae is roughly 1200 miles from Jerusalem in what was considered Asia at that time. One thousand two hundred miles is a long, long walk. It would be like walking from Dallas, Texas, to San Diego, California.

With this basic knowledge, the question needs to be asked, what are the chances that the church in Colossae was largely Jewish? The odds are pretty slim. Colossae was more than likely a predominantly Gentile church with some Jewish converts due to the Diaspora. And here is why this is important. If Paul is talking to Jewish converts, he is telling them to forget the Law. Foods, Festivals, new moons, and sabbaths all come from the Law, something that a Jewish convert would have been very familiar with. If Paul is telling his Jewish brothers to disregard the Law, he is not only contradicting himself from other writings (*Rom 3:31, 1 Cor 7:19*), but he is also an apostate. I go into greater detail on this in a later chapter about Paul's writings.

If Paul is talking to Gentile converts, who have now *adopted* these practices where they had not before, it makes more sense. It also eliminates the possibility of Paul being double-minded in his teaching. In verse 13 we can see exactly who Paul is talking to.

Vs.13 - **13***And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh,*

Only non-Jews are uncircumcised in their flesh.

Lastly, Colossians 2 is often quoted as a defense against obeying the Sabbath, but those who quote it typically forget the final sentence.

Vs.17 - **17***which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*

Should it not concern us that this passage clearly states that festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths are *shadows of things to come* and not shadows of things long past? If they are shadows, then this means that they are Types for which the Antitype is YET to come, and therefore should still be practiced as Holy Convocations.

In God's Own Words

Finally, if there is any doubt as to which day is the Lord's day or how He may feel about it, listen to Isaiah. Emphasis Mine

Isaiah 58:13-14 - **13***"If you turn away your foot from the **Sabbath**, From doing your pleasure on **My holy day**, And call the Sabbath a delight, **The holy day of the Lord** honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, **14**Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

This day, Yehovah's day, the holy day of the Lord is the same day that John mentions in Revelation 1.

Revelation 1:10 - **10***I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet...*

Have you also forsaken the Sabbath? Trust me when I say, learning to rest takes work, but the blessings are unmistakable. Join me in embracing this beautiful command and rest.

FOOD LAWS REVISITED

Did Yeshua or Paul put an end to the food laws that Yehovah laid out for Israel in Leviticus? Or is this just another Christian tradition? To answer this question, we need to take a look at the original commands.

In Leviticus chapter 11, Yehovah lays out in detail what His people could eat and what was to be considered unclean or not eaten. We first need to understand the meaning of the word “unclean” as it pertains to food.

Unclean - **טמא** (taw-may) - *unclean, defiled*

Although many people think that God somehow hates pigs and shrimp, the truth is, His command comes from love. Unclean animals are “defiled” not because Yehovah does not like them; instead, it is because they feed on dead things. Swine, catfish, shrimp, crab, scallops, crawfish, predators, and the like all have diets of dead or dying animals. Pigs will eat their own feces, and shellfish eat the dead on the bottom of the sea. Our loving Father is commanding us not to pollute our bodies by ingesting into ourselves that which these animals ate.

Leviticus 11:24 - **24***By these you shall become unclean;*

By eating these things, YOU become defiled. We wonder why so many people are sick and die of cancers and other diseases. If this was true for ancient Israel, why is it not true for

us today? More importantly, if the spirit behind the command is love and for our health, why would this command need to change under a new covenant? Or maybe this is just another Christian tradition.

Only For Israel?

It is a popular belief that the food laws were just for Israel and not for anyone else. There is no Biblical support for such a claim. If we count ourselves among God's people, then the command is just as essential for us as it was for them. In fact, Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2 that we are grafted into the Commonwealth of Israel as disciples of Christ.

Ephesians 2:11-13 - **11***Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—* **12***that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* **13***But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

So even if the command was only for Israel, I am, and you are Israel as followers of Christ.

Defining Food

Let us take a closer look at the last two verses of Leviticus 11.

46*'This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth,* **47***to distinguish between the unclean*

and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten (food) and the animal that may not be eaten (not food).’ ”

In this issue, we need to use Biblical definitions of what food is and is not. It will help us to understand New Testament teachings in this arena better. Verse 47 is very clear when Yehovah says what “*may be eaten vs. may not be eaten.*” That which may be eaten is considered food, and that which may not be eaten is not food. In our world, there are some delicious mushrooms which, if you like mushrooms, are considered to be food. At the same time, other mushrooms cannot be eaten unless we want to die. Both are mushrooms, yet one is food, and the other is certain death and thus, not food. Just because we can put something into our mouth and consume it does not mean that it is meant to be food. This helps us understand Paul’s words to Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:1-5 - **1***Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*

Many Christian teachers use this passage to say that the observance of Yehovah's law related to food is a "teaching of demons." Certainly, we can all agree that God's law is not a teaching of demons. Others will say that as long as you're

thankful for whatever you put into your mouth, it is ok to eat. Is this what Paul is saying here?

The key to understanding this passage is in vs. 3 when it says, "*abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*" Where do we find in Scripture a list of foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving? The answer is in Leviticus 11. In that same chapter, we also learn what is NOT to be considered food. And therein lies the truth. Paul's audience would have never considered anything on the unclean list to be food.

The next thing about this passage that we need to look at is Vs.4 where it says, "*every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused.*" The obvious question to me is, does this mean every animal? Many animals cause certain death if eaten, so this does not seem to be the intent of this passage. The problem stems from the fact that many only read this passage and not the one that comes after it. Vs. 5 "*for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*" The word 'sanctified' means set apart, so we must ask, where does Yehovah sanctify foods? The answer again is in Leviticus 11. Think about it. If everything is food, then nothing is set apart. So the 'everything' that Paul is referring to is everything in the sanctified list of foods. Otherwise, Paul is teaching against the Torah.

So what then is this doctrine of demons? Those who teach or mandate others to abstain from that which God *did* create (*clean list of foods*) to be received with thanksgiving. A modern example of this would be India. In that culture, you are forbidden to eat beef. An animal that God did create to be

received with thanksgiving. Why can you not eat beef? Because, in that culture, they worship the cow, which is idolatry, but that is another topic for another book.

But Jesus Said!

Did Yeshua declare all foods clean? There are two very large problems with this interpretation of Mark 7 that I would like discuss.

Mark 7:1-23 - **1**Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, **2**they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. **3**(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, **4**and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) **5**And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" **6**And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

*"This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
7in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'*

8You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." **9**And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! **10**For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your

mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' **11**But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)– **12**then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, **13**thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do." **14**And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: **15**There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." **17**And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. **18**And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, **19**since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) **20**And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. **21**For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, **22**coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **23**All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Yeshua is confronted by the religious establishment (Pharisees) about what they call "defiled hands." Why was this an issue for them? It was because the Pharisees held to another law in addition to the Mosaic Law, a law that man wrote. This "Oral Law," or Talmud, as they call it, is a collection of Rabbinical commentaries written over the course of the last several hundred years that they had elevated in authority over the written law of Moses. It would not be in written form for

another two hundred years or so, but its observance was in full force by Yeshua's time. They believed that God Himself gave the Rabbi's authority to interpret the Law as they saw fit, and their interpretations often redefined the Law into something that it was never meant to be. The washing of hands is a great example here in Mark 7.

In this Talmudic custom or *Halakha*, it is written that to wash one's hands was not enough. It was required that only certain two-handled vessels be used and that the hand-washing began with washing only the right hand twice and then the left hand twice. In addition to this, they would recite this prayer: *"Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands."*

If any of these criteria were unmet, your hands were not considered to be washed, even though there is no command of God regarding the washing of hands in the Torah.

It is because of this that Yeshua uttered the words, "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!" (Mark 7:9)

This opening narrative not only serves to give us some background on what is happening here, but it also provides for us the actual subject (*antecedent*) of the discussion of the verses that follow.

“Hear me, all of you, and understand”

Why does one wash one’s hands before a meal? The answer is simple. To eliminate the presence of germs or dirt on the hands that one might ingest. This is common sense is it not? This common-sense understanding gives us insight into why Yeshua went on to say:

“Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person (dirt, germs) that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” Vs.14-15

Remember, they are discussing the washing of hands here so, it is poor exegesis to assume at this point that Yeshua jumped to clean or unclean foods. It simply does not fit the antecedent.

The disciples then inquire of Yeshua as to the meaning of His words when He chastises them for their poor understanding of this simple teaching. He basically describes the digestion system where food (*and dirt*) go into the body only to be expelled. Then we see these little words (*in most translations*) that seem to define our current theology on the matter of clean and unclean foods. “Thus Jesus declared all foods clean” Vs.19.

For any student searching for the answer to what is clean to eat and what is not, this appears to be the final word. These words are coming straight from Yeshua’s mouth. Or are they? When looking at the original manuscripts in the Greek language, I was surprised to find that these words actually DO NOT exist in the way that many English translations render this

phrase. The phrase in the original text reads (καθαριζον πάντα τὰ βρώματα - "purifying all the food"). This makes sense considering the fact that Yeshua is describing the digestive system in the human body. Our digestive system does indeed work to clean our foods of impurities. When those six words are replaced with the actual original text and the account is read in context, you cannot conclude that Yeshua is advocating breaking God's Law from Leviticus 11 about eating clean foods. More importantly, if He is contradicting the Father's written Law, he is no longer the spotless Lamb that saves the world from sin. He cannot advocate against the Law while being obedient to it. You need to be really careful how you translate this passage.

Yeshua cannot usurp the Father's commands without Himself becoming a false prophet, according to Deuteronomy 13.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 - *1*"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, **2**and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—and let us serve them,' **3**you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. **4**You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. **5**But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of

bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk.

This spoken Word of God became flesh and lived among us (*John 1:14*), and some want you to believe that the Word that became flesh (Yeshua) is going to contradict Himself by advocating against the written Law. It simply does not add up.

Some have said and believe that Yeshua has the authority to change the Law, and although He does have the authority, this position is refuted by scripture.

Malachi 3:6 - **6**"*I the Lord, do not change*"

John 10:30 - **30**"*I and the Father are one*"

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

Collectively, these three passages should tell us that neither the Father nor the Son changes things regarding the Law. This is either a universal fact or it is not. You would not believe the exegetical acrobatics that some theologians employ to get around these passages because they do not line up with their pet doctrines.

Psalms 119:89 - *Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.*

Peter's Dream

Did Yehovah show Peter in a vision that it was ok to eat whatever we want? Let us take a close look to find out.

Acts 10:9-16 - **9***The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray,*

about the sixth hour. **10**Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance **11**and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. **12**In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. **13**And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

14But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

15And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." **16**This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

At first glance, this passage appears to be another convincing scripture in favor of unrestricted eating. After all, He did say, "What God has made clean, do not call common" (or unclean). To the Western Greco Roman Gentile eyes, this conveys the idea that God declared everything edible at some point (though we have no record of it), But to take this position would be to read this passage and the others that follow, out of context. The first thing we have to take note of is Peter's reaction. He knows the Torah (Law) and the possibility of God recommending unclean foods is a massive contradiction to the Law, hence his response, "By no means Lord!" To deduce that Yehovah is changing the rules here in Acts 10 requires Yehovah to violate His own word. Again, we have no precedence for this anywhere else in Scripture. If the Father would contradict Himself, would he do it here, in matters of eating? Romans 14, a chapter that we will cover later in this book, says, "For the kingdom of God is not a

*matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” So what is happening here? Yehovah used a concept that Peter understood very well (*clean and unclean*) to convey a more profound lesson for him.*

Consider for a moment Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream.

Genesis 41:1-4 - **1***After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, 2and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. 3And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows.*

Was this dream actually about cows eating other cows? No, it was not. And how do we know this? Because Joseph himself interprets the dream for us.

Genesis 41:25-30 - **25***Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. 27The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. 28It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, 30but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt.*

The dream was about a coming famine in the land, and the cows were representative of good years and bad years. So it is

with Peter's dream. Peter was somewhat prejudice, and Yeshua was lovingly helping him to repent. How do we know he was prejudice? In vs.28, Peter says, "*You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation.*" The Bible actually does not teach this anywhere. Israel was commanded not to *blend* with Gentile nations, but it does not say that they cannot associate with them. However, the Oral Law does teach such sentiments even today, and God was trying to drive that man-made tradition from Peter's heart.

As the Scriptures tell us, Peter was going to be visited by a Gentile. Many of them actually in Cornelius' home. Yehovah was preparing Peter to show no partiality (Vs.34) toward them, and this is what his vision was about. How do we know? Because like Joseph, Peter interprets his own dream when he says, "*but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean*" Vs.28. Now, ask yourself this. What did God actually show him? Answer? A sheet full of clean and unclean animals. And how did he interpret this vision? Answer? When it comes to mankind, there is no clean and unclean.

So, a look at Peter's dream in context tells us that this vision has nothing to do with overturning God's law on clean and unclean foods.

Questions of Food?

Colossians 2:16-17 - *16* So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, **17** which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Another teaching from Paul that at first glance would again seem to be teaching us that we should not be concerned about being judged for not eating according to God's commands. I find this curious because it only says, "let no one pass judgment." Why are we quick to assume, as Gentiles, that he is not advocating FOR Godly eating here vs. against it? When in fact, that is exactly what Paul is doing. Let us examine this more closely.

To better understand what Paul is saying, we need to read above this passage because our quoted text begins with "therefore," which always tells us to consider the verses mentioned earlier.

