

# The Law in Old and New Testament

Additional study material

A discipleship training to equip  
Christians for works of service,  
so that the Body of Christ may  
be built up (Ephesians 4:11-16).

# 9

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## PART I. THE LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### A. THE LAW BEFORE AND AFTER THE FALL INTO SIN

#### 1. The law before the fall into sin.

God created man in his own image. He wrote his moral laws in every human heart and gave each person a conscience to remind him of these moral laws (Romans 2:14-15). Thus, by nature Adam and Eve knew exactly what they had to do to keep God's moral laws. They knew that only the Living God of the Bible existed and that they had to worship, obey and serve him only.

When God placed Adam in the garden which was located in the region of Eden, he gave him the task to work it, to care for it and to guard it (probably against the evil one). Adam was given a perfect free will to eat from every tree in the garden except one tree (Genesis 2:15-17). Adam knew God's law, because God had clearly revealed this to him. Adam knew that "good" was equal to obey God and "evil" was equal to disobey God. This was the only time that man had a perfect free will and thus the ability to choose to do God's will (cf. Romans 8:7-8). This was also the only time in the Bible that man could maintain the eternal life he possessed through obedience to God's law.

But because the first man, the representative of all human beings, was disobedient to God's law, he lost the privilege of maintaining eternal life and became subject to death. From then on it was no longer possible that anyone could acquire eternal life through obedience to the law!

#### 2. The law after the fall into sin.

After the fall into sin men and women still knew that the Living God of the Bible was the only God and that they had to obey his moral laws. They knew that they had to worship and serve him only. They knew that they had to honour their parents. They knew that they were not allowed to kill, to commit adultery, to steal, to lie or to cover what belongs to another. God's moral laws (the Ten Commandments) remained written in the hearts of human beings.

But due to the depravity of man's human nature by sin, human beings more and more forgot God's moral laws or twisted the meaning and application of God's moral laws. Although God's moral laws became worn out due to sin, they still functioned enough in the heart and consciences of human beings to render them all subject to "guilt" and "shame". Since the fall into sin until today people who do not possess the Bible still know what is "good" and what is "evil". Their consciences still accuse or defend their thoughts and actions.

Nevertheless, in spite of knowing God's moral laws, human beings deliberately do what is "evil" and "wrong" in God's eyes. They suppress the truth by their godlessness and wickedness or twist God's truth and exchange it for a lie (Romans 1:18,25). The law silences every mouth and holds the whole world accountable to God (Romans 3:19). There is not a single human being who keeps the law perfectly (James 2:10). God says that there is not even one human being that is righteous or does what is "good" (Romans 3:10-12). All human beings have sinned and therefore fall short of the glorious righteousness, holiness and presence of God (Romans 3:23)!

#### 3. In the time of Moses the written law was added to God's covenant of grace

When God's people, Israel, had become a large nation and had rebelled against God several times in history, God gave Israel his moral, ceremonial and civil laws. Moses wrote down everything the LORD had said in the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:4). Moses read the Book of the Covenant to the Israelites and they responded that they would obey God (Exodus 24:7). The moral law (the Ten Commandments) formulated very clearly the moral law that had become worn out in the hearts and minds of people. The purpose of the moral laws was to regulate the relationship of people to God and their fellowmen. God also added the ceremonial laws which regulated how God wanted Israel to approach, worship and serve him during the Old Testament period. And he added the civil laws which regulated the political, judicial and social relationships of the Israelites during the Old Testament period. The apostle Paul teaches that God added the law 645 years<sup>1</sup> after God had made his covenant of grace with Abraham in 2092 B.C. (Galatians 3:15-17).

#### 4. The purpose of the law.

It is important to note that the written law was given AFTER Israel had already become God's people! After God had saved Israel from their slavery and sin (Exodus 20:1-2) he gave them the law (Exodus 20:3-17). The moral, ceremonial and civil laws were NOT given in the context of lost people who were required to try and save (or justify) themselves by keeping these laws, but that they were given in the context of saved people who were required to live as God's saved people in the world! The law was given to people whom God had already shown mercy! That is why the Bible clearly teaches that no one would be saved (justified, forgiven) by keeping the law (Galatians 2:16)! The purpose of the law was never to be a means of saving (justifying) people, but was always the way in which God desired his saved people to

<sup>1</sup> Paul followed the Greek translation of the Old Testament which thought that the Law was given at the end of the 430 years Israel lived in Egypt (1877-1447 B.C.) (Exodus 12:40). The period between the giving of the covenant and the entrance to Egypt was 215 years (2092-1877 B.C.).

relate to him and to their fellowmen, thus, to glorify God in the world.

## 5. The Old Testament law may be divided into moral, ritual and civil laws.

There is not always a clear dividing line between these three groups of laws. Sometimes these laws were given in mixed form. The ritual and civil laws in Israel may contain some moral laws and spiritual principles that are still valid during the New Testament period. For example, the moral aspect of the fourth commandment is to separate one out of every seven days to rest from the previous six days of work, to meet together in a sacred assembly (Leviticus 23:3) and to do good and save lives (Mark 3:4). The ritual aspect of the fourth commandment was to keep this day only on the seventh day of the week (Saturday). Christians must keep the moral aspect of the fourth commandment, but need not keep the ritual aspect. The marriage laws and sexual moral laws in the Old Testament are still valid during the New Testament period.

## B. THE MORAL LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### 1. The purpose of the moral law

The Old Testament moral law is summarised in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21). The purpose of the moral law in the Old Testament was to teach God's saved people how to live as God's people in the world.

### 2. The division of the moral law.

The first four laws in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-11) command God's saved people how to love God. The last six commandments in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12-17) command God's saved people how to love other people. Jesus Christ summarised the Ten Commandments as follows; "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). Jesus also gave the correct explanation of the Ten Commandments in Matthew chapter 5 to 7. For example, "You shall not kill" does not only refer to killing someone's body, but also destroying his spirit by anger (Matthew 5:21-26).

### 3. The moral law has not been abrogated in the New Testament.

Both Jesus Christ (Mark 12:30-31), the apostle Paul (Romans 12:13:8-10) and James (James 2:8-11) reconfirm the moral laws. They are still God's rules of how to live the saved life during the New Testament period! It is important to explain all moral laws in the full light of the New Testament revelation (Matthew 5:21-48).

## C. THE CEREMONIAL (RITUAL) LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### 1. The division of the ceremonial law.

The ceremonial (ritual) law consists of rules and regulations concerning four areas of approaching, worshipping and serving God during the Old Testament period.

- Laws concerning holy people (the priests and the Levites)
- Laws concerning holy places (the tabernacle and later the temple)
- Laws concerning holy times (the daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and seasonal celebrations)
- Laws concerning holy actions (circumcision, sacrifices, clean foods, washing rituals, first born, first fruits, tithes)

### 2. The purpose of the ceremonial law.

The word "holy" means "separated" from what is wrong and evil and "dedicated" to what is right and good. It means absolute "perfection" of character and behaviour. The God who revealed himself in the Bible is a holy God. Unholy people by themselves cannot approach the holy God (Leviticus 19:1-2; Isaiah 6:1-7)! But because the God who revealed himself in the Bible is also a loving God, he instituted the ceremonial law as a preparation for his Old Testament people to approach him, worship him and serve him. The purpose of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament was to teach God's people how to approach, worship and serve God. God instituted priests to represent his people as they approached God with their prayers and sacrifices. God instituted a place to worship him in order to keep his Old Testament people from getting involved in worshipping idols on hills and under trees. God instituted special times to approach and worship him. And God instituted special rituals by which his Old Testament people should approach, worship and serve him. The animal sacrifices reminded them that they needed atonement for their sins. One tithe was destined to support the priests and Levites and the second tithe was destined to support the poor and destitute in Israel.

### 3. The ceremonial law was insufficient.

ALL the ceremonial (ritual) laws were only "shadows" of "the realities" that would come with the first coming of Jesus Christ at the beginning of the New Testament period (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8:5-8; Hebrews 10:1). The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ *ends* the Old Testament period and *begins* the New Testament period (Matthew 27:51;

John 19:30). The daily Old Testament sacrifices were not able to control the power of the sinful nature of man or clear his conscience (Hebrews 10:1-4), but only served as “an ongoing illustration” (type) of the only perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ that would bring eternal redemption and perfectly cleanse all consciences to experience perfect peace (Hebrews 9:10,12). The ceremonial laws were only “external regulations applying until the time of the new order” (i.e. the New Testament period) (Hebrews 9:8-10)!

#### **4. The ceremonial law was fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated at the first coming of Jesus Christ.**

The law in the sense of the ceremonial law had formed a dividing wall of hostility between believing Jews and believing non-Jews in the New Testament period. The death of Christ abrogated the ceremonial law (Ephesians 2:15). The ritual laws of the Old Testament may never be re-introduced into the New Testament Church, because they would again cause division and hostility!

### **D. THE CIVIL LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

#### **1. The division of the civil law.**

The purpose of the civil law in the Old Testament was to teach God’s people how to function in the State of Israel.

The civil laws determined rules and regulations for the political, judicial, military and social life of the Israelites during the Old Testament period. They include the criminal or penal laws for transgressing God’s laws. For example:

- **Regulations with regard to the government of Israel** included rules for the appointment of leaders for the twelve tribes of Israel (Numbers 1:16), rules for the campsites of each tribe (Numbers 2:2-3,17,34) and rules for the future kings of Israel (Deuteronomy 17:14-20).
- **Regulations with regard to the social system of Israel** included rules for keeping Hebrew slaves (Exodus 21:1-11) and rules for mistreating the weak and the foreigners within Israel (Deuteronomy 24:17).
- **Regulations with respect to the judicial system of Israel** included rules to protect possessions, rules to compensate damages and rules with respect to murder and sexual immorality (Exodus 21:1-23:9; Leviticus 19:15; Leviticus 20:10,13,15,19; Deuteronomy 16:18-20).
- **Regulations with respect to the military system of Israel** included rules for military service, the conduct of war and the total destruction of the seven godless and wicked Canaanite nations (Leviticus 18:24-25, 28-30; Deuteronomy 7:1-11; Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Psalm 106:34-38).

#### **2. The civil law of Israel was replaced by Christ’s teachings about the Kingdom of God.**

The special functions of the State of Israel during the Old Testament period were the following:

- **To bring forth the promised Messiah** in whom all the nations in the world would be blessed (John 4:22; Galatians 3:16)
- **To form the beginning of God’s covenant people on earth** (Exodus 19:3-6)
- **To visibly illustrate how people may approach, worship, serve and fellowship with God**
- **To live visibly as God’s saved people and covenant people** according to his laws, that is, as his righteous and holy people among the heathen nations in the world (Exodus 20:1-17).

All these laws served as a preparation for “the fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4) when the Messiah, Jesus Christ, came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17) and to establish the kingdom of God, not only in Israel, but in all the nations in the world (Matthew 12:28-30; Mark 1:15; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23).

The special functions of the State of Israel have ended with the first coming of Jesus Christ. Since then God’s eternal plan is being realised in all the nations in the world (Genesis 22:18), including in the nation of Israel (the Jews), (Romans 1:16; Romans 10:12; Ephesians 3:5-6; Galatians 3:26-29).

From the first coming of Jesus Christ the special functions of the civil law of Israel have been replaced by the regulations of the kingdom of God as taught by Jesus Christ, especially in his many parables! He teaches people in all the nations how they ought to function in the kingdom of God. Therefore the civil laws of Israel must be explained in the light of the New Testament revelation.

#### **3. The New Testament contains regulations of the civil law**

- **The political systems** under which Christians live (Matthew 2:21; Acts 4:19-20; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-23)
- **The social systems** (1 Corinthians 6:12 - 7:40; Ephesians 4:17-6:11; Colossians 3:18-4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; James 2:1-13; James 5:1-12)
- **The judicial systems** (Matthew 5:38-42; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Corinthians 6:1-10; Hebrews 10:34; 1 Peter 2:18-23; 1 John 5:17)
- **And the military systems** (Matthew 26:52-54; Luke 3:14; Luke 6:27-28; John 18:36).

## E. THE LAW WAS ADDED TO THE COVENANT

In 1447 B.C. God added the written law to his covenant of grace for the following reasons:

- The law was added **not to replace God's covenant** of grace (Galatians 3:17)!
- The law was added as “the rule of life” **to teach how God's people ought to live** as his saved people amidst the heathen nations of the world (Exodus 20:1-17). It has always been God's purpose to reveal his glory to his people and to display his glory through his people!
- The law was added **to reveal transgressions to Israel**, that is, to make very clear what was “good” and what was “evil” in God's eyes (Galatians 3:19).
- The law was added as “a prison guard” **to hold Israel as a prisoner of sin** from which she could not escape by her own power during the Old Testament period (Galatians 3:22-23)
- The law was added as “a pedagogue” put in charge **to supervise the Israelites as immature children** of God during the Old Testament period in order **to lead them to Jesus Christ to become mature sons and daughters** of God during the New Testament period (Galatians 3:24-25; Galatians 4:1-7).
- The law was added as “a judge” **to silence every mouth** and hold the whole world accountable to God (Romans 3:19)
- The law was added as “a mirror” **to see and become conscious of sin** (Romans 3:20).
- The law was added as “a magnifying glass” **to discover the nature and extent of sin** and **to increase the ability to see the far greater power of God's grace** in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:20-21)
- The law was added as “a bridle” **to restrain sin** (lawbreakers, rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, adulterers and perverts, slave traders and liars and perjurers and for whatever is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel (1 Timothy 1:9-11).

## PART II. THE FULFILMENT OF THE CEREMONIAL LAW

### A. THE CEREMONIAL LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Letters to the Romans, Galatians and Hebrews clearly teach the place of the LAW (Greek: nomos, Hebrew: Torah, Arabic: Sharia) within the Old Testament period and within the Christian Faith in the New Testament period. All Christians need to study these letters very well. Especially these three Letters teach the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament in the Bible!

#### 1. The difference between the laws of Israel and the laws of the Gentile nations.

##### ▪ The moral laws.

Leviticus chapters 18 to 20 contain various **moral laws** like those in the Ten Commandments. The moral laws stress living *a holy life!* Leviticus 19:2 says, “Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy”. One can always tell the character of someone's god by looking at the way that person worships and lives! The worship and life of the Canaanite nations were wicked, cruel and immoral. Their gods were also full of wickedness, cruelty and immorality. Their gods demanded sacrifice of children and sponsored temple prostitution. The prophets of these nations themselves lived immoral lives. By their proclamations, chanting and reciting they promoted immoral worship and life. In contrast, the God of the Bible is alive and morally absolutely pure and holy. The God of the Bible demands that his people worship and live in accordance with *his* holy and righteous character!

##### ▪ The ritual laws.

The Book Leviticus in the Old Testament contains **ceremonial laws** concerning priests, sacrifices, clean food and religious festivals. Why did the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Bible, give a place to ceremonial laws and rituals, which were also found in other nations in the world? The answer is that the Holy Spirit intended to teach God's people how to approach God in worship and life. The Holy Spirit intended to teach them that *the God of the Bible is the controlling centre of everything*, that *he is the final goal of every action on earth* and that *he is the Saviour of the total man*.

What were the differences between the ceremonial laws and rituals of Israel and that of the other nations? While the rituals of the nations were the product of some priestly class of people, the book of Leviticus was God's revelation. While the rituals of the nations were often individual, family or clan rituals how to appease or manipulate the gods, the ceremonial law was the same for the whole nation of Israel and taught people how to approach and worship God. While the religious leaders of the nations fought wars and murdered everyone who disagreed with them, the God of the Bible desires to save the spirit and bodies of everyone in this world. While the anger of the gods of the nations was despotic and purely arbitrary, the wrath of the God of the Bible was caused only by *disobedience and disrespect* towards God's clearly revealed will that usually resulted in failing to live a righteous and holy life. While the religious ceremonies of

the nations depended on magical rites, the Old Testament ceremonies *depended on the inner attitude of the heart*. The Old Testament ceremonial (ritual) law of Israel regulated how sinful man could approach, worship and serve the holy God. While the religious life was essentially a matter of the individual, the religious rituals were a matter of the whole community. Therefore the value of these rituals depended on the extent to which they were an expression of the sincere spiritual life of the individual!

▪ **The condition and attitude of the heart.**

The prophet Moses taught that God demands: “*Circumcise your hearts* and do not be stiff-necked any longer” (Deuteronomy 10:16)! The prophet Samuel taught, “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in *obeying the voice of the Lord*? To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22). King David taught. “You (the LORD) do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; *a broken and contrite heart*, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:16-17). And The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). The Old Testament religious ceremonies without a changed heart and without faith were completely useless!

## 2. The ceremonial law in the Old Testament was added to the covenant with Abraham

God made his covenant with Abraham in 2092 B.C. (Genesis 12:1-4) and reconfirmed his covenant with Abraham in 2068 B.C. (Genesis 17:1-14). In 1447 B.C., when Israel had grown in numbers and had been disobedient to God a number of times, **God added written laws to his covenant** with Abraham (Galatians 3:17-19). These laws became necessary due to sin and consisted of:

- Moral laws
- Ceremonial (ritual) laws
- And civil (social) laws

Read Delta study 9.

## 3. The purpose of the ceremonial law

The purpose of the ceremonial law was to teach God’s people during the Old Testament period how to approach, worship and serve the holy God. Because the word “holy” means *separated from* what is wrong and evil and *dedicated to* what is right and good, unholy people by themselves cannot draw near to a holy God (Leviticus 19:1-2; Isaiah 6:1-7). The ceremonial law regulated the approach, worship and service of God between the time of Moses and the first coming of Christ.

## 4. The ceremonial law taught ritual rules

The ceremonial law taught the rules for four areas of approaching God in worship and service.

- The rules for the holy **servants**: the priests and the Levites
- The rules for the holy **places**: the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) and later the temple
- The rules for the holy **times**: the *daily* prayers, the *weekly* Sabbath, the *monthly* New Moon festivals; the *yearly* fasting day (the Day of Atonement), the yearly pilgrimages to religious festivals (the Feast of Passover together with the Feast of Unleavened Bread; the Feast of Harvest or Weeks or Pentecost; and the Feast of Ingathering or Booths); and the *seasonal* festivals: the Sabbath Year which occurred every seventh year and the Year of Jubilee which occurred every fiftieth year.
- The rules for the holy **ritual acts**: the physical circumcision, the offerings (sacrifices), the ceremonial washings (ablutions), the eating of clean foods, the dedication of the firstborn, the bringing of the first fruits of the harvest and the giving of tithes.

## 5. Leviticus taught how people in the Old Testament might approach, fellowship and worship the God who revealed himself in the Bible.

The main goal and theme of Leviticus is regulating how God’s redeemed people may approach, fellowship and worship God. All the ceremonial laws are intended to prevent God’s people, Israel, from worshipping God in the abominable ways of the pagan nations. The offerings are never brought to idols. Everybody in Israel was forbidden to follow the detestable practices of these nations (Deuteronomy 18:9-13). The religious festivals had to be free from the drunkenness, orgies and revelry of these nations. The theme of Leviticus may be described as “Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness” (Psalm 29:2). The Old Testament ceremonial laws prepared God’s Old Testament people for the New Testament way of worshipping God. The New Testament way of worship is not outwardly ceremonial (ritual), but inwardly “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

## 6. Leviticus taught that only God himself determines the way of access, fellowship and worship.

### ▪ The book of Genesis

teaches clearly that people have failed under all favourable conditions: They failed when they had a perfect free will before the fall into sin. They failed when they were commanded to subdue and rule the earth. They even failed when God made a covenant of grace with them. The failure of man shows that all people need God as their Saviour!

### ▪ The book of Exodus

teaches clearly that God saves people by his grace and mercy and not because people deserve it. People are saved only by God's grace! Since access to God is made possible by grace alone, the believer must maintain his access to God, fellowship with God and worship of God only in the specific way that God himself has commanded. People may not worship God in any way as they please, but must worship in the only way that God has prescribed.

### ▪ The book of Leviticus

regulates the way in which believers during the Old Testament period should approach God, fellowship with God and worship God. Therefore all the regulations with regard to the offerings and other rituals must originate with the God of the Bible and not with man. All religious rituals that are invented by man (even those who call themselves prophets or priests) should be regarded as an attempt to establish some kind of self-justifying personal merit before God. The Old Testament ceremonies prepared God's people, Israel, to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. John 14:6 says that he would be the only way of uninhibited access to God!

## 7. Leviticus taught the principle of salvation for the total man.

The view of man's soul in Israel determined their view of sin and salvation. The view of many people in the modern world is based on neo-Platonic philosophy, which teaches that man is a duality: man "has a body and soul" and therefore can keep his physical and psychological functions apart. But the teaching of the Bible is different. According to Genesis 2:7, man does not "have a soul", but he "is a living soul"! "*Man is a soul that has two inseparable sides: a visible physical side (a body) and an invisible spiritual side (a spirit)*! Man is therefore not a duality, but a unity and therefore his body cannot be kept apart from his spirit! That is why also the New Testament teaches that a person without spiritual life is a *dead* person (Ephesians 2:1-3).

This means that the invisible spiritual world influences not only his spiritual and psychological life, but also his physical life, like his health and life-style! The invisible spiritual world of God has influence on every aspect of man's life. It affects the total man! This also means that every aspect of man's life can get tainted by sin. Sin affects a man's spiritual, psychological, intellectual, volitional and physical life. In order to teach these truths to his own people, God made laws not only with respect to the spiritual aspects of man's life, but also laws with respect to the physical aspects of man's life. Laws with respect to the spiritual aspects of man are for example the sacrifices to make atonement for sins. And laws with respect to the physical aspects of man are for example the prohibitions to eat unclean food, to touch unclean things and to get involved in sexual immoral relationships.

Therefore, the ceremonial (ritual) aspect of Israel's life served to teach man that *every aspect of human life is important for God* and that *God has come to save the total man!* God has come to save man's spirit and man's body! Proverbs 11:30 says, "He who wins *souls* is wise". To win souls is to be concerned with both a person's spirit and a person's body.

## 8. Leviticus taught the principle of perfection.

Leviticus teaches that the number *seven is a sacred number*. Because God completed the created universe in seven days and rested from his work of creation on the seventh day, therefore the number seven symbolises *the perfect work of God*.

In the book of Leviticus we often find the number "seven". Every 7<sup>th</sup> day was the Sabbath, which was a day of rest for man from his daily work and an opportunity to have a sacred assembly together with other believers (Leviticus 23:3). Every 7<sup>th</sup> year was a Sabbath Year, which was a year of rest for the crop bearing fields. After every 7 Sabbath Years, the fiftieth year was the Year of Jubilee, which was a year in which all the mortgaged lands must be returned to the original family. The Passover Festival was held at the end of the second sevens of days, that is, on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month (Abib) in the evening. The Festival of Unleavened Bread was celebrated during the 7 days following the Passover. The Feast of Harvest or Pentecost was celebrated 7 weeks after bringing the sheaf of the wave offering, that is, on the fiftieth day. During the 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri) of the Jewish calendar there were three important festivals: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths. The Feast of Booths was also celebrated for 7 days.

