

## Beyond a certain point ...

when you finish building or renovating a house, the unsightly scaffolding—which for a time is very necessary—is taken down. The house is what’s important. Yet, even though the scaffolding is removed, the house may not yet be finished. Usually there is still a lot more work to do.

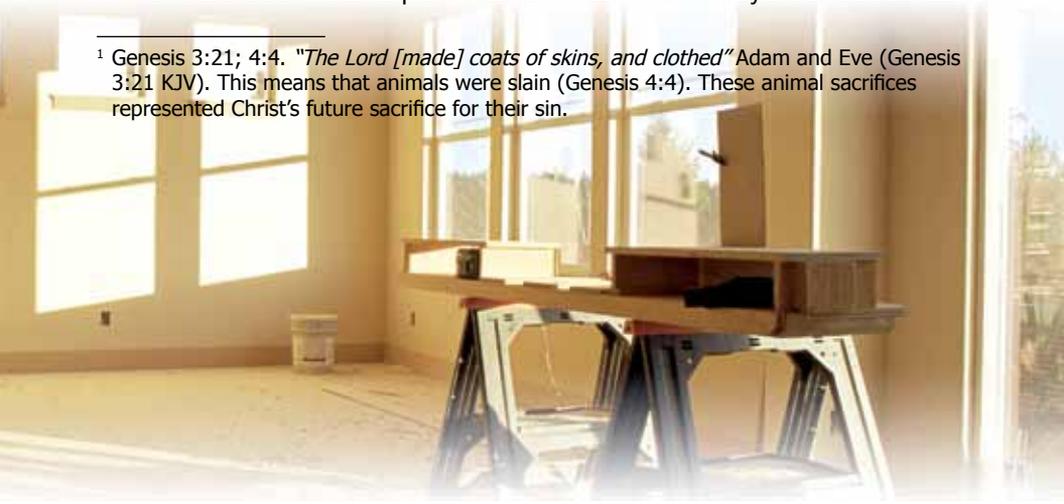
*“You are ... fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God ... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple ... for a habitation of God in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:19-22). God’s spiritual house—His literal, eternal kingdom—consists of two stages: Old Testament and New Testament. Certain tools He used to build with before Christ died, He hasn’t needed since, except as object lessons. It’s important to ...

# KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

## 1. What was the “scaffolding” of the Old Testament?

*“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added **because of** transgressions, till [Christ] should come”* (Galatians 3:19, 16). God added another law to the eternally existing moral law immediately after Adam and Eve sinned.<sup>1</sup> This new law, which we call the ceremonial law, contained instructions for religious services. These ceremonies actually illustrated the plan of salvation, the divine plan to save the human race from eternal death, and included the sacrifice that Christ would make on the cross for our sins. These rituals were very important, for they served to keep this critical future event alive in the minds and hearts of His people, the Israelites, until Jesus came. And actually, God intended for Israel to instruct all the nations of the world about the wonderful plan of salvation that is illustrated by the ceremonial law.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:21; 4:4. *“The Lord [made] coats of skins, and clothed”* Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21 KJV). This means that animals were slain (Genesis 4:4). These animal sacrifices represented Christ’s future sacrifice for their sin.



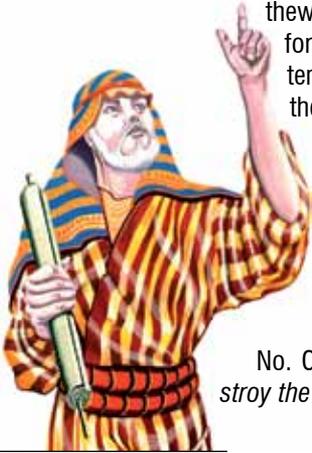
## 2. How does God describe the ceremonial law?

God says, “*I gave them also statutes that were not good*” (Ezekiel 20:25 KJV). God is as much the author of these ceremonial statutes as He is of the moral law. But He didn’t like the ceremonial law any more than He enjoyed scheduling the crucifixion of Jesus. The animal sacrifices—a “necessary evil,” so to speak—could not atone for sins. Yet those sacrifices were a foreshadowing of the wonderful plan of redemption; they were given to help man comprehend how awful sin is, the terrible price it cost all heaven and mankind, and God’s goodness in saving man. And although we no longer observe the ceremonial law, it still teaches us valuable lessons.