Vs.8-14 - **8**See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. **9**For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, **10**and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. **11**In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, **12**having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. **13**And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, **14**by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Paul begins his line of thought here with a warning about embracing philosophy and human tradition. Certainly, we cannot put Yehovah's commands regarding food, festivals, and new moons into that category. His Law does not originate from the "*elemental spirits of the world.*" Vs.8

Secondly, Paul's warning is about being taken captive by philosophy, empty deceit, and human tradition. Individuals (or *sometimes churches*) will come at you with doctrines built on these foundations. They will impute their faulty interpretations and agendas on you, and unless you know the Word of God, you will be taken captive by their doctrines. And I am afraid that we already have been taken captive by these weak and empty traditions.

Paul's words were directed at those who were now adopting the ways of God and were most certainly getting resistance for it from family and friends. He is saying, "*Let no one pass judgment on you*" for embracing God's word. Do we not deal with this dynamic as disciples of Yeshua today in our own world? Peter says:

1 Peter 4:3-4 - **3***For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4***With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;**

And lastly, we cannot read Colossians 2 without asking ourselves, "*what was nailed to the cross?*" Many Christian teachers say that Yehovah's Law itself was nailed to the cross, thereby freeing us from obeying it. However, that is not what Paul is saying at all. He says the "*record of debt that stood*

against us" was nailed to the cross, not the Law itself. What is this record of debt? It is our sin, and allow me to remind you once again if there is no Law, then there is no sin because sin is breaking the Law (1 John 3:4).

Nothing is Unclean?

Romans 14:14 - **14***I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

Here again, we see a passage that appears to be saying that nothing is unclean. For those who know and understand the Torah, this presents a huge problem and is undoubtedly why many Jews wanted to stone Paul. I have already established that most of the New Testament passages that we use to reject Biblical food laws are being misinterpreted, so there must be more to what Paul appears to be saying here. And there is.

Let us begin with Paul's opening remarks in this chapter.

Romans 14:1-2 - **1***As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. 2***One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.**

Immediately we see that Paul is discussing two things: strong vs. weak brothers and meat vs. vegetables. He goes on to exhort the church to be tolerant of one another in regards to who eats what (*meat or vegetables*) and when they eat it.

If you recall Yeshua's parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:11-12 - **11***"The Pharisee, standing by*

himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'

There was an argument of which days were best for fasting and whether one should fast at all. Hence, Paul's remarks in Vs.5-6 - **5***One person esteems one day (of fasting) as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* **6***The one who observes the day (of fasting), observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, (Emphasis Mine)*

Notice the contrast in the structure of the sentence between "*observing the day*" and "*the one who eats*"

So what could Paul possibly mean by making the statement that everything is clean? He is already on record in chapter 3 as stating that he upholds the Law and appears to be contradicting himself here.

Romans 3:31 **31***"Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law."*

Paul's letter to the church in Corinth provides some assistance here.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 - **1***Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up.* **2***If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.* **3***But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.* **4***Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God*

but one.” **5**For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords” – **6**yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. **7**However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. **8**Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. **9**But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. **10**For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? **11**And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. **12**Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **13**Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Paul opens this section of his letter discussing knowledge. Knowledge of what? The knowledge of which food is offered to idols and which is not becomes more apparent as we read further. He says that food offered to idols “has no real existence” or, in our modern understanding, is not changed on a molecular level, just because it was offered to an idol Vs.4-6.

Vs.7 “However” and this is a big however, Paul says not everyone has this understanding. In other words, eating something that was sacrificed to an idol, while you were unaware of this fact, is not going to harm you. This is true

because there is no real power in the gods to whom it was sacrificed Vs.5-6.

Vs.8 - **8**"We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do"

Paul continues with a hypothetical scenario in which one person's knowledge can damn another. Based on what I have just explained, I will add bolded emphasis in the following text to help us better understand.

Vs.9-11 - **9***But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. **10**For if anyone sees you who have knowledge (**of what is and what is not sacrificed to an idol**) eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged (**to safely eat there as well**), if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? **11**And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed (**for eating food sacrificed to an idol**), the brother for whom Christ died.*

Paul concludes his thoughts in this matter with this summation.

Vs. 12-13 - **12***Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **13**Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*

Paul says he would rather just not eat meat at all than risk hurting his brother that does not understand. Now back to Romans.

It is because Paul's writings can be very challenging that we need to verify the things that he writes against his other

writings. We do this so that we can have multiple witnesses for understanding challenging passages and certainly those that seem to contradict one another.

Romans 14 is another unfortunate instance where teachers fall short in studying God's Word to understand exactly what Paul is teaching. As a result, many accidentally dismiss Peter's words about misunderstanding Paul's teaching and mistakenly render any application meaningless. Instead, either because of exegetical laziness or trusting too much in the doctrines of men, Romans 14 is continuously used to support a law-abolishing paradigm. More specifically, the commandments considered abolished via Romans 14 are the commandments found in Leviticus 11 (Dietary) and Leviticus 23 (Sabbath).

Paul himself warns us to test everything in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 so let us do that here. A careful look at vs.15 in the original text tells us something about the food that Paul is discussing.

Romans 14:15 - **15***For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.*

The word used here for "what you eat" in the Greek is, "broma"(βρῶμα) which is translated from the word, "food." *Strongs 1033.*

Unclean animals have never been considered food (*broma*) by Israel, regardless of what unbelievers outside of God's Word might consider food.

Paul is not entertaining a debate about whether unclean animals, according to Leviticus 11, are now clean and can be

accepted as food (*broma*). Paul is discussing whether Biblically clean food can be made unclean in ways not mentioned in Scripture. What do I mean by this?

Due to the confusion brought on by Pharisaical traditions and the Oral Law (*Talmud*), many Christians believed that if food (*broma*) was not prepared within the confines of the Talmud's ceremonial procedures demanded, it was defiled and therefore, unclean. Referring back to our section on Mark 7, we can see this confusion in practice. The Pharisees were compelling the people to wash their hands in their prescribed methods or risk defiling the food. Yeshua rejected this notion when he said, **18** "*Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?*"

Paul is in effect applying Mark 7 by saying that clean animals (*broma*) that are sacrificed in pagan temples and then sent to the marketplace are still considered clean and thus, still considered food, given that you are unaware of the fact that it was indeed sacrificed to an idol. (1 Corinthians 10:25-28)

The only other potential interpretation of this passage implies that Paul was given the authority by Yehovah to abolish or otherwise teach against the Law, and we find that happening nowhere in Scripture.

Foods Sacrificed To Idols

Should Christians abstain from eating foods that have been sacrificed to idols? Let us dig deeper and find out.

Acts 15:28-29 - **28**For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: **29**that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

This was the recommendation of the Jerusalem council as to how to handle the conflict created by the converted Pharisees. They demanded that the Gentile converts be obedient to the entire Torah before being baptized.

There are a couple of things worth noting here. First, and most obviously, why do we not include these teachings in our modern-day conversion studies? After all, these are scriptural directives for Gentile conversions coming straight from the New Testament directly from an Apostle's mouth. Ironic, I think. We will defend Paul's (*also an Apostle*) teachings with blind abandon but completely ignore another Apostle's clear teaching. And why? It is because this teaching comes straight from Leviticus 11, which is the Law. And perhaps the most disturbing of all, our rejection of this teaching reveals an evangelical trend that I call Judaistic Hostility. When I say "our," I do not limit that to our local or global family of churches. I attribute it to all Christian denominations.

Judaistic Hostility is the subtle disregard of anything that has the appearance of being Jewish, either culturally or doctrinally. It is not antisemitism per se, but a bias nonetheless. If a practice or teaching is thought to have its origins in the Hebrew culture, it is disregarded as legalistic. This is especially true of Old Testament doctrines such as the Mosaic Law,

hence the rejection of James' clear instructions in Acts 15. In some groups, it is considered heresy even to give a head nod to the old ways. Sabbath was only for the Jews, they say, and the food laws were only for Israel in the desert. Thus, Christianity has created for itself a divide from its heritage, and over the course of 2000 years, it no longer even resembles the faith of our early brothers.

What is food or anything else that is sacrificed to an idol? As you might guess, it is simply items or animals offered to a god rather than to the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Your first response might be to point out that we do not offer sacrifices any longer, and you would be correct. So why is this an issue? Although Yeshua's death indeed represented the final sacrifice for sin, not all people believe that.

Enter Halal. It is most common in Pakistani restaurants, but not limited to them. Halal is primarily a Muslim practice in which the food they serve is first offered to their Muslim god. Although this is a more sophisticated method of dedication than their ancestors practiced, it is still food offered to an idol. If we, as Gentile believers, disregard this as legalistic, we are in violation of a New Testament command.

"An Idol has no real existence"

1 Corinthians 8:4-13 - **4***Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one."* **5***For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—* **6***yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and*

one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. **7**However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. **8**Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. **9**But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. **10**For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? **11**And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. **12**Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **13**Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

In his letter to Corinth, Paul raises the point that meat offered to idols is not defiled, that is unclean, and still suitable for eating, (*We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do vs.8*), but not all have that strength of conviction. Moreover, just because you have this knowledge does not make it ok to eat. If, as Paul states, you use your knowledge to eat meat in the presence of a brother that does not have knowledge (*Vs. 10*), you condemn both yourself and him.

Some would say that Paul mentions one eating in the idol's temple (*Vs.10*) is a clear indication that this law was done away with. This position is problematic on two fronts. First, it would mean that Paul was standing in direct conflict with Yehovah's Law, and second, he makes it very clear as to his position on this matter just two chapters later.

1 Corinthians 10:14-22 - **14**Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. **15**I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. **16**The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? **17**For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

18Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? **19**What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? **20**Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. **21**You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

"Don't ask don't tell policy"

So how are we to use this knowledge then? Again, Paul makes it clear in the following verses.

Vs.25-29 - **25**Eat everything that is sold in the meat market, without raising questions for the sake of conscience, **26**since the earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it. **27**If any of the unbelievers invites you over and you want to go, eat everything that is set before you, without raising questions for the sake of conscience. **28**But if someone says to you, "This is food from a sacrifice," do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who told you, and for the sake of conscience. **29**I do not mean your own conscience, but the other person's.

“To the Angel of the church write”

Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, we should consider the fact that Yeshua Himself has something to say about this practice.

In His letter to the church in Pergamum Yeshua states; “But I have a few things against you. You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to place a stumbling block in front of the Israelites: to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.” (Rev 2:15)

And again to the church in Thyatira he states; “But I have this against you: You tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols.” (Rev 2:20)

These are post-resurrection churches being rebuked by Yeshua Himself for tolerating meat sacrificed to idols. Should we not listen?

Thus we can see how even in the Christian churches, the tradition of disobeying God’s Law on food has prevailed for centuries. If, at this point, you find yourself thinking that the food laws are in the Old Testament and therefore no longer applicable to you as a believer in Christ, read on. I hope to show you a much larger deviation concerning the Law of Yehovah.

IN DEFENSE OF THE LAW

AND HOW I GOT HERE

Before you begin to read this chapter, it is of paramount importance that you understand and keep two keys as we go forward. In addition, we need to understand the definition of the word antinomianism.

antinomian

[an(t)ē'nōmēən]

ADJECTIVE

- relating to the view that Christians are released by grace from the obligation of observing the moral law.

First, I intend to show that the antinomian doctrines of evangelical churches are an error of tradition and the greatest of all deviations from Yehovah's Word that we have discussed thus far. Please understand me when I say that I know exactly what you are thinking after reading that last sentence. If you are like others that I have spoken to about this subject, you might be thinking that I have left the train station and might be a little heretical. I get that, but please be patient and read on.

Secondly, and more importantly, none of what I will show you here has any bearing on how one becomes a disciple of Yeshua. I believe that we are saved by grace through our faith in Christ alone, and I am in no way advocating putting you

back under the Law as a means to gain salvation. It is actually quite the opposite.

How I Got Here

For as long as I have been a believer in Yeshua, I have embraced the doctrine of what some call Dead Law (*antinomianism*). This is the doctrine that teaches that the Law of Yehovah, as communicated in the Hebrew Scriptures, is abolished and no longer required of us as believers in Christ.

I have not only believed this doctrine but preached it from the pulpit based on my previous understanding of the Pauline letters such as Romans, Colossians, and Galatians. Through the years, I found myself increasingly frustrated with passages that seemed to challenge this belief. Passages that I could not rightly explain as long as I maintained my antinomian doctrine. I never dreamed of reconsidering my antinomian position because that seemed to be as sacrilegious as denying Christ to me.

It was not until I set my sights on understanding the Feasts of the Lord that my eyes began to open a little. When I read something in my Bible about a feast, I always assumed it was some ritualistic Jewish BBQ or party. I could not have been more surprised to learn that they are so much more than that. They were and are pointing us to the Messiah. One of the most faith-building lessons that I learned was that Yeshua fulfilled the Spring Feasts in His Passion week, even down to the hour. In addition to this, He is destined to fulfill the Fall Feasts in His second coming. Did you catch that? The Fall Feasts are pointing us to His second coming.

How could that be? The teaching of the Feasts of the Lord comes directly from Leviticus 23, which is the Mosaic Law. If the Law is dead and no longer applicable to me as a disciple of Yeshua, how can this part of the Law still be in play in the big picture? I spent the better part of 2 years researching this anomaly until I could safely say that I had missed something in my theology. When this realization truly settled in my heart, I began to search to see if I had missed anything else, so I began with the simple things, or so I thought—food laws and Sabbaths.