God uses the number "seven" to remind man that whatever God does is *perfect* and whatever God requires is also nothing less than *perfect*.

However, God's Old Testament people, Israel, could not obey God perfectly and so God used the law to drive them to the coming Saviour Jesus Christ. In the New Testament in Galatians 3:23-25 we read that God's people during the Old

Testament period “were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.” The law was put in charge to lead them to Jesus Christ so that they might be justified by faith and not by the works of the law. And after Jesus Christ came and faith in him became possible, people are no longer under the supervision of the law.

## **9. Leviticus taught that the purpose of fellowship with God and worship of God is love expressed in holiness.**

In Leviticus 19:2 the Lord says to Moses, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy.’” The word “*holy*” means *to be set apart from* the sinful and rebellious world and *to be dedicated to* the worship and service of the One and Only Living God. God wants his own people to be like himself. God is holy and he wants his people to be holy.

How is holiness expressed? In Leviticus 19:18 God says, “Love your neighbour as yourself!” Holiness is especially shown in the way the people of God relate to God, to other people (for example: their family members, their neighbours and the aliens living in their midst) and to themselves. In short, holiness is shown in loving God, loving the neighbour and loving yourself. Therefore the fundamental attitude of love is expressed in the following five ways of holiness:

### **▪ Love is expressed in holiness when you abstain from sexual immorality.**

Leviticus chapter 18 and 20 we read that the people of God show their love in holiness when they abstain from every kind of sexual immorality and from anything that violates the marriage bond. Especially adultery, incest, homosexuality and bestiality are abominable to God. And God will certainly punish people who do these things.

- In Leviticus 18:20 and Leviticus 20:10 God says concerning *adultery*: “Do not have sexual relations with your neighbour’s wife and defile yourself with her. If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife, ... both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.”
- In Leviticus 18:6 and Leviticus 20:17 God says concerning *incest*: “No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. If a man ... has sexual relations with ... the daughter of either his father or his mother, it is a disgrace and they must be cut off before the eyes of their people.”
- In Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 God says concerning *homosexuality* “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them has done what is detestable. They must be put to death.”

In Leviticus 18:24 God warns: “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.” The reason why God punished the Canaanite nations was because they committed these sexual immoral sins.

### **▪ Love is expressed in holiness when you are honest and incorruptible.**

In Leviticus 19:11 and 16 God commands, “Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not go about spreading slander among your people.”

### **▪ Love is expressed in holiness when you are fair and just.**

In Leviticus 19:13,35-36 God commands, “Do not defraud your neighbour or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights.” Unlike the common practice among the nations to cheat and bribe in business transactions, *God commands his people to be different!* God’s people should love their neighbour by never cheating and by never paying bribes or receiving bribes under any circumstance. In Leviticus 19:15 God commands, “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism towards the great, but judge your neighbour fairly.” The same is commanded in Deuteronomy 16:19, “Do not pervert justice ... Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.” Unlike the common practice among the nations to influence decisions made in the government or in the court of justice by paying bribes to false witnesses and bribes to the judges, the people of God should love their neighbour by never perverting justice, by never showing favouritism to the rich and powerful and by never receiving or giving bribes!

### **▪ Love is expressed in holiness when you protect life.**

In Leviticus 19:16 God commands, “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour’s life.” And in Leviticus 19:14 God commands, “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind.” Because the deaf cannot hear and the blind cannot see, the people of God should never do things that would prejudice the interests of the handicapped or in any way harm the handicapped. God’s people should especially be concerned with the needs of the handicapped, the aged, the widows and orphans, the poor and the oppressed.

### **▪ Love is expressed in holiness when you avoid every form of occultism.**

In Leviticus 19:26,31 God commands, “Do not practice divination or sorcery. Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists (spiritualists), for you will be defiled by them.” And in Leviticus 20:6,27 God warns that he will punish both the people who practice occultism and the people who consult the occultists. He says, “I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists ... I will cut him off from his people. A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death.” While modern man thinks that spiritism and other forms of occultism are harmless, God regards it as dangerous for man and detestable.



While in the Old Testament *love is especially expressed in holiness*, in the New Testament *love is especially expressed in obedience*. In John 14:21 and 23 Jesus Christ says, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” In the New Testament, obedience includes holiness of life.

## 10. The ceremonial law was only external and temporary

Hebrews 9:9-10 mention several parts of the Old Testament ceremonial law: the tabernacle (temple), the gifts, the sacrifices, the food laws and the ceremonial washings (ablutions) and teaches that they are only external and temporary regulations applying only during the Old Testament period!

“The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place (the entering of God’s holy presence by ordinary people)(Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:12) had *not yet* been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings – *external regulations applying until the time of the new order*” (i.e. the New Testament period).

## 11. The ceremonial law has been fulfilled in the New Testament

### ▪ The Messiah in the Old Testament.

The ultimate purpose of the Old Testament ceremonial law and rituals was to point to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. The nation of Israel and its ceremonies were only the means of God’s revelation, but not the final goal of God’s revelation. From the beginning God purposed that the means of revelation would fall away and make place for the goal of revelation, namely Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah said that “the Servant of the LORD” (the Messiah) is called “Israel” and through him the LORD would display his splendour, gather the remnant of his people in the nation of Israel and bring his salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:3,6). Romans 10:4 teaches that Jesus Christ “is *the end* of the law”, or “*the goal, the meaning and the substance* of the law” (Greek: telos)! When Jesus Christ came, Israel as a people of God reached their final purpose.

### ▪ The law was only a custodian in the Old Testament period.

During the Old Testament period God’s people (Israel) lived “under law”. During the Old Testament period the purpose of especially the ceremonial law was to prepare God’s people for the first coming of the Messiah (Galatians 3:24) and his grace (John 1:17).

The Old Testament law functioned as a custodian or guardian supervising the immature children of God. The law made them prisoners and locked them up until faith in Jesus Christ was revealed. The law was “a pedagogue (= one that leads an immature boy)” put in charge to lead all people living under law to Christ so that they might be justified by faith in Christ.

Now that the New Testament period has come, in which justification by faith has become possible, people formerly under law *are no longer under this pedagogue* (Galatians 3:23-25)!

As long as people are physical immature children, they are subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by the father. Likewise, as long as people are spiritual immature children living under religious laws, they are in the perpetual state of slavery under “the basic principles of the world” (= the elementary rules and regulations by which people attempt to gain acceptance with God or salvation). For Jews, “the elementary rules and regulations” were the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament to which the Jews had added many of their own rules and regulations: observing special days, months, years, seasons and circumcision (Galatians 4:9-10; Galatians 5:2-4)! For non-Jews “the elementary rules and regulations” are the laws and prescriptions of their religions by which they seek to achieve redemption or justification. By all such religious “rules and regulation” both Jews and Gentiles were putting themselves under the yoke of slavery!

But when the New Testament time had fully come, God sent his Son Jesus Christ, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem people under law, that they might receive the full rights of mature sons. The people formerly under law *are no longer slaves* (Galatians 4:1-3). When Jesus Christ sets them free, they are free indeed (John 8:36). Then they are able to receive Jesus Christ and his atonement of sins by faith, then the Spirit of God comes to live in their bodies and then they will become mature sons and daughters of God and inheritors of heaven (= Paradise) and of the new earth for ever (Galatians 4:4-7)!

### ▪ The ceremonial law was only an Old Testament shadow of the New Testament reality.

*The gospel* had been proclaimed during the Old Testament period (Romans 3:21; Galatians 3:8). The substance of the gospel is the Messiah, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Jesus Christ is foreshadowed in the Old Testament law. The Old Testament laws were “a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Jesus Christ” (Colossians 2:17). Thus, when Israel accepted and obeyed the law, they accepted and obeyed Jesus Christ (who was still to come). However, in order to understand Jesus Christ as the goal and substance of the Old Testament law, we should limit ourselves to the types in the Old Testament law that are explained in the New Testament as types that point

forward to Jesus Christ. All the ceremonial laws during the Old Testament period were only “shadows” of the “realities” that would be revealed with the first coming of Christ at the beginning of the New Testament period (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8:5,13; Hebrews 9:8-10; 10:1). In the New Testament the shadows have been *replaced by the realities!* The New Testament books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews teach clearly how Jesus Christ fulfilled *the shadows* (the Old Testament ceremonial law) and introduced *the realities* themselves.

- **The ceremonial law was changed at the beginning of the New Testament period.**

At the first coming of Jesus Christ there was a change in the Old Testament priesthood. And when there was a change in the Old Testament priesthood, there was *a change* in the Old Testament law (Hebrews 7:12)! How was the law changed? The law was changed by first being fulfilled and then being cancelled and abrogated.

- **The ceremonial law was fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated by Jesus Christ.**

At his first coming, Jesus Christ *fulfilled* God’s law in the sense of God’s righteous and holy requirement that people should be perfectly righteous and holy and that all their sins should be perfectly punished (Matthew 5:17; 2 Corinthians 5:21). God made peace with believers through the death of Christ on the cross (Romans 5:1,10). God declared believers completely (100%) righteous in his eyes and henceforth regards and treats them as completely (100%) righteous on the ground of Christ’s completed work of salvation (1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18a). God cancelled the written law with its regulations that was against believers and stood opposed to believers. He took it away and nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

Christ fulfilled the moral law in the sense that he taught its original untainted significance, namely that it has always been God’s purpose (during the Old Testament period and during the New Testament period) to have a people to whom he revealed his glory and through whom he would display his glory (Matthew chapters 5 to 7).

He fulfilled all “the shadows” of the ritual or ceremonial law and consequently *cancelled* it (Luke 24:25-27,44-47; Colossians 2:14) and *abrogated* it so that it no longer formed a barrier or dividing wall of hostility between Christians coming from the Old Testament Jews and Christians coming from the heathen nations. He reconciled them both to himself through the cross so that they now form “one new man” (Ephesians 2:14-16) or “one Body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:13). That is why no ceremonial law may again be re-introduced into the New Testament Church. It would again cause division in the Body of Christ.

Jesus Christ brought “the realities” which the Old Testament prepared, prophesied and illustrated as “shadows”. Jesus Christ is the fulfilment and the reality. He is the Unique and Everlasting High Priest (Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10; 7:11-28) and only sufficient sacrifice of atonement (Hebrews 9:8 – 10:22)! He is the Greatest and Final Prophet (Acts 3:22-26) and has spoken God’s final and complete Word (Hebrews 1:1-2)! He is the Only and Eternal King (Matthew 28:18; John 18:36) and he is conquering now until everyone and everything has been conquered (Romans 8:31-39; Revelation 6:1-2; Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:11-21)!

## B. THE CEREMONIAL LAW HAS BEEN FULFILLED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### (i) Ceremonial laws about holy people

#### 1. THE PRIESTS

##### The priests during the Old Testament period

- **The priesthood of believers and the instituted priesthood.**

During the Old Testament period the priesthood still belonged to the ordinary believers. In the book of Genesis Abraham still built his own altars and brought his own offerings to God (Genesis 12:7).

But in the books of Exodus (Exodus 28:1) and Leviticus (chapters 8-10) these functions belonged only to offices appointed by God from the tribe of Levi. The priests were limited to the family of Aaron and the Levites were appointed to maintain the temple service. Although Leviticus 1:5 shows that the ordinary people still brought their offerings to the Tent of Meeting, slaughtered, skinned and removed the intestines themselves, it is clear that the priests were appointed to actually present these offerings to the Lord.

- **The Old Testament priests differed from the priests of other religions.**

While the priests of the nations were regarded as loaded with magical powers to manipulate the gods, the Old Testament priests were only servants of the Living God. The priests of the heathen nations were regarded as people with visionary and magical powers; wonder-doctors or witch-doctors, or bearers of some secret, mysterious and magical knowledge. In contrast, the Old Testament priests were appointed by God to be *mediators between the people and God*.

- **The tasks of the priests.**

- Their first task was to preserve God's Word, to guard God's covenant, to teach God's laws to the people (Deuteronomy 33:9-10) and to bless the people (Deuteronomy 10:8).
- Their second task was to be righteous judges and make fair decisions in disputes.  
In these two tasks the priests represented God with the people. They spoke on behalf of God to the people.
- Their third task was to bring the offerings of the people to God (Deuteronomy 33:10).
- Their fourth task was to worship God with songs and prayers and pray for the people to God.  
In these two tasks the priests represented the people with God.

### The priests during the New Testament period

During the New Testament period these Old Testament institutions were set aside (replaced) (Hebrews 7:18-19) by *the eternal and permanent high priesthood* of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 7:11-28) and *the priesthood of all believers* in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Jesus Christ is the Unique and Ever-present High Priest because he was chosen by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek (the king-priest). He was absolutely sinless. He lived a perfect life. He brought the perfect atonement for sins. And, being the only One raised from death, he lives forever. He needs no successor!

All Christians have prophetic, priestly and royal functions towards other people and these functions may not remain limited to a small group of (ordained) church leaders.

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## (ii) Ceremonial laws about the holy place

### 2. THE TEMPLE

#### The temple during the Old Testament period

- **The Tent of Meeting or temple was very different to other religious buildings.**

While the temples of the nations were places of idols, the Old Testament Tent of Meeting or temple was *the visible dwelling of the Living God*. While despicable idols filled the temples and shrines of the nations, there was no idol in the temple! What distinguished the temple from all other religious places was "the Presence of the Lord"! The glory of the Living God would once in a while descend on the Tent of Meeting in a cloud (Exodus 40:34-38). God promised his Old Testament people: "My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest." And Moses replied: "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me (i.e. as God's prophet) and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me (i.e. as a genuine prophet) and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:14-16). What is important was not a religious place, but the Presence of the God of the Bible!"

- **The temple symbolised the dwelling place of God.**

During the Old Testament period the temple at Jerusalem symbolised the place which God chose as a dwelling for his Name (Deuteronomy 16:2), a place where the believers could meet God (Psalm 27:4) and where God would hear their prayers (1 Kings 8:30).

- **The temple was the centre of Old Testament worship.**

The five prescribed religious rituals for ordinary believers were:

- **Confession** - The confession that the God, whose glory filled the temple, is One, i.e. the Only God (Exodus 40:34; Deuteronomy 6:4). In the Old Testament, the God of the Bible never acknowledged the existence of any other god. He says, "Before me *no god* was formed, nor will there be one after me. I am the LORD and apart from me there is *no saviour*" (Isaiah 43:10-11)!
- **Prayer** - Praying three times every day towards the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10; 1 Kings 8:29-30).
- **Fasting** - Fasting one day every year, holding a sacred assembly at the temple (Leviticus 16:2-3; Leviticus 23:27)
- **Giving** - Three tithes (Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 12:17-19; Deuteronomy 14:22-29) must be given for the upkeep of the temple in Jerusalem (Malachi 3:9-12) and the social tax in Israel.
- **Pilgrimage** - Pilgrimages to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate the appointed religious festivals (the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread; the Feast of Harvest or Pentecost; and the Feast of Booths) (Deuteronomy 16:16).

- **The temple is no longer the centre of worship!**

While millions of people every year make pilgrimages to particular religious shrines and buildings in particular religious cities, the God of the Bible is not worshipped at any particular place on earth! After the first coming of Jesus Christ also the temple had finished its purpose. Paul says in Acts 17:24, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and *does not live in temples* built by hands".

## The temple during the New Testament period

### ▪ **The Church is not a building, but a spiritual community.**

Christians do not necessarily worship God in a special religious building (cf. 2 Samuel 7:6-7; 2 Chronicles 6:18; Acts 7:48-49; Acts 17:24-25) and also do not make use of religious rituals (ritual prayers, ritual fasting, ritual giving and ritual pilgrimages) as the Jews did during the Old Testament period!

The worship place made of stone was replaced by a spiritual community consisting of living believers (Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5) and the ritual prayer times, the ritual fasting, the ritual giving and the ritual pilgrimages were replaced by the worship of God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

### ▪ **The Church worships God in spirit and in truth.**

In about 27 A.D. Jesus said, “Break down this temple and I will raise it again in three days”. The words have two meanings: The word ‘temple’ may refer to the temple built of stones standing in Jerusalem, or it may refer to the temple of his body. The word ‘break down’ may refer to the tearing down of the temple building, or it may refer to the destruction of his body. And the word ‘raise up’ may refer to the reconstruction of the temple building, or it may refer to the resurrection of his body!

The meaning of the entire saying of Jesus is the following: “Even though you, Jews, are breaking down the temple of my body (by crucifying me), nevertheless, in three days I will be resurrected! And even though as a result of murdering me you also break down your own *temple of stone and the entire system of religious practices connected with it*, nevertheless as a result of my resurrection I will establish a new temple with a new cult, namely, the Church with its worship of God in spirit and in truth.”

The type or illustration and the antitype or fulfilment cannot be separated in the Bible. The type or illustration was Israel’s tabernacle or temple and was regarded as *the place in which God dwelt*. The antitype or fulfilment is Christ’s body, which is in a far superior sense the dwelling-place of God (Colossians 2:9). Therefore, if anyone destroyed the second, Christ’s body, he also pulled down the first, the Jerusalem temple with its cult! Thus, after Jesus Christ was crucified, *the temple building and its entire cult ceased to have any more meaning!* When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51) as a sign that people in every place could now approach God (Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:12). The temple as a religious building was abolished. The terrible crime of crucifying Jesus resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem together with its temple building (70 A.D.)(Luke 19:43-44; Luke 21:24). The book of Hebrews teaches clearly the once for all time replacement of the temple and its whole cult by Jesus Christ and his fulfilled work of salvation!

In exactly the same way, the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ implies the establishment of the new temple, another temple, which is a temple not made by man (Mark 14:58). In the New Testament the Body of believers or the Church is clearly taught to be the temple of God, “the temple which is not made by man” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:21-22).

Thus Jesus Christ exercised his authority to break down the Old Testament temple and its legalistic system of worship in order to establish the New Testament temple (the Church) and the worship of God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

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## 3. THE DAILY PRAYERS

### Prayers during the Old Testament period

#### ▪ **Prayers three times a day.**

During the Old Testament period Jews used to pray three times a day (Daniel 6:10)(Darius: 539–538 B.C.). Because a day in the Old Testament ends and begins in the evening, the order of prayer is:

- At three in the afternoon before the sun sets in the evening (Psalm 55:17; Psalm 141:2) (1011-971 B.C.)(cf. Acts 10:3,30)
- In the early morning (Psalm 55:17; Psalm 5:3)
- And at noon (Psalm 55:17; Acts 10:9).

#### ▪ **Prayers facing Jerusalem.**

Since the time of king Solomon (971 - 931 B.C.) the Jews prayed facing towards Jerusalem, because of Solomon’s prayer in 1 Samuel 8:27-30: “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built? Yet, give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy, O LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. May your eyes be open towards this temple night and day, this place of which you said, ‘My Name shall be there,’ so that you will hear the prayer your servant *prays towards this place*. Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel *when they pray towards this place*. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.” But praying facing Jerusalem was a human addition to God’s Word!

▪ **Prayers in different positions.**

The prayers in the Old Testament did not consist of divinely prescribed ritual prayers or ritual prayer positions. The believers prayed in many different positions (cf. Delta plus study 39: Body postures in worship).

**Prayers during the New Testament period**

During the New Testament period Jesus Christ had the habit of praying before the evening (Matthew 14:23) and early in the morning (Mark 1:35; Luke 22:39-41). But Jesus Christ never prescribed certain times of prayer and also not certain forms or postures of prayer! He taught the people not to make a public show of their prayers (Matthew 6:5), but to withdraw to a place where they could pray to God alone and pray a short prayer (Matthew 6:6-15).

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**(iii) Ceremonial laws about holy times**

**4. THE YEARLY APPOINTED FESTIVALS AND PILGRIMAGES**

**The appointed feasts during the Old Testament period.**

▪ **The appointed religious feasts of Israel.**

During the Old Testament period the ceremonial law prescribed 6 ‘appointed feasts’ every year (Leviticus 23:1-44; Numbers 28:16 – 29:40) to which a 7<sup>th</sup> was added after the return from exile.

- (1) **The Sabbath** kept on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset)(Leviticus 23:1-2).
- (2) **The Passover Feast** (Hebrew: Pesach) on 14<sup>th</sup> day of 1<sup>st</sup> month (Nisan)(March-April) together with the Feast of Unleavened Bread (7 days) from 15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> day (Leviticus 23:4-8; Numbers 28:16-18). This was at the beginning of the harvest, when the sheaf of the first grain harvested was brought to the priest (Leviticus 23:9-11).
- (3) **Feast of Harvest or Day** of first fruits (later called: Pentecost or Feast of Weeks) 7 weeks after the Passover Sabbath on 6<sup>th</sup> day of 3<sup>rd</sup> month (Sivan)(May-June)(Leviticus 23:15-16; Numbers 28:26). This was the end of the harvest when Israel gave thanks for the harvest.
- (4) **Day of Blowing Trumpets** (Hebrew: rosh ha-shanah) on 1<sup>st</sup> day of 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri)(September-October) (Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1). After the return from exile this was celebrated as the New Year’s Day.
- (5) **Day of Atonement** (Hebrew: Jom Kippur) on 10<sup>th</sup> day of 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri)(Leviticus 16:11-34; Leviticus 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7).
- (6) **Feast of Booths** or Tabernacles (7 days) from 15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> day of 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri)(Leviticus 23:33-37; Numbers 29:12). This was a thanksgiving for the ingathering of the harvest.
- (7) **The Feast of Purim** on 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> day of 12<sup>th</sup> month (Adar)(February-March)(Esther 9:18-32).

Together with other nations, Israel celebrated New Moon Festivals when the new moon appeared (Numbers 10:10; Numbers 28:11; cf. Colossians 2:16-17).

**The Sabbath-day:** is the heart of the holy times in Israel. Around it are formed three concentric circles:

**The Sabbath-month:** consisted of the Jewish New Year, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths.

**The Sabbath-year:** consisted of every 7<sup>th</sup> year in which the land had to rest (Leviticus 25:3-4).

**The Half a century Sabbath** (Jubilee): consisted of the 50<sup>th</sup> year in which freedom was given to all Jewish slaves and land was returned to its rightful owner (Leviticus 25:8-10,13).

