

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

A correspondent writes: I understand you teach obedience to the commandments of God. Do you wish us to understand the Ten Commandments written on stone, delivered to Moses at Horeb?

We reply, No; we are not under the law of commandments written on stone, in the sense of hoping to justify ourselves before God in keeping them. Israel's experience when they were put under that Law is sufficient to prove to us, as Paul expresses, that, "By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight." (Rom. 3:20.) Hence we are very glad that we are "not under the Law, but under Grace" – favor. (Rom. 6:14; 11:6; Gal. 5:4; Rom. 3:19-26.) We are glad that the Gentiles were never put under that Law as the Israelites were, for in man's present imperfect condition it must and does condemn every one under it and justifies none. We are glad for Israel too, that when Christ Jesus died and thus fulfilled the claims of the Law against all under it, that he thus became "the end of the Law for righteousness (or rightly terminated its dominion) to every one that believeth." (Rom. 10:4, and Gal. 3:23,24.)

But lest some should claim that these scriptures quoted, refer to what some designate the "ceremonial" law, we will give Scripture proof that it included the laws written on tables of stone – the Ten Commandments. These were given at Horeb or Mt. Sinai. (See Exod. 19:20 and 34) and are termed the "covenant" of the Law. (See Deut. 5.) Paul tells us that that covenant justified only Jesus, who, by his sacrifice, justified believers, bringing them under a new covenant, not of law, but of favor, by his blood, and, being thus justified, enables us [the Gospel Church] to inherit the first covenant – the one made to Abraham's seed – which Paul declares the Law (covenant), made four hundred and thirty years after (at Sinai), did

not disannul, but merely hindered until removed and fulfilled by Jesus. (See Gal. 3:17-19.)

Romans 7:7 proves that the Ten Commandments were part of the Law, which Paul in the preceding verse and the entire chapter shows that we are delivered from. There can be no question that THE LAW which said, "Thou shalt not covet," is that contained in the Ten Commandments, and this is the very law which Christ made Paul free from – by fulfilling its claims for him. (See Rom. 8:1-4.)

"Do we then make the Law of God of none effect [useless] through [the doctrine of] faith, [which we are now preaching]? Nay, "we establish the Law." (Rom. 3:31.) First, we are proving that God's law is nothing short [R542 : page 6] of perfection, and that none but a perfect person could keep it, and that it was given to prove to Israel their imperfection, and thus as pedagogue to lead them to Christ, from whom to receive as a gift, by faith in his blood, that life and perfection which they found they could not claim or obtain under the LAW. (Gal. 3:24-29.)

Secondly, our Head Christ Jesus who made us free from that Law under which Israel was placed, gave us another instead, saying, "A new commandment I give unto you that ye LOVE one another." (John 13:34.) This law of LOVE under which we are placed, contains the spirit of the Law to Israel – the Ten Commandments, and even more. This, the Apostle James terms the "royal law." (Chap. 2:8.) And the same apostle who wrote that we are "delivered from the Law," (Rom. 7:6), and called it "Moses' Law," (Heb. 10:28), and that "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth," (Rom. 10:4), and that now "we are not under the Law," (Rom. 6:15), said also that he was not without law to God, BUT UNDER THE LAW to Christ, (1 Cor. 9:21) [i.e., our responsibility is transferred from the Father to our Lord Jesus who bought us, hence we are no longer under Jehovah's Law given at

Sinai, but under a new law or arrangement – "under Law TO CHRIST." Yet, since Christ is Jehovah's agent in making the new arrangement, and since his law is in harmony with and built on our Father's law, as a temporary help for us, until we are restored to perfection; therefore, we may say with Paul, that we are not without law to God, even though "the Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."] [R543 : page 6]

The Law under which we come through Christ differs from "Moses' Law" in this – that the latter judges men by the deeds of the flesh, while the former (Christ's Law) judges by the intents of the mind or will. Under Moses' law, all men being imperfect through Adamic sin, none could DO perfectly, however much they might desire; hence, by deeds, no flesh was ever justified by that Law – all were condemned. (Rom. 3:20.) But now, under the new law of love, we walk by spirit or mind after this new law. We may not always succeed perfectly in doing all which we wish or will to do, but under this law the will is judged and not the deed. Hence all believers consecrated to God can fulfill this "Royal law," even though the new mind is in an imperfect "earthen vessel."

And while thus excused from the letter of the law, all "believers" – united to and one with Jesus – have fulfilled it, i.e., so long as we in heart observe Jesus' law, so long we may abide in him; and abiding in him, we have share in the actual fulfillment of the LETTER OF THE LAW as accomplished by him. Thus the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

It can readily be seen that two laws would be useless. And, since all in Christ are under the law of Love, they cannot also be under the Law of Moses. The law under which we are makes allowance for all the imperfections of each, whereas "Moses' Law" required actual obedience and made no allowance; for it does not

read, he that willeth and trieth to do, but "The man that doeth these things shall live," and "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to DO them." (Gal. 3:10,12.)