To my utter shock, I began to untangle what I thought Paul was saying in his teachings about the Law and slowly realized that what I thought he was teaching, he simply is not teaching. After careful examination of the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, one cannot arrive at the conclusions that the bulk of Christianity has embraced for millennia.

Absurdity! I realize that your initial reaction to such a statement is to write this off and not to proceed any further. How could so many miss so much? How could so many God-fearing people have missed something this huge over the course of thousands of years of Biblical study?

These are the questions that I asked myself for months until I remembered, as the title of this book suggests, and I have shown, that since Adam, man has consistently strayed off the Ancient Path. Should we expect to be any different from the heroes of our faith that came before us?

Thus, I set out to discover the truth. In order to do this, I had to empty myself of any and all previously held belief systems and only embrace what the Scripture was showing

me. Believe me when I say that this was not easy. I left nothing out. Every conviction that I had was tested against Scripture. I could not allow myself a pass in any area. If I could not find unassailable answers to my hard questions, then I would not be convinced one way or another. This is what seeking and searching look like, and I did not realize it until my beliefs were brought into question by the Bible itself.

Speaking of Hard Questions

In my search for answers, I had set for myself three walls or three barriers, that if I could get past them, I would prove that what I thought that I saw in my Bible about the Law was false. In order for me to embrace the Law as authoritative Scripture for Christianity today, the hermeneutics needed to be unassailable. I was not willing to make such a huge life change based on Biblical hunches. To date, not only have I not found the answers, but nobody that I have sought help from can get past these walls either.

So I present them to you here in hopes that they cause you to think more deeply about your relationship to the Law of the Lord. And by all means, if you have answers after reading this book, I am all ears.

Wall #1 - Amos

*Amos 3:7 - **7**Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*

The Old Testament Law, as we call it, was taught, preached and enforced for thousands of years before the coming of the Messiah. If it was going to be abolished, done away with, or

otherwise put to an end, would there not be at least one prophet teaching about this monumental paradigm change? According to Amos, the answer is yes! One Teacher that I spoke to about this said that this statement by Amos was not meant to be universal but pertinent for this point in time specifically. He attempted to prove this by asking why Yehovah did not prophesy about other monumental paradigm changes like the cessation of animal sacrifice and the destruction of the second Temple. I was quick to point out that the prophet Daniel foresaw both of these events in Daniel 9.

The truth is, as far as I can tell, Yehovah prophesied about every significant event in the New Covenant. Much of the Old Testament can be seen as one big omen for what was to come, and yet not one single prophet mentions the Law going away. This fact alone should cause some to pause and ask why. Do we just disregard this and blindly assume that Yehovah gave Paul the authority to change the Law, even though we cannot find that happening in Scripture either? Of all of the prophecies, omens, foreshadowing, and types in the Old Testament, none of them speak of the Law coming to an end. Why?

Wall #2 - Paul

It is from Paul's teaching that Christianity derives its antinomian doctrines. No other author in the New Covenant appears to be teaching against the Law as Paul appears to be doing. In fact, no other writer in all of the Bible uses the phrase "under the law" except for Paul. For the record, I believe that every one of Paul's letters is inspired writings. For this wall of mine, Paul is not the issue, but our interpretation of Paul

causes me to rethink my position on obedience to the Law. And it begins with this question.

Where did Paul get his authority to change the Law, if he was indeed changing the Law?

Deuteronomy 18:20 - **20***But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'*

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 - **1***"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, **2**and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—'and let us serve them,' **3**you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. **4**You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. **5**But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk.*

Yehovah makes it very clear in the two passages above that any prophet that comes along and speaks against His commands in order to "entice you from the way in which the Lord commanded you to walk" should be put to death. Would teaching against the Sabbath or the Food Laws fall into this

category? Indeed it would, and yet, that is exactly what we believe Paul is doing, as did the Jews hence their efforts to kill him.

As I said, I believe Paul to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, and if Yehovah gave Paul the authority or command to change His Law, then who am I to argue? But where did He do this?

Some say that it was during his vision of Yeshua on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6-9), yet the Bible records that experience in great detail and no evidence of that command exists. Some say it must have been during his three-year sabbatical in Arabia (Galatians 1:16-18) but again, the Bible records this as well, and there is no mention of it anywhere. We find it no place in the Scriptures, and believe me, I looked for it deep and wide. If you can show me where Paul was given this authority without reaching to that conclusion, then I will gladly accept it. Up to the time of publishing this book, nobody has offered a solution to this wall.

Should we create and then live according to a perceived doctrine that we 'think' Yehovah gave His stamp of approval? Should it not concern us that we cannot find any place in Scripture where Yehovah gave Paul this authority? And the bigger question is; is Paul even really teaching what we think he is teaching? We will attempt to untwist Paul's teaching in the next chapter.

Wall #3 - The Berean's

Acts 17:11 - **11***Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the*

message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

The Bible records that the Bereans were scripture checkers. Lauded for their diligence in making sure that what Paul was teaching was 'true.' Paul even had a Berean traveling with him (Acts 20:4). I find this very interesting. If Paul was indeed teaching against the Law (*which I maintain that he was not*), how did he get past the Bereans checking the Hebrew Scriptures for validation? If they found something in their Bible (*the Old Testament*) which confirmed that Paul had this authority, why can we not find it? Or is it possible that Paul was not teaching what we thought he was teaching? Which makes more sense? Are we ok with the current teaching that Paul was teaching against the Torah even though we see no record of him receiving this authority?

There you have it, my three walls. My failure to break through these walls cemented my convictions on embracing the Law of the Lord. I know that you must still have many questions at this point. I plan to do my best to answer them all.

Throughout this book, I have asked you, the reader, to consider if it was possible that we might have missed something in two thousand years. Is it possible? Is it probable? If you answered yes to either one of those questions, then I ask you to consider with an open heart and with open eyes to see what I will present in the pages to follow.

UNTWISTING PAUL

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.— 2 Peter 3:15-17

When a Holy Spirit inspired Apostle of Christ tells you that Paul's writings are hard to understand, you need to take notice. When he says that some will twist Paul's words because they do not understand them, you need to pay careful attention. It is largely from Paul's teaching that we have most, if not all, of our current doctrines on matters of the Law.

Much of my journey in understanding what I am proposing to you is and was centered around Paul. Under my former paradigm, I was forced to live with a Paul that seemed to contradict himself. It was not until I opened my eyes to the possibility that I was among those who did not understand Paul that I began to understand what he and the Bible were saying in regards to the Ancient Path.

Who Was Paul and Why is He Hard to Understand?

Acts 22:3 - **3***"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.*

Philippians 3:4-6 - **4***though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: **5**circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; **6**concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

As shown in the passages above, Paul was perhaps one of the most influential people in Biblical history. In my opinion, he was most likely the most brilliant theologian in the world and uniquely suited for the task of taking the Gospel to the Gentile world. His knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures was unparalleled, and as we will see, his teachings require patience, wisdom, and understanding to even begin to grasp what he is saying and to whom he is saying it. Take a closer look at Peter's warning.

In vs.16, he warns that the "untaught" will twist Paul's teaching to their own destruction. Untaught in what? What we know as the Old Testament is the only Scripture that they had at this point in history, so this can only mean that they would be untaught in the Law and the Prophets. In the following verse, Peter calls these individuals in error and lawless (*not adhering to the Law*), leading to instability. I am reminded of another of Paul's teachings in Romans 7 when he states in

verse 1, *“Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the Law –.”* In other words, if you do not understand the Law, you most likely will not understand what he goes on to teach. It is not surprising that Romans 7 is one of the most contested chapters in Scripture among evangelicals.

Saul, Saul Why Do You Persecute Me?

In Acts 9, Saul is confronted by Yeshua in a vision on the road to Damascus. At this moment, Saul truly understood his own theological error, and the Bible records that he spent the next three years in seclusion before presenting himself to the Apostles in Jerusalem. Why did he do that?

Paul just realized that his understanding of Scripture was incomplete, and he needed time, prayer, and solitude to adjust his theology. He needed to understand what he missed and how he missed it. Even the great Paul missed something, a giant something. He missed the Messiah. There is no man alive today that can make the claims that Paul can in regards to his education and knowledge of the Law, and yet, just like Adam, Israel, the Kings, and the rest, he had strayed from the Ancient Path.

It is essential for us to understand this about Paul and to see what he did as the result of that new knowledge. What did Paul do when confronted with something that challenged his understanding of Scripture to the core? Unlike his Pharisee colleagues who believed that Yeshua could teach them nothing, Paul was humble. Paul was teachable, and Paul was willing to unlearn. He took the time that he needed to put the pieces together. The fact that Yeshua was whom He said He was is a paradigm-changing truth for Paul.

Imagine The Questions

What was this new understanding of the Scriptures going to mean to Paul? Remember, he had murdered Christians as a result of his faulty understanding of Scripture. Now he realizes that he was wrong the entire time. If you are Paul, you are asking questions like 'how did I miss this?', 'how can this be true?', 'how did my people miss this for so long?', 'how will this change my life?', 'what do I need to do?', 'and where do I start?'

The Bible tells us that Paul was blinded after his experience with Yeshua on the Damascus Road. Although the blindness was real, the spiritual metaphors jump off the page. Paul was blinded to the truth of who Yeshua was despite his vast knowledge of the scriptures, and this was his *come to Jesus* moment. It was Yeshua that completed Paul's Biblical equation. It was Yeshua that made all things clear to Paul. It was Yeshua that filled the voids in Paul's understanding of the word.

In my journey to understand the need for Christians to embrace the Law of the Lord, I found Paul's experience to be the most ironic one of all. Paul's blindness is reminiscent of Israel's partial blindness to accepting that Yeshua is the Messiah (Rom 11). Israel embraced the Law and rejected Yeshua. Historically, Gentiles have embraced Yeshua and rejected the Law. Both are wrong.

Paul's surprising truth is that he never rejected the Law once he embraced Yeshua as Lord as many believe.

Paul Obeyed The Law

When I made this point to some of my Christian brothers, they responded with a noticeable sentiment of disdain and disbelief. Why would Paul, the supposed champion of freedom from the Law, have lived a life of obedience to it? Why indeed? One of the brothers replied that "Paul was just a good Jew." His implication being that Paul played both sides of the fence in the spirit of being all things to all men (1Cor 9:22). Not only is that not what the passage in 1 Corinthians is teaching, but it also makes Paul a hypocrite.

Galatians 2:11-14 - **11**Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; **12**for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. **13**And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. **14**But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

Unlike Paul, Peter was living on both sides of the fence. He was willing to eat with the Gentiles but not in full view of his Jewish brothers. Paul confronted him with this hypocrisy, and rightly so. With this in mind, what are the odds that Paul obeyed the Law just to be a good Jew in the presence of other Jews? Would he not be doing the exact thing for which he

rebuked Peter? So let us take a closer look at how Paul lived in obedience to the Torah with his faith in Christ intact.

*1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 6-8 - **1**It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! **2**And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you...**6**Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? **7**Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. **8**Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Paul confronts the church in Corinth with a sin that sounds completely obvious to 21st-century believers. Sexual immorality with your father’s wife would raise anyone’s eyebrows, yet some of the church members were guilty of this sin. But from where does Paul get his convictions in this matter? Does the Bible teach us that this conduct is wrong? Yes, it does.

*Leviticus 18:6-8 - **6**None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I am the Lord. **7**The nakedness of your father or the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover. She is your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness. **8**The nakedness of your father’s wife you shall not uncover; it is your father’s nakedness.*

In vs. 2,6-8, Paul says that such a person needs to be "purged" and "taken away from among you." This may sound extreme but again, where is he getting this? Is Paul just making this up as he goes? Again, Paul is reminding them of the Law.

Leviticus 18:29 - **29***For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people.*

Paul finishes his thoughts with one final encouragement with a charge to "keep the feast." Which feast is he referring to? Given the fact that he also mentions leaven in the same verse, he can only be talking about the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is also in the Law (Lev 23).

Vs. 8 - **8***Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

In the book of Acts, we also see Paul making an effort to be present at a Feast in Jerusalem. Of the seven Feasts in Leviticus 23, only three are considered Pilgrimage Feasts, which require the men to be present in Jerusalem. These are Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

Acts 18:18-21 - **18***So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. **19**And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. **20**When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, **21**but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in*

Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.” And he sailed from Ephesus.

Paul and The Nazarite Vow

Also mentioned in the verse above is that Paul had cut his hair off because he had taken a vow (Vs.18). Which vow is this? There is no such vow in the New Testament that requires a person’s hair to be cut off. But there is in the Law.

Numbers 6:1-5 - **1***Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord, 3he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. 4All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. 5’All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.*

This vow was meant to be for those who wished to dedicate themselves for a certain period of time in complete service to Yehovah. During this period, they basically lived as Levites (Priesthood), and the time of dedication ended with the shaving of one's hair.

Vs. 16-18 - **16***‘Then the priest shall bring them before the Lord and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; 17and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to*

the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. **18**Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

This is an Old Testament statute. Why would Paul embrace this if he believed that the Law was done away with? The book Acts tells us the answer.

Acts 21:18-22 - **18**On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. **19**When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. **20**And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; **21**but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. **22**What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.