▪ **The appointed pilgrimages to Jerusalem.**

Three appointed feasts were pilgrimages to Jerusalem (Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16; Leviticus 23:1-44):

- A pilgrimage to celebrate the Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> months (March-April) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for 7 seven days (15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> day) thereafter. This commemorated the exodus from Egypt and celebrated the beginning of the harvest.
- A pilgrimage to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost (Weeks or Harvest) fifty days after the Passover Sabbath (May-June). This celebrated the end of the harvest.
- And a pilgrimage to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles, Ingathering) on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (September-October). This celebrated the ingathering of the harvest.

**Three religious feast added by modern Judaism.**

Later Judaism added three more religious festivals:

▪ **The Rejoicing over the Law** (Hebrew: Simchat Torah)

This festival is celebrated on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri)(September-October). It arose when the system of reading of the Law of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy) in the synagogues during the period of one year was established. On this festival day the reading of the Torah was completed and started again.

The Torah scrolls, dressed in beautiful coloured cloth is put into the arms of men and boys and then carried seven times around the rostrum of the synagogue while they sing joyful hymns in honour of the Torah. The assembled people touch the scrolls with their fingers and then kiss their fingers as a token of their love and reverence for the Word of God.

How true are the words of the prophet Isaiah (740-680 B.C.), “For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him: ‘Read this, please’, he will answer; ‘I can’t; it is sealed.’ Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say” ‘Read this, please,’ he will answer: ‘I don’t know how to read.’ The LORD says, “These people come near to me with their mouths and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men. Therefore, once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish” (Isaiah 29:11-14).

#### ▪ **The Feast of Lights** (Hebrew: Chanukka)

This festival is celebrated from 25<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> day of 9<sup>th</sup> month (Chislev)(November-December). This feast originally celebrated the victory of light over darkness, but was later connected to the cleansing and rededication of the temple by Judas the Maccabee in 164 B.C. after Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled it. In John 10:22 it is called by its Greek name: Feast of Dedication.

Jews relate a miracle, how a Jew found a small jar of consecrated oil in a corner which in former days was used for the perpetual light in the temple. It was just sufficient for one day, but lasted 8 days until a new supply of oil could be prepared and consecrated. To commemorate this miracle, later Jews decreed that for 8 days 8 candles should be lit in every Jewish household, beginning with one candle on the 1<sup>st</sup> day until 8 candles on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. The symbol of Chanukka is a candelabrum with 9 arms or a lampstand with 9 little candles. Each new candle is lit from the candle called ‘the servant’.

Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. the 25<sup>th</sup> of December (which according to the Jewish calendar is the 25<sup>th</sup> of Chislev) the Day of Chanukka became Christmas, celebrating the birth of Christ. John 8:12 proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world! And Matthew 5:14 teaches that Christians are the light of the world – they light their light from Christ.

#### ▪ **The Feast of Purim**

This festival is celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> day of 12<sup>th</sup> month (Adar)(February-March)(Esther 9:18-32). After the return from exile to Babylon, many Jews chose to remain in dispersion rather than face the hardships of pioneering in their devastated homeland. Among them were Mordecai and Esther. King Xerxes (Ahasuarus)(486-465 B.C.) ruled over 127 provinces in the Medo-Persian Empire. One of his courtiers, Haman, offended by the Jew Mordecai, bribed king Xerxes to issue an edict to have all Jews murdered. Esther from a humble Jewish home was elevated to the position of queen. She risked her life to plead the case of the Jews and king Xerxes issued another decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves and annihilate any armed force attacking them. Many people of other nationalities became Jews because they feared the Jews. Even the governors of the provinces helped the Jews. On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month, the Jews and their allies killed 300 men in the capital Susa and 75000 men in the provinces and rested on the 14<sup>th</sup> day.

Purim was first celebrated by only Persian Jews. Later the Greek speaking Jews followed and finally also the Aramaic speaking Jews in Palestine. Every year the story of Esther is read in the synagogue. Mordecai’s name is cheered and Haman’s name is greeted with stamping of the feet, with derisive booing and with the grinding sound of special noisemakers. Public merriment is in order and gifts are sent to friends and to the poor. Purim commemorated the deliverance of the Jews from the intrigues of their enemies and celebrated the invisible work of the Invisible God behind the scenes of human events. “He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:4)!

### **The pilgrimage festivals during the New Testament period.**

#### ▪ **Jesus Christ gave new meaning to the Old Testament pilgrimage festivals.**

Although before his crucifixion Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover (John 5:1? John 6:4; John 12:1) and the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2), these festivals were only Old Testament ‘shadows’ that pointed to the New Testament ‘realities’. Jesus Christ and the apostles gave these Old Testament festivals a complete new meaning.

- The Passover festival in the Old Testament pointed forward to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God in the New Testament period (Mark 10:45; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Because Jesus Christ fulfilled this Old Testament shadow, the yearly Passover festival as a Jewish national festival was terminated and replaced by the regular celebration of the Lord’s Supper, which is a proclamation of the death of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:15-22).
- The Pentecost (harvest) festival in the Old Testament pointed forward to the birth of the Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5; Acts 2:1; Acts 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8).
- The Feast of Booths in the Old Testament pointed forward to the abundant blessings (including salvation) through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). It pointed forward to Christ being the Light of the world (John 8:12) and the uncountable harvest of believers (Revelation 7:9).

- **The New Testament no longer focuses on the earthly city of Jerusalem.**

The Old Testament pilgrimages were centred on the earthly city of Jerusalem. The earthly Jerusalem still represents people who are in slavery to the law (Galatians 4:21-25). But in the New Testament the focus is no longer on the earthly Jerusalem, but on the Heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 13:14). The Heavenly Jerusalem represents all genuine believers that are born of the Spirit (Galatians 4:26-31; Hebrews 12:22-24), which at the second coming of Jesus Christ will descend as the New Jerusalem onto the new earth (Revelation 21:1-2,9-10). That is why there are no more pilgrimages to the earthly city of Jerusalem during the New Testament period. During the New Testament period believers no longer pray towards an earthly city, but towards the Living God.

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## 5. THE WEEKLY SABBATH

### The Sabbath during the Old Testament period

- **The Sabbath as God's creation ordinance.**

The creation ordinance commands "one day of rest" in every seven days of work for all nations! The people of God were commanded to celebrate the end of God's work of creation by *resting on the seventh day* (Genesis 2:1-3)!

- **The Sabbath as God's ceremonial ordinance for Israel.**

The ceremonial ordinance commanded "*not to do any work*" on the seventh day (Deuteronomy 5:12)! Any person in Israel who desecrated the Sabbath had to be put to death (Exodus 31:14)! And the Sabbath as God's ceremonial ordinance for Israel also commanded Israel to keep the Sabbath as a day of remembrance of God's salvation of Israel from the house of slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15)! The ceremonial Sabbath differs from the creation Sabbath in two respects: it forbids all work with respect to life and it forbids all work (effort) with respect to salvation. God had completed creation and God had also completed salvation!

### The Sabbath in modern Judaism

- **The Sabbath and circumcision are the distinguishing marks of Judaism.**

After the return from exile in Babylon (538 B.C.), the Jews and especially the Pharisees kept a very strict Sabbath. The Sabbath and circumcision became the two distinguishing marks of Judaism, but even the Sabbath had to give way to circumcision (cf. John 7:22)! The Jews call the Sabbath "the queen of the soul". They believe that God gave to Israel the Sabbath as their distinguishing sign throughout all their generations (Exodus 31:12-14).

The Jews even pronounced the death sentence on Gentiles who attempted to keep the Sabbath or any part of the ceremonial law without complete submission to the law in its entirety. "Either let a Gentile become a proselyte of righteousness (a convert to Judaism) and take upon him the whole law: or let him remain in his own law, and neither add or diminish. But if he employs himself in the law, or keeps a Sabbath, or makes any innovation, he is to be beaten and punished, and informed that he for this is guilty of death, but he is not to be killed" (Hilchoth Melachim, chapter 10:9).<sup>2</sup> The Sabbath has helped the Jews to keep their distinct identity, but someone said, "Even more than the Jews have kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept the Jews!"

- **The Jews invented rules to evade keeping the Sabbath.**

In order to observe the Sabbath during the Old Testament period, the existence of the temple, the God-appointed priesthood and the sacrificial system were presupposed! Because modern Jews do not have these things, they try to observe *the rabbinical version of the Sabbath*! The Jewish religious teachers (= rabbis) sought to make the breaking of the law as difficult as possible. So they put "a fence around the law" consisting of 39 Sabbath laws with 39 subdivisions of each of these laws, so that there are now 1521 Sabbath rules! Hardly any Jew knows these rules! There are rules for travelling on the Sabbath; for carrying things on the Sabbath; for preparing food on the Sabbath; for making a fire on the Sabbath; even for turning on the electric light switch on a Sabbath. Writing of any kind is forbidden on the Sabbath. The Jewish religious leaders first erected a fence around the Sabbath and then turned around and showed how Jews may circumvent these rules. That is how the 1521 prohibitions and evasions came into existence! Human wisdom unaided by the Holy Spirit invariably leads to lifeless sterility. The religious laws of the Jews became "windmills grinding no grain and providing no bread whereby people can live." Forced by modern economic conditions some Jews work and trade on the Sabbath (the Saturday). Some Reformed Jews observe the Sunday as their Sabbath day just like many people in the West do.

- **How modern Jews celebrate Sabbath.**

Like all the religious holidays, the Sabbath begins on Friday at sunset. Before that, the home is festively decorated, the table is set, candles are lit and a special meal is prepared. After returning from the synagogue, a cup of wine is blessed and distributed among the members of the family, called 'the kiddush' (= sanctification). After supper there is a prayer of thanksgiving.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*, Victor Buksbazen, 1954, p71

▪ **The Jewish blessing (actually curse) for the Apostates and Sectarians.**

To the daily prayers of the synagogue was added “the blessing of the Sectarians” (Hebrew: Birkat Hamminim). The original Hebrew version said, “And for the Apostates (= Jews who left Judaism) let there be no hope, and the dominion of arrogance (= the Gentiles in the governments of the world) may it be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the Nazarenes (= Jews who became Christians) and the Sectarians (= probably other Christians) perish as in a moment. May they be blotted out from the Book of Life and with the righteous ones may they not be inscribed. Blessed are you, Jehovah, who humbles the arrogant.”<sup>3</sup> Today this prayer is used in a changed form in the synagogues. The word ‘Apostates’ has been changed to ‘Slanderers’ and the direct references to the Nazarenes and the Sectarians have been omitted.

▪ **The final break between Jews and Christians.**

Jesus Christ died and was resurrected in 30 A.D. In the early New Testament period (30-33/34 A.D.), the Jewish Christians continued to meet in the temple and observe the Sabbath, probably because that was part of their culture and family life (Acts 3:1,11; Acts 5:12,21). The first opposition arose from the Greek speaking Jews in the Synagogue of the Freedom in Jerusalem. They stoned the Greek speaking Jewish Christian, Stephen. A great persecution broke out against the Church at Jerusalem and most Christians were scattered (Acts 8:1-3). The learned Jew, Paul, became a Christian in about 34 A.D. He had the habit to first go to the synagogue and speak to the Jews gathered there (Acts 13:14-15)(34-48 A.D.)(Acts 17:1-4)(50-52 A.D.). Later jealous Jews stirred people up to riot against Christians (Acts 17:5-9)(50-52 A.D.)(Acts 19:8-10)(52-54 A.D.). The Jews launched false accusations against Christians, had them arrested and tried in court (Acts 21:27-31; Acts 22:30 – 23:3)(57 A.D.). Finally some Jews plotted to kill Christians (Acts 23:12-15).

During the second century A.D. the Jews under leadership of Bar Kochba fought against the Roman occupier in 135 A.D. The Jewish Christians did not endorse this political and military struggle of the Jews and left Jerusalem and eventually Palestine. From that time onwards Jews and Christians went their separate paths.

### **The Sabbath during the New Testament period**

▪ **Jesus Christ opposed the strict Sabbath keeping of the Pharisees.**

He taught the following:

- When the Pharisees judged his disciples (Christians) for not keeping the Sabbath, they were judging “innocent” people (Matthew 12:7)!
- Jesus Christ is *the Lord of the Sabbath* (Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28), which means, that it was he who instituted the creation Sabbath for all nations (in Genesis 2:2-3) and the ceremonial Sabbath for all Israelites (in Exodus 20:8-11; Exodus 23:12) and that he therefore knows the original intention of this ordinance and how it should be kept!
- Jesus Christ made the Sabbath *for the benefit of man* and did not make man to keep the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath was originally a human Sabbath (a day of rest), but the Pharisees had changed it into a Jewish Sabbath (a day in which every form of work was forbidden on the seventh day). Jesus taught that God did *not intend the Jewish Sabbath*, because God and Jesus Christ continue to work, even on the Sabbath (John 5:17-18)! Therefore the Jewish ceremonial Sabbath accuses even God of breaking the Jewish Sabbath! Jesus taught that God’s creation Sabbath is the highest Sabbath. That is why Jesus Christ did most of his miracles on a Sabbath day (Mark 3:1-6)! The Jewish ceremonial Sabbath has been terminated, but God’s creation Sabbath continues!

▪ **Jesus Christ fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated the ceremonial law (including the ceremonial Sabbath).**

During the New Testament period Jesus Christ had fulfilled everything necessary for salvation: “It is finished!” (John 19:30)(30 A.D.). Because Jesus Christ fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17), he also cancelled (Colossians 2:14) and abrogated (Ephesians 2:15) the ceremonial law! Because Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament “shadows” (the ceremonial laws) and introduced the New Testament “realities” (Colossians 2:17), *the ceremonial Sabbath has been permanently terminated!*

That is why the imposition of the Sabbath upon the Gentile believers at the Jerusalem meeting in the year 50 is conspicuous by its absence (Acts 15:24,28-29)! And that is why Paul wrote in 61 A.D.: “Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17)! No one may judge a Christian for not keeping the ceremonial Sabbath or any other religious festival (Colossians 2:16)!

▪ **The creation Sabbath changed from the seventh day (Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday).**

The Old Testament Sabbath (rest) could only be celebrated on the seventh day of the week (Saturday) because it commemorated “*the end* of God’s week of creation” and consequently “the end of man’s week of work”. But the New

<sup>3</sup> *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*, Victor Buksbazen, 1954, p73.



Testament Sabbath (rest) is celebrated on the first day of the week (Sunday) because it commemorates “*the beginning* of God’s work of salvation”: Christ was resurrected on Sunday (Matthew 28:1)! And the Spirit of Christ was poured out on a Sunday (Acts 2:1)! While the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week pointed to *the end* of God’s creation and the end of man’s week of working days, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week pointed to *the beginning* of God’s new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and *the beginning* of the new life of Christians together with the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:4).

That is why Christians during the New Testament period celebrated a sacred assembly on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10). In the Old Testament covenant of works the Sabbath had to be *the end* (because God first had to complete his work of creation), but in the New Testament covenant of grace and salvation the Sabbath must be *the beginning* (because Christ had already completed his work of salvation)! As Jesus Christ battled against the Jews advocating the ceremonial Sabbath, so the apostle Paul battled against Jewish Christians advocating the keeping of the ceremonial law (Galatians 3:2-3): the ceremonial Sabbath (Colossians 2:16), the other ceremonial festivals (Galatians 4:8-10) and the ceremonial circumcision (Acts chapter 15; Galatians 5:1-4).

▪ **The moral aspect of the Sabbath has not been terminated.**

While the ceremonial aspect of the Sabbath (not doing any work on the seventh day of the week) has been fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated, the moral aspect of the Sabbath has never been terminated. The application is still valid. Christians continue to sanctify (i.e. to set apart - from daily work) one out of every seven days of the week:

- For God: to gather together in a sacred assembly to worship God (Leviticus 23:3).
- For others: to do good to other people and save lives (Mark 3:4).
- For self: to rest and do things that refresh them (Exodus 23:12).

▪ **The differences between the Jewish ceremonial Sabbath and the Christian’s Lord’s Day.**

- The ceremonial Sabbath is a part of the law given by Moses. But the Lord’s Day is a part of the grace given by Christ (John 1:17).
- The 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week commemorates the completion of God’s creation of heaven and earth and thus *the end* of God’s work of creation (Genesis 2:1-3). But the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week commemorates the completion of God’s re-creation and thus *the beginning* of God’s work of salvation (Matthew 28:1,6).
- The observance of the 7<sup>th</sup> day is the sign for Old Testament Israel (Exodus 31:13). But meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> day is something New Testament Christians do (Acts 20:7).
- The Jews regard the Sabbath as the day in which God rewards man for his work. But on the Lord’s Day Christians celebrate what God has done for man!
- Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament. But the fourth commandment about keeping the seventh day is nowhere commanded in the New Testament!

▪ **The ultimate Sabbath rest.**

The *ultimate* Sabbath rest comes when Christians enter the eternal rest, first in heaven and later after the second coming of Jesus Christ on the new earth (Hebrews 4:1-11).

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## 6. THE YEARLY PASSOVER

### The Passover during the Old Testament period.

▪ **The institution of the Passover Feast together with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.**

The word “pesach” means “pass over”, a reference to the angel of death passing over the house of believers when he saw blood smeared on the lintels of the door. The word is first a reference to the (Pesach) lamb that is slaughtered (Exodus 12:21), then to the (Pesach) festival on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month (Abib)(March-April)(Numbers 28:16) and finally to the whole 8 day (Pesach) festival that included the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Deuteronomy 16:1). Abib became the 1<sup>st</sup> month of the year, because in that month the Israelites were saved from slavery in Egypt at the exodus (Exodus 12:1).

The Passover was instituted as follows: At twilight (i.e. the end) of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month the father had to slaughter a lamb without blemish and put some of its blood on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they would celebrate the feast (Exodus 12:6-7). This slaughtering of the Passover lamb on a Friday (the day before the Passover Sabbath/Friday evening to Saturday evening) pointed as “a shadow” forward to “the reality”: the death of Jesus Christ on Friday! In the evening (i.e. the beginning) of the 15<sup>th</sup> day the family (or families) had to gather in the house to eat the Passover meal consisting of the lamb roasted over fire, together with bitter herbs and unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8). They had to eat it ready to depart on the exodus the next morning (the 15<sup>th</sup> day): with their cloaks tucked into their belts, with sandals on their feet and with their staff in their hands (Exodus 12:11). During that night the destroying angel would bring judgement on the gods of Egypt and the people that worship them, while he would *pass over* the houses that had blood on their doorframes (Exodus 12:12-13).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was *celebrated* (thus “a feast”) for seven days from the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> day and hold a sacred assembly on the first and seventh day (Exodus 12:14-20). The counting started

with the Passover Feast (15<sup>th</sup> day)<sup>4</sup>. The father had to function as the priest (cf. the priesthood of believers); the sacrifice was to make atonement for sins; and the meal was to have communion (i.e. a meal fellowship) with God and his people. The eating of bread without yeast (tasteless) and with bitter herbs had to remind the Israelites of their suffering in slavery. The meaning of Passover had to be explained to the next generations (Exodus 12:26-27).

In later years the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the temple court by the Levites (2 Chronicles 30:16) and the blood was sprinkled on the altar (2 Chronicles 30:16) and the meal was held at the temple (Deuteronomy 16:2). God severely judged people who sacrificed to idols and joined in religious meals with idolaters (Numbers 25:1-5; Psalm 106:28-30).

▪ **The Feast of Passover was the first of the three compulsory pilgrimages to Jerusalem.**

“Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles.” At the three pilgrimage festivals the Jews brought sacrifices and gifts in proportion to the way God had blessed them. In this way the temple treasury was filled (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

▪ **The Passover was a harvest festival and signalled the beginning of the harvest.**

The Passover feast signalled the beginning of the harvest and as such was an agricultural festival. The Israelites had to bring the sheaf of the first grain they harvest to the priest. The priest must then wave this sheaf before the Lord on the day after the Passover Sabbath (thus, on Sunday)(Leviticus 23:10-11). This act signified the beginning of the new harvest, the beginning of the first fruit. This waiving of the first sheaf of the harvest on a Sunday pointed as “a shadow” forward to “the reality”: the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Sunday! Thus, the slaughtered lamb pointed to the death of Christ; the waiving of the first fruit pointed to the resurrection of Christ; and the waiving of two loaves of bread seven weeks later on Pentecost pointed too the establishment of the Christian Church on the Day of Pentecost (Note that “the two witnesses” represent the witnessing Church in Revelation 11:3; cf. Mark 6:7)! The Old Testament “shadows” were fulfilled in the New Testament “realities”!

The Passover Feast had *national significance* for Israel in the Old Testament and still has national significance for Judaism today. The Passover Feast had *typical significance* for Israel in the Old Testament and still has typical significance for the Church in the New Testament. And the Passover Feast has *symbolic significance* for the Church in the New Testament – the bread and wine pointed to the Lord’s Supper.

▪ **The Passover had national significance.**

The Passover was a festival celebrating the deliverance of Israel from the house of slavery in Egypt. The Old Testament Passover thus had *national significance* for Israel. It pointed back to the past, to the liberation of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 12:1-28,51; Deuteronomy 16:1-3).

▪ **The Passover has typical significance.**

Because Egypt represented ‘the land of slavery’ (Exodus 20:2), the Old Testament Passover feast also had *typical significance* for Israel and pointed forward to the deliverance from the slavery of sin. At this first Passover, a Passover lamb was slaughtered and the blood applied to the doorframes. This was a sign for the angel of death ‘to pass over’ that home and refrain from killing the firstborn in that family. The Living God is righteous and must punish sin. The slaughtered Passover lamb made atonement for sins. The Passover feast thus pointed forward to the future reality of the slaughtering of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, for the atonement of sins (Matthew 26:2; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). While the deliverance from Egypt was the central point in the Jewish history and worship, the work of redemption on the cross is the central point in the Christian history and worship!

**The Passover in modern Judaism.**

Modern Jews cleanse the house, pots and pans thoroughly to remove every vestige of leaven. Then unleavened bread (Hebrew: matzos) is brought into the home. After the service in the synagogue, the father returns to a festively decorated home. The family dress in their best clothes and assemble around the table. An empty chair is reserved for the possible return of the prophet Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6). On the table are all kinds of symbols: a glass of salt water symbolizing the Red Sea through which they escaped from the Egyptians; three matzos (unleavened bread) covered with a white napkin; a shank bone in the place of a slaughtered lamb (Exodus 12:3); four cups of red wine symbolising the blood of the slaughtered lamb; bitter herbs (horseradish) to bring tears to the eyes symbolising the sorrow of their forefathers in slavery; and a clay-like substance made of apples and nuts (Hebrew: charoseth) symbolising the clay bricks the Israelites had to make for Pharaoh.