## 3. What happened to this law when Jesus died on the cross?

“*Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*” “*[God] wiped out the handwriting of requirements<sup>2</sup> that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross*” (Matthew 27:50-51; Colossians 2:14). After Jesus paid the price for sin, God dismantled the “scaffolding.” By rending the temple veil “*from the top to the bottom,*” God exposed the most holy place, previously hidden from view to all but the high priest. This action declared that the animal sacrifices prescribed in the ceremonial law had met their fulfillment in Christ; this law, therefore, was nailed to the cross with Him.



## 4. Was the moral law nailed to the cross with the ceremonial law?

No. Christ clearly stated, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to*

<sup>2</sup> This is the law that God declared to Moses (Deuteronomy 1:3) and that this servant of God put in his own “*handwriting*” in a law book that he placed *beside* the ark (Deuteronomy 31:26). This book stands in contrast to the law that God Himself spoke (Exodus 20:1) on Mt. Sinai in the audience of all Israel (Exodus 20:18-19) and that He wrote on two tables of stone (Deuteronomy 4:13) with His own *finger* (Exodus 31:18). The latter law Moses placed *inside* the ark (Deuteronomy 10:5). For further detail, see the “*Comparison of the Moral Law and the Ceremonial Law*” on page 5.

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fulfill. 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” (Matthew 5:17-18). He then went on to explain how particular God is about our keeping the moral law. Serious errors have arisen among Christians because they do not differentiate between the moral law and the ceremonial law.

**5. In New Testament times, does grace eliminate the need for the moral law?**

The apostles didn't think so. *“Sin is the transgression of the law,”* writes John. And Paul declares, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”* (1 John 3:4 KJV; Romans 6:1-2). John defines sin as “transgression of the law.” This cannot be an abolished law. And Paul emphatically denies that grace gives people a license to sin.

**6. Was any other tool discarded in New Testament times?**

Yes. *“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.... In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’<sup>3</sup> He has made the first obsolete”* (Hebrews 8:6-7, 13). A covenant is an agreement, often a contract signed by two or more parties.

**7. How did the children of Israel respond when God proposed to enter into a covenant with them at Mount Sinai?**

*“If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a king-*

## THE LAWS THAT GOVERNED THE JEWS ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE MAIN CATEGORIES:

**1. The moral law**, the Ten Commandments, is an expression of the perfect nature and character of God. Throughout the Bible, we find details and explanations of this law, the transgressions of which are referred to as “abominations.” This law is eternal; it can **never** be abolished.

**2. The ceremonial law** consists of services given by God to illustrate the realities of the plan of salvation. It was meant to be observed only until Christ died.

**3. The civil law**, based upon the moral law, included instructions about social relationships and imposed penalties for breaking God's law. It was given to Moses at Sinai and suspended during the Babylonian exile; then it finally disintegrated when the Jewish nation came to an end in A.D. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34.

dom of priests and a holy nation.” “Then all the people answered together and said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do’” (Exodus 19:5-6, 8). Around B.C. 1500, God led the Israelites out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and destroyed their pursuing enemies. When this great God proposed to enter into a covenant with them at Mt. Sinai, the Israelites responded enthusiastically! Three times they promised to obey **all** His instructions.<sup>4</sup>

**8. Why was this covenant, often referred to as the “old covenant,” abolished at the cross?**

This covenant was based on *the people’s* promise to obey. But soon after they entered into the covenant, the Israelites violated it miserably.<sup>5</sup> Said God, “*They did not continue in My covenant*” (Hebrews 8:9). The evils of human nature are greater than our good intentions! God demonstrated that it’s impossible to live a sinless life without His help.<sup>6</sup>

**9. In which way is the new covenant better than the old?**

“*This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel... 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*” (Jeremiah 31:33). This agreement is based on “better promises” (please refer back to question 6), because it is based on **God’s** promises,<sup>7</sup> not ours.

**10. But if the old covenant didn’t work, were all the people of the Old Testament period lost?**

No. “*God ... has saved us and called us with a holy calling ... according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began*” (2 Timothy 1:8-9). From the very beginning, the provisions of the new covenant were in place—by promise. Abraham, for example, was saved by grace, through faith, just as we are. “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*” (Galatians 3:6).

**11. The scaffolding was removed two thousand years ago when Jesus died for the sins of all mankind. Is there still a lot of work to do?**

“*Therefore, laying aside all [evil], as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as to a living stone ... you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house*” (1 Peter 2:1-5). Whether building a house or sewing a dress, the most time-consuming part is usually the finishing work. The prophecies indicate that we are in the last phase of world history. God’s Spirit is appealing to us to take our places as living material in His “spiritual house”—His kingdom. When the whole world has made the decision to either accept or reject Him, Jesus will come.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 32.

<sup>6</sup> While on earth, Jesus said the same thing (John 15:5).