When reading this passage carefully, two things should stand out to you if you embrace antinomianism. First, in Vs.20, we see there were believing Jews that were "zealous for the Law." Under Christianity's current theology, these two things do not belong to one another, and yet, here it is. Not only that, but these new Jewish disciples had concerns for Paul. What were these concerns? They had heard that Paul was teaching "all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses,

saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs" (Vs.21).

Is this not the same thing that you have heard (*believed*) about Paul? Like so many others, they also misunderstood Paul's teaching about the Law, and James offered a solution to these concerns.

Vs. 23-24 - **23***Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. 24***Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.**

This could not be any clearer. The solution that James offered was to show or to prove that Paul kept the Law. How could Paul teach against the Law, like so many believe if he was also obedient to it? Paying the fees for the Nazarite Vow was expensive for one person, let alone paying them for others, as James suggested. This was a hefty cost to Paul for something that he was supposedly disavowing unless, of course, he was not disavowing it.

Faith and The Law

Romans 3:27-31 - **27***Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28***Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. 29***Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30***since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31****Do we then**

make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

As Paul does consistently in his writings, he distinguishes here in his letter to the Romans between the Law and faith in Christ. He did this because in the minds of the Jews, it was obedience to the Law that justified them instead of faith in Christ (Rom 3:20). But in drawing this distinction, Paul makes sure that the reader understands that even though we are justified through our faith in Christ (Rom 3:21-22), we are not justified at the expense of the Law. He asks, "*do we make void the law through (or because of) faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the Law*".

The word for 'establish' here is "histémi" (ἵστημι) *to make to stand*. Many English translations use the word "uphold." So Paul is not in any way saying that the Law is dead and gone, but the exact opposite is true.

Freed From the Law?

For many years I believed that what Paul was teaching in Romans 7 was freedom from the Law. In fact, I thought that the phrase 'freedom in Christ' meant just that. Sadly, I believed this because I did not know enough of my Old Testament to understand what Paul was saying. And this is precisely what Paul says in this regard.

Romans 7:1 - **1***Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?*

Paul opens his thoughts on this issue with a warning of sorts. He expects the reader to “*know the law*”; otherwise, what is to follow might be misunderstood. And it was misunderstood; it is still misunderstood today.

Romans 7:1-6 - **1***Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. 4Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 5For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

Paul appears to be speaking of ‘the Law’ here but uses a marriage metaphor to make his point. Is this what is happening here? To have a better understanding of this chapter of Romans, we need a better understanding of the relationship between Yehovah and Israel.

Ezekiel 16:6-8 - **6***“And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ 7I made you thrive like a*

plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare.

8“When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,” says the Lord God.

Ezekiel tells us that the relationship between Yehovah and Israel was that of a husband and wife. The Scriptures are replete with this fact (Isaiah 54:5, Jer 31:32, Hos 2:19 et al).

It was at Mt. Sinai that Yehovah married His bride when He gave His people the terms of their union, i.e., the Law, and they answered with a resounding “I do.”

Exodus 19:7-8 - **7**So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. **8**Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

But they were not faithful. As you have already seen in the opening chapters of this book, it did not take long for the bride to commit adultery. Despite all Yehovah’s efforts to call her back to Him, she became a harlot, and the Father divorced her.

Jeremiah 3:6-8 - **6**“Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. **7**And I said, after she had done all these things, ‘Return to Me.’ But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. **8**Then I saw

that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce;

The House of Israel was now a divorced woman estranged from her divine husband, and Yehovah has laws about divorce.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 - **1**"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, **2**when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, **3**if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, **4**then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

The Law is clear about this issue. When a woman has been divorced and lies with another man (as Israel did), her first husband cannot take her back. This presents a problem because Yehovah vowed to get her back somehow and redeem her. But how could He without violating His own Law?

Now let us read Paul's teaching in Romans 7 again with this new knowledge. Remember, Paul knows the Law, and he explains how Yehovah redeemed His bride. I will add emphasis this time for clarity.

Romans 7:1-6 - **1**Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law (**of the husband**) has dominion over a man as long as he lives? **2**For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. **3**So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from **that** law (**the law of the husband**), so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. **4**Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the (**dead**) body of Christ (because you also died in baptism), that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead (**the risen Christ**), that we should bear fruit to God. **5**For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. **6**But now we have been delivered from the law (**of the husband**), having died to what we were held by (**certificate of divorce**), so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Do you see? Are your eyes open? The only way for the woman to be freed from the law of Deuteronomy 24 was for the husband to die. How did Israel's husband die? He died on a cross to redeem His bride. We also died in baptism so that both He and we are free to marry again. What a beautiful love story!

So Paul is not teaching us in Romans that we are freed from the Law of the Lord; he teaches us that we are freed from "that law" (Vs.3), which was the law of the husband in Deuteronomy 24.

All Things are Lawful?

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 - **23***All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24*Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

Here is another one of Paul's famous sayings that are often taken out of context and used as an excuse to sin. We have already seen that Paul is obedient to the Law and has not forsaken it, so what could he be saying here? As humans, we have been given the freedom to do what we want. We have the freedom to choose how we will live. In this sense, anything is lawful for me. Adam had the freedom to choose, and he chose poorly. We also have this freedom. It is lawful for me to eat poison, but that will not turn out well for me. So even though everything is lawful, there are still consequences to the choices that we make.

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

The Book of Galatians is the flagship book for those who cling to antinomianism as Paul makes many statements that appear to support such a position. The key to understanding what Paul was saying was the one word he repeatedly uses in the letter: "Justified" (or Justification).

Galatians 2:16 - **16***knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

Remember, some believed that it was by obedience to the Law that one was justified before God, and Paul was teaching that no amount of obedience was good enough to save or justify a man before Him. But he is in no way saying that the Law is void due to this fact. Again, see Romans 3:31. I obey the Law because I love Him, not because I am trying to earn something from Him.

*Vs.19-21 - **19**For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. **20**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **21**I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."*

What does Paul mean when he says, "through the law I died to the law"? To be specific, he is not saying that the Law died, but rather we were the ones who died to the Law or to the curse of the Law. What was the curse of the Law but death and condemnation? Paul teaches us this in vs.13.

*Galatians 3:10-13 - **10**For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." **11**But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." **12**Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." **13**Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us...*

We need to unpack what Paul is saying here.

Vs.10 - *For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.*

Paul says that for those who choose to seek justification by the observance of the Law, they are cursed. The New Living Translation puts it this way, "But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under His curse"

Then Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 when he says, "*Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.*" Which is true in the eyes of Paul and God. Then in Vs. 11, Paul says, "BUT, no one is justified by that observance. Do you see the difference in this vs. what many believe Paul to be saying? Paul has one more thing to say in this regard.

Vs.12 - *Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."* Here is another "but" moment for Paul that is critical to understand. For emphasis, I will break this down.

"The Law is not of faith" (TRUE), BUT, the man who does them shall live by them (or because of them). Is he talking about eternal life here? No, he is not; he is talking about the quality of life. He is quoting Leviticus 18.

Leviticus 18:5 - **5***You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.*

The Purpose of the Law

Galatians 3:23-25 - **23***But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24***Therefore the law was our tutor to**

bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

To understand this teaching, I had to put it into terms that I could easily understand. What does Paul mean that we were kept under guard by the Law and having it as a tutor that we are no longer under?

When a person is in school, they are given a textbook to teach them how to pass the test. Or consider what you and I needed in order to get our driver's license. We needed a tutor, a guide, a textbook to inform us of the laws and how to be a good driver. We use this tutor as a teacher until the information is memorized and we can take the test without its help. Can you imagine taking the driving test while at the same consulting the manual? No, you are expected to know the material before the test. As a mature driver, I no longer need this tutor because the information has been internalized, and I instinctively know right from wrong. Does this mean that the tutor is gone? Not at all. If I break one of those traffic laws, the tutor is right there to stand in judgment over me. Now that I have broken a traffic law, I am now 'under the law' or under its punishment.

Under The Law

In all of Greek literature, Paul is the only author to use the phrase 'under the law.' Unfortunately, evangelicals have hijacked its meaning to teach that to be under the Law is to obey it. Let us take a closer look.

Paul's first usage of this phrase appears in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 3:19-20 - **19***Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. **20**Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Vs.19 - Paul says here that the Law speaks to those who are *under its penalty*, which was all of us at one time, because "*all of the world is guilty*" (*paraphrased*). This is much like his teaching to the Galatian churches when he says:

Galatians 3:22 - **22***But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

So the phrase '*under the law*' does not mean to be obedient to it, but rather to be under the consequences of breaking it. Galatians 3:22 says we were confined '*under sin*,' so it is prudent here to remind us of what sin is.

1 John 3:4 - **4***Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.*

So, sin is breaking the law, and lawlessness is sin. And to be '*under sin*' is to be '*under the law*'. Do you see that?

If you are a disciple of Christ you are not under the Law because Christ redeemed you from the curse that comes as a result of breaking the Law.

Galatians 3:13 - **13**Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (from being under it - *Emphasis Mine*), having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),

In summation, to call one to embrace the Law of the Lord is not in any way calling them to go back under the Law, for that would be impossible for a believer unless he or she decided that it was the Law that saved them.

But Christ is The End of the Law!

This one passage in Romans 10 is perhaps the most often quoted passage when someone breaches the topic of obedience to the Law. We need to understand what Paul is saying here. Bear in mind that Paul has already made the emphatic statement that he *'upholds the Law'* in chapter 3, so there must be something more to what Paul is saying here.

We have already discussed the fact Israel was bent on holding to the Law for their righteousness. As disciples of Christ, our righteousness does not come from the observance of the Law but by our faith in Christ.

Galatians 2:16 - **16***knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

This not only applies to any Old Testament mandate but also any New Testament mandate. Yehovah's Law is His law wherever it is found. We are not saved because we obey but because of our faith and love for Christ. It is because of that faith and love that we obey all and not just some. On to Romans.

Romans 10:1-3 - **1***Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2**For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3**For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4**For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

As many people try to use this passage to support their anti-law position, they fail to not only quote the entire passage, but they fail to read it in the context of what Paul is saying. The entire sentence is "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*"

It is the end of the Law for righteousness, or in other words, the end of trying to justify yourself by obedience to the Law if you are a believer.

Do you see the difference? Vs.3 says that Israel was ignorant to God's righteousness (which is by faith in Christ) and wanted a righteousness of their own (the Law). Paul is saying that this is wrong. As followers of Christ, our righteousness comes from our faith in Christ, but that does not mean we stop being obedient. This is precisely what Paul says in the third chapter.

Romans 3:31 - **31***Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*

In other words, we do not claim faith at the expense of the Law. We claim faith in Christ while obeying the Law.

Alive and not Dead

I would like to end this chapter with one small reminder from the New Testament, and it includes more than just Paul's teachings. It is a fact that 21st-century believers most often overlook.

Hebrews 4:12 - **12***For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

When the New Testament writers were penning their letters, what did they consider to be the Word of God? When the author of Hebrews wrote the words above, do you think that he was referring to the letters of Paul or the writings of the Gospels which did not yet exist? Or do you think that he was referring to the *only* Word of God that they had at the time? The living and active '*Old Testament*' that was sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

There are 46 references to the Word of God in the New Testament. All of them referring to the Hebrew Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi. Consider that as you head into the next chapter.

SEEING THE LAW IN THE NEW COVENANT

We have been constituted in such a way that we need to be given specific commands by ministers of God's Word. To leave off the preaching of commands, as many do today, is to neglect an instrument that God has appointed for the sanctification of his church. We must not be wiser than God!" — Mark Jones

When I first opened my heart and mind to the fact that Christianity was in error for abandoning the Law of the Lord, I began to see Yehovah's Law everywhere in my New Testament. However, to see it, I had to read a translation that had not replaced the variations of the word 'law' with some other English word. To my surprise, the Law was everywhere. The Law in one form or another is mentioned 236 times in the New Testament alone. In the conversion studies that my church employs, we make the claim that the word '*disciple*' is used more than 270 times in the New Testament, and because of that, we need to pay special attention to its meaning. Does that not apply here as well? Should we take the time to roll back the English translation to uncover what Yehovah has to say about the Law under the New Covenant?

Let us do that here and now. The first one that comes to mind is in Matthew chapter seven.

Matthew 7:21-23 - **21**"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **22**Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' **23**And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

For the longest time, I understood this passage to be teaching about the religious who had not been truly converted. For some reason, in my mind were images of televangelists and so-called faith healers. But this is not what Yeshua is saying at all. When you look at what He actually says, the issue is with the *practice* of *lawlessness*. How does one 'practice' lawlessness? If we consider the context, it cannot just be those who practice sin because sin is breaking the Law, and we are all guilty of that. These are individuals who are seemingly engaged in what we might call Christian activity. Prophesying in the name of Yeshua, casting out demons, and doing wonders in the name of Yeshua are all Christian attributes. So what could Yeshua mean by this statement?

Could this be believers in Christ who reject the Torah? Who claims that it has no authority in their lives and that it is dead and gone? If so, then this curious passage in the book of Revelation makes sense.

Revelation 14:12 - **12***Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God **and** the faith of Jesus.*

In Christianity's current paradigm, this passage simply does not fit. In the mind of the antinomian, you cannot keep the commandments of God AND the faith of Yeshua. Or can you?

Yeshua on the Law

Matthew 7:11-12 - **11***If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! 12*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Many modern teachers want us to believe that when Yeshua taught things like this, it was only meant to be obeyed until after the resurrection, then forgotten. Really? Even from an utterly humanistic approach, this just does not seem to make sense. Are we to believe that Yeshua knew that the Law was going away shortly after His ministry, and yet He still urged people to obey it? You be the judge.