The father washes his hands, pronounces a blessing over the wine and all drink of it. For two hours the father recites in a sonorous chanting voice the story of God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Early in the meal the father takes the middle matzos, breaks it in half, hands the first half out to be eaten by everyone (i.e. eating the ‘aphikomen’) and hides the second half under the white napkin until he brings it forth again at the end of the meal. The father also explains all the symbols on the table and he invites the poor and hungry to come in and partake. When relating the ten plagues, he

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<sup>4</sup> W.H. Gispen, Exodus

dips his finger in the red wine and causes one drop of wine to fall for each plague, mentioning the plague. At the end of the Passover celebration the family sings the Hallel (Psalm 113-118).

How little do Jews realise the symbolism of the death AND the resurrection of Jesus Christ in their celebration of the Passover! Most remarkable in the Jewish celebration of Passover is the absence of the slaughtered lamb! The Jews do NOT really celebrate the Passover, but celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread! Nevertheless, the Jews rejoice hoping that in the future the Messiah would deliver them from all political tyranny.

### **The Passover during the New Testament period.**

#### **▪ The Passover Feast in the time of Jesus.**

During the New Testament time the Jews celebrated the Passover as follows: the father fetched a jar of water from the Pool of Siloam (Mark 14:13) and removed every vestige of leaven from the house. By half past two in the afternoon he had a lamb slaughtered by singing Levites in the court of the temple. The priests stood in a long row, handed the blood in silver dishes to one another and poured the blood out onto the altar.

The Passover meal began by drinking the first of four cups of wine. Then the oldest son asked his father about the meaning of the Passover Feast (Exodus 12:26). The history of the Passover was narrated by way of singing. The gathered people sang the little Hallel (Psalm 113-114). The second cup of wine was shared and the Passover meal was eaten consisting of the roasted lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Then two more cups of wine were shared. The celebration ended by singing the great Hallel (Psalm 115 to 118).

#### **▪ Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper during the last Passover Feast.**

He broke the bread during the meal and blessed the third cup of wine after the meal (Luke 22:20). The Lord's Supper commemorates the complete atonement of sin and is a communion with God through Christ.

#### **▪ The Passover has symbolic significance.**

During the New Testament period Jesus Christ fulfilled the typical significance of this law (Matthew 5:17). On the night before his crucifixion Jesus Christ replaced the Old Testament Passover meal of Israel by instituting the New Testament celebration of the Lord's Supper by Christians from all nations in the world. The institution of the Lord's Supper was also the beginning of the new covenant (Luke 22:15-20; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)! Here at last the Old Testament Passover festival received its real meaning and deepest significance! The slaughtered lamb and cups of red wine of the Old Testament Passover meal had *symbolic significance*: they were "shadows" pointing forward to "the realities": the body and blood of Christ. Because Jesus Christ had already died and shed his blood two thousand years ago, no animal sacrifice is made during the New Testament period! The bread and wine in the Lord's Supper *symbolise* the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the end of the Lord's Supper, Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn (Matthew 26:30). Psalm 118:21-24 says, "I will praise you for you have answered me; *you have become my salvation* (Literally: You have become my 'Jeshuah', which is the name of Jesus)(Matthew 1:21). The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone (cf. Matthew 21:42 where this refers to Jesus Christ); the LORD has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!" After they left the upper room, they were confronted by the mob sent by the Jewish Sanhedrin. Judas betrayed Jesus and all his disciples fled. Jesus Christ, the Capstone, the Foundation of the Kingdom and the Church, was at that moment rejected. But after his death he rose from the dead triumphantly! The day in which Christians must rejoice and be glad is the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the heart of the gospel (the good news). Psalm 16:10 is a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The tomb of king David (and all other prophets) is still on earth (Acts 2:29-32), but the tomb of Jesus Christ is empty (Matthew 28:6-7)!

Thus, the Passover lamb symbolised the death of Jesus Christ and the waiving of the sheaf of the first grain harvest symbolised the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the First Fruit of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20)!

While the Old Testament Passover Feast had national significance for Jews only, the New Testament Lord's Supper has no national significance. It has symbolic significance for all nations! During the Old Testament period the non-Jews were excluded from citizenship in Israel (Ephesians 2:11-12). There was a real wall built around the court of the temple with a sign at the gates that forbade non-Jews to enter! The apostle Paul used this fact to illustrate the ceremonial law. "The wall" that caused enmity and brought separation between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians consisted of the regulations of the ceremonial law (Ephesians 2:13-16)! The death of Jesus Christ on the day of preparation (Friday) before the Sabbath of the Passover week (Saturday) (John 19:14) and his resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week (Sunday) (Luke 24:1-8) broke down 'the middle wall of hostility' that had brought separation between Jews and non-Jews and broke down the separation between Christians from different cultural backgrounds.

That is why Christians from every nation celebrate every first day of the week (the Sunday) and every Lord's Supper together with one another and also with sincerity and truth. "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the Festival,

not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

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## 7. The yearly Pentecost or Feast of Weeks (Feast of Harvest or the Day of First fruits)

### Pentecost during the Old Testament period.

- **The institution of the Feast of Pentecost.**

The Feast of Harvest or The Day of First Fruits (later called: Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks) was celebrated on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of 3<sup>rd</sup> month (Sivan)(May-June)(Leviticus 23:15-16; Numbers 28:26). This was seven weeks after the Passover Sabbath (the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month Nisan)(March-April), on which the sheaf of the first grain harvest was presented to the priest and waived before the Lord. “Pentecost” means “fifty” in Greek and refers to the 50 days after the Passover Feast.

- **The Feast of Pentecost was the second of the three compulsory pilgrimages to Jerusalem.**

“Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles.” At the three pilgrimage festivals the Jews brought sacrifices and gifts in proportion to the way God had blessed them. In this way the temple treasury was filled (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

- **The Feast of Pentecost was a harvest festival and signalled the end of the harvest.**

Pentecost signalled the end of the harvest and as such was an agricultural festival. The Israelites had to bring two loaves made of the new grain and baked with yeast as a wave offering of first fruits to the LORD (Leviticus 23:15-17). It was a thanksgiving festival in which the Israelites expressed their dependence on God for the harvest and their daily bread. “Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field.” “Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God” (Exodus 23:16a,19). So the Israelites brought a part of their harvest to the temple, in proportion to how God had blessed them. And there they celebrated a joyful feast together with their families, servants, the Levites, the aliens and the poor of their town.

- **Prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.**

God said that he would pour out his Spirit on his people. Like the rain, poured out from heaven on the thirsty land and dry ground, turns the desert into a fertile field and forest, so the Spirit poured out from heaven on his people would result in blessings (Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 44:3)!

God said that he would sprinkle clean water on his people and cleanse them from all their impurities and idols. He would remove their heart of stone and put his Spirit in them and in this way they would follow and obey God’s Word (Ezekiel 36:25-28).

God said that he would pour out his Spirit on all his people. They would prophesy, dream dreams and see visions. Everyone, who called on the name of the Lord, would be saved (Joel 2:28-32).

God said he would accomplish his work not by human might and power, but by his Spirit (Zechariah 4:6).

Thus, in the Old Testament, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all God’s people would result in a cleansed and transformed heart, in obedience to God’s Word, in serving God through proclaiming his Word, in creatively turning dreams and visions into a purposeful life that glorifies God, and in the salvation of everyone who calls on the name of the Lord!

### Pentecost in modern Judaism.

- **Pentecost was turned into the birthday of Judaism.**

When the Jews got dispersed among the nations after 70 A.D. Pentecost was no longer a harvest festival. Ancient rabbis made careful calculations and came to the conclusion that God must have given the Law to Moses on the Day of Pentecost. Thus, Pentecost lost its primary character as a harvest festival and became known as “the Season of the Giving of the Law”. This was considered as the birthday of Judaism.

- **The reading of Ruth.**

Because Pentecost was originally a harvest festival, the Jews read the book of Ruth on the day of Pentecost. Boaz was a Jew, but Ruth was a Moabite (Gentile). Boaz and Ruth became the great-grandparents of king David, who became the ancestor of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1-16). This could be a prophetic type of the New Testament reality where “in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek” (Galatians 3:28)!

## Pentecost during the New Testament period.

- **The harvest of believers on Pentecost was the birthday of the Christian Church.**

Fifty days after the Passover Sabbath, again on a Sunday, the Old Testament believers had to wave two loaves of bread baked with yeast. The two loaves of bread pointed throughout the Old Testament period to the New Testament harvest of believers in Christ from the Jews and believers in Christ from the Gentiles (Romans 1:16). These two groups have been reconciled to one another in one Body by the death of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:14-18). In the New Testament the Church is symbolised by “the two witnesses” (Revelation 11:3; cf. Mark 6:7)!

On the day of Pentecost in the year 30 A.D. the Holy Spirit was poured out, first on Jews (Acts chapter 2) and later on non-Jews (Acts chapters 10 and 11) when these two groups of people believed the good news about Jesus Christ. Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian Church! Pentecost signified *the end* of the agricultural harvest in the Old Testament, but signifies *the beginning* of the spiritual harvest in the New Testament. The harvest consists of people becoming Christians and they are “the first fruits of all God created” (James 1:18)!

- **Prophecies in the New Testament concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.**

Many times in the Gospel of John, Jesus Christ promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on his people (John 7:37-39; John 14:16-18, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-10; John 16:13-15). He said that believers in him had to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit *until after he had been glorified*, that is, until after his resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven. When this happened, the Holy Spirit would be like streams of living water flowing from their lives.

Just before he ascended into heaven, Jesus said that *in a few days* his people would be baptised with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). This happened on the Day of Pentecost, which is described in Acts chapter 2. The apostles preached the gospel, three thousand people turned to Jesus Christ and the first local congregation was founded in Jerusalem! Thus, the Old Testament *agricultural* harvest festival became the New Testament *spiritual* harvest festival, which consists of new Christians and new local congregations everywhere in the world! “The baptism with the Holy Spirit” is the same as “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit” on new believers and results in their regeneration, salvation and renewal (Acts 11:14-18; Acts 15:8-9; Titus 3:4-8). While about 3000 people became believers on the day of Pentecost, by the time of the return of Jesus Christ, there will be “an uncountable great number” of believers (Revelation 7:9-10)!

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## 8. The yearly Day of Atonement (a yearly fasting day)

### Atonement during the Old Testament period.

- **The Day of Atonement (Hebrew: Jom Kippur)(Leviticus 16:1-10).**

“Jom Kippur” means “Day of Covering” and referred to the covering of the sins of people by the blood of sacrifices sprinkled on the atonement cover (Leviticus 16:11-17). The substitutionary death of the animal that was sacrificed “propitiated” God: that is, it satisfied God’s demand for absolute righteousness and holiness, removed his righteous and holy indignation against the sinner and reconciled the sinner to God.

The Day of Atonement was celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri)(September-October). The elaborate ritual for the Day of Atonement is described in Leviticus chapter 16. Atonement had to be made once every year for all the sins of the Israelites (Leviticus 16:34).

Once a year only the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place in the Tent of Meeting (later: the temple) to make atonement for the sins of people. He would bathe himself with water and clothed himself with sacred garments. He would bring a bullock and two goats to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and cast lots for the two goats: one would be for making atonement by sacrificing it as a sin offering and the other would be for making atonement by sending it away into the desert.

- **Sacrificing the bullock made atonement for the high priest and his household (Leviticus 16:11-14).**

The high priest would slaughter a bullock to make atonement for himself and his household. He would take a censer with burning coals and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense, take them behind the curtain before the Most Holy Place and put the incense on the fire so that the smoke would conceal the golden atonement cover above the Testimony (the ark) so that he would not see God and die. He would sprinkle blood of the bull once with his finger on the front side (east side) of the atonement cover and seven times on the ground before the atonement cover.

- **Sacrificing the first goat made atonement for the sins of the whole community of Israel (Leviticus 16:15-19).**

The high priest would slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people, take its blood behind the curtain and sprinkle its blood once with his finger on the atonement cover and seven times in front of it in order to make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the sins and rebellion of the Israelites. He had to do the same for the Tent of Meeting and also the same for the altar of burnt offerings at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. It is said that

meanwhile the people with mounting tension waited for the high priest to reappear and when he reappeared they sighed with relief believing that their service had been accepted and hoping that their sins had been forgiven (cf. Luke 1:8-22).

▪ **Sending away the second goat symbolised the forgiveness of sins (Leviticus 16:20-22).**

Then the high priest would bring forward the live goat, lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the sins, wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites, thus symbolically laying all their sins on its head. He would then send this scapegoat away into the desert in the care of someone appointed for the task. Thus the scapegoat would symbolically carry on itself all the sins of the Israelites to a solitary place. Note the symbolism in the prayer of the prophet Micah, “You (the LORD) will hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).

Finally the high priest would bathe himself, put on his regular clothes and bring burnt offerings to make atonement for himself and for the people (Leviticus 16:23-25)..

▪ **The Day of Atonement was a day of denial and a Sabbath (Leviticus 16:29-31).**

The Day of Atonement was a Sabbath of rest and a complete fast. The Israelites were required to deny themselves and not do any work.

**Atonement in modern Judaism.**

▪ **The Jews make the following substitutes for the sacrifice of atonement.**

Since the Jews have no temple, no priest and no sacrifice, the rabbis have provided the following substitutes for the sacrifice of atonement<sup>5</sup>:

- Repentance, prayer and charity are regarded as the most important.
- Sacrificing a white rooster for every male or a white hen for every female as a substitute sacrifice (called ‘kapporot’) on the day before the Day of Atonement. The Jews express a deep need for atonement of sins through the shedding of blood, but have no understanding of any substitute sacrifice of atonement, because they keep on rejecting Jesus Christ.
- Charity. In modern Hebrew the word ‘charity’ is the same as the word ‘righteousness’.
- Suffering, especially if the Jew lives righteous.
- Self-inflicted beating with 39 stripes (called: ‘malkot’).
- One’s own death, wrongly based on Psalm 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”
- The study of the Law, especially the Talmud.
- Special prayers at midnight for forgiveness (called ‘slihot’) a whole month before the Day of Atonement.

▪ **The Jews have watered down the need of a substitute sacrifice of atonement in which blood is shed.**

Rabbinical Judaism has made a consistent effort to water down the importance of the sacrifices and the shedding of blood, which alone can make atonement for sins. In place of the sacrifice of atonement they have declared celebrating the Day of Atonement itself without the necessity of sacrifice to make atonement for sinners!

Rabbi Amnon of Mayence (about 1100 A.D.) prayed, “As a shepherd seeks out his flock and causes them to pass beneath his crook, so do you (Lord) cause every living soul to pass ... appointing the measure of every creature’s life and decreeing their destiny.” The underlying belief of this prayer is that atonement and *forgiveness depend on whether a man’s good deeds and merits outweigh his misdeeds and demerits.* This is also the teaching of all other human religions!

▪ **The Jews believe that God opens the books of accounting on New Year’s Day.**

Therefore Jews wish one another, “May your name be *inscribed* in the book of life.” And they believe that on the Day of Atonement God *seals* the books of accounting. Therefore Jews wish one another, “May you be *sealed* in the book of life.” There is no assurance of sins forgiven in Judaism (as in all other man-made religions)! Judaism is man’s attempt to justify himself by his own effort without the atonement made by our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, himself!

But Psalm 130:3 says, “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?” And Paul proclaims, “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Because *no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law*” (Romans 3:19-20)! All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly *no one is justified before God by the law* (Galatians 3:10-11).

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<sup>5</sup> *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*, Victor Buksbazen, 1954, p29.

▪ **The Jews make the following preparations for the Day of Atonement.**

- Special prayers at midnight for forgiveness (called: *slihot*) a whole month before the Day of Atonement.
- The Jewish New Year's Day is on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri)(September- October). In the afternoon on the New Year's Day, Jews throughout the world assemble near rivers, and oceans performing the symbolic ritual of "casting away their sins". This ceremony is called 'he casts away' (Hebrew: *tashlik*) based on Micah 7:19, "You (the LORD) will cast all our sins in the depths of the sea." But note that the prophet says that GOD would cast away their sins, but here the Jews themselves are casting away their sins! In Judaism Jews try to save themselves!
- The ten days between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement are called 'the ten days of repentance' or 'the awesome days'. During that period every Jew searches his heart and seeks to be reconciled with God and his neighbour.
- In the afternoon preceding the Day of Atonement, a festive meal is eaten by the family in preparation for the ensuing fast.

▪ **The Jewish rituals on the Day of Atonement.**

- The Day of Atonement is the most solemn religious festival in modern Israel and is called 'the Sabbath of Sabbaths'. For 24 awesome hours from sundown to the next sundown, Jews all over the world assemble in synagogues and places of prayer, conduct a complete fast and seek atonement and forgiveness from God for all their sins! The Day of Atonement is a day of judgement and reckoning.
- The most solemn prayer prayed by the cantor on the Day of Atonement is called 'the all vows' (Hebrew: *kol nidrei*) in which Jews repent of all their negligence. It says: "All vows, binds, oaths, devotions, promises, penalties, and obligations: wherewith we have vowed, sworn, devoted and bound ourselves: from this Day of Atonement unto the next day of Atonement, may it come unto us for good; lo, all these, we repent us in them. They shall be absolved, released, annulled, made void, and of none effect: They shall not be binding nor shall they have any power. Our vows shall not be vows; our bonds shall not be bonds; and our oaths shall not be oaths." This prayer seems to absolve the Jews from not keeping any promise or from not doing any obligation, but rather expresses the inability of Jews to keep their vows, promises, bonds and obligations in relation to God. Man can only face his Maker as a suppliant in need of forgiveness.
- The Day of Atonement is ended by blowing the ram's horn, the trumpet of God (Hebrew: *shofar*). It heralds the coming of the Messiah. But Jews continue to ignore the fact that *the Messiah had already come* to make atonement for sins!
- The celebration of the Day of Atonement with rigid fasting is immediately followed by a meal.

**Atonement during the New Testament period.**

▪ **The Old Testament external regulations concerning atonement (the animal sacrifices) were only valid until the New Testament fulfilment in Jesus Christ.**

The Letter to the Hebrews teaches the New Testament fulfilment of the Old Testament atonement sacrifices. Hebrews 9:7-10 says, "But only the high priest entered the inner room (= the Most Holy Place) and that only once a year and *never without blood*, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings – external regulations applying until the time of the new order" (i.e. the New Testament period)!

▪ **The New Testament realities in Jesus Christ.**

- The Old Testament priests served in an earthly temple. But Jesus Christ served in *the Heavenly Temple*. "Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence" (Hebrews 9:24; cf. Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 9:11).
- The Old Testament priests entered the temple by means of the blood of animals (goats and calves). But Jesus Christ entered the Most Holy Place by *his own blood* (Hebrews 9:12). "The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). "Christ died for us" (1 Corinthians 15:3).
- The Old Testament priests entered the temple every day and made the same sacrifices which could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:11), because the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year can never make the worshipper perfect (Hebrews 10:1-4)! But Jesus Christ entered the Most Holy Place *once for all* because by one sacrifice he made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 10:12-14). God promised, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:17). "Where these (believers) have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice (needed) for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)!
- The Old Testament priests and Jews were only ceremoniously or outwardly cleansed (Hebrews 9:13). But Jesus Christ *cleans the inner consciences* of believers so that they genuinely experience their forgiveness (Hebrews 9:14).
- The Old Testament priests served in the old covenant which consisted of external laws, historic knowledge of God and only ceremonial cleansing. The old covenant has become obsolete. But Jesus Christ served as the Mediator of

*the new covenant* which consisted of God's words written internally in the heart, knowing God personally and really experiencing forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 8:10-13). The new covenant has been established during the last supper of Jesus with his disciples (Luke 22:20). The ceremonial law was only a shadow of the coming realities, but the realities themselves are found in Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1).

▪ **Jesus Christ was destined to cause the fall and rising of many in Israel (Luke 2:34).**

Because Jews reject Jesus Christ, they also reject the atonement which Jesus Christ made for the sins of everyone who believes in him. They reject the atonement Jesus Christ made by dying on the cross, because the Jews want to establish their own salvation. They want to get rid of their sins through their own religious works! "The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained righteousness that is by faith (in Jesus Christ); but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith, but as if it were by works. They stumbled over "the stumbling stone". As it is written, "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (Romans 9:30-33; cf. Isaiah 8:14; Isaiah 28:16; Romans 10:11; 1 Peter 2:6-8).

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## 9. The yearly fasting day

### Fasting during the Old Testament period.

▪ **The meaning of the words "to deny" and "to fast".**

The Hebrew verb ">inna" (Pi) means "to humble", "to violate (a woman)", "to cause privation" or "to make to fast". The Hebrew words ">inna nefesh" means "to humble or afflict the soul", "to cause privation to the soul" and is an expression for the travail of the soul. In Isaiah 58:1-5 it is used together with the word "tsum".

The Hebrew word "tsum" or "tsom" means "to fast" or "fasting" (the abstention from food). The normal way of fasting in the Old Testament involved only the abstinence from food, not from water. "Fasting" in the Old Testament was a *divine required religious act* only for one day in the year, on the Day of Atonement (for sins)(Leviticus 23:26-30)!

▪ **Fasting as a divine religious institution.**

In the Old Testament Law (1446 B.C.) God required that his people "humble their souls (= themselves)" or "cause privation to their souls (= to themselves)" only for on one day in the year, on the Day of Atonement.

God required that atonement was to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites (Leviticus 16:29-34; Leviticus 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7). "To deny yourself something" is a symbol of "mourning" (over your sins) and repentance.

Although the primarily meaning of this divinely required religious rite affected the "soul" much more than the "stomach", the reference to the Day of Atonement as "the Fast" in Acts 27:9 shows that "the humbling of souls" or "the denying of oneself" probably included "the abstention from food". The prophet Isaiah takes the words "the humbling of souls" and "the abstention from food" together (Isaiah 58:1-5).

Thus, *the Old Testament Law required only one day of fasting* in the entire year, namely, on the Day of Atonement. This day was regarded as a Sabbath, in which God's people had to rest and do no ordinary work. They had "to humble or cause privation to their souls" when once a year the high priest made atonement for sins committed in the Most Holy Place, in the Tent of Meeting (the temple), on the altar, by the priests and also by all the people of the community.

▪ **Fasting as a purely human religious institution.**

• **The multiplication of days of fasting.**

In the course of the Old Testament history, the Jews began to multiply fasts! *These fasts were not divinely instituted religious rites, but purely human religious customs.* These rules about fasting were not made by God, but by the religious teachers and leaders in Israel. These fasts became a part of tradition that threatened to side-step the Word of God (cf. Mark 7:5-13).

