

WHICH WAY, AMERICA?

Night 5

The Dismantling of America

1. Isn't the Ten Commandments the same as the Old Covenant?

Answer: No. A popularly held belief based on Deuteronomy 4:13 suggests that the Ten Commandment law is the same as the old covenant that was abolished. Even though the Ten Commandments were indeed a commanded covenant, they did not constitute the old covenant which vanished away (Hebrews 8:13). Here are the reasons:

1. The old covenant was faulty, had poor promises, and vanished away (Hebrews 8:7–8, 13). None of those points apply to the perfect law of God (Psalm 19:7).
2. The old covenant was made **“concerning all these words”** of the written law (Exodus 24:7–8). It was not the law itself.
3. Referring to the Ten Commandments, God said to Moses, **“After the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel”** (Exodus 34:27–28). It was not the law itself but over the keeping of the law — **“the tenor of the words”** — that the old covenant was made.
4. Moses referred to the golden calf as **“your sin, the calf which ye had made”** (Deuteronomy 9:21). (Please note: The calf was not the sin, but the sin took place concerning the calf.) In the same way, the old covenant was not the law, but it was concerning the law. Thus it is called the covenant.
5. Romans 9:4 proves that the old and new covenants were different from the law itself: **“Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law.”** Here the law is mentioned, as well as the covenants (plural). This would include both old and new covenants, plus the **“giving of the law,”** which is the Ten Commandment law.
6. To prove positively that the law is not the old covenant, let's try to make the words interchangeable in Romans 3:31: **“Do we then make void the [old covenant] law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the [old covenant] law.”** Clearly the old covenant and the law are not the same.

2. Luke 16:16 says that, “the law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” Doesn't this mean that we don't need to keep the Ten Commandments anymore?

Answer: The “law and the prophets” refers to all the writings of the Old Testament. Some who take a superficial view of this text conclude that the whole body of the Old Testament Scriptures lost their authority when John began to preach. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Jesus was merely stating that before John's ministry, the “law and the prophets” were all that men had. They constituted man's primary guide to salvation.

Was Jesus implying that those ancient Scriptures would end when the gospel began to be proclaimed? Not at all. The word “until” is used in other passages to show continuing force and application. Refer to Matthew 28:15 and Romans 5:14, where the same Greek word “*mechr*” is used.

Jesus emphatically affirmed the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, declaring that not a “jot” or “tittle” would be removed (Matthew 5:18). In truth the only Bible available to the first generation New Testament church was the writings of the Old Testament. Believers found their strongest confirmation of faith in it. On one occasion, Jesus set forth those writings as sufficient to guide men to heaven (Luke 16:29–31). Paul repeatedly appealed to the law and the prophets in support of his message (Acts 26:22; 28:23).

“Since that time” refers to the time since John began to preach, when additional light had been shining on the pathway of salvation. That new revelation of truth, especially through Christ and His teachings, had brought huge crowds into the way of light and truth. Jesus described it as “every man presseth into it.”

3. Didn't Paul say that he was “dead to the law”?

Answer: The text referred to is found in Galatians 2:19. Here is what it says: “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.”

How did Paul become dead to the law through the law?

1. The law pointed out his sin (Romans 3:20).
2. It made sin “**exceeding sinful**” (Romans 7:13).
3. The law pointed him to Christ (Romans 8:3).
4. Christ gave power to obey the law (Romans 8:4).
5. In Christ he was no longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).
6. To be under the law means to be guilty of breaking it (Romans 3:19).
7. Through accepting the death of Jesus he was dead to the law because he was no longer breaking it, and it did not condemn him (Romans 7:4).

4. According to Galatians 3:19 the law was only needed until Jesus came, right?

Answer: Let's look at Galatians 3:19. “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”

The question is often asked: To which law is Paul referring? The answer appears as we consider the sole subject of this chapter. Paul is contrasting condemnation and justification, and the chief point of his argument is that “no man is justified by the law in the sight of God” (Verse 11). Please take note that the argument is not whether the law operates or not, but whether it operates as a *justifier* of guilty sinners. Paul clearly spells out in many other texts that the law is necessary as a revealer of sin (Romans 3:20; 7:7), but not as a *justifier* from sin.

In verse 18 (the verse just preceding the one under consideration), Paul emphasizes again that the inheritance is not by law, but by promise. And in verse 21 he says, “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.”

These verses make it very clear that Paul is talking about both moral and ceremonial laws in verse 19. Neither of them could save or justify the transgressor. All they could do was condemn the sinner and point forward to “the seed” who “should come.” That seed was Christ, and He would be able to justify and deliver them from the condemnation of the law. But even then, the law would not cease to exist. Its function of pointing out sin would ever be needed to turn back to Christ anyone who deviated from the path of justification and obedience.



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