Matthew 13:41-42 - **41***The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42*and will cast them into the furnace of fire.

Here again, we see Yeshua using this phrase 'practice lawlessness' in light of His second coming. As I attempted to define earlier, these are those who make it a practice to break the Law of the Lord. When reading Paul's words to the Galatians, this makes perfect sense.

Galatians 5:19-21 - **19***Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness,*

lewdness, **20**idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, **21**envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

This passage is not unfamiliar to most of you, but what may be shocking is the fact that Paul lists an Old Testament standard (sin) by which men will be judged. Vs.19 'uncleanness.'

“ἀκαθαρσία” - akatharsia (*uncleanness*)

Cognate: 167 *akatharsía* (from 1 /A "not" and 2513 / *katharós*, "clean because unmixed, pure") - ritual *impurity*, caused by leprosy, open infection, child birth, touching a corpse, etc.

[This use of 167 /*akatharsía* occurs in the LXX (see Lev 12:5, 13:11, etc.).]

In most English translations, this word is rendered as '*impurity*,' which is an unfortunate translation. In our current sexualized culture, this has been used to denounce sins like masturbation, lust, and the like. However, it is the exact same word being used in Leviticus 12 and 13, where the Bible teaches about uncleanness as a result of coming into contact with blood and leprosy. So why does Paul list this Old Testament sin among damning practices if he believed that the Law was dead?

The Greatest Commandment

Matthew 22:37-40 - **37**Jesus said to him, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”* **38**This is the first and great commandment. **39**And the second is like it: *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* **40**On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

A popular sentiment among those who do not feel it necessary to obey the Law is drawn from this passage. They say, *‘as long as I love God and love people, I am fulfilling the Law.’* And although this is true when the Law of the Lord is truly understood, they use it as a license to ignore the details of the Law. An example would be the Sabbath or cleanliness laws. They wish to use this passage as a safety blanket while ignoring the rest of the Law.

To understand this passage, one needs to see that the Law given on Mt. Sinai is all about love. A close look at the decalogue reveals this to us.

1. “You shall have no other gods before Me.” - Loving God
2. No graven images of worship. - Loving God
3. Taking the Lord’s name in vain - Loving God
4. Remember the Sabbath - Loving God
5. Honor Father & Mother - Loving People
6. Shall not murder - Loving People
7. No adultery - Loving People
8. Shall not steal - Loving People
9. No false witness - Loving People
10. Shall not covet - Loving People

We must keep in mind that God will not be mocked (Gal 6:7). We will not be successful in finding some loophole to obedience. This was something that the Pharisees were famous for.

Matthew 23:23-24 - **23**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. **24**Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Mark 7:9-13 - **9**He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. **10**For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ **11**But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban”—’ (that is, a gift to God), **12**then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, **13**making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

In both of the passages above, the Pharisees employed the same attitude toward obedience that many Christians do with the greatest commandments. They say, “as long I love God and love people, I’m good with the Law,” therefore excusing themselves from obedience to individual laws. Yeshua would say to them (and us), “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Luke 11:42).

Abounding Lawlessness

Matthew 24:12-13 - **12***And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. **13**But he who endures to the end shall be saved. **14**And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

Notice here how Yeshua sets *endurance to the end* against the increasing *lawlessness*. In other words, to endure to the end is to be lawful to the end and not lawless.

Can any of us deny that humanity appears to be going farther and farther away from morality and sensibility with each generation? Let it not be said of God's people that they also increased in lawlessness but rather returned to it.

Matthew 5:17-20 – **17***“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. **18**For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. **19**Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20**For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

The many theological rationalizations that I have heard in response to Yeshua's words above have been surprising. I have heard Bible Teachers utter the words, “Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but He did.” This kind of Biblical

interpretation is not only absurd; it is precisely the reason that I set my heart to understand the truth. This is just another Scripture that does not belong in the antinomian worldview. They are so bent on having a world with no Law that they do everything that they can to explain this statement away.

Another explanation that I have heard is that fulfillment is abolishment. In other words, when Yeshua fulfilled the Law, it was automatically abolished. Not only can that not be proven with Scripture, but the assertion also requires me to believe that when Yeshua uttered these words, He knew that it would only be valid until He died. Despite His qualifying words that followed when He said, "*till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled*" (Vs.18). At the risk of sounding sarcastic, Heaven and Earth are both still here, right?

Yeshua goes on to say that whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men to do so shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Do we not do this with the Sabbath? Do we not do this with the Food Laws? Do we not do this with the Feasts? Today, the Church actively teaches against these commandments and warns people like me to disobey and disregard the other half of Yeshua's statement. "*But whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*" Return to the Ancient Path Church!

Yeshua's final words in Vs.20 truly hit the nail on the head for those who were paying attention. They will also serve to help us better understand the irrefutable nature of His words on the longevity of the Law.

Vs.20 - **20***For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

For many years this passage of scripture bewildered me. I held to the belief that the Pharisees were beacons of obedience to the Law. And if Yeshua is saying that my righteousness had to exceed theirs, I was in trouble. It was not until I learned who the Pharisees really were that I fully understood what Yeshua was saying. In Mark 7, a scripture that we explored in the chapter on Food Laws, Yeshua tells us who the Pharisees are.

Mark 7:6-8a,9 - **6***He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:*

*'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. **7**And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' **8**For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men... **9**He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.*

They are hypocrites, but why?

- Teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.
- Laying aside the Law in order to obey their tradition
- Rejecting the Law in order to keep their tradition

Are you a Pharisee? Do these descriptions apply to you or your theology in any way? You see, the Pharisees elevated their traditions and opinions over the Law of the Lord. They enforced these man-made rules by placing them on the shoulders of their brethren, and their righteousness was not based on adherence to the Law but to their Oral Law and to

their traditions. So, when we re-read Yeshua's words, "*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*" What is Yeshua saying? He is saying to obey the Law and not your man-made traditions.

Paul on the Law

Romans 2:12-15 - **12***For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law* **13***(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; 14**for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15**who show the work of the law written in their hearts,*

Do you remember when Peter said that some of the things that Paul writes could be difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16)? Well, this is undoubtedly one of them. A lot is going on here in these four verses. We first need to understand that Paul is drawing from his knowledge of the Law to show that something prophesied has now come to pass. Consider Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 - **31***"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 32**not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. 33**But this is the covenant that I will make with*

the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

I often ask people the question, “who was the Old Covenant for?” Their response is almost always “the Jews.” Then I ask, “who was the New Covenant for?” And the response is almost always “the Church” or “the Gentiles .” But the book of Jeremiah makes this clear when it says that the New Covenant is for the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (Vs.31). If you are not a Hebrew, where do you fit in this?

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he takes the time to help us understand this dilemma.

Ephesians 2:11-13 - **11***Therefore remember that **you**, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— **12***that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

We could write an entire book on what it means to be in the Commonwealth of Israel, but we need to make it brief for our purposes.

It is often understood among evangelicals that the “you” Paul is referring to in Vs.11 are pagan Gentiles like you, and I was before Christ. But this view does not take into account the source from which Paul gets this teaching. Paul is not just

dreaming up this terminology. He is quoting from the book of Daniel.

Daniel 9:7 - **7***O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.*

When Yehovah divorced the House of Israel, He cast her into the nations (*in all the countries to which You have driven them*), and they were no longer under covenant and had become Gentiles. Paul says in Eph 2:11 above that they (*the House of Israel*) were called the '*uncircumcision*' (Gentiles) by those who were called the '*circumcision*' (Jews). It was the House of Israel that had become '*strangers from the covenant, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and without Christ.*'

How can we know this for certain? Because of Paul's words in Vs.13 where he quotes Daniel 9:7.

Ephesians 2:13 - **13***But now in Christ Jesus **you** who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ*

vs.

Daniel 9:7 - *and all Israel, those near and those far off*

So specifically, Paul is referring to the House of Israel who are now Gentiles, and that also includes us, and together, through the blood of Christ, we are grafted into the Commonwealth of Israel. Back to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah foretold that under the New Covenant, the law would be in our minds and written on our hearts (Jer 31:33).

In Romans 2, Paul is once again referencing back to this prophesy when he says, "for when Gentiles, who do not have the Law, by nature do the things in the Law, these, although not having the Law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the Law written in their hearts (Rom 2:14-15)

Please take a moment to read that again, and when you do ask this question; according to Paul, how do the Gentiles show that the Law is written on their hearts (Vs.15)? The answer? By doing the things in the Law (Vs.14). This is why Paul says that it is not the hearers of the Law that are justified, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

This is the exact same teaching from James, the brother of Yeshua, the leader of the Jerusalem council, in his letter.

James 1:22-25 - **22***But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* **23***For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; **24**for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. **25**But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

Remember, at this point in history, there was no New Testament written yet. If this is the case, what was the "word" that James is referring to, and what is this "perfect law of liberty" that we are supposed to "continue in?" Brothers and sisters, it is the Law of the Lord.

Again in his letters to Corinth, Paul seems to contradict his supposed antinomian teaching with an exhortation to continue in obedience to the Old Testament commandments.

1 Corinthians 7:19 - **19***Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.*

Again, in Paul's letter to the Romans, he makes the point that our faith in Christ does not void our obligation to the Law.

Romans 3:31 - **31***Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.*

Just because our righteousness comes as a result of our faith does not mean that the Law is void.

Hebrews, James, and John

Hebrews

Hebrews 7:11-12 - **11***Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? **12**For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.*

Many will attempt to use this passage in Hebrews 7 in order to justify their anti-law position claiming that it was changed. To understand what the writer of Hebrews says to us, one needs to have a deep understanding of Melchizedek and the Levitical Priesthood, which many do not have. It is a weighty topic, to be sure. The writer tells us that there was a 'change in the law,' so we need to understand what that

change was. I have already emphatically stated and supported that Yehovah does not change, so what can this mean?

First, the writer discusses the difference between two priesthoods, the Levitical and the Melchizedek, and why Yeshua can assume the priesthood even though He is not in the line of Aaron. The Torah teaches that only the line of Aaron can be priests (Exod 28:1). The writer argues that the Levitical laws do not restrict Yeshua from being a priest since He is not a priest on Earth. Because Yeshua is not a priest on Earth, the earthly priesthood laws do not apply to Him. According to the writer of Hebrews, the primary qualification to serve as Priest in the heavenly Tabernacle is the '*power of an indestructible life*' (Vs.16), for which Yeshua qualifies. The Hebrews writer teaches that He can be our High Priest, despite not being descended from Levi, because He is a Priest of a different priesthood. Therefore, this is a '*change of the Law,*' as the writer puts it – governing the Heavenly Tabernacle compared to the law that governs the Earthly Tabernacle. This, however, does not invalidate or void the Earthly Tabernacle that is still in force on Earth.

Hebrews 8:4-5 - **4***For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5*who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things

So the change mentioned here is not a change indicating that the Torah changed or went away, but rather a change in the priesthood. The very fact that the author of Hebrews makes it a point to explain how Yeshua is a legitimate Priest makes sense only if he considers the Torah to still be applicable to those in the faith

James

James 2:10-12 - **10***For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11*For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. **12**So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

Have you ever heard someone say that you cannot succeed in obeying the Law of the Lord because if you break one Law, you are guilty of all Law, so why try? This is a popular sentiment in the Christian Church that is drawn from this passage. But is this what James is saying?

James does indeed say that when a person is guilty of breaking one Law, he is guilty of all. In other words, whether a person breaks one or all, he or she is still a lawbreaker and under the curse of the Law. However, he goes on to say we should live as one that the Law will judge. How do you live as one that the Law will judge if you do not obey the Law? We surely understand this from a civil perspective. Whether we break the civil law by speeding or by theft does not matter because either violation puts us in opposition to the law. Does this mean that we should not try to be lawful citizens as a result? Of course not. James teaching here certainly does not convey that he believes that the Law is gone.

John

1 John 2:3-6 - **3***Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4*He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. **5***But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is*

perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

The most common anti-law response to this is to say that John is talking about Yeshua's commandments and not the Old Testament Law. I know this because I used to teach it myself. Unfortunately, this position pits Yeshua against the Father and makes them two different authorities. If you are in that camp, I will encourage you to consider these passages.

John 10:30 - **30**"*I and My Father are one.*"

John 12:49-50 - **49***For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50***And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."**

John 14:9 - **9***He who has seen Me has seen the Father;*

Yeshua neither teaches against nor different from the Father. To assume so is to set Yeshua in opposition to Yehovah.

1 John 2:7, 24 - **7***Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning (Old Testament). The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning...24***Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.**

Here John is clearly teaching the value of the Old Testament in the life of the disciple. If the Word (Old Testament) abides in you, you will also abide in the Son! Why?

What connection does the Law have with the Christian? John gives us the answer when he says: **6***He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

How did Yeshua walk? He walked in accordance with the Law. How can we as Christians walk in the dust of our Rabbi if we reject the standard by which He walked? When Paul says, *"Imitate me as I imitate Christ"* (1Cor 11:1), do you think that he was telling us to imitate a lawless Paul while he imitated a lawful savior? This just simply does not make sense.

The cynic will ask, "Do we need to be celibate like Yeshua? Unmarried like Yeshua? Wear sandals like Yeshua? Or speak Hebrew and Aramaic like Yeshua? Of course, this argument is a logical fallacy and arguing a point to its absurd conclusion. We must use common sense here to realize that John does not mean to convey such extremes.