There was a fast for half a day (Nehemiah 9:1-3), a fast for one whole day from sunrise to sunset (2 Samuel 1:12), a fast for seven days (1 Samuel 31:13), a partial fast for three weeks (Daniel 10:3) and a supernatural and absolute fast for forty days (Moses in Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9,18 and Elijah in 1 Kings 19:8).

There was a fast during the ninth month (Jeremiah 36:9), fasts during the fifth and seventh month (Zechariah 7:3-5), and soon during the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth month (Zechariah 8:19)!

Finally in the time of Jesus there were fasts twice a week by the Pharisees (Monday and Thursday)(Luke 18:12).

• **The outward forms of fasting.**

Fasting was a religious practice known in several religions and even before the Old Testament Law was instituted (Job 16:15-17). People often wore "sackcloth" and had "dust on their heads" when they fasted (Nehemiah 9:1). "The mourning clothes" consisted of a robe coarsely woven from goat hair or camel hair and worn on the bare body. Together with dust on their heads they resembled "the dead". It was possibly a symbol expressing either their conviction that they were "spiritually dead" due to their transgressions and sins (Ephesians 2:1) or at least that they felt "dead" due to their sins. Sometimes people also "tore their clothes" (Ezra 8:3; 1 Maccabees 3:47). Or they lay on the ground, wept, fasted and prayed to the LORD for three days without a break (2 Maccabees 13:12).



### • **The historical development of fasting.**

Fasting became more and more an outward form without any real religious significance.

Before the exile (8<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), when the religious practices of the Israelites had merely become an outward form without any sincere significance (Isaiah 1:10-15; Jeremiah 14:11-12), the pre-exilic prophets proclaimed that *true fasting* did not consist of the abstinence of food, but *the abstinence of doing evil and the practising of justice and mercy* (Isaiah 58:1-12)!

During the exile (605-538 B.C.), the Jews observed 4 days of fasting every year (Zechariah 8:19)(cf. the Talmud). These days of fasting marked disasters in Jewish history:

The 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month (December-January 588 B.C.) was a fast to remember the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:1-2; Jeremiah 52:4-5).

The 9<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month (June-July 586 B.C.) was a fast to remember the capture of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:3-4; Jeremiah 52:6-7).

The 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month (July-August 586 B.C.) was a fast to remember the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (2 Kings 25:8-12; Jeremiah 52:12-16).

The 7<sup>th</sup> month (September-October 586 B.C.) was a fast to remember the death of Gedaliah, the governor appointed by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:25-26; Jeremiah 41:1-3).

Because there was no temple or temple service in Babylon, fasting became more and more *a religious practice whereby people believed that they could gain righteousness or merit before God*.

After the exile, the Jews continued to observe these days of fasting. Esther (about 465 B.C.) asked the Jewish community to fast for her sake before she took the risk of going into the presence of the king to make a request. She asked them to fast for three days and nights (Esther 4:16).

Nevertheless, all these fasts were purely *human institutions* that gradually became *religious traditions*. They were *not ordained or required by God!* These biblical passages are *historical narratives and not commands or teachings* either for Jews or for Christians.

### ▪ **The prophecy about fasting days of mourning that would be changed into days of joy.**

The prophet Zechariah (520 - 518 B.C.) prophesied that the “days of fasting” would be changed to “days of joy” (Zechariah 7:3,5; Zechariah 8:19)! He also proclaimed that *true fasting did not consist of the abstinence of food, but the abstinence of evil and the practising of justice and mercy* (Zechariah 7:3-10)!

### **Fasting in Judaism.**

The Essenes covered a wide range of Jewish sectarian bodies that drew aside from the main stream of Jewish life. One of these bodies was almost certainly the Qumran community with their Dead Sea scrolls. According to the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, the Essenes were a Jewish religious community, which flourished in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. and 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. and constituted the third Jewish school or philosophy. Fully initiated Essenes lived together in separate communities. Attached to each community (order) were associate members who lived in all the cities of Judea, including Jerusalem. They followed the ordinary ways of life. The Essenes fasted often and severely, because their dualistic worldview required that they *put their physical bodies to death in order to release their souls* (as some eastern and western religions also taught). They *forbade the eating of meat and the drinking of wine*. They *only ate after sunset* (cf. the much later practice of Islam during Ramadan).

### **Fasting during the New Testament period.**

#### ▪ **The meaning of the words “nesteia” and “nesteuo”.**

The Greek noun “nesteia” means “to hunger” (2 Corinthians 6:5; 2 Corinthians 11:27), fasting as a public religious rite on the Day of Atonement (Act 27:9) or fasting as a private religious rite (Luke 2:37; Acts 13:3; Acts 14:23). The Greek verb “nesteuo” means “to fast, to abstain from food” as a religious rite among Jews and Christians as a sign of grief (Mark 4:2; Acts 13:3). Jesus and his disciples did not fast (Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-19; Luke 5:33-35). “Fasting” among Christians in the New Testament is a *voluntary human religious act*, a *voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes*.

Fasting is not the same as “a hunger strike”, the purpose of which is to attract attention to a particular cause, usually a political cause. Fasting is also not the same as “dieting”, the purpose of which is to promote physical health.

The words “asitia” and “asitos” (without food)(Acts 27:21,33) do not refer to a religious fast, but to the difficult circumstances during the long storm at sea.

#### ▪ **The legalistic-meritorious fasting of the Jews in a historical setting.**

During the New Testament period, the Jews still regarded fasting as very meritorious for gaining righteousness before God.

- The prophetess Anna worshipped God night and day with prayer and fasting (Luke 2:37).
- The Pharisees were hypocrites and disfigured their faces when they fasted in order to show people that they fasted (Matthew 6:16). The Pharisees fasted twice every week, on Monday and on Thursday, because Moses allegedly ascended Mount Sinai on a Monday and descended again on Thursday (Luke 18:12). They also fasted

in times of draught and calamities. Even the disciples of the Pharisees fasted (Matthew 9:14). Jesus exposed “the so-called righteousness of the Pharisees” as useless before God (Matthew 5:20)!

- The disciples of John the Baptist fasted (Matthew 9:14).

These biblical passages are *historical narratives and not commands or teachings* for Christians.

▪ **The voluntary fasting of Jesus Christ in a historical setting.**

Jesus was born *under the law* (Galatians 4:4). Just as Moses and Elijah in the time of the Law had fasted for a period of 40 days, he also fasted for 40 days (Matthew 4:2). However, being in the desert, his fast was not necessarily a fasting from choice. Food was probably not available in the place he selected for his weeks of preparation for his public ministry, as the first temptation suggests. Nevertheless, this passage relates history.

▪ **The voluntary fasting of Christians in a historical setting.**

- **At times of crises.**

The apostle Paul was also born *under the law and raised as a Jew* (Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:2-11). At his conversion, Paul fasted voluntarily for three days (Acts 9:9). This is a historical narrative and not a command or teaching for Christians. The word “*nesteiai*” in 2 Corinthians 6:5 does not refer to Paul’s many “fasts”, but rather to the many occasions during Paul’s life that he was “hungry”.

- **At times of worship.**

The church of Antioch and voluntary fasting. Some Christians in the church of Antioch fasted when they worshipped the Lord (Acts 13:2-3). There is no indication that this is a required practice!

- **At times of appointing elders.**

The apostles and their assistants appointed elders for each local church in Asia Minor and committed them to the Lord with prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23). These biblical passages are *historical narratives and not commands or teachings* for Christians.

▪ **The teaching of Jesus Christ about fasting.**

- **Fasting belongs to the Old Testament order.**

Jesus Christ taught that the Old Testament fasting *belonged to the old order of the Old Testament* (Matthew 9:14-17; Hebrews 9:8-10). The Old Testament order was terminated at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ instituted the New Covenant (i.e. *the New Testament*) with the institution of the Lord’s Supper on the evening before he was crucified (Luke 22:20). The new contents require new forms!

- **Fasting is no longer required, but may be voluntary (Matthew 6:16-18)**

The Day of Atonement was *a part of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament* and required fasting as an obligation. But because Jesus Christ made a complete atonement for sins (Romans 3:25), he fulfilled the ceremonial law (Matthew 5:17). Fasting was therefore no longer a required obligation for Christians! Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and abolished *required* fasting (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14), but he did not abolish *voluntary* fasting. He nevertheless, denounced the *misuse* of fasting, as was practised by the Pharisees. Christians may fast unobtrusively in the sense of abstaining from food for personal reasons (Matthew 6:16-18), but they may never enforce fasting on other Christians!

- **Fasting is not necessary (Matthew 17:21).**

The text in Matthew 17:21, “But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” is absent from the oldest Greek manuscripts (cf. NIV).

- **Fasting has been replaced by feasting as an expression of never-ending joy (Mark 2:18-22).**

Jesus Christ replaced fasting as an expression of *mourning* over sin (Leviticus 23:26-32; Zachariah 7:5) with *feasting* as expression of never ending joy (cf. the prophecy in Zechariah 8:19b with its fulfilment in Mark 2:18-22). Christians rejoice over the real atonement made for their sins (their genuine and complete forgiveness) (Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 8:12) and over the never ending presence of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:19-22; Matthew 28:20)!

- **Fasting in the sense of denying is expressed in justice and sharing (Isaiah 58:6-12; Luke 14:12-14)**

<sup>6</sup>“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter —  
when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before you,  
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

<sup>9</sup>Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,

with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

<sup>10</sup>and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,

then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the noonday.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.

<sup>12</sup>Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and will raise up the age-old foundations;  
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,  
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

A practical way to do this is Luke 14:12-14. <sup>12</sup> Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

## 10. The yearly Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)

### The Feast of Booths during the Old Testament period.

During the Old Testament period the Feast of Booths had three purposes: it was a harvest festival celebrating the ingathering of the harvest; a commemorative festival commemorating the journey through the desert; and a prophetic festival anticipating God’s blessings in the future.

- **The Feast of Booths was a harvest festival: thanking God for the harvest.**

There are five days between the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths. The feast of Booths was celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri)(September-October) and lasted for seven days. It was a harvest festival celebrating the ingathering of the produce of the threshing floor and their winepress (Deuteronomy 16:13).

- **The Feast of Booths was the third of the three compulsory pilgrimages to Jerusalem.**

“Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths).” At the three pilgrimage festivals the Jews brought sacrifices and gifts in proportion to the way God had blessed them. In this way the temple treasury was filled (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

- **The Feast of Booths was a commemorative festival: joyfully commemorating God’s guidance of Israel through the desert for forty years.**

Leviticus 23:40 says, “On the first day you are to take for yourselves the fruit from citrus tree, tied-together boughs of palm trees, leafy branches (myrtle?) and willows-at-a-stream, and rejoice before (the face of) the LORD your God for seven days.” After the return from exile to Babylon the scribe Ezra taught the Jews to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Nehemiah 8:14-17). “The people went out and brought back branches and built themselves booths on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Watergate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim. The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great.”

- **The Feast of Booths was a prophetic festival: anticipating God’s blessings in the future.**

On each of the seven days of the feast, a priest would fill a golden pitcher with water from the pool of Siloam and carry it back to the temple accompanied by a solemn procession. At the temple he would pour the water through a funnel, which led to the base of the altar of burnt-offering. The symbolic rite of water-pouring reminded the people of the refreshing stream of water that flowed miraculously from the rock at Meribah in the desert (Exodus 17:17).

It reminded them of God’s promises in the Old Testament Scriptures:

- “I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants” (Isaiah 44:3).
- “Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters” (Isaiah 55:1).
- “You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail” (Isaiah 58:11).
- It pointed forward to the Messiah, the spiritual rock, Christ, from whom living water would flow (1 Corinthians 10:4).
- It pointed forward to the blessings of the coming Messianic age.

That is why Jesus in John 10:38 could say with confidence, “*As the Scripture has said*, ‘streams of living water will flow from within him’.”

On the seventh day, called ‘Hoshana Rabba’ (the Great Hosanna) the pouring of water from the golden pitcher took place amidst the blasting of the trumpets by the priests, and the singing of Psalms (Psalm 113-118) by the Levites, while the procession of people waved their ‘lulavs’ and chanted the great ‘Hallel’ (Psalm 118:25-29): “We beseech you, LORD, save please (Hebrew: Hoshiah-n<a = Hosanna)! We beseech you, LORD, make prosperous please! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you! The LORD is God and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God and I will give you thanks; you are my God and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever!”

It pointed forward to the Messiah, the coming Saviour. The Saviour’s name is “Jesus” (Matthew 1:21) and he already entered Jerusalem triumphantly as the King to whom the crowds shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David”. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD” (Matthew 21:1-9)!

- **The Feast of Booths was a prophetic festival: pointing to the Day of the Lord.**

The prophet Zechariah (520-518 B.C.) prophesied in Zechariah chapter 14 about the Day of the Lord when the Lord comes to save his people and judge his enemies. In terms of the Old Testament shadows, he prophesied the last great outburst of hatred against God's people (cf. Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 20:8-10). There will be changes in the natural creation. The remnant of God's people will escape this final onslaught. God's people will figuratively celebrate the Feast of Booths in the New Jerusalem on the new earth (Zechariah 14:16-19). Here 'the Feast of Booths' symbolises the great joy and thankfulness of God's people on the new earth. But God's enemies who attacked God's people and do not participate in the New Jerusalem and its festivities will be severely punished.

### **The Feast of Booths in modern Judaism.**

- **Booths or bunches.**

The Sadducees interpreted Leviticus 23:40 as a reference to building booths (Hebrew: sukkot) with branches tied together, while the Pharisees regarded this as a bunch of branches (Hebrew: lulav) carried in the procession and waved in the temple during certain parts of the service. Eventually they reached a compromise and the booths, the lulav and the citrus fruit became the basic symbols of the feast of Booths. Small huts made of branches and leaves were erected on the rooftops and in the streets and provided shelter for the pilgrims who attended the feast. In 2 Maccabees 10:7 during the cleansing of the temple (164 B.C.), the Jews carried poles decorated with branches of trees with blossoms and palm branches while they were singing songs of praise. Later the custom was to carry a palm branch decorated with willow and myrtle branches (the lulav) in the right hand and a citrus fruit (Hebrew: ethrog) in the left hand. Shouting "Hosanna" they walked in procession once around the altar every day and seven times on the seventh day. While chanting the words of Isaiah, a jar of water mixed with wine was poured out on the altar.

- **Illuminating Jerusalem and the temple.**

In the night between the first and second day, high four-armed candelabras were lighted in the outer court of the temple and the most important citizens of Jerusalem performed a dance with lighted torches accompanied by psalms and hymns by a choir of Levites standing on the stairs leading to the inner court. This reminded the people of the pillar of fire that guided Israel by night after the exodus and became a symbol of the temple being a light of the world. It pointed forward to the Messiah, the light of the world! The spectators were gathered in the court of women. At the crow of the cock in the morning three blasts with a trumpet ended the festivities.

- **Building booths, heaving bunches and carrying citrus fruit.**

In modern times the Jews celebrate the Feast of Booths in some places by still building "booths" (sukkot) and by heaving up or carrying the "bunches" (lulavs) in the right hand and the "citrus fruit" (ethrog) in the left hand in procession around the centre of the synagogue.

- **Striking the branches of the willow tree.**

On the seventh day, the Jews observe a custom of striking the branches of the willow tree (arba'ah), three times in an effort to shed all the leaves, which represent sins!

The Jews are still waiting for the Saviour of sins! They will not believe that he has already come two thousand years ago! At his first coming Jesus Christ said, "Have you (Jews) never read the Scriptures: The Stone the builders rejected has become the Capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes (Psalm 118:22-23). Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed" (Matthew 21:42-44).

- **The Feast of rejoicing in the Torah in Judaism.**

The whole cycle of the autumn holidays in Judaism is concluded with 'the rejoicing over the Law' (Hebrew: Simchat Torah) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (Tishri) (September-October).

### **The Feast of Booths during the New Testament period.**

- **The promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit together with its abundant blessings (including salvation).**

During the New Testament period Jesus came to the temple in Jerusalem during the feast of Tabernacles (October 29 A.D.). He stood in the temple court and taught the people (John 7:2,14-18,37-44). On the seventh day, when the trumpets were blasting, the Levites were singing and the crowds were beseeching God to save them, "We beseech you, LORD, save please!"

Jesus himself stood in their midst and proclaimed, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:37-38). By implication Jesus Christ was saying, "I am the answer to your prayers! I have come to save you!" The crowds clearly understood Christ's claim to be the Messiah, because they immediately began to question whether he was the Messiah and debate how the Messiah could come from Galilee (John 7:40-43) instead of Judea (Micah 5:2).

The apostle John then teaches what Jesus meant: "By this he meant the Spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:39)(i.e. he

had not yet been raised from death, ascended and enthroned on God's throne in heaven). The outpouring of water pointed forward to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the first coming of Jesus Christ (30 A.D.)(Acts 2:17,33).

- **Jesus is the Light of the world.**

Then Jesus spoke again, saying: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). The illumination of Jerusalem and especially the temple with lights and burning torches pointed forward to Jesus being the Light of the world!

- **The ingathering of the uncountable multitude.**

The apostle John looked forward to the feast of the greater ingathering of the harvest, "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb (= Jesus Christ). They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9-10)!

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## (iv) Ceremonial laws about holy actions

### 11. The circumcision

#### Circumcision during the Old Testament period.

- **Circumcision in Israel differed from circumcision among other nations.**

Circumcision in Israel differed to that among other nations. While other nations also circumcised females, only boys in Israel were circumcised. While Islam circumcises boys around the age of twelve years, boys in Israel are circumcised when they are eight days old. While only the priests in Egypt were circumcised, all the males in Israel had to be circumcised.

In the early days circumcision was performed by the father, but in an emergency it may also be performed by a woman (Exodus 4:25-26). In modern Jewish synagogues there exists an office of circumciser. Circumcision is also the occasion for giving the boy his name (Luke 1:59).

- **Circumcision was the national sign of belonging to the nation of Israel.**

During the Old Testament period (in 2067 B.C.) a very ancient custom among the nations in Asia, Africa, America and Australia, namely circumcision, became *the national symbol of Israel*. Every male belonging to Abraham and his descendents, including the dependent servants and slaves and proselytes, had to be circumcised (Genesis 17:12-13).

- **Circumcision was the spiritual sign of keeping the covenant of grace.**

But circumcision given to the patriarchs was above all *the spiritual symbol of belonging to God's covenant people and keeping God's covenant* with Abraham and his descendents: "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Genesis 17:7,11; Leviticus 26:12). God's people had to believe in God and his covenant (Genesis 15:6) and prove their faith by their obedience (Genesis 22:17-18; Hebrews 4:2,6).

During the Old Testament period the people were circumcised in the flesh (body) as a sign pointing forward to the reality of the circumcision of their hearts. The impurity of the flesh was a symbol of the impurity of the heart (spirit, soul). Cutting off the unclean foreskin from the body symbolised the need for cutting off sin from the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 4:3-4; cf. Romans 2:28-29).

- **Circumcision was the spiritual sign of keeping the moral law.**

After God had added the Law of Moses (in 1447 B.C.) to the covenant with Abraham (Galatians 3:17-19), circumcision also became *the spiritual symbol of keeping (especially) the moral law* that was a part of the covenant of grace.

In Romans 2:25 Paul says: "Circumcision has value if you keep the law." Here Paul uses the word "law" in the sense of "God's covenant of grace". The law as God's covenant of grace demanded faith expressed in obedience to the moral law: "Love God and your neighbour" (cf. Romans 1:5; Romans 16:26). Thus, even after the adding of the law, circumcision remained the sign of keeping the covenant of grace during the Old Testament period.

In this sense Jesus Christ was circumcised (Luke 2:21) because he was born under law. But Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to redeem people under law (who were still immature children and lived like slaves)(Galatians 4:1-3) so that they may receive the full rights of sons (Galatians 4:4-6). Christ redeemed his people by first fulfilling the law and then by cancelling the law, taking it away and nailing "the written code with its regulations" (the ceremonial law) to the cross (Colossians 2:11-14).

- **Circumcision became the legalistic sign of keeping the ceremonial law.**

However during the period between the Babylonian exile (587 B.C.) and the first coming of Christ the Jewish religious teachers and leaders replaced the covenant of grace with its sign. Circumcision was originally only the spiritual sign of keeping the covenant of grace (i.e. of faith and obedience), but now became *an outward legalistic sign of keeping the*

*ceremonial law*. Circumcision itself became the covenant! The keeping of the ceremonial law (e.g. circumcision) became more important than keeping the moral law (loving God and the neighbour)!

That is why Jesus says in John 7:19,22-23 (29 A.D.) that the Jews had made circumcision something Moses had given as a ceremonial law to keep and they had made circumcision without any biblical warrant to be the most important part of the law. Jesus uses the word “law” especially in the sense of “the ceremonial law” (Leviticus 12:3).

### **Circumcision during the New Testament period.**

- **Circumcision of the flesh (body) remains the legalistic sign of keeping the ceremonial law.**

The apostle Paul warned Christians (i.e. believers after the first coming of Christ) who let themselves be physically circumcised that they are obligated to obey the whole law! Of course, no one is able to obey the whole law! When people try to be justified by keeping the ceremonial law (including circumcision), they thereby alienate themselves from Christ (and his perfect righteousness) and fall away from grace (Galatians 5:3-4; cf. Galatians 3:10-11)(50 A.D.)!

Paul warned Christians against religious people who enforce circumcision of the flesh as the sign of keeping the ceremonial law. Such religious people are “mutilators of the flesh”, tearing up the body as dogs tear up a piece of meat (Philippians 3:2-3)(end 61 A.D.).

Christians are “the true circumcision”, “people whose hearts have been circumcised by the Holy Spirit and worship by the Spirit of God” (Romans 2:28-29)!

- **Circumcision of the heart is the spiritual sign of regeneration.**

During the New Testament period circumcision of the flesh (the foreskin) of boys (men) has been abolished (Galatians 5:2-4; Galatians 6:12-15) and has been replaced by the circumcision of the heart of both men and women. The work of the hands of men was replaced with the work of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 6:12-15; Colossians 2:11-14). The circumcision of the heart is the same as regeneration (rebirth) (Romans 2:28-29; cf. Titus 3:4-7). People who were already physically circumcised before they became Christians must no longer give their physical circumcision any spiritual meaning, but must rely completely on the circumcision of their hearts through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 6:12-15)!

- **The baptism with the Spirit during the New Testament period is related to the circumcision of the heart during the Old Testament period.**

The circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament required the later circumcision of the heart (Leviticus 26:41, Deuteronomy 10:16, Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4, Jeremiah 9:25-26, Romans 2:28-29). The baptism with the Spirit in the New Testament is related to the circumcision of the heart in the Old Testament (Colossians 2:11-13).