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 8:6.

# COMPARISON OF THE MORAL LAW AND THE CEREMONIAL LAW

The Moral Law	The Ceremonial Law
1. Existed in Eden <i>before</i> the fall (Genesis 2:17; 3:6; Romans 7:7—Eve coveted and, with Adam, stole. Romans 5:12; 1 John 3:4; Exodus 20:17, 15).	1. Was given <i>because</i> of, and thus <i>after</i> , the fall (Galatians 3:19; Genesis 3:21—the first animal sacrifice. Genesis 4:3-4—Cain and Abel gave sacrifices).
2. Is a collection of the basic, absolute <i>moral</i> principles for life (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).	2. Was wholly <i>ceremonial</i> (ritualistic and symbolic) (Hebrews 9:10).
3. Required the <i>death penalty</i> for its transgression (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23).	3. With some exceptions, imposed <i>no penalties</i> for not participating in the ceremonies.
4. Was spoken by <i>God</i> Himself directly to the people (Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 4:12).	4. Was given by God to <i>Moses</i> , who spoke it to the people (Deuteronomy 1:1-5; 2 Kings 21:8; Acts 15:5).
5. Was written <i>by the finger of God</i> (Exodus 31:18).	5. Was written by <i>Moses</i> (Deuteronomy 31:9, 24).
6. Was engraved upon <i>stone</i> (Deuteronomy 4:13).	6. Was written in a <i>book</i> (Deuteronomy 31:24).
7. Was placed <i>inside</i> the ark of the covenant (Deuteronomy 10:5).	7. Was placed <i>beside</i> the ark of the covenant (Deuteronomy 31:26).
8. Was spoken as the Ten Commandments by God, who “ <i>added no more</i> ” (Deuteronomy 5:22).	8. Consisted of <i>many regulations</i> (ordinances) for the Old Testament service (Colossians 2:14).
9. Is the <i>perfect</i> ideal of character and leads the repentant sinner to Christ (Psalm 19:7; Galatians 3:24).	9. Showed the transgressor of the moral law how to obtain pardon <i>for imperfection</i> (Hebrews 7:18-19).
10. Is a <i>light</i> , a guide to right living (Proverbs 6:23; Isaiah 51:4).	10. Was a <i>shadow</i> , a symbol (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1).
11. Is <i>spiritual</i> , the foundation of a just society (Romans 7:14; Proverbs 14:34).	11. Was <i>caral</i> (Hebrews 7:16 KJV; 9:10 KJV).
12. Was taught by Jesus, who <i>exalted</i> its binding claims and eternal validity (Isaiah 42:21; Matthew 5:17-19).	12. Was <i>nailed to the cross</i> by Jesus (Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:15—the true Sacrifice replaced the scaffolding).
13. Is <i>within</i> the consciences of <i>all people</i> , who are born with a sense of its claims (Romans 2:14).	13. Became an (offensive) Jewish wall, <i>excluding the Gentiles</i> (Ephesians 2:14-15).
14. Is the only safe and reliable <i>guide</i> for conscience (Isaiah 8:20; Romans 9:1).	14. Offered <i>no help in guiding</i> the conscience (Galatians 4:9-11; 5:1-8).
15. Is written by the Holy Spirit into the heart at the time of <i>conversion</i> , the new birth (Hebrews 8:10; 2 Corinthians 3:3).	15. After Christ’s death, its observance bolstered human pride in attempted <i>self-redemption</i> (Galatians 6:12-16).
16. Is the entrance <i>requirement</i> for eternal life (Matthew 19:16-19; 1 Corinthians 7:19).	16. Was an <i>illustration</i> of the plan of salvation (Isaiah 53:6-7; John 1:29; 3:14-16).
17. <i>Will judge the world</i> (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; James 2:11-12).	17. <i>Judges no one</i> (Colossians 2:16).

## THE CEREMONIAL LAW?

- **Is learning about the ceremonial law of value today?**

This law provides a wealth of illustration about the plan of salvation. The more we study it, the more details about Christ, His sacrifice, and His work for our salvation become apparent. We can think of the Old Testament as the roots and trunk of a tree—and the gospel as the branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit. If we chop down a tree, it will die. If we cut away a root, a branch will die. So too, if we don't understand the Old Testament, we'll not understand the New, for the New is built on the Old. The only Scripture Jesus had was the Old Testament. He studied it and taught from it, and *"the people were astonished at His teaching"* (Matthew 7:28).