1 John 5:2-3 - **2***By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. 3For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*

John finishes his letter with an exhortation to love Yehovah and to show that love by being obedient to His commandments. This should sound familiar to most Christians as Yeshua uttered these exact words.

John 14: 15 - **15***"If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

John's Vision in Revelation

Revelation 12:17 - **17***And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring,*

who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 14:12 - **12***Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

Revelation 22:12-15 - **12***“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. **13**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”*

14*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. **15**But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*

John’s vision of the apocalypse tells us much about who should be obeying the Law. In chapter 12, we are told that Satan makes war against those who “*keep the commandments of God AND have the testimony of Jesus Christ,*” which is a strong link between the Old Testament Law and faith in Christ working together. He reiterates this sentiment in chapter 14. In chapter 22, we see what I believe to be the most chilling warning of all. In vs.14, he says, “*Blessed are those who do His commandments,*” and then connects this statement to access to the tree of life and entering the Holy City. Among them who are left out are those who love and practice a lie. May we work even harder not to fall trap to the lie and find our way back to the Ancient Path.

LEGALISM

AND RELIGIOUS FORMALISM

To escape the error of salvation by works we have fallen into the opposite error of salvation without obedience. In our eagerness to get rid of the legalistic doctrine of works we have thrown out the baby with the bath and gotten rid of obedience as well." — A.W. Tozer

legalism

: excessive adherence to law or formula.

theology

- dependence on moral law rather than on personal religious faith.

formalism

: the practice or the doctrine of strict adherence to prescribed or external forms (as in religion or art)

I felt it necessary to include the definitions of the two words in the title so there would be no misunderstanding the goals of this chapter.

If you have read this far, you most likely have one of two different reactions or questions, and perhaps you have both.

1. Is this just a lot of legalism?
2. How in the world can Christians obey the Law?

I hope to answer the question of 'how in the following chapters. However, here we need to address the questions of legalism because in our current Christian culture, the word 'legalism' is a dirty word and is often used when describing someone who advocates adherence to the Law. And sadly, it is also often used as an excuse for not obeying Scripture at all, regardless of its location in the book.

Obedience is not Legalism

Most of our ideas of what legalism is come from Yeshua's interactions with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and rightly so. If you have been paying attention, then you have seen the common thread of who and what these factions were and what they represented.

They were beholden to their interpretations of what they believed the Law to be and, in doing so, created for themselves a law unto themselves. They took the simplicity of Yehovah's ways and twisted them into something that He never intended. We saw this in Mark chapter 7, where they created handwashing laws. We saw it alive and well in Peter's heart in Acts 10. And we can read the entirety of Matthew chapter 23 to see the full scope of their religious formalism. It is no wonder that Yeshua warned us against their methodology.

Matthew 16:5-12 - *5Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."*

7And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

8But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? **9**Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? **10**Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? **11**How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?— but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." **12**Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

What was this warning, and what did Yeshua mean by using the word 'leaven'? Anyone who bakes understands this metaphor. Leaven is the ingredient in baking that causes bread to rise or to puff up if you will. Just a tiny pinch goes a long way to turning flatbread into a fluffy loaf.

Yeshua is comparing the doctrine (leaven) of the Pharisees and Sadducees to that which changes the outcome of the lump of dough, which is just another metaphor for your heart or your church. If leaven can change dough from being flat and hard to fluffy and soft, so can legalism turn a pure and sincere heart to serve God into a prideful box checker of do's and do not's. And it does this very quickly and completely, as Paul warns.

Galatians 5:9 - **9***A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

The doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees was to categorize their devotion into a set of "thou shalt not's and thou shalt's." This is the reason that we know how many commandments there are. No doubt many of you have heard

that there are 613 commandments or Mitzvahs in the Torah. Many of you may not know that of the 613 commandments listed, many are duplicates, and many more are opinions that have their origins from the Talmud. What does this tell you? It tells us the proclivity of man to systemize their religion into manageable bits and pieces, as well as man's tendency to add or take away from the written Word. Once this happens, we begin to base our sense of spirituality on how well we manage that system. This is legalism, and we can be as guilty of it in our faith as the Pharisees and Sadducees were in theirs.

The doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees was to categorize their devotion into a set of "*thou shalt not's and thou shalt's.*" This is the reason that we know how many commandments there are. No doubt many of you have heard that there are 613 commandments or Mitzvahs in the Torah. Many of you may not know that of the 613 commandments listed, many are duplicates, and many more are opinions that have their origins from the Talmud. What does this tell you? It tells us the proclivity of man to systemize their religion into manageable bits and pieces, as well as man's tendency to add or take away from the written Word. Once this happens, we begin to base our sense of spirituality on how well we manage that system. This is legalism, and we can be as guilty of it in our faith as the Pharisees and Sadducees were in theirs.

As a father, I have certain expectations for my children. Like most parents, I have rules and standards for my household. Let's call them laws. If I say to my daughter that I want her to do the dishes and she does only a few, am I legalistic when I discipline her for not obeying my rule? If I tell my son to mow the yard and he only mows half, or perhaps he does not mow

at all, am I legalistic to point this out to him? If you are a parent, then you are most likely whispering to yourself a quiet "NO!" Then why do we treat Yehovah this way? Why do we think that He is ok with our half-hearted devotion or, in some cases, no devotion to His Law and then cry "legalism" when another brother or sister attempts to hold us to it?

1 Samuel 15:22-23 - **22b**Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. **23***For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.*

Deuteronomy 11:1 - **1***Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.*

Deuteronomy 28:1 - **1***Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.*

John 14:15 - **15***If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

"Obedience is the love-motivated process of acting in accordance with God's word because you believe that you are living under His favor and that He only has your best interest at heart. Obedience is trust, fueled by love, in action.

Legalism, by contrast, is the anxious effort to earn God's favor because you believe, at least on an emotional level, that God's love is conditional and therefore that He holds you at a distance until you prove yourself worthy. It is a form of religious

narcissism, a way of keeping self as one's center while projecting the illusion of serving God." – Ty Gibson

We must remember that the Bible is, from cover to cover, a love story between Yehovah and His Bride. Too many people believe that Yehovah's commandments to Israel were only about making sure that they were different from the world. To be sure, the standards of the world back then, as they are today, fall seriously short of what we would consider being wholesome living. With that in mind, we can understand why, at least in part, Yehovah called His people out of those standards. It is equally as important to understand that we also are being called out of the world. For the other part, Yehovah is calling His bride to be like Him. To value what He values, to hate what He hates, to celebrate what He celebrates, and to love what He loves. If obeying the Law of the Lord seems abhorrent to you, can you say that you are like Him in your values?

Freedom In Christ?

It is always the gratification of self that draws us away from the Father's holy goals. Unfortunately, so many believers today use the expression "*free in Christ*" to excuse their self-focused desires, ambitions, and sins. Freedom in Christ has become for us an E-ticket that excuses us from any real obedience to what we might call ceremony or ritual. John explains this to us in his first letter, and we can see that it has its origins all the way back in Genesis.

1John 2:15-17 - **15***Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16*For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is

of the world. **17**And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Here John lists the principal faults of man when he identifies these three chinks in our armor. Lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is shocking to me to see these three sins at work in the very first rebellion.

Genesis 3:6 - **6**So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh), that it was pleasant to the eyes (lust of the eyes), and a tree desirable to make one wise (pride of life), she took of its fruit and ate.

Every error of humanity can be traced back to one of these three sins, including man's tendency to deviate from the paths that the Father has laid out for us. Everything we do in life is about taking the path of least resistance, and to be set apart requires continual self-sacrifice. It means always being aware of how the world is trying to change you and force you to conform to its ways.

This is why Yehovah uses words like '*diligently obey*' and '*observe carefully*,' but the majority of contemporary believers reflect a more flippant attitude to obedience while crying "freedom in Christ!" Yeshua did not come to free us from obedience. He did not come to free us from the burdensome legalistic Law. He came to show us what it looks like to delight in it. He came to show us how Law and faith work together.

EMBRACING THE LAW OF GOD

I have had what can be called a negative understanding of what the Law represented for all of my Christian life. This was primarily due to two different dynamics. First, I only ever heard negative things about the Law from the pulpit, and second, I had no real urgency to understand it or see it for what it was. Every Christian church that I have ever been a member of held to antinomian doctrines. And like I said earlier if the Old Testament was not authoritative for me as a Christian, why bother reading it.

If you are anything like me, you have heard the Law described with words like curse, abolished, nailed to the cross, taskmaster, bondage, burden, and legalistic. Is this how the Bible truly describes the Law, or is this a Christian tradition that has been handed down for hundreds or even thousands of years? Needless to say, when I finally took the time to study the Law, I was pleasantly surprised to discover what the Bible actually had to say about the Law.

Psalm 119:18 - **18***Open my eyes, that I may see the wondrous things from Your law.*

Proverbs 7:2 - **2***Keep my commands and live, And my law as the apple of your eye.*

The Law Is...

Is Healing	Prov 4:22	Is a Delight	Psa 119:77
Is Prosperity	Psa 1:1-3	Is Protection	Josh 1:8
Is Wisdom	Psa 19:7	Is Freedom	Psa 119:45
Is Perfect	Psa 19:7	Is Peace	Psa 119:165
Is Right	Psa 19:8	Is Holy	Rom 7:12
Is Radiant	Psa 19:8	Is Good	Rom 7:12
Is Truth	Psa 119:142	Is Just	Rom 7:12
Is Pure	Psa 19:8	Is Spiritual	Rom 7:14
Is Firm	Psa 119:89	Is Understanding	Psa 119:34
Is a Warning	Psa 19:11	Is Knowledge	Rom 3:20
Is a Rewarder	Psa 19:11	Is Love	1 Tim 1:5
Is a Discerner	Prov 28:7	Is Eternal	Psa 119:89

David was a master of poetry and romanticizing the Word of God. He understood it for what it was, a love letter written by a husband to his bride. As a young disciple, I often prayed that I would have David's heart. After all, it was David's heart that Yehovah said was most like His own.

Speaking of David, Samuel said *"The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart"* - 1 Samuel 13:14. And Paul says *"He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of*

Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.' - Acts 13:22

This is an amazing compliment the Father gives to David! I cannot think of any greater words Yehovah could say to me, other than *"well done good and faithful servant."*

David says...

Psalm 19:7-11 - **7***The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; **8***The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; **9***The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. **11***Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.****

Of all of the adjectives that David uses in this Psalm to describe the Law of the Lord, "curse," "burden," "bondage," and "legalistic" are not among them. Where did the evangelical world get this idea? Why do so many Christians believe this about the Law? How can Yehovah's Law be perfect, true and righteous, and a curse at the same time? How can David say, *"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night,"* but for me to say this is heresy?

If David meditated on the law day and night, it is safe to say that he also made every effort to obey it as God Himself said of David *"he will do all of my will"* (Acts 13:22).

Can you say that your delight is in the Law of the Lord? Can you say that you meditate on it day and night? Should you say this? If this sentiment was found in the New Testament, would you do this? What if Paul felt the same way? Paul does feel the same way.

Romans 7:22 - **22***For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being.*

Paul has much more to say about the Law that we will soon discuss, but before we do, I would like to share a few observations that I made while on this journey of discovery.

Some of my greatest Biblical heroes are people like Joseph, David, Phinehas, Jehoshaphat, and Caleb, and I stand in awe of their faith. Yet, as contemporary Christians, we cannot worship as they did. We cannot say to Yehovah in prayer what they did because, in our antinomian culture, they are just empty words unless we believe what they believed.

As Christians, we think that our faith is different from that of our Old Testament brothers and sisters. As if it is somehow a better faith, and yet which of us can say that they have accomplished by faith the things that many of our Old Testament heroes did?

That Which Was Commanded, Now is Heresy

There is no New Testament author who has anything negative to say about the Old Testament Law. We have already established its positive attributes, and yet when someone sets their mind on being obedient to it, there is an immediate objection from others. Recently, I even had a Church Teacher

tell me that the idea was heretical. Heretical? When did obeying God's commands become heresy? How did this happen in the Church?

When I first began to embrace what the Bible was teaching me, I was told that it was fine for me, but I could not teach others to follow it. If the Law of the Lord is freedom, perfect, true, righteous, wisdom, prosperity, healing, and love, what were they afraid of? How is it acceptable to embrace Paul's words about delighting in the Law of God while at the same time rejecting the idea of obedience to it? What harm can be done to a person or a body of believers that obeys the Law? Zero, none, nada unless you put your faith in that obedience for salvation. This is what Paul is really dealing with in his letters.

Blessings and Curses

The following passage of Scripture is a long one, but take a moment to see the promises of obedience versus the promise of curses for those who reject the Law.

Deuteronomy 28:1- 20 - **1**"*Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.* **2***And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God:* **3**"Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. **4**"Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. **5**"Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading

bowl. **6**“Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. **7**“The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. **8**“The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. **9**“The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. **10**Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. **11**And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. **12**The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. **13**And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. **14**So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

***15**“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:*

***16**“Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in*

the country. **17**"Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. **18**"Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. **19**"Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

20"The Lord will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.

And He goes on. Too much to add to this page. I encourage you to read it in its entirety.

What are we supposed to do with this as Christians? Are we supposed to believe that the curses given to Israel for her disobedience are all acceptable now under the New Covenant? In other words, that which was once heresy is now tolerated? As if Yeshua came to set us free from all of these terrible commandments? Some theologians might say that we were set free from our dependence on them for salvation, but obedience to commandments was never a requirement for salvation. Even in the Old Covenant, salvation was a matter of faith. It never came as a result of obedience, as Paul clearly teaches in Galatians 3.