The circumcision of the body in the Old Testament was the sign and seal of justification by faith (Romans 4:11-12) and the baptism with water in the New Testament is the sign and seal of the forgiveness of sins, that is, of the justification by faith (Acts 2:28a).

But while circumcision of the body was only a temporary sign of the Old Testament covenant (and thus only had a function during the Old Testament period) (Genesis 17:9-14; Galatians 5:2-6; Galatians 6:12-15), the baptism with water is the decisive sign and seal of the New Testament covenant (Matthew 28:19)!

And while circumcision of the body in the Old Testament took place with newborn males of eight days old (Genesis 17:9-14) who **still had to believe afterwards** (Hebrews 4:2), the baptism with water in the New Testament takes place with males and females who **already have come to faith** in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38,41; Acts 8:36-37; Acts 10:43,47-48; Acts 16:31-33).

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## **12. THE SACRIFICES**

### **Sacrifices during the Old Testament period.**

- **Sacrifices in general.**

In general a religious sacrifice is an action by which a person either dedicates himself or something he owns to the godhead or destroys it in order to win the favour of the godhead. The emphasis is generally on destroying (slaughtering) something in order to make atonement. The sacrifice may also be made as a token of self-denial, dedication, guilt or thanksgiving. Sacrifices among the nations are generally made as a means to gain unity with the godhead, to gain power, to gain his favour or to pacify his hostile attitude. The nations in the area of the Euphrates and Tigris brought sacrifices. Before the institution of the ceremonial law in Israel, there were Israelites who sacrificed outside the camp to idols and ate blood, just like the Canaanite nations (Leviticus 17:1-12).

▪ **Sacrifices before the institution of the ceremonial law.**

- The first fruit offerings (Genesis 4:2-4).

Cain worked the soil and brought some of the fruits of the soil as a sacrifice to God, but Abel kept flocks and brought the fat portions of some of his flock as a sacrifice to God (Genesis 4:2-4).

- The burnt offerings (Genesis 8:20; Genesis 22:13).

Noah built an altar to the LORD and sacrificed clean animals and clean birds as burnt offerings to the LORD (Genesis 8:20). God provided Abraham with a goat instead of his son to sacrifice as a burnt offering (Genesis 22:13).

- The covenant offerings (Genesis 15:9-19).

When two equal parties made a covenant, they would cut a heifer, a goat and a ram in two halves, arrange the two halves opposite to one another and then walk through the midst of these two halves as a sign that the party that breaks the covenant would also be cut in two pieces (Jeremiah 34:18-20)!

However when God made a covenant with Abraham (before 2082 B.C.)(Genesis 16:3), Abraham was not his equal. In the visible appearance of “a smoking fire pot with a blazing torch” God passed alone through the midst of these two halves as a sign that God would never break his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:9-19)!

When God had added the covenant of the Law (with Moses)(1446 B.C.) to his covenant of grace (with Abraham), Moses built an altar with twelve stones at the foot of Mt Sinai and young Israelite men offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings. They sprinkled blood on to the altar and blood onto the people who promised to keep the covenant as “the blood of the covenant” (Exodus 24:1-8; Hebrews 9:19-22). Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders of Israel saw God and ate in his presence (Exodus 24:9-11).

When king Zedekiah together with all the people made a covenant with God to declare freedom to all their slaves, but then violated this covenant by enslaving them again, God decided “to declare freedom for them to be destroyed” (Jeremiah 34:8-22)! When people violated a covenant with God, God would treat them like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces (Jeremiah 34:18-20).

- The libation offerings (Genesis 28:18-22).

Jacob poured oil out on a stone and made a vow to God that if God cared for all his needs the LORD would be his God and he would give a tenth of all God gave him (Genesis 28:18-22).

- The peace or fellowship offerings (Genesis 31:44-54).

Laban set up a heap of stones as a boundary between him and Jacob and Jacob offered a peace offering and invited Laban and his relatives to a meal (Genesis 31:44-54).

- The Passover offerings (Exodus 12:1-13)(1446 B.C.).

God commanded the Israelites to slaughter a year old lamb or goat without blemish and put its blood on the sides and tops of their doors. The blood functioned as an atonement sacrifice and the roasted lamb as a meal of fellowship (Exodus 12:1-13).

▪ **Sacrifices regulated by the ceremonial law.**

Leviticus chapter 1-7 regulated *the different offerings* that Israel had to bring in order to have fellowship with God. It regulated the circumstances under which each offering had to be brought and the way in which it had to be brought.

**The Old Testament teaches the following five sacrifices:**

- The burnt offering (Leviticus 1:1-17; 6:8-13)
- The grain offering (Leviticus 2:1-16; 6:14-23) and drink offerings (Numbers 28:7,10,16,24; 29:6,11,16 etc.)
- The fellowship offering (Leviticus 1-17; 7:11-21)
- The sin offering (Leviticus 4:1 – 5:13; 6:24-30)
- The guilt offering (Leviticus 5:14 – 6:7; 7:1-10)

▪ **The Old Testament offerings differed from other religious offerings.**

- **The Old Testament offerings were not regarded as food for God.**

The nations often regarded their sacrifices as food for their gods. Israel still used ancient sacrificial terminology, like “a food-offering by fire” (Leviticus 3:11) and “the Lord’s table” (Malachi 1:7). They added “salt” to the meat offering and “oil” to the flour offering, because some of the offerings became the share of the priests. But nowhere in the Old Testament do we find the idea that the God of the Bible needs our food. The Bible clearly teaches that the God who made the heavens and the earth “is *not served by human hands, as if he needed anything*, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else (Acts 17:25).”

- **The Old Testament offerings were not regarded as gifts to God.**

The nations often regarded their sacrifices as gifts to their gods in order to appease them. But the Old Testament teaches that the offerings were *not gifts of man to God, but rather were God’s gracious gifts to man!* During the Old Testament period (before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ) God had graciously given the institution of sacrifices to man as the way in which sinful people could make atonement for their sins, have access to God and fellowship with God.

God had given the blood of creatures *to (symbolically) make atonement for man's sins*. In Leviticus 17:11 we read, "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and *I have given it to you to make atonement* for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." Therefore, the Old Testament offerings were not the result of man trying to climb up to the unknown God, but rather the way in which the God of the Bible came down to man to reconcile man to himself. The offerings were meant to teach man that *only by the death of something or someone could man gain life* and gain a relationship with God. The Old Testament offerings were therefore the visible means of God's grace.

- **The Old Testament offerings were not regarded to have magical power.**

The sacrifices of the nations were regarded to have magical power to manipulate the gods and to force reconciliation between the gods and people. The sacrifices of the nations could control the minds of their gods and the lack of sacrifices could make those gods very angry and revengeful. But in the Old Testament the offerings had no magical or manipulative power at all.

Of course, God is able to show grace without any offerings. He did that after Israel had broken the covenant by making the golden calf (1446 B.C.)(Exodus 32:30f). But after that God instituted the sacrifices to teach people that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness": either during the Old Testament period (Leviticus 17:11) or during the New Testament period (Hebrews 9:22). The sacrifices were "Old Testament shadows" pointing forward to "the New Testament reality", namely, the sacrifice of atonement that Jesus Christ brought on the cross.

God instituted the offerings as *a shadow of the reality* that would come during the New Testament period. The offerings pointed forward to the fact that God completely controlled the methods and the functioning of the sacrifices during the Old Testament period.

And of course, God also has the right and power to reject the offerings that people bring. God says in Isaiah 1:13, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me." The value of the Old Testament offerings depended on *the attitude of the heart and the sincerity of behaviour!*

- **The Old Testament people bringing offerings differed from the heathen bringing sacrifices.**

While the bringing of sacrifices among the nations was an exclusive privilege of kings and priests, every person in the Old Testament could bring a sacrifice. Among the nations, often only their kings and priests were worthy of bringing sacrifices to their gods. This was because the king was regarded as related to his god and the priest was regarded as possessing secret knowledge to open the way to the gods.

However, in the Old Testament the king was no more than any ordinary citizen. He was as it were taken from pasturing sheep in the field to pasture God's people (2 Samuel 7:8). The king was subject to God's Law just like all the other citizens in Israel.

Also the priest in the Old Testament was nothing more than a member of an ordinary family, called by God "to minister in the Holy Place" (Exodus 28:43). Leviticus 1:1-9 teaches clearly that in the Old Testament, the ordinary people knew God's laws and ceremonies, brought an animal without defect to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, laid their hand on the head of the animal to signify that it would make atonement for sin on their behalf, slaughtered it, skinned it and cut it into pieces.

- **Leviticus teaches that the way of access to God is only on the basis of substitutionary atonement.**

The God of the Bible is a righteous and holy God. He hates wickedness and unholiness. He will not associate with people who are wicked and unholy (Psalm 5:4-5). Therefore he has commanded the way how people during the Old Testament period could maintain access to God. Israel as a community could maintain access to God only by offerings. By the shedding of the blood of a sacrifice, the life of the innocent offering was *substituted* for the life of the guilty believer who had forfeited his life due to sin. The Old Testament ceremonies prepared Israel to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:12 says that by the shedding of his own blood Jesus Christ once for all obtained eternal redemption.

- **Leviticus teaches that the offerings to God in the Old Testament must be perfect.**

No lamb or goat that had any kind of defect may be offered to the Lord.

Nothing corrupt or liable to speedy decay may be presented as an offering to God. Therefore, leaven, honey and milk, which quickly caused decay, were excluded from the offerings to God. But salt, which preserves and gives taste, were added to the offerings to God (Leviticus 2:13). Honey was a kind of syrup produced from fruit and dates and quickly fermented. Milk quickly soured.

Animals like pigs were excluded, because in those days the pagan nations associated pigs with the worship of the gods of the nether world.

Nothing impure may enter the holy presence of God. People with infectious diseases or wearing contaminated clothing were excluded. Clothing made of a mixture of different materials, such as wool and flax, were excluded, because they



*typified the mingling of the holy and the profane.* All these perfect offerings in the Old Testament were intended to teach the Israelites that God is satisfied with nothing less than what is perfect!

The Old Testament ceremonial laws prepared Israel to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.

- **God does not delight in animal sacrifices, but in a broken and submissive spirit.**

The prophet Samuel taught this truth in 1 Samuel 15:22 when he said: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in *obeying the voice of the Lord?* To obey is better than sacrifice.”

King David taught this truth in Psalm 51:16-17 by saying: “You (God) do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; *a broken and contrite heart*, O God, you will not despise.”

## **(I) THE BURNT OFFERING**

- **The burnt offering was to express substitution and complete submission.**

Leviticus 1:3-13 (Exodus 29:10-18). Burnt offerings were already brought by Noah (Genesis 8:20), Abraham (Genesis 22:3,6,13) and Moses (Exodus 10:25; 24:5). Burnt offerings consisted of large animals from the herd or small animals from the flock or even birds (Leviticus 1:3,10,14). The burnt offerings were the regular offerings in Israel. The Israelites had to sacrifice a year old lamb as burnt offering each morning and another year old lamb each evening (Exodus 29:38-42).

The word ‘burnt offering’ (Hebrew: >olah) means ‘rising’ (of its smoke) and expressed the idea that the parts sacrificed were totally destroyed (nothing was kept back). It expressed complete submission. The burnt offering had to be a male animal (from which most power issued)(females were more needed for breeding), under three years old (Genesis 15:9) and “without defect” (cf. Leviticus 22:19-22), which meant that it fulfilled all the requirements of the Lord (cf. Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19).

The believer had to lay his hand on the head of the animal, which symbolised the transference of the sins of the believer to the animal and also the complete reliance of the believer on this means of atonement. Sacrificing a burnt offering symbolised the self-sacrifice of the believer which would make him ready to serve God. The holy indignation of God was substituted for his satisfaction. ‘To make atonement’ (Hebrew: Pi. kipper) did not mean “the covering” of sins, but meant “the sweeping away” of sins.

The believer had to slaughter the animal himself on the north side of the altar (Leviticus 1:11), but later this was done by the Levites (Ezekiel 44:10-14). But the priest had to bring the blood to the inner court (cf. Ezekiel 44:17-19) and “sprinkle the blood profusely on and over” the altar (Hebrew: zaraq). The believer had to skin the animal and give the hide to the priest. But the priest had to arrange its pieces on the altar (as setting a table)(cf. Psalm 23:5). The believer had to wash the intestines and feet, because they were ceremonially “unclean” (having touched the ground), and the priest had to rake up the fire on the altar to flames and ritually burn or “cause to go up in smoke” (Hebrew: hiqtir) the fat (enclosing the intestines)(Exodus 29:13,22) and the meat (i.e. the whole animal). This was the “ritual burning” in honour of the Lord in which a lot of smoke was developed. “Ordinary burning” (Hebrew: saraf) happened outside the camp (Leviticus 4:12). The smoke was regarded anthropomorphically as “an aroma pleasing to the Lord” (cf. Genesis 8:21). The priest had to burn “all of it on the altar.” This is what was meant by the words: “It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire”.

- **The daily burnt offerings.**

Leviticus 6:8-13 is not a reference to the private burnt offerings of believers, but a reference to the daily burnt offerings. Each day a one year old lamb had to be sacrificed first thing in the morning and last thing in the evening on the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. This was accompanied by grain and drink offerings. The burnt offering of the evening had to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night. At the entrance to the Tent of Meeting God would meet and speak to his people (Exodus 29:38-46). The fire on the altar of burnt offering was never allowed to go out. Early in the morning, the ashes on the altar of burnt offering had to be removed and the fire had to be stirred up.

## **(II) THE GRAIN OFFERING**

- **The grain offering was to propitiate God by the lesser giving a gift to the greater.**

Leviticus 2:1-15. There were two kinds of grain offerings: first, the grain offerings connected to the daily blood sacrifices (Numbers 28:3-8) and the weekly, monthly and yearly religious festivals (Numbers 28:9) and second, the independent grain offerings (Leviticus chapter 2). The word ‘grain offering’ (Hebrew: mincha) served to propitiate someone. For example: Jacob propitiated Esau (Genesis 32:13), kings propitiated Solomon (1 Kings 10:25), Benhadad propitiated Elisha (2 Kings 8:8) and the believer propitiated God (Joshua 22:23).

The grain offering consisted of raw wheat flour (Exodus 29:2), without yeast (Leviticus 2:5), to which oil, incense and salt were added. “Oil” was regarded as life-giving and sanctifying. “Incense” was appreciated as a fragrant aroma (Exodus 30:34). “Salt” gave taste and preserved the food. The priest would take a handful of wheat flour mixed with oil, incense and salt and throw it into the fire on the altar of burnt offering. This part of the grain offering was called “a

memorial portion” (Hebrew: azkara) and was “an offering made by fire” (it had to be completely burnt) and “an aroma pleasing to the Lord”.

The rest of the grain offering belonged to the priests and was called “a most holy part” (literally: holiness of holiness) and meant that it was prohibited to leave the sanctuary and had to be eaten inside the sanctuary. Also the sin offerings, the guilt offerings (Leviticus 6:18; 7:1), the bread set before the Lord (Leviticus 24:9) and the incense offerings (Exodus 30:36) belonged to “the most holy parts” of the offerings made to the Lord by fire.

There were grain offerings made of raw wheat flour (Leviticus 2:1-3), grain offerings baked on a griddle and crumbled into pieces (Leviticus 2:4-6), grain offerings cooked in a pan (Leviticus 2:7) and grain offerings of first fruits (Leviticus 2:14-16). All grain offerings had to be made without yeast or honey, because these substances promoted decay. But all grain offerings had to include salt, because salt promoted preservation.

- **The daily grain offerings.**

Leviticus 6:14-18. The daily grain offering for all the people consisted of a handful of wheat flour mixed with oil and incense, called “the Lord’s memorial portion”, which a priest had to throw into the fire on the altar of burnt offering as a pleasing aroma to the Lord each day.

The rest of the grain offering was “most holy” and only the male descendants of the priests were allowed to eat it inside the sanctuary. The priests had to be very careful that no one else touched “the most holy things” (food)(Numbers 18:8-10), because “whoever touched them would become holy”. Ritual holiness could therefore be transmitted just as ritual uncleanness.

- **The grain offering of the high priest when ordaining priests for the priesthood.**

Leviticus 6:19-23. This special grain offering was brought by the high priest *when ordaining priests for the priesthood* (Exodus 28:41; Exodus 30:30; Exodus 40:15; Leviticus 7:36; Numbers 3:3). The son who would succeed him as anointed priest had to prepare the grain offering with oil on a griddle and present half of it in broken pieces (cf. Leviticus 2:6) in the morning and half of it in broken pieces in the evening on the day he was anointed. This was the Lord’s regular share and had to be burned completely (i.e. never eaten).

- **The grain offering as a sin offering.**

Leviticus 5:11-13. To make atonement for the sins of a very poor person, the poor person may bring a quantity of wheat flour without oil and incense (instead of an expensive animal) as a sin offering. The priest had to throw a handful in the fire on the altar of burnt offering. This sin offering would make atonement for his sin and he would be forgiven.

The rest of this sin offering is the portion of the priest who made atonement.

- **The grain offering as a jealousy offering.**

Numbers 5:11-31. When a man suspects his wife of adultery he had to take her to a priest and present a grain offering of jealousy, a reminder offering to draw attention to guilt (Numbers 5:15). Her guilt or innocence had to be tested. The priest would write curses on a scroll and wash it off in the holy water mixed with ashes from the altar of burnt offering and make the woman drink it. If she was guilty she would suffer, but if she was innocent she would not suffer.

### **(III) THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERING**

- **The fellowship offering was to establish fellowship with the God of the covenant.**

Leviticus 3:1-17. The word ‘fellowship offering’ (Hebrew: zebach shelamim) is an offering in which God, the Host, gave a part of the offering for the believer who brought the offering in order to sit with him in a meal fellowship (cf. Revelation 3:20). It comes close to what is expressed in the Lord’s Supper. While the heathen nations believe in the physical and magical presence of their god at religious meals, the Israelites believed in the personal, spiritual and moral fellowship with God. The fellowship offering *excluded* the idea of blood brotherhood and also excluded the idea of participating in a god as in the Greek mystery religions. Fellowship offerings were brought at joyful occasions (Genesis 31:54; 1 Samuel 11:15), but also at sad occasions (Judges 20:26; 2 Samuel 24:25).

The fellowship offering consisted of a male or female goat or lamb without defect (or cattle, Leviticus 22:21). The believer who brought the offering had to lay his hand on the head of the animal and slaughter it himself in front of the Tent of Meeting. The priest sprinkled its blood profusely on and over the altar of burnt offering. This blood did not make atonement for sins, but was regarded as “the blood of the covenant” that established a living and unbreakable covenant relationship between God and his people (Exodus 24:6-8; cf. Genesis 15:9-19). The parts offered as a burnt offering by fire were fat (covering the inner parts, loins and liver), the kidneys (regarded as the seat of emotions) and the entire fat tail. This showed that the burnt offering was the foundation of the fellowship offering: whenever a believer had submitted himself completely to God, God would have unbroken fellowship with him!

All Israel’s offerings point to Christ’s offering on the cross, which brought peace with God and opened the way to eternal fellowship with God! In the fellowship offering it is certainly not man climbing up to God, but is God coming down to man to be the Absolute Centre of the fellowship meal. “There in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you” (cf. Deuteronomy 12:7).

The Israelites were forbidden to eat any fat or any blood (Leviticus 3:17), because “blood” was regarded as the seat of life (Leviticus 17:11) or “the blood is the soul and you must not eat the soul with the meat (the body)” (Deuteronomy 12:23-24).

▪ **Regulations with respect to fellowship offerings.**

Leviticus 7:11-21. There were three kinds of fellowship offerings: the thank offering, the vow offering and the freewill offering.

• **“The fellowship offering”**

was a thank offering which expressed thankfulness for salvation from sickness, danger and death (Psalm 56:12-13; Psalm 107:20-22; Psalm 116:15-17). Along with the meat of the fellowship offering (Leviticus 3:1-17) the believer had to bring food offerings: cakes made without yeast (Leviticus 7:12) and cakes made with yeast (Leviticus 7:13; Amos 4:5). The cakes containing yeast (as the two loaves of bread waved at Pentecost)(Leviticus 23:17) were not part of the offering presented on the altar of burnt offering (which always had to be without yeast)(Exodus 23:18), but was a part of the meal afterwards because the Israelites never ate meat without bread! One cake of each kind was a contribution to the priest who made atonement. The festive offering meals of the priests could last throughout the night, but no meat was allowed to be left till the next day (or to be taken home).

The worshipping believer would enter the gates of the sanctuary with thanksgiving (Psalm 100:4), bow down (kneel) in worship towards the sanctuary (Psalm 5:7; Psalm 95:6), present the thank offering, perform the ritual washing of hands and then went singing around the altar of burnt offering (Psalm 26:6-7).

• **“The vow offering”**

was the payment (fulfilment) of a vow made in times of trouble (Psalm 61:8; Proverbs 7:14). Jacob made a vow about paying tithes (Genesis 28:20-22). Jephthah made a vow to sacrifice the first thing coming out of his house (Judges 11:30-31). Hannah made a vow to give her son to the Lord for all the days of his life (1 Samuel 1:11). Absalom made a vow to worship the Lord at Hebron (2 Samuel 15:7-8). God does not require people to make vows, but if they make vows, he expects them to fulfil them (Deuteronomy 23:21-23). But if a person regrets having made a vow or made the wrong vow, he must immediately humble himself and free himself from this vow (Proverbs 6:1-5).

• **“The freewill offering”**

was a result of being grateful (Psalm 54:6-7) and was distributed by the Levites (2 Chronicles 31:14). It was especially presented during the pilgrimage festivals in Jerusalem (Exodus 23:15). All vow offerings and freewill offerings had to be accompanied by a grain offering and a drink offering (Numbers 15:3-5). The priests were allowed to take the meat of the fellowship offerings home, but it had to be eaten within two days. What was left on the third day had to be burned, because it was unclean (Leviticus 7:16-18). Any priest who was ceremonially unclean and had eaten from the fellowship offering, had to be “cut off from his people”, that is, not killed, but pushed out of the tribe and out of the service of the Lord (thus, handed over to the wrath of the Lord)(Leviticus 7:19-21; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

#### **(IV) THE SIN OFFERING**

▪ **The sin offering was to make atonement for sin and to reconcile the sinner to God.**

Leviticus 4:1 – 5:13. The sin offerings were to make atonement for sins. The sin offerings were distinguished by how the blood was applied: either by sprinkling before the Lord (Leviticus 4:6) or by smearing it onto the horns of the altar (Leviticus 4:25). The sin offerings had to be totally destroyed by fire: the hide was not skinned, the intestines were not washed and the meat was not cut in pieces as was done with the burnt offering. The sin offering was as it were “tainted with sin” and therefore had to be removed from the sanctuary and burned in an ordinary way (Hebrew: saraf) and not burned in a ceremonial way (Hebrew: hiqtir). It had to be burned outside the camp in a clean place (not contaminated by Levitical uncleanness), because “clean” and “unclean” were equally dangerous in Semitic thinking. The sin offering was not a food offering (i.e. which may be eaten by the priests) whenever its blood was brought into the sanctuary. But in other instances the sin offerings of the ordinary people (in which blood was not brought into the sanctuary) had to be eaten by the priests inside the sanctuary as a food offering or “a most holy offering” (Numbers 18:8-32; Leviticus 2:3,10; Leviticus 6:26,29).