Where LOVE is the law of the mind, it influences and, to a great extent, controls the imperfect and weak body. None thus actuated by love have any desire to violate the law of commandments. It is useless to say to such a one, "Thou shalt not steal"; "thou shalt not kill"; "thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." He has no desire to do those things, for love prompts to an opposite course. And if, through weakness of the flesh, such a one realizes that on some occasion he has failed to exemplify the law of love, no one is more grieved than himself.

But some man will say: What is there in the "Ten Commandments" which any one cannot keep perfectly? That you so regard them proves that you, like the Pharisees, look not at the full measure or spirit of those commandments. If we will take the Master's teaching on the subject, we find that these Ten Commandments demand absolute perfection of thought and deed for their fulfillment. Jesus summarized their teaching, saying: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law. (Matt. 22:37-40.) Now let us see, is this a hard commandment? Yea, verily; none but perfect men could keep it. To love God thus is to subject every other thing and interest to his pleasure. To love a neighbor thus would insure that you would neither kill him, nor steal from him, nor covet his goods. Besides, look at Jesus' definition of the sixth and seventh commandments. (Matt. 5:22,28.)

Viewed from this standpoint, we see why none of the Jews ever could keep the Law and why we need to get into Christ, in order that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: but the Seventh Day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work, etc. (Exod. 20:8-11.)

If this is a part of the Law whose control over us was removed by Jesus' death, and which never was given to the gospel church, but whose righteousness (or right-meaning) is fulfilled in us, then all may see that, to any recognizing the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, there can be no bondage to the observance of any day. And in harmony with this thought is Paul's statement that "one man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike: Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Rom. 14:5.) And if he shall make up his mind on this subject, from the foregoing statements of the Apostle relative to the Law, he will, doubtless, be persuaded with Paul and with us, that since Jesus has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross; therefore, henceforth, no man should judge us in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come. Wherefore, if we are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? (Col. 2:14,16,17,20.) To those in Christ there is no law on the subject except that of LOVE. They may celebrate any or no day as their love to God and man, and their judgment of what would glorify God and bless men may direct.

The fact that the Law compelled a rest every seven days, and that mankind seemed to require it, is an excellent reason why such a

day should be observed. And love to God and a desire to worship him and to commune with his children is one of the best reasons for observing such a day. As to which of the seven days should be the best to observe, the church very early in its history decided that the first day of the week would be very appropriate, since on it Jesus arose from the dead and met with them and caused their hearts to burn as he expounded unto them the Scriptures. (Luke 24:27,32.) Accordingly, we find that to meet on that day was very common among them, even before they came to appreciate fully their liberty, and while they still, to a great extent, observed the seventh day also. (Acts 2:1, Pentecost came on the first day of the week. Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 16:2.) Paul was the Lord's special agency in leading the other apostles and the Church in general into true liberty, and as he taught that every day was alike, so he practiced; and we find that sometimes he met with the Church on the first day, and sometimes went into the synagogues on the Sabbath, or seventh day.

The question of Sabbath-keeping, like that of circumcision, is one that depends on the spirit or intent of the observer. As Paul testified to those who practiced circumcision in his day, so we testify to Sabbath (or seventh day) keepers now, viz.: If they keep the seventh day or any other day as under "Moses's Law," and in hope of keeping that Law and gaining its promised blessings, they are fallen from grace, and at present Christ is profiting them nothing, for the Jew did just so before Christ came. (Gal. 5:2-4.)

We cannot gain life by keeping the Law, for none can keep it perfectly, and to keep the third commandment and to fail in any other point, deprives of life and condemns to death under the Law covenant just as surely as though the whole law were violated, for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10.) Hence that entire covenant was set aside on account of human imperfection, and the "new covenant,"

written and sealed with the blood of Christ, takes its place – the covenant which speaks of favor, life and peace through the righteousness of him who bought us with his own precious blood.

Let us remember that under the Law the seventh day was commanded for rest only, and Paul gives us the key when he declares that "WE WHICH HAVE BELIEVED do enter into REST"; for he who trusts in Jesus as his justifier RESTS from attempting to do the work for himself and accepts it as a finished work – a gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Those who thus rest in Jesus, do as God the Father did; for having created man, whose sin and fall he foresaw, Jehovah rested the entire matter in the hands of Christ to redeem men and destroy sin and death during the seventh day. (Seven thousand years from Adam till the end of the Millennium.) [See article "Creative Week" in back issue – of which we have no more on hand.] (Heb. 4:3-10.) Whosoever thus believes in Jesus, as the propitiation for his sins, has "joy and peace (rest) in believing" (Rom. 15:13) – a rest not transitory but permanent; not partial, but complete; not of one day, but of all, and which was well illustrated in the seventh day which typified it; for seven is the symbol of completeness. Since this REST is the gift of God's love, and since we enter it when we come under the "royal law," is it not, therefore, fulfilled in love? for love is the fulfilling of the Law – to all in Christ Jesus who appreciate their standing and walk as becometh saints. **page 6** (Rom. 8:1.)