Galatians 3:11-12 - **11**But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." **12**Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

However, we cannot forget vs.12. Although the Law is not of faith, the man who *does them shall live by them*. Too many have read this passage as 'if a man does them, they will be

required of him.' This is an unfortunate interpretation as Paul is simply quoting Leviticus here.

Leviticus 18:5 - **5***You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.*

Yehovah is telling us that there is a huge benefit to humanity if they stay on the Ancient Paths of His commandments, laws, statutes, and judgments. Paul is simply reiterating this truth to the churches in Galatia. The trap for humanity is believing that by obedience, a man is saved, and unfortunately, we still deal with this fallacy today. Ask yourself this question, are you saved because you obey New Testament teachings? Are you in danger of Hell if you disobey a New Testament command? Of course not! You are living by faith that the blood of Christ covers your sin when you disobey. This is true for obeying Old Testament commands as well. We obey because of salvation, not for salvation. But we still make every effort to obey. I cannot say this enough because I know that some readers will interpret what I say in this book as an effort to somehow make us Jewish or going back under the Law, which is the furthest thing in my mind. To obey the Law is NOT to be Jewish; it is joining yourself to the Israel of God and therefore embracing His ways.

What About the Strange Laws?

To embrace the Law is not to embrace the Rabbinical additions to the Law that Yeshua fought so hard to expose. It is essential always to make the distinction between what is written in the Word and what is written by man. There are many examples of this that would be good to discuss here.

Phylacteries

When I suggested embracing the Law to one of the Congregational Teachers, he asked me about wearing Phylacteries. What is a Phylactery? A Phylactery is a small leather box containing Hebrew texts on vellum, worn by Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the Law. The Pharisees were famous for wearing them.

Matthew 23:5 - **5***But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.*

This practice is simply a Rabbinical invention and an over-interpretation of the heart of Deuteronomy 6, as well as a perfect example of delineating the Word from human invention.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 - **6***“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Beards, Shaved Heads & Tattoo's

Another common objection to obedience to the Law is the matter of beards, shaved heads, and tattoos. Images of Hasidic Jews flood the mind when lawful obedience is mentioned. This sect of Jews, along with others, has taken Leviticus 19 out of context and created their own doctrine from it.

Leviticus 19:27-28 - **27***You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard. 28*You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord.

A common practice among pagan sun worshipers was to wear their sideburns as tassels, cutting themselves and marking (*Tattooing*) themselves for the dead. Yehovah was calling Israel out of these cultural practices. We can see it in action with the 400 prophets of Ba'al as they prayed to their pagan gods.

1 Kings 18:28 - **28***So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.*

This is not a command for us to have unshaved heads or to avoid tattoos. As much as some want this passage to say this, it simply is not. Having said that, I do believe that for a believer to have the image of a passed loved one tattooed on them in memory of that person would be a violation of this passage.

Human Discharge

The most common objection from women when confronted with the idea of obeying the Law usually goes something like this; "*The Law says that during my period I have to leave my house until it is over.*" If you are a woman, I am certain that you have heard this. However, this too is a tradition that has no basis in Scripture.

Leviticus 15:19-27 - **19***If a woman has a discharge, and the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until*

evening. **20**Everything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; also everything that she sits on shall be unclean. **21**Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. **22**And whoever touches anything that she sat on shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. **23**If anything is on her bed or on anything on which she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. **24**And if any man lies with her at all, so that her impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

25If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, other than at the time of her customary impurity, or if it runs beyond her usual time of impurity, all the days of her unclean discharge shall be as the days of her customary impurity. She shall be unclean. **26**Every bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and whatever she sits on shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her impurity. **27**Whoever touches those things shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

I would call on you to recall our discussion on unclean foods here in order to understand what being unclean means. It simply means to be dirty or polluted. So with this in mind, we can better understand what Yehovah is saying here. Which of us does not understand the potential issues with coming into contact with blood or any other human discharge? This is almost a no-brainer for us to understand, especially in our current pandemic culture. If you are a woman and thinking that this is unfair, then please read the verses before this to see

that Yehovah had the same requirements for the impurities of men. If you think that all of this is extreme, then I encourage you to consider this. The Tabernacle of Yehovah was in their midst. It was at the center of their community. If a man or woman was to enter the Tabernacle in an unclean condition, it would cost them their life and defile the Tabernacle.

Leviticus 15: 31-33 - **31***'Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that is among them.* **32***This is the law for one who has a discharge, and for him who emits semen and is unclean thereby,* **33***and for her who is indisposed because of her customary impurity, and for one who has a discharge, either man or woman, and for him who lies with her who is unclean.'* "

Thus, the laws surrounding human discharge were more about our health and protecting the integrity of the Tabernacle than being some weird ceremonial requirement.

Polygamy

According to some, the Law allows for having many wives. Abraham had multiple wives, as did Jacob, David, and others. However, this too was a deviation from the Ancient Path. The standard has always been one woman and one man.

Genesis 2:24 - **24***Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

Deuteronomy 17:17 - **17***Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.*

The fact that so many took multiple wives does not imply that it was allowed in the Law. Did Yehovah work on behalf of these men despite these errors? Yes, He did, but He always works on behalf of His people even though they sin. If He did not, we would be truly lost in every manner.

No Blended Fabric?

Does the Law teach that we should not wear blended fabrics? That is, clothing with more than one source like cotton and polyester? No, it does not. It does, however, teach us not to blend wool and linen.

Leviticus 19:19 - **19***You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.*

There are many schools of thought as to the purpose of this command, but the one that I find most interesting comes from the world of science.

"In 2003, a study was done by a Jewish doctor, Heidi Yellen, on the frequencies of fabric. According to this study, the human body has a signature frequency of 100, and organic cotton is the same -100. The study showed that if the number is lower than 100, it puts a strain on the body. A diseased, nearly dead person has a frequency of about 15, and that is where polyester, rayon, and silk register. Nonorganic cotton registers a signature frequency of about 70. However, if the fabric has a higher frequency, it gives energy to the body. This is where linen comes in as a super-fabric. Its frequency is 5,000. Wool is also 5,000, but when mixed together with linen, the frequencies cancel each other out and fall to zero. Even

wearing a wool sweater on top of a linen outfit in a study collapsed the electrical field. The reason for this could be that the energy field of wool flows from left to right, while that of linen flows in the opposite direction, from right to left." – Dr. Heidi Yellen

Could it be this simple? If so, what does this tell us about this command, if not that it comes from a heart of love? A command like this one sounds like it would be fun for a church or a group of believers to research and seek the answers instead of just dismissing it as ridiculous.

Returning To Jerusalem?

Deuteronomy 16:16 - **16** *"Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed.*

The argument has been made that a command like this is impossible to obey, as it would require us to travel to Jerusalem 3 times a year. Indeed this would be a challenge, but we need to have a better understanding of this command.

In Vs.16 above, we can see that the men were to appear before the Lord *"in the place which He chooses."* What does this mean? Does it imply that the location for the gathering can change? No, the place of God's choosing is a very commonly understood synonym for the Temple. The place of His established name and dwelling.

Deuteronomy 12:5 - **5***“But you shall seek the place where the Lord your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.*

Deuteronomy 12:11 - **11***then there will be the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the Lord.*

Thus, this pilgrimage requires the presence of the Temple, which we no longer have. However, you still may wonder how this would be possible even for the Israelites in their time, considering the fact that they had spread out over time. Yehovah understood this as well.

Deuteronomy 12:21 - **21***If the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter from your herd and from your flock which the Lord has given you, just as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your gates as much as your heart desires.*

Tassels?

Deuteronomy 22:12 - **12***“You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself.*

Numbers 15:37-40 - **37***Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **38**“Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. **39**And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, **40**and that you may*

remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.

This specific command seems to really bother some people, which I find strange. Yehovah instructs His people to wear tassels or 'tsee-tseeth' on their clothing as a reminder to be obedient to His commandments. I cannot speak for any of you, but I personally need reminders in my life to be holy and set apart. Is that not the goal of discipleship? As disciples of Yeshua we are called to love and disciple one another as iron sharpens iron, are we not?

However, this command specifically mentions 'four-cornered garments,' and we do not wear four-cornered garments. I cannot think of a single one of my articles of clothing that has four corners. If I were ever to own one, I would be obedient to this passage. Does that bother you? Do you think that it is an infringement on your freedom in Christ? If so, let me ask this; do you feel the same way about the ring on your finger that reminds you that you belong to another? Is that not there as a reminder of obedience and loyalty? If we would do this for our spouse, would we not do it for our God?

What About Sacrifices?

Any suggestion of turning our hearts to be obedient to the Law naturally raises questions about the many offerings and sacrifices required by the Law.

If we commit ourselves to be Torah observant, does this mean that we need to be mindful of these requirements?

The answer is no; we do not. The writer of the book of Hebrews goes into great detail explaining Yeshua's office as

our intercessor. He is our High Priest, and thus, all sacrificial requirements were met by His sacrifice on the cross.

Hebrews 10:11-18 - **11***And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12*But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, **13***from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. **15**But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,

16*"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," 17*then He adds, *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."* **18**Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

So, all offerings and sacrifices are nullified by Christ's sacrifice for those that believe in Him. Secondly, all sacrifices and offerings require the presence of a Temple and an altar, which we have not had in Jerusalem since 70A.D.

Conclusion

When you negate the laws that we cannot obey due to the fact that we no longer have a Temple and those that Yeshua our High Priest has nullified on our behalf (*sacrifices*), what do you have left? You have mostly moral laws set in place for our well-being and the well-being of those around us. You have laws meant to help us, as Yehovah's people, to live a life set apart from the world. You have His holidays and special

gatherings that help us look forward to the things to come while not forgetting what He has already done for us.

There will be those times when we, as Western believers, will be at a loss with some commands as to how to obey them. That is ok. Seek out the truth of the matter. Pray, talk to others, and discover what it means and how you might be obedient to it. In my own experience, I can tell you how incredibly enriching it has been to my faith when I seek out the answers to the 'hard to understand' commands and teachings. When I finally discover the truth, I am in awe of my God's wisdom and love. That is what it means to seek Him with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

THE WAY

THE ANCIENT PATH

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." – Genesis 18:19

"The Way" - **דרכ** (deh-rek) - way, path (Strong's #1820)

The first time that the phrase 'the way of the Lord' is used in the Bible is in the verse above. The first time that this phrase is used in the New Testament is in Matthew 3.

Matthew 3:3 - **3**For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.'

"The Way" - **ὁδός** (hod-os) - way, road (Strong's #3598)

Using the law of First Mention, it is easy to see that since the beginning, Yehovah has called His people to follow His ways and to walk in His path, and this did not change under the New Covenant. Throughout the Scriptures, it has been His 'ways' that the heroes of the Bible have sought after, and many of them gave their lives in pursuit of them.

Even the first century Church was known by this monicker. They were not known as Baptist's, Catholic's, Presbyterian's, or Non-Denominational's. They were known as "The Way."

Acts 19:9 - **9***But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.*

Acts 19:23 - **23***And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.*

Acts 24:14 - **14***But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.*

Acts 24:22 - **22***But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case."*

They were called The Way because even in their new Christ-centered identity, which was now comprised of both Jew and Gentile, they harkened back to the unchanging and eternal ways of their God.

He Made Known His Ways

Speaking of Abraham Yehovah says:

Genesis 18:19 - **19***For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that*

they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

Yehovah made His ways known to Abraham with the intent of passing them on to his children and his household after him. This statute would not change in the days of Moses and Israel.

Psalm 103:7 - **7**He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.

Exodus 18:20 - **20**And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.

1 Kings 8:36b - **36**...Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk;

Deuteronomy 4:8-10 - **8**And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? **9**Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, **10**especially concerning the day you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, when the Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

Deuteronomy 11:18-23 - **18**"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind

them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. **19**You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. **20**And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, **21**that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. **22**"For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him— **23**then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves.

Deuteronomy 26:17 - **17**Today you have proclaimed the Lord to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.

Deuteronomy 28:9 - **9**"The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways

There are too many examples in scripture to completely list here in this book, but suffice it to say, Yehovah made His ways clear throughout ancient history with the intent to have them and them only handed down from generation to generation.

"Keep the way of the Lord"

"He made known His ways"

"Show them the way"

"Teach them the good way"

"Teach them to your children and grandchildren"

“Walk in His ways keeping His statutes, His commandments, His judgments and obey His voice”
And perhaps the strongest admonishment “lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul”

How does one fight the constant bombardment from the world as to how to live, what to buy, where to live, and what to believe if not by heeding these instructions as an immovable anchor in your everyday life? Yet they did not. We have not.

I realize that statement may put some readers on the defensive, but two-thousand years of Christian tradition and more than thirty-thousand denominations stand as proof against us. Christian Denominationalism has become such a huge part of our lives that most do not even think twice about it. Choosing the church that fits most within our personal beliefs and worldview like a Buffett has become normal practice for us.

Have you ever stopped to consider how we got here, if not from ignoring the Ancient Paths and embracing man-made doctrines and ideologies? Including those of the so-called Church Fathers? If you look back at those listed in this book, you will see doctrines that they created that are still considered to be true today in many Christian churches.