The sin offerings were valid only when the sins committed were “unintentional”. The fact that the passage speaks of the community “not being aware” of the sin and “becoming aware of the sin” (Leviticus 4:13-14) does not imply that the sinner did not know that he had committed sin, but that the truth had not been brought home to him. There were no offerings for sins that were committed intentionally (defiantly). The offender would be cut off, not in the sense of exclusion from the community, but in the sense of receiving the death penalty, either executed by the people or by God’s sovereign intervention (Numbers 15:30).

While modern law holds a man guilty only when he committed a sin with his will, the law of God made no distinction between a sin being committed objectively (the deed) or subjectively (deliberately), because “sin” was a misdeed against God and as such needed atonement. The ceremonial law only distinguished between “deliberate murder” and “unintentional manslaughter” (Exodus 21:12). Leviticus 1:1 – 4:35 and Leviticus 5:17-19 dealt with breaking positive commandments of God. But Leviticus 5:1-13 dealt with neglect of doing something positive: not giving testimony when

he should, touching ceremonial unclean things, entering the sanctuary (as an unholy person), eating holy food (Numbers 19:13,20), touching human uncleanness, or taking a thoughtless oath (Leviticus 5:1-6).

The sin offering was also necessary at the purification of a woman after childbirth (Leviticus 12:6-8), for the purification of people with infectious skin diseases (Leviticus 14:19-20), for the purification of male and female discharges of uncleanness (Leviticus 15:14-15,29-30) and for breaking the Nazirite vow of separation (Numbers 6:11-12).

Sin offerings were also brought on the appointed feasts and monthly feasts. A sin offering had to be brought on every New Moon Festival (Numbers 28:15), on the Passover Feast (Numbers 28:22), on the Pentecost Feast (Leviticus 23:19; Numbers 28:30), on the Feast of Trumpets (New Year's Day)(Numbers 29:5), on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:6,15,30; Numbers 29:11) and on the Feast of Booths (Numbers 29:16).

Different kinds of sin offerings were brought for different sinners and different kinds of sins. The rules what were to be done with the blood were also different.

- **Leviticus 4:3-12. To make atonement for the sin of an anointed priest.**

This anointed priest had to bring a young bull (the largest of the animal sacrifices) without defect. He had to lay his hand on the head of the bull, which symbolised the transfer of his sins to the animal: “the animal was made to be sin” (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). He had to slaughter the bull himself at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then he (being the anointed priest himself) had to dip his right forefinger into the blood and “sprinkle a little amount” (Hebrew: *hizza*) of it seven times before the Lord in the front of the curtain of the sanctuary, put (Hebrew: *natan*) some blood on the horns of the altar of incense that is before the Lord in front of the curtain and pour the rest of the blood out at the base of the altar of burnt offering outside the entrance. The number “seven” is the number of complete fullness in the eyes of God. “The altar of incense” pointed to the accompanying prayer of the priest requesting atonement and reconciliation.

- **Leviticus 4:13-21. To make atonement for the whole Israelite community as a gathering.**

How the whole Israelite community as a gathering (Hebrew: *kol >edat Israel*) sinned is not explained. There is no difference with the word ‘the whole congregation of Israel (Hebrew: *kol qahal Israel*)(Leviticus 16:17), because the Greek translation uses the word ‘synagogue’ for both “community” and “congregation”. Nevertheless, to make atonement for the sins of the whole Israelite community, the elders as representatives of the community had to lay their hands on the head of a young bull. The Levites had to slaughter it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then the anointed priest had to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the Lord in the front of the curtain of the sanctuary, put some blood on the horns of the altar of incense and pour the rest out at the base of the altar of burnt offering. The fat parts and kidneys had to be ceremonially burnt on the altar of burnt offering and all the rest of the animal had to be burned in an ordinary way outside the camp. This sin offering would make atonement for all the Israelites and they would all be forgiven.

- **Leviticus 4:22-26. To make atonement for a leader in Israel.**

The leader had to lay his hand on the head of a *male goat* without defect and slaughter it himself at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then the anointed priest had to dip his finger into the blood and put some blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour the rest out at the base of the altar of burnt offering. This would make atonement for the man's sins and he would be forgiven. The fat parts and kidneys had to be ceremonially burnt on the altar of burnt offering and all the rest of the animal had to be burned in an ordinary way outside the camp (Leviticus 4:22-26). This sin offering was also necessary at the New Moon festival.

- **Leviticus 4:27-35. To make atonement for the sins of an ordinary Israelite.**

The Israelite had to lay his hand on the head of a *female goat or female lamb* without defect and slaughter it himself at the place of burnt offerings. There were four differences with the other sin offerings: This sin offering was not slaughtered before the Lord at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, but *at the place where burnt offerings were slaughtered* (north of altar of burnt offering)(Leviticus 4:24,29,33). The ceremony was performed by *an ordinary priest*. The priest had to dip his finger into the blood and put some blood *on the horns of the altar of burnt offering* and thus not bring any blood into the sanctuary. The rest of the blood was poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering. There seemed to have been a small channel for blood from the altar of burnt offering to the Kidron valley below. Finally, the fat parts and kidneys had to be ceremonially burnt on the altar of burnt offering, *but the rest of the animal had to be eaten by the priests* in a holy place in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting (Leviticus 5:26,29; Numbers 18:10). This sin offering would make atonement for the person's sins and he would be forgiven.

- **Leviticus 5:7-10. To make atonement for the sins of a poor person.**

The poor person was allowed to bring two doves or two young pigeons: the first as a sin offering and the second as a burnt offering. The priest had to wring the head of the sin offering from its neck and sprinkle some blood on the side of the altar of burnt offering and drain the rest of the blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering. This would make atonement for his sin and he would be forgiven. The dove or pigeon as sin offering had to be eaten by the priest, but the dove or pigeon as burnt offering was ritually burned on the altar of burnt offering. This sin offering was also necessary at the cleansing of all sins related to childbirth (Leviticus 12:6; cf. Luke 2:22-24).

- **Leviticus 5:11-13. To make atonement for the sins of a very poor person.**

The very poor person was allowed to bring a quantity of wheat flour without oil and incense (instead of an expensive animal) as a sin offering. The priest had to throw a handful in the fire on the altar of burnt offering. This sin offering would make atonement for his sin and he would be forgiven. The rest of this sin offering was the portion of the priest who made atonement.

- **Leviticus 16:11-14. To make atonement for the sin of the high priest and his household on the Day of Atonement.**

The high priest had to slaughter a young bull at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then he had to sprinkle some blood with his finger once on the front of the atonement cover and seven times before the atonement cover.

- **Leviticus 16:15-19. To make atonement for the sin of the whole community of Israel on the Day of Atonement.**

The high priest had to slaughter a goat as a sin offering to the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then he had to sprinkle some blood with his finger once on the front of the atonement cover and seven times before the atonement cover. This would make atonement for the sins of Israel, for the defilement of the Most Holy Place and the Tent of Meeting. Then he had to come out of the temple, put some blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and sprinkle blood seven times on the altar of burnt offering. This would consecrate the altar of burnt offering from all the uncleanness of the Israelites.

#### ▪ **Regulations with respect to the sin offering.**

Leviticus 6:24-30. The sin offerings had to be slaughtered in the place of the burnt offerings (the north side of the altar of burnt offering). The meat of the sin offering for the high priest and the congregation of Israel had to be burned completely outside the camp, because its blood had been brought into the sanctuary. But the meat of the sin offerings brought by the ordinary people was “the most holy” portion of the priests and only the male members of the priest’s family was allowed to eat it in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. Garments that had blood spattered on them had to be washed inside the sanctuary. Clay pots in which the meat was cooked (before consumption) had to be broken and bronze pots had to be thoroughly scoured so that no blood of the sin offering would ever leave the sanctuary!

### **(V) THE GUILT OFFERING**

- **The guilt offering was to make atonement for a transgression of God’s law and to reconcile the sinner to God.**

- **Leviticus 5:14-16. The guilt offering for unintentional violations against the Lord’s holy things or unlawful appropriation of the Lord’s holy things** (Leviticus 21:22).

When a priest unintentionally sinned with respect to the sacrifices that were allowed to be eaten by the priests within the sanctuary. “The most holy food” (Numbers 18:8-10) consisted of the twelve loaves of bread in the Tent of Meeting (Leviticus 24:9), the incense offerings (Exodus 30:34-38), the sin offerings (Leviticus 6:26,29), the guilt offerings (Leviticus 7:1,6,17; Numbers 18:9), the meat or food offerings (Leviticus 2:3,10; 6:17) and the grain offerings (Numbers 18:9). “The holy food” consisted of the fellowship (or thank or wave) offerings (Exodus 29:27-28; Leviticus 7:31-32; Leviticus 10:14-15), the wave offering on Pentecost (Leviticus 23:20), the first fruits of the grain, wine and oil harvest (Number 18:12-13), the firstborn of animals (Numbers 18:14-16), the tithes (Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:26-29) and everything devoted to the Lord (Numbers 18:14).

- **Leviticus 5:17-19. Here the guilt offering was for transgressing any of the Lord’s commandments, whether he is aware of it or not.**

The guilt offering was for any wrongdoing against the Lord. While a transgressor could bring *as a sin offering* any female goat or lamb, *as a guilt offering* he had to bring a ram without defect, a ram of which the value was determined not by the man but by the priest. This guilt offering would make atonement for his sin and he would be forgiven. This guilt offering was also necessary for violating the Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:12), for failing to bring tithes and at the healing of a leper (Leviticus 14:10-20).

- **Leviticus 6:1-7. Here the guilt offering was for the unlawful appropriation of possessions belonging to another Israelite, which were not regulated by law as in Exodus 22:1-14.**

By deceiving a fellow Israelite, one sins and is unfaithful to God. Examples of transgression were: not returning what had been entrusted to his care, cheating, swearing falsely (Leviticus 6:2-3), stealing (Job 24:2-4), not returning lost property (Ezekiel 34:4), defrauding another’s field, home and inheritance (Micah 2:2), denying that one had received the first payment, moving the boundary stones (Deuteronomy 19:14), seizing someone’s water well (Genesis 21:25), stealing from his herd or flock, extortion, withholding wages, oppressing orphans and widows and depriving aliens of justice (Malachi 3:5). “What he swore falsely about” referred to cases outside the jurisdiction of a judge, when a person was forced to swear to God that he was innocent, but in fact was guilty. It is clear from this list that besides the burnt offering and sin offering, the guilt offering must have been offered very often!

To make atonement the transgressor first had to make restitution (give everything back to the owner) *plus 20%* of the original value as judged by the priest and then bring a guilt offering as above (Leviticus 5:16; 6:5; Numbers 5:5-10). In some cases the restitution consisted of *double* the original value (Exodus 22:6-14). See the importance of reconciliation

(and possible restitution to make reconciliation) in the New Testament (cf. Matthew 5:23-24). If the owner had died, the restitution became a contribution to the priest who made atonement for him (Numbers 5:5-10).

▪ **Regulations with respect to the guilt offerings.**

**Leviticus 7:1-10.** The sin offerings had to be slaughtered in the place of the burnt offerings (the north side of the altar of burnt offering). While the blood of the sin offerings (making complete atonement) for ordinary Israelites was partly *smear*ed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and all the rest of the blood was *pour*ed out at the foot of the altar of burnt offering, all the blood of the guilt offerings was *sprink*led on the sides of the altar of burnt offering as was done with the burnt offerings (Leviticus 1:5) and fellowship offerings (Leviticus 3:2).

All fat parts and kidneys had to be burned on the altar of burnt offering. But all the meat of the guilt offering had to be eaten by only the male members of the priest's family inside the sanctuary. Thus the meat of the sin offerings and guilt offerings of the ordinary people were the portion of the priest who made atonement (Leviticus 7:7). The skinned hide of the animal also belonged to the priest who made atonement. The baked and cooked grain offerings belonged to the priest who made atonement, but the raw grain offerings belonged equally to all the priests (Leviticus 2:10).

**Other regulations:**

▪ **Regulations with respect to blood and fat.**

**Leviticus 7:22-27.** Fat may be used for other purposes, but must never be eaten. It was absolutely forbidden to eat blood, because that was a heathen practice effecting fellowship with the god and God wanted to avoid heathen practices (1 Samuel 14:31-35; Ezekiel 33:25). Blood of the sacrifices were regarded as the seat of life (Leviticus 17:7,11). The elders of the churches of Antioch and Jerusalem decided to advise Christians not to eat blood or the meat of strangled animals, and to avoid sexual immorality which often accompanied such festivals (50 A.D.)(Acts 15:29). The apostle Paul commanded Christians to abstain from food and drinks sacrificed to the idols at heathen religious festivals in order not to participate with demons (56 A.D.)(1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

▪ **Regulations with respect to the share of the priests.**

**Leviticus 7:28-36.** The wave offering was the breast part of the fellowship offering. The breast was put on the hands of the bringer of the offering. The priest would put his hands under that of the bringer of the offering and then move the hands first forwards towards the altar of burnt offering (symbolising the offering was presented to and accepted by the Lord) and then backwards towards the priest (symbolising the offering was given to the priest)(Exodus 29:24; Leviticus 8:27,29). After this ceremony, the fat parts were burned on the altar of burnt offering and the breast was given to the priest to eat. The right thigh was not part of the wave offering, but was given as a contribution to the priest.

▪ **Regulations with respect to the ordination offering.**

**Exodus 29:19-37; Leviticus 7:37-38.** The priests that were to be ordained (Aaron and his sons) had to lay their hands on the head of a ram. Moses had to slaughter it, put some blood on the thumbs of their right hands and toes of their right feet, sprinkle blood on the sides of the altar of burned offering and sprinkle blood mixed with anointing oil on the priests that were to be anointed and on to their garments. This ceremony made atonement for the ordination of the new priests and consecrated them. Also a grain offering as wave offering had to be burned on the altar of burnt offering. The breast had to be waved and was given to the priests. The meat of the ram had to be cooked and had to be eaten together with bread in a basket by the newly ordained priests. Also a bull had to be sacrificed for seven days as a sin offering to make atonement for the altar of burnt offering and to consecrate it. The altar of burnt offering was most holy and everything that touched it was holy.

**Sacrifices in modern Judaism.**

After 70 A.D. the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed, the priesthood scattered and all offerings terminated, because there was no more an altar of burnt offering.

Judaism downplayed the absolute necessity of atonement by the shedding of blood and their religious teachers devised other ways to make atonement. See the Day of Atonement.

**Sacrifices during the New Testament period.**

▪ **The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was the only perfect sacrifice.**

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was the only perfect sacrifice possible in the history of man, because of the following four reasons:

- The animal sacrifices can never take away sins (Hebrews 10:11)! But Jesus Christ in his human nature was not an animal. He was a human being.
- Any sacrifice that would be able to make atonement for sins would have to be perfectly sinless. Only Jesus Christ in history was perfectly sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Any sacrifice that would be able to make atonement for sins would have to offer himself completely willingly. Jesus Christ laid down his life on the cross on his own accord (John 10:17-18).
- Any sacrifice that would be able to make atonement for sins would have to be the choice of the God of the Bible. No one less than God himself chose Jesus Christ before the creation of the world (1 Peter 1:18-20).

- **Jesus Christ was the sacrifice that made propitiation or expiation for sins.**

At the first coming of Jesus Christ God presented Jesus Christ as “a sacrifice of atonement”, actually: “*a sacrifice of blood as a means of propitiation or expiation*”, that is, “as a penalty for sins and a means to make amends, a means to satisfy the righteous and holy indignation of God against sin, to remove his anger and to reconcile the sinner to God”. Thus God demonstrated that he is holy and just and must punish sin. And God also demonstrated that he is merciful and love by leaving the sins committed by believers during the Old Testament period unpunished until they were punished on Jesus Christ at his first coming (Romans 3:23-25)!

- **The sacrifice of Jesus Christ terminated the need for all other sacrifices.**

During the Old Testament period “the continuous repetition” of bringing animal sacrifices was the symbol that atonement by the shedding of blood was absolutely necessary! But these sacrifices were not able to clear the consciences of worshippers (Hebrews 9:8-10)!

But during the New Testament period, the “once for all” death of Jesus Christ on the cross made complete atonement for sins and consequently terminated all other sacrifices! Hebrews 7:26,28 says that Jesus Christ is the only perfect human being who has ever lived. He “is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens, ... made perfect for ever!” Nothing but the perfect Jesus Christ could be the perfect substitute sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the whole world (Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 9:12-14,28; 1 John 4:10).

- **Not the blood of animals, but the blood of Jesus Christ obtained eternal redemption.**

The blood of the offerings was a type of the blood of Jesus Christ. And the blood of Jesus Christ is a symbol for his death on the cross. In Hebrews 9:12-14 we read, “Jesus Christ did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place (heaven) once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” And 1 John 1: 7 says, “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

- **Not the blood of animals, but the blood of Jesus Christ can forgive sins and make believers holy and perfect for ever.**

In Hebrews 10:1-4 we read that the ceremonial law of the Old Testament was only “a shadow of the good things that were coming - not the realities themselves”. The sacrifices in the Old Testament were repeated endlessly year after year, but could never make the people perfect. The worshippers were not really cleansed and still felt guilty for their sins. The real purpose and meaning of the Old Testament sacrifices was to remind the people of their sins and to convince them that they were sinners. The Bible teaches that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Hebrews 9:26 and Hebrews 10:10-18 clearly teach that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once for all on the cross does away with sins, forgives sins and makes believers holy and perfect forever! After the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is the end of all other sacrifices in the world.

- **The Day of Atonement is a type of the atonement that Christ made.**

In 1 John 4:10 the Bible teaches us, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” The word atonement means that Christ’s death on the cross satisfied God’s righteous and holy anger against all unrighteousness and sin, turned God’s wrath away from the believer, took away his sins and reconciled the believer to God.

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## 13. The ceremonial washings (ablutions)

### The ritual washings during the Old Testament period.

- **Ritual uncleanness.**

“Holy” means to be *separated* from what is bad, evil and spiritually dirty and *dedicated* to what is good, righteous and spiritually pure. “Pure” means unmixed, morally not corrupt and sexually undefiled. The God who revealed himself in the Bible is absolutely holy and pure. Therefore he demanded his Old Testament people to become holy and pure. In order to teach his people *the necessity to be spiritually and morally holy and pure*, God introduced ritual (ceremonial) washings (ablutions). The continuous repetition of ritual washings of the Jews had to remind them of the necessity to be spiritually and morally pure from sins.

**Leviticus chapters 11 to 15.** The ceremonial or ritual law regulated *ritual (ceremonial) cleanliness*. The Israelites could become ritually unclean (contaminated) either by things that *came out of their body* (bodily emissions) or things that *entered their body* (unclean food). Even the clothes they wore, the things they sat on and the place they lived became ritually unclean. Leviticus lists all kinds of food, which was regarded as ritually “clean” and “unclean” (ch.11). A person after childbirth was ritually unclean and had to become ritually clean again (ch.12). A person with an infectious disease was ritually unclean and had to become ritually clean again (ch.13-14). A house that had mildew was ritually unclean and had to become ritually clean again (ch.14). A person who had a bodily discharge was ritually unclean and had to become ritually clean again. Examples of “bodily discharges” were: a woman having her period, a man having an emission of semen, a couple having sex and a woman giving birth to a child (ch.15). Anyone touched by

a person with a discharge who had not rinsed his hands with water became ritually unclean (Leviticus 15:11). Any person who touched a dead person, dead bones or a grave became ritually unclean (Numbers 19:13,18).

When a person had an infectious skin disease (for example: leprosy), the priest had to pronounce him “unclean”. He had to tear his clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, “Unclean! Unclean!” As long as he had this infectious disease, he had to live alone outside the camp (Leviticus 13:44-46).

▪ **The civil or social law regulated the punishments for violating forbidden relationships.**

**Leviticus chapters 18 to 20.** The ceremonial or ritual law regulated *the relationships towards family members, the neighbour and the alien* living in the midst of Israel. It lists very clearly different relationships that are forbidden and would defile God’s people. It lists all unlawful sexual relationships like adultery, homosexuality, bestiality and incest (ch.18). Also rape was forbidden (Deuteronomy 22:23-29). It lists various laws of holiness, truthfulness and fairness towards the neighbour as well as laws forbidding all forms of spiritism, sorcery and occultism (ch.19). It also lists the punishments for violating these laws, especially the punishments for idolatry, occultism, sexual perversion and rebellion against parents (ch.20).

▪ **Ritual cleansing with the water of cleansing (Leviticus 14:1-9; Numbers 19:1-22; Hebrews 9:13)**

In the book of Leviticus, a priest had to prepare “the water of cleansing” as follows: he had to take two live clean birds, some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop outside the camp to the diseased person. The priest had to order someone to kill one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot. The priest had to dip the live bird together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and hyssop into the blood and water of the bird that was killed.

A person with an infectious skin disease living outside the camp had to shave off all his hair: his head, his beard, his eyebrows and the hair on the rest of his body. He had to wash his clothes and bathe himself with water. The priest had to go outside the camp to examine the diseased man. When he had examined him and had seen that he was healed of his disease, he had to sprinkle the former diseased man seven times with the water of cleansing making use of the hyssop branch before pronouncing him clean. This shows that the action of ritual cleansing was carried out by sprinkling water from above on and over a person. Finally the priest had to release the live bird as a symbol of his healing and cleansing. After being healed the former diseased man had to stay seven more days outside the camp (in order to avoid infecting other people). On the seventh day he had to wash his clothes again and bathe himself again with water. Then he would be ritually clean again.

In the book of Numbers “the water of cleansing” was prepared as follows: a red heifer was slaughtered and burned together with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool outside the camp. The ashes of the red heifer were kept in a clean place outside the camp for use in the water of cleansing in order to ritually purify people from the sin (= the falling short of God’s holy standard). When these ashes were mixed in water it became “the water of cleansing”.

A person who was ritually unclean (for example by touching a dead person) remained ritually unclean for seven days. He had to be purified by the sprinkling of the water of cleansing by a person who was ritually clean on the third and the seventh day. Even his tent and the people he touched had to be sprinkled with the water of cleansing. Thereafter he had to wash his clothes and bathe himself with water. In the evening he would be ritually “clean” again. A person who did not ritually clean himself had to be cut off from the community because he had defiled the sanctuary. Also the man who sprinkles the water of cleansing must wash his clothes.

**The ritual washings in Judaism.**

In the time of Jesus Christ, the Pharisees and the teachers taught the necessity to obey “the tradition of the elders” which consisted of 613 laws made by the rabbi’s since the exile to Babylon. They required every Jew to obey these man-made rules which they had added to the Bible!

For example, when they returned from the marketplace (where all kinds of ‘unclean’ people touched them) they did not eat unless they had washed their hands. This “washing” took place by pouring water on and over the hands (cf. 2 Kings 3:11) while the one hand is rubbed in the fist of the other hand (Mark 7:3). Luke calls this “washing” “baptising” the hands (Luke 11:38-39). They observed many other traditions, such as the washing of “cups, pitchers and kettles”. Mark calls this “washing” “baptism” (Mark 7:4; cf. Hebrews 6:2). This shows that the action of ritual baptism (John 3:25-26) was carried out by pouring water from above on and over a person.

But Jesus Christ condemned these hypocrites by saying, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead man’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness” (Matthew 23:25-28). “You are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it” (Luke 11:44).



### **The ritual washings during the New Testament period.**

During the New Testament period the ceremonial washings were abolished and replaced by the baptism with the Spirit and its outward sign, the baptism with water. Also the baptism with the Spirit is described as “a pouring out from above on and over” people (Acts 2:17,33; Titus 3:5-6), as “a falling from above on” people (Acts 8:15; Acts 10:44) and as “a gift given by God above” to people (Acts 2:38). The baptism with water was regarded as “a ceremonial or ritual washing” (John 3:22-26) and the baptism with water was the outward visible sign and seal of the inward invisible baptism with the Spirit (Mark 1:8; Acts 10:47-48; Acts 15:8-9). The baptism with water symbolises the genuine washing away of sins (Acts 22:16). Believers who have been baptised with the Holy Spirit (i.e. have been born again by the Holy Spirit) receive the visible sign and seal of their transformation by being baptised with water.

In contrast to the Old Testament practice to perform repeated ablutions for continually repeated transgressions, the New Testament baptism with the Holy Spirit is a once for all washing away of all sins. People who have received the Holy Spirit are baptised once with water in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:47-48). This symbolises that all their sins have been washed away (Acts 22:16)!

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## **14. The eating of ceremonial clean food**

### **The eating of ritual “unclean” food during the Old Testament period.**

During the Old Testament period the eating of ceremonial “clean” food (Leviticus chapter 11) was an exercise to *distinguish between ‘the holy and the common’, between ‘the unclean and the clean’.*

“You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean”. That is why the Lord’s decrees were taught in the Old Testament (Leviticus 10:10-11). The political and religious leaders of Israel “did not distinguish between the holy and the common. They taught that there was no difference between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 22:26). The prophet Ezekiel had to measure the temple “to separate the holy from the common” (Ezekiel 42:20). The priests during the Old Testament period had to teach the people “the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 44:23).

### **The eating of ritual “unclean” food in Judaism.**

Jews are still forbidden to eat “unclean” foods, especially pork.

### **The eating of ritual “unclean” food during the New Testament period.**

But during the New Testament period Jesus Christ taught the following: “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him “unclean”? For it doesn’t go into his heart, but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean”. He went on, “What comes out of a man is what makes him “unclean”. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man “unclean” (Mark 7:13-23). Thus, Jesus Christ clearly taught that nothing that comes from the outside into a person can make him “unclean”. But all the evil things that come out of a man’s heart make him unclean, not only ritually unclean, but spiritually and morally unclean!

The “decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (50 A.D.) for the people to obey” (Acts 16:4) were “decisions” (Greek: dogmata kekrimena) – a terminology from court, which does not mean enforceable decisions, but rather decisions in the sense of advice. The Christians were advised by the Holy Spirit and the apostles and elders to avoid idolatry and to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from eating blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality – things that characterised the heathen nations (Acts 15:28-29). “The requirements” (Greek: epanagkai) are “requirements necessary for the sake of love, especially of love towards “the weaker brothers” (i.e. the Jews and the proselytes to Judaism)(Acts 15:20-21; cf. Romans 14:1-4).

The apostle Paul (in 56 A.D.) taught Christians that food in itself is indifferent – it cannot defile one (Mark 7:18-19) and also does not bring one near to God (1 Corinthians 8:8).

Nevertheless, Christians are exhorted not to defile and wound the conscience of weak believers by eating food sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8:1-13). Christians are warned that participating in the religious festivals of other religions could cause them to participate with demons (1 Corinthians 10:14-33).

Paul (in 62-63 A.D.) also taught Christians not to listen to false teachers who teach people to abstain from certain foods. God created all food “good” and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because food is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

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## 15. The bringing of the firstborn

### The firstborn during the Old Testament period.

#### ▪ Israel as the firstborn

During the Old Testament period the firstborn in Israel were a constant reminder that Israel was God's "firstborn son" (Exodus 4:22-23), that is, that Israel as a people belonged to God and was set apart for God and his service. Israel was God's specially loved and redeemed people during the Old Testament period (Hosea 11:1).

#### ▪ The firstborn.

The firstborn son was regarded as the heir of his father's strength and possessions, the lord over his brothers (Genesis 27:29) and the protector of his mother (Genesis 49:3-4,8). The right of the firstborn was a double share of all the father's possessions (Deuteronomy 21:15-17).

#### ▪ The firstborn sons and the firstborn animals in Israel.

All the physical firstborn (Hebrew: bekor pether) in Israel of man and animals belonged to God (Exodus 13:2) and were set apart (sanctified) for God and his service as a sign that God brought Israel out of exile in Egypt (Exodus 13:14-16). All firstborn animals were sacrificed to God and all firstborn people were redeemed with a lamb that was sacrificed (Exodus 13:12-13; 22:29-30; cf. Luke 2:22-24).

#### ▪ The Levites came in the place of the firstborn sons.

Later God set the Levites apart from all other Israelites to serve him instead of the firstborn among the Israelites (Numbers 3:12-13,40-41,45; cf. 1 Samuel 1:28). The Levites were chosen because they had remained faithful to God when Israel had made a golden calf (Exodus 32:26-29). The firstborn animals and the money from the redemption of the firstborn sons were destined to support the priests and Levites.

### The firstborn during the New Testament period.

#### ▪ Jesus Christ as the Firstborn over all creatures.

During the New Testament period Jesus Christ is called "the Firstborn (Greek: prototokos) over all creation (or: creatures)" (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:6). This does not mean that he was the first creature in a long line of creatures, because he is Creator of all things that were created (Colossians 1:16; John 1:3)! He is prior to every creature, distinct from every creature and highly exalted above every creature. Jesus Christ is the One to whom belongs the right and dignity of the Firstborn in relation to every creature! He is the Specially Loved One, Chosen One of God the Father. He is the Heir of all things in creation (Hebrews 1:2).

#### ▪ Jesus Christ as the Firstborn among many brothers.

Jesus Christ is called "the Firstborn (Greek: prototokos) among many brothers" (Romans 8:29). He possesses the highest place and pre-eminence among all Christians, because all Christians will be transformed into his likeness (Romans 8:29; cf. Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2)! He even possesses the highest place in the universe (Philippians 2:9-11).

The term 'only-begotten' is analogous to the term 'firstborn'. Jesus Christ is called "the Only Begotten Son" of God (John 3:16). The term 'Only Begotten' never implies human begetting or a beginning in time, but always signifies that he is 'unique in kind', 'the only example of its category'. He is "the only-begotten one (the Unique One), God (according to his real being)" (John 1:18; cf. Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 2:8; 1 John 5:20). This expression indicates the eternal and permanent relationship between God the Father and God the Son (cf. John 1:1).

#### ▪ Jesus Christ as the Firstborn from among the dead.

Jesus Christ is called "the Firstborn (Greek: prototokos) from among the dead" so that in everything he might have pre-eminence (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). Jesus said, "Because I live, you too will live" (John 14:19). Jesus Christ is the Path-breaker who conquered death in all its aspects. Because he is the forever Living One, he was resurrected from the dead to live for ever more. He holds the keys to death and the state of death (Revelation 1:18). He had authority to rise by himself from the dead (John 10:18), he has complete authority over life and death (Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Hebrews 2:14-15) and will resurrect all the dead in history (John 5:28-29). Because Jesus Christ is the visible Image of the invisible God, the One in whom all the Fullness of God dwells, the Almighty Creator of everything, the Sustainer (the Together-holder) of everything, the Conqueror of death, the Giver of eternal life, the Head of the worldwide Church, the Sovereign King over all rulers and authorities, the Firstborn Heir of everything ("all things are created for him"), yes, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 21:6) – he will certainly have the Supremacy and Pre-eminence in everything (Colossians 1:15-19)!

#### ▪ The Church of the firstborn.

All Christians together are called "the Church (consisting) of the firstborn" (Greek: prototokos)(Hebrews 12:23). The word 'firstborn' has spiritual significance and means that all Christians are God's specially loved and redeemed people.

set apart to be God's spiritual children. Their right as children of God cannot and will not be taken away from them and they will inherit the new earth (the kingdom of God in its final phase)!

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## 16. The giving of the first fruits.

### The first fruits during the Old Testament period.

#### ▪ The first fruits of the agricultural harvest.

As the first fruits of people (the firstborn) (Exodus 22:29) were set apart from the other people during the Old Testament period, so the first fruits of the harvest (grain, oil, wine) (Exodus 23:19; Numbers 18:12-13; Deuteronomy 18:4-5) and the first fruits of the animals (Exodus 13:2,12,15) were always set apart from the other agricultural products of the harvest and animals. The first fruits had to be the best of their initial harvest (Exodus 23:19; Exodus 34:26). This ancient custom was later regulated by the ceremonial law.

Every year God's Old Testament people had to celebrate the Passover Feast by presenting the sheaf of the first fruit of grain (Leviticus 23:9-11) and they had to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost (the Feast of Harvest, the Feast of Weeks) by presenting two loaves made of the new grain and baked with yeast as a wave offering of first fruits to the LORD (Leviticus 23:15-17). Nothing of the new season's crop was available for ordinary consumption until the first fruits had been presented (Leviticus 23:9-14). The amount of first fruit was left to the decision of the giver. None of these references invites any comparison between the first fruits on the one hand and the remainder of the crops on the other hand, except that once the first fruits had been offered, the remainder of the crops was free to be used. The first fruits were given as food to the priests and Levites and their households (Numbers 18:12-13; Deuteronomy 18:3-5; Deuteronomy 26:2-11).

#### ▪ Israel as the first fruits of God's harvest.

God's Old Testament people, Israel, were regarded as "the first fruits of the harvest", that is, Israel was set apart from the evil world to belong to God. And this is also the meaning of the word "holy" (Jeremiah 2:3; cf. Romans 11:16). Gods believing people in the Old Testament were the beginning of God's harvest of people in the world. Israel was not the only harvest and also not different than the New Testament harvest (Romans 1:16; Acts 13:46-48; Revelation 21:9-14).

Note that the first fruits of the agricultural harvest during the Old Testament period were presented on a Sunday, the day after the Passover Sabbath (Leviticus 23:11). It pointed to the first fruits of the spiritual harvest of people at Pentecost in the New Testament period which was also on a Sunday!

### The first fruits during the New Testament period.

#### ▪ The world of created humanity as a harvest.

During the New Testament period the world of created humanity is often compared to a harvest. The harvest (a symbol for all people) belongs to God and is ripening for the final judgement (Matthew 9:37). The "wheat" (a symbol for all believers) is harvested and gathered into the barn (a symbol for heaven), while the "chaff" or "weeds" (symbols for all unbelievers) is harvested and thrown into the fire (a symbol for hell)(Matthew 3:12; Matthew 13:30). This is also done in Revelation 14:14-20, where the believers are harvested and gathered to belong to the Lord forever (Revelation 14:14-16) and the rest of humanity is to be punished together with Satan (Revelation 14:17-20; cf. Matthew 25:41).

#### ▪ The believers as the first fruits of God's creation.

Thus all believers in Jesus Christ are a kind of first fruits of all that God created (James 1:18). Out of everything God created only Christians are set apart to belong to God forever. In the whole creation, only those people who have been liberated from the bondage (slavery) to decay (in the sinful world) and have been brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:19-23; Colossians 1:13) will be saved! Whoever does not belong to these first fruits of God's creation, is not a believer.

"The first fruits" are a symbol of the full number of all genuine believers in Jesus Christ in history, another designation for "the (symbolic) 144 000" who have the name of God the Father written on their foreheads (Revelation 14:1-5). They do not constitute a literal number of people and also not a kind of select group in heaven, a group of super-saints. They constitute all true believers, because they have all "been redeemed (purchased away) from the earth", that is, from the rest of the wicked people in the world and thereby set apart from them. They follow Christ wherever he goes. While they have the name of God on their foreheads, the rest of humanity has the name of the beast on their foreheads (Revelation 13:16-17). They have been purchased by the precious blood of Christ (i.e. by his substitution sacrifice or death on the cross)(1 Peter 1:18-19). Thus, the first fruits of God's harvest consist of *all* God's elect, *all* believers in Jesus Christ.

#### ▪ Jesus Christ as the First Fruit of those who have fallen asleep.

During the Old Testament period the believers brought the first fruit of their family, harvest and cattle to God. But during the New Testament period it is not what the believers bring to God, but what Jesus Christ brought to Christians

(namely: himself) that stands in the centre. Jesus Christ Himself is called “the First fruit (Greek: *aparche*) of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20,23). This does not mean that Jesus Christ is the first *historical* person to be resurrected from the dead (cf. 1 Kings 17:21), but means that Jesus Christ as the representative Head of his Body is the Guarantee that all believers in him will be resurrected from the dead! Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead as an individual, but rose from the dead as the Head of his Body (the Church). Whatever happened to the Head is definitely going to happen with the Body (Romans 6:2-5)!

▪ **The Holy Spirit as the First Fruit which believers receive.**

Christians moreover receive ‘the first fruits of the Spirit’ (i.e. the First Fruit consisting of the Spirit) (Romans 8:23). The Holy Spirit Himself lives in Christians as the Deposit or Guarantee that God will certainly fully complete his work of salvation in them (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14; cf. Philippians 1:6; Philippians 2:12-13).

▪ **Christians first give themselves and then their gifts.**

During the New Testament period it is not just a part (or a certain percentage) of what Christians possess that is set apart for God. All they possess belongs to the Lord! “What do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7; cf. Luke 14:33). That is why Christians first give themselves (their mind, heart and body) to the Lord (Romans 12:1-2) and then also give whatever possessions are needed to the Lord’s ministry (2 Corinthians 8:3-5; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

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## 17. The giving of tithes

### Giving during the Old Testament period.

▪ **Giving fixed amounts under compulsion.**

During the Old Testament period the believers in Israel were under obligation to give fixed amounts of their possessions or money in order to maintain the Old Testament temple service (Malachi 3:8-10). They had to bring, not just one, but *three kinds of tithes*:

• **The first tithe** (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-32; Malachi 3:10)

was a holy offering (Numbers 18:32), the reward or compensation (salary) for the ceremonial service of the Levites in the tabernacle or temple (Numbers 18:31).

• **The second tithe** (Deuteronomy 12:4-7,11-12,17-19; Deuteronomy 14:22-27)

was destined for the feast of rejoicing in the presence of the LORD at the place God chose as a dwelling for his Name (the temple at Jerusalem). This was a part of worshipping God. Every two consecutive years the second tithe was used to buy food in Jerusalem to consume at this feast of rejoicing. This probably took place during the yearly Feast of Booths (Exodus 23:17; Leviticus 23:33-43; Numbers 29:12-39; Deuteronomy 16:13-17). This tithe served to teach the Israelites again and again to stand in awe before God.

• **The third tithe** (Deuteronomy 14:28-29; Deuteronomy 26:12-15)

was destined for the poor and the aliens living among the Israelites in their own towns. This ‘tithe of the third year’ is probably the same as the second tithe used for the feast of rejoicing (Deuteronomy 14:22-27), but every third year it was instead used to support the poor and the aliens in their own towns (thus, a kind of social tax).

▪ **Giving to fixed destinations.**

The Old Testament law demanded giving to fixed destinations: for the maintenance of the Old Testament temple service in Jerusalem (a religious tax), for rejoicing at the yearly festivals in Jerusalem (a holiday expense) and for the support of the poor and foreigners in Israel (a social tax).

### Giving during the New Testament period.

▪ **Giving any amount voluntarily.**

During the New Testament period giving has become completely voluntary and consists first of giving oneself and then one’s possessions. A Christian gives possessions (money):

- generously (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6)
- even sacrificially (Luke 21:1-4)
- in keeping with his income (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)  
or according to what he has (his ability) (2 Corinthians 8:12-15)
- and as he has decided in his heart to give,
- not reluctantly
- or under compulsion,
- but cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)!

What Jesus says about ‘tithes’ in the New Testament (Matthew 23:23-24 and Luke 18:12), he does not say to Christians or the Church, but in order to expose the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Israel who pretended to keep the law. This rebuke of Jesus was uttered before the ceremonial law had been fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated by the death of Jesus

Christ. These passages may not be used to prove the giving of tithes in the New Testament Church!

▪ **Giving to different destinations**

But during the New Testament period giving is to different destinations. Giving is destined:

- for those who proclaim the gospel – not necessarily to people from your own congregation (1 Corinthians 9:14)
- for those who give you instruction in the Word of God (Galatians 6:6; cf. Hebrews 13:7)
- for the elders of your congregation who do their task well (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- for the poor Christian brothers and sisters – also not necessarily people from your own congregation (James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18; 2 Corinthians 8:13-15)
- and for the poor in general (Proverbs 19:17; Proverbs 21:13; Matthew 6:1-4)

Thus, Christian gifts are for the world wide Church to extend the Kingdom (kingship) of God.

The Old Testament way of giving has been abrogated and replaced by the New Testament way of giving!  
Thus, the Old Testament giving of tithes may not be required, taught or enforced in the Christian Church!

## PART III. THE LAW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### A. THE WORD “LAW” HAS DIFFERENT MEANINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

#### Meaning 1.

**The law is God’s holy and righteous requirement for all people for salvation (justification), for sanctified living (sanctification) and for condemnation (judgement).**

**This law is fulfilled for believers by Jesus Christ and by no other.**

God is a righteous and holy God. Therefore, God’s righteous and holy requirement for all people is: that all sins must be punished, that all his people must be perfectly righteous and holy (with respect to their position or state) and also live complete perfect, righteous and holy lives (with respect to their style of behaviour)! The law is God’s whole rule of duty and God’s condition for complete salvation, no matter whether it existed as the law written on the hearts of people or as the law written in the Bible. It is God’s spiritual and moral standard, to which all his rational creatures are bound to conform. It is God’s absolute standard for both righteousness and holiness (i.e. justification and sanctification). It condemns all lack of conformity to its own inflexible standard of perfect obedience and a completely holy life.

Galatians 3:10 says, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything (mng 1) written in the Book of the Law (mng 2).” And James 2:10 says, “Whoever keeps the whole law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3) and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”

#### Meaning 2.

**The law is the first five books or all the books of the Old Testament.**

**This law is part of the beginning of God’s revelation and a preparation for his New Testament revelation.**

The moral laws, the ceremonial laws and the civil laws (mng 3) are expressed in commandments, prohibitions and regulations that are written in the Old Testament Scriptures (mng 2). That is why the whole Old Testament Scriptures are often called “the Law (Torah) and the Prophets” (Matthew 5:17; Romans 3:21). But the Old Testament Scriptures contain more than just the moral laws, the ceremonial laws and the civil laws. It also contains salvation history, religious poetry and prophecies.

Whatever the law (mng 2)(i.e. the Old Testament Scripture)(Romans 3:19a) says, it says to all people in the world, because all people in the world are “included in”<sup>6</sup> the law (mng 1)(i.e. are under obligation to fulfil God’s holy and righteous requirement)(Romans 3:19b). The law (mng 2)(i.e. the Old Testament Scripture) is not dead, but “speaks”. The Holy Spirit makes the words in the Bible alive so that the Bible speaks to the hearts, minds and consciences of people (John 16:8-11; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

#### Meaning 3.

**The law is distinguished in moral, ceremonial and civil commandments, prohibitions and regulations contained in the Old Testament, including their elaborate interpretations by the religious Jews.**

<sup>6</sup> Greek: ‘en’ (English: in), not ‘hupo’ (English: under).

**While the moral laws continue to be valid, the ceremonial laws have been fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated, and the civil laws have been superseded by the teachings about the kingdom of God.**

There are three kinds of laws in the Old Testament, which cannot be completely separated from one another, but can be roughly distinguished in:

▪ **The moral laws.**

The moral laws were God's righteous requirements during the Old Testament period and still are his righteous requirements during the New Testament period for how all people in history should live. They are *expressed in* the Ten Commandments and other moral commandments and prohibitions in the Bible and have never been abrogated. The quotations from the Psalms and Isaiah in Romans 3:10-18 are examples of this law.

▪ **The ceremonial laws.**

The ceremonial or ritual laws were God's righteous requirements during the Old Testament period for how his Old Testament people should approach, worship and serve him. They were expressed in laws about the temple, the priests, the religious festivals and the religious rituals. The ceremonial law has been fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated.

▪ **The civil laws.**

The civil laws were God's righteous requirement during the Old Testament period for how the society of his Old Testament people, called Israel, should be regulated. They contained government laws, property laws, penal laws, military laws and tax laws. God's people in the Old Testament period (called Israel) was continued in the new Testament period on a higher plane and enlarged to include the believers from all nations and thus constituted God's people in the New Testament period (called the Church). Therefore the civil laws of the state of Israel in the Old Testament have been superseded by the teachings of Jesus Christ about the kingdom of God in the New Testament.

#### Meaning 4.

**The law may be a principle or a compelling and controlling power.**

Romans 7:23 says, "I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin." Romans 8:2 says, "The law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death"

#### Meaning 5.

**The law is the Old Testament covenant together with its requirements of faith and obedience and its outward sign of circumcision during the Old Testament period.**

Romans 2:25-27 says, "Circumcision has value if you observe the law (mng 5), but if you break the law (mng 5) you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's (mng 5) requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law (mng 5) will condemn you who, even though you have the written code (mng 2) and circumcision (mng 3), are a lawbreaker."

## B. JESUS CHRIST FULFILLED THE LAW IN EVERY SENSE

Jesus Christ fulfilled the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