- **In Colossians 2:17, the ceremonial law is referred to as "a shadow," or a type. Why?**

*"Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ"* (Colossians 2:16-17). Just as a shadow is not the real object, animal sacrifices were not the real atonement; they pointed forward to something much greater—the reality. Everything listed in this verse was part of the rituals that symbolized Christ and His mission. The sabbaths mentioned were the ceremonial sabbaths<sup>8</sup> that depicted the different phases of Christ's work for the salvation of mankind. They are different from the moral law's weekly Sabbath, which is a reminder, or memorial, of creation.

There is also a very important lesson to learn from the Israelites' failure to keep their promises. Their very best intentions simply were not enough. The holiness God asks of us is to admit and confess our failures and sins and resolutely seek help from the only One who can help. Jesus stated the obvious: *"Without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). The most miserable people in the world are those who don't dare to face themselves. Instead of mangling our self-respect by living a lie, we may ask God to help us be the kind of people we really want to be. Jesus says, *"Ask, and it will be given to you"* (Matthew 7:7). When you and I really believe in Jesus, we'll be surprised at what He will do for and through us!

It's so badly needed, but it can't be earned! Yet, to date, it's been gratefully accepted by untold numbers of liars, murderers, adulterers, rash and revengeful people, slave brokers—as a matter of fact, by all kinds of others, too: *"God's Gift to You and Me"* (see Lesson 14).

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<sup>8</sup> Or annual sabbaths. Leviticus 23:1-2, 4-44.

# REVIEW QUESTIONS

Please answer the following questions—and send them to us so we can help you with any misunderstandings. Note that multiple-choice questions may have more than one correct answer. *Circle the letters of all correct answers.*

**1. Scaffolding is ...**

- a) good—and useful up to a certain point.
- b) taken down when it is no longer needed.
- c) temporary, like the ceremonial law.

**2. The ceremonial law ...**

- a) must be observed even today.
- b) consists of a series of services meant to teach the plan of salvation.
- c) was very popular among the Israelites.
- d) was added because of transgression.

**3. Christ said about the moral law that ...**

- a) He came to destroy it.
- b) He came to fulfill it.
- c) one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from it.



**4. “Sin is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_” (1 John 3:4 KJV).**

**5. Paul declares, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in \_\_\_\_\_ that grace may abound? Certainly \_\_\_\_\_! How shall we who \_\_\_\_\_ to sin \_\_\_\_\_ any longer in it?” (Romans 6:1-2).**

**6. If Christ had not come and died for the sins of the whole world,...**

- a) all the Old Testament animal sacrifices would have been totally worthless.
- b) people would have had to continue sacrificing animals for salvation.

**7. God used the old covenant to teach Israel and us that ...**

- a) we cannot obey God without His help.
- b) nothing can stop us from doing anything we decide to do for God.

**8. The new covenant is much better than the old because ...**

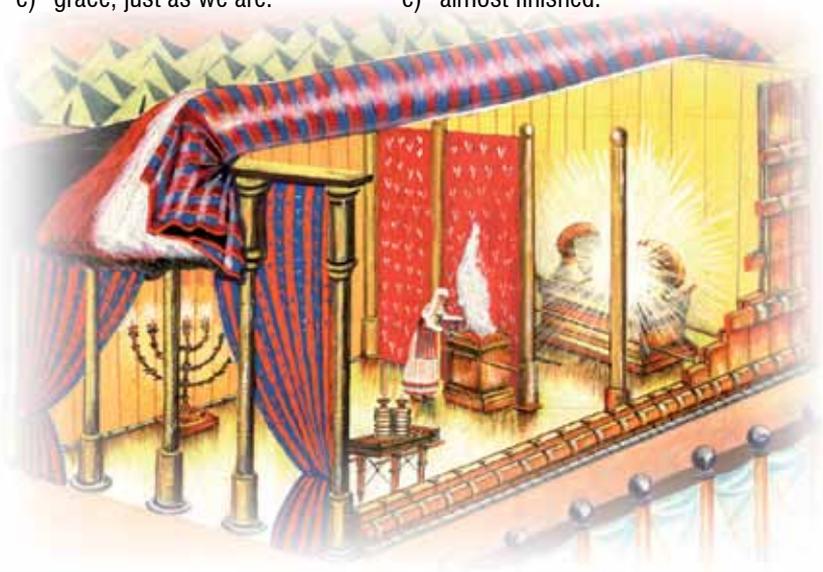
- a) it is based on God's promises rather than ours.
- b) we have more control.

**9. Abraham was saved by ...**

- a) the old covenant.
- b) the new covenant.
- c) grace, just as we are.

**10. God's spiritual house is ...**

- a) made up of living stones.
- b) in the scaffolding stage.
- c) almost finished.



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