Law And Covenant - Not the Same

One of the challenges that I faced when trying to understand the Law was combining the Law with the Covenant as if they were the same. I have found this is a very common misunderstanding among many believers. There is no doubt

that with the Covenant comes the Law, but they are not to be considered inseparable.

I have already shown that the ways of the Lord have been known as early as the days of Abraham, but it can be argued that His ways began with Adam in the form of verbal communication. Our first example of someone 'walking in God's ways' comes in the person of Enoch (Gen 5:24). He was known as one who walked with God, although we are not explicitly told what this entailed. Noah was also a man that Yehovah called 'blameless' in his generation (Gen 6:9), which leads us to believe that he had to have followed some kind of code or law; otherwise, he could not have been blameless. Considering the fact that Noah understood the difference between clean and unclean animals (Gen 7:2) tells us that, at the very least, he understood God's ways in these matters. Finally, we see Abraham, who was called to obey Yehovah's Law long before it was given at Mt. Sinai.

Genesis 17:1 - ***1**When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.*

Which Abraham did and became the father of the faith.

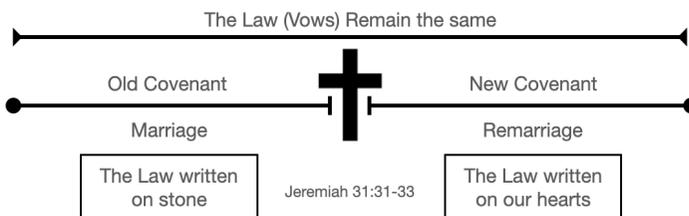
Genesis 26:5 - ***5**because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.*"

Thus, Yehovah's ways have always been and will always be irrespective of the covenants. Furthermore, they are the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, as He never changes.

Psalms 119:89 - **89**Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.

So what does this mean, and how does this make the covenant and the Law two separate entities? If you recall from the chapter about Untwisting Paul, Yehovah was in a marriage relationship with Israel. The Law, or His ways, were made known to Israel in what can be considered as marriage vows, and the covenant was the marriage contract. In other words, He said, "I will be your faithful husband, and you will be my faithful bride." Faithfulness meant obedience to His Law which we know they failed to do. As a result, the House of Israel was divorced and cast into the nations even though Yehovah promised to get them back again. He would accomplish this through Christ's sacrifice, thus making it possible for a re-marriage, which up to that point was impossible.

Now, allow me to ask you a question. If a man marries a woman, there are always vows of commitment, love, and devotion. If that man divorces his wife for adultery and marries again, will his vows be different for the new bride, or will he *still* desire commitment, love, and devotion? Yes, he will, and this is the simplest way to explain the difference between law and covenant. Perhaps the graphic below will assist in understanding this.



Finding Our Way Back To The Way

The journey back to the Ancient Path may seem to be a daunting task. When confronted with the knowledge that you have neglected to obey the commandments of God, the first response must be one of humility. Like any biblical response to sin, we must approach this with earnestness, eagerness to clear ourselves, indignation, alarm, longing, concern, and a readiness to see justice done (2 Cor 7:11). When I initially embraced this, my first response was one of shock and alarm. I spent several weeks contemplating my life and wondering where and how I missed this. Just like Paul was confronted with the knowledge that he was opposing the Messiah and murdering Christians, I sat in darkness for a while. I would like to say that I had the fortitude of Josiah and immediately went to work destroying idols and tearing down High Places (2 Kings 22), but I did not. This new understanding represented a monumental paradigm change from what I was accustomed to, and I knew that some of my brothers in Christ would not easily accept it.

Whether you are a church member or a Pastor of a church, you need to prepare yourself for the possible reality of rejection. Antinomian doctrines run deep in the heart of evangelicalism, and change will only come with great patience, gentle instruction, and a little courage. Sadly, there have been those who have stumbled upon this teaching and, in their zeal, forcefully attempted to change their fellowships by demanding instant adherence and repentance. Many of those brothers were chased off and even disfellowshipped, and they probably deserved it. Changes like this will not happen overnight, nor will they happen by swinging a large

hammer. No, this is surgical and requires the patient hands of brothers and sisters who are willing and determined to gently lead their family, friends, church members, and Pastors to the Ancient Path.

Don't Touch My Doctrines!

The opposition will come. Many are open to learning and even changing once they see and understand what the Bible is saying. Unfortunately, some will not change, regardless of what they see. Like so many of us, our heartstrings get wrapped around our doctrines, and the idea of changing them is too big. Some of these individuals will be members of influence in your Church, and at the end of the day, you may be facing some unrest in your congregations. This cannot be avoided. If the Church is to be divided, let it be divided over matters of the truth and not opinion or human pride. Divisions like this have a strange way of forcing people into their Bibles to seek the answers, and that is the goal.

Certainly, my family of churches is not new to this kind of division. We have faced change and battles from within since our humble beginnings in the late '70s. When we first embraced the Biblical model of discipleship, the Church was divided over that truth. Some wanted to remain in their tradition, while others could not ignore the fact that Yeshua was calling His followers to change the world. By faith, we chose the latter, regardless of the cost. As many may remember, the cost was a loss of friendships, fellowships, and sadly even family members. A return to the Ancient Path will cost no less.

Luke 9:23-24 - **23***Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.*

"Is it faith to understand nothing, and merely submit your convictions implicitly to the Church?" – John Calvin

Sadly, many believers will be content to rest on the convictions, or the lack thereof, of the church to which they belong. As John Calvin asked, is this faith? How many will be willing to search for the Ancient Paths regardless of how the local church rests on an issue? There is one thing that I can assure you of; when we stand before the King at the end of days, He will not be concerned with which church you were a member. He will not ask you whether or not your church had the correct understanding of scripture. He will ask if you searched for Him and His truth with all of your heart and all of your mind and all of your strength.

Jeremiah 29:13-14 - **13***And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14I will be found by you, says the Lord,*

Matthew 7:7-8 - **7***"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*

Beware The Enemy

Any time a single believer or an entire church turns their hearts and minds towards obedience and begins to reject and

repent of their man-made traditions and doctrines, the enemy will respond. In my experience, I have seen the attacks on me personally as well as my extended family. You will find that he will begin to provide many opportunities for you to change your mind or be otherwise distracted from your new goals. He will accuse you of legalism and attempt to malign your intentions. He will whisper questions in your ears as he did to Eve, saying, "did God really say that?" And worst of all, he will turn your brothers and sisters against you in an effort to discredit you among the brethren. You must resist him. Find your strength in Christ and offer only love in return.

Luke 6:22 - **22***Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake.*

The Earth Will Marvel

Revelation 17:8 - **8***The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

At the end of days, we are told that the lost will stand in marvel at the beast. Their eyes will finally be opened, and they will realize just how deeply they were deceived by the evil one in every aspect of their life. Where they thought they were experiencing coincidence, they will see that he was there. Where they thought they were dealing with denominational strife, they will see that he was there. Where they thought they were arguing for their truth, they will see that he was there. They will see him in our cultures and in our racial divide. They

will see him working in all political parties and in every religion. And finally, they will see his fingerprints on every malady, and curse, and strife that has befallen humanity since Adam. Yes, they will marvel when they realize that he was everywhere. He was the beast that was always there (was) and yet was masked (is not) so that you would not see his direct involvement (yet is). Is this not what John meant when he said, *"the beast that was, and is not, and yet is?"*

Revelation 2:25-26 - **25***But hold fast what you have till I come. 26***And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—**

Final Thoughts

This has not been an easy book to write. The topic forced me to take a really hard look at my faith, my devotion to the Word of God, and the church that I have been a devoted member of for 35 years. It is nearly impossible for a man to take inventory of his spiritual convictions without being forced to do the same with the church that is partly responsible for building these convictions. Do not misunderstand me; I do not place any blame at the foot of any one church. I must take full responsibility for my life and the decisions that I have made, and I have. I love my local church and its global family. I have seen Yehovah do amazing things through this body of believers over the years. I have been blessed to serve them as an Evangelist and as a Missionary and blessed to have witnessed twelve of my immediate family members becoming disciples of Christ within their ranks. That is why this is so hard.

In the course of my journey to find answers to difficult questions, I found myself at odds with some of the doctrines of my church. And not just my church, but evangelical teachings at large. Needless to say, this created an unfamiliar tension between myself and those that I have loved and respected over the years. Where I was once respected, I was now suspected of being a false teacher. I was once listened to, and I was now disregarded and marginalized by those I held in high esteem. Yet, I remained faithful. Faithful to my God and faithful to them as a man under their authority. If it were not for the love and devotion of so many of them, I would not be where I am today as a man, father, and husband. I owe them a great deal, but I believe it would be a great dishonor to them to remain silent. The question has always been how, when, and in what format to speak. I knew that the bullhorn approach was wrong, and I also knew that I could not just begin teaching something that represented such a drastic change. So I began with questions. I asked many questions online to my Digging Deeper group members to see what people were thinking and what they believed. I was pleasantly surprised at many of the answers. It seemed that I was not alone in some of my new convictions, but I needed to talk more with the “powers that be,” and that would come as a result of one of my online discussions. I quickly found myself surrounded by curious brothers and not a few knee-jerk reactions.

For those that were the first to hear me, the initial reaction was one of alarm. Almost as though I had gone off the theological deep-end. Men that I have served alongside for 30 years were now bringing me before the church leadership in an attempt to silence me and silence me; they did. After all, I

was a member of the church over which they shepherded, and they had a right to ask me not to teach what I was learning. I happily agreed, as long as there was a continued effort to study together and confront the obvious contradictions that I saw in the Bible versus what was being taught. Aside from one meeting and a few emails in two years, there has been no urgency on their part to do so. I understand in one sense. I can only assume that the changes that I am suggesting are most likely impossible in their minds, so why bother pursuing it. Promises have been made to follow up, but there has been none in that same time period.

Therefore, I believe the best approach is to present my study in the form of a book that they (and you) may read at their leisure. When I set my mind to understanding the Law of the Lord and how it is applied to my life as a Christian, I had to prove to myself that this is what the Bible was calling me to do. For me, it had to be unassailable and bulletproof. The proof that I required came from hundreds of hours of study and research, and I knew that for others to see what I was seeing, the presentation had to be equally unassailable.

I hope that I have accomplished that goal with this book. In the spirit of integrity, I have presented this book to six different Biblical Scholars and a handful of Pastors and Evangelists that I trusted to give me honest and scholarly feedback. If I were wrong in any way, it would be edited out. If I misunderstood a passage that I was using to make my case, it was corrected. And if in my approach I seemed harsh or judgmental, I changed the wording. Although I cannot entirely remove myself from the equation as the author, my desire for this book

is ultimately about Him and not me. His ways and not my ways. And to Him to be all the glory.

Where To Go From Here

I know that nobody will be making sweeping changes in their fellowships due to reading this book. However, I hope that this book has inspired you to make some changes on an individual level. When David Platt dropped the bombshell of the fallacy that is the Sinner's Prayer, he spawned discussion groups and debates among the non-denominational world that eventually caused some to change.

If, in the course of time, this little book manages to cause some to stop and re-think their position on the Law or causes discussion groups or even debates among the brotherhood of believers, I have accomplished my goal. I only seek open and honest, non-judgmental discussions on what it means to join Law and faith.

If you are a member of a church that stands opposed to the idea of adopting Torah observance, please do not be a Torah Terrorist with your brothers and sisters, and especially not with your Pastor. Be patient. Live your life and let that be your witness. When people are curious and ask questions, then share what you believe and why, but by no means are you called to demand that they change at that moment. Allow room for the Holy Spirit to work in you and in them, and with His guidance, hearts will be molded.

If you are clergy and wish to begin teaching this to your flock, then start small. Teach them the importance of rest by honoring the Sabbath as the Lord's holy day. Trust me when I

say learning how to truly rest takes work. The exercise will be one of excitement for your people that you can build on. Once your people begin to see the value of these commands and the love from which they come, move on to bigger things like the Food Laws, not forgetting that these come from love as well.

When you get to the hard stuff, and you will get there, make it a project for the whole group to explore. Why is Yehovah commanding this, and what does it mean? Seek input from others and take the time to research the answers. And always remember this, if you seek Him with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind, you will find the answers because He will show them to you. This is His promise. *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”*

So there you go. This is where you get to make a decision as the reader. You can disabuse me of what you may call my ‘fanciful notions,’ or you can go back and re-read those parts that challenged your current theology. You may need time to think and pray, or perhaps you think that I have lost my marbles. My desire is that you wish to discuss these issues more with others in your church or family. If you believe all of this to be doctrinally incorrect, I welcome your insights. Please take the time to visit my website and post your questions or rebuttals and let the discussions begin.

To Him be all the glory.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be
established on the top of the mountains, And shall be
exalted above the hills; And peoples shall flow to it.
Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us
go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of
the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we
shall walk in His paths." – MICAH 4:1-2



Ed Doss is a former Evangelist with more than 30 years of outreach and evangelistic experience. As a missionary, Ed has planted two churches in Los Angeles and Victorville California alongside two campus ministries in Phoenix Arizona, and in Los Angeles. He served as an Evangelist in the Phoenix Church of Christ for five years and founded Digging Deeper, a Biblical teaching group within the Dallas Church of Christ that explores the often overlooked and untaught parts of Scripture. Additionally, he has authored papers on topics such as the six-day creation week, the two Houses of Israel, and understanding the book of Job. He currently resides in Dallas Texas where he continues to teach online and is working on publishing two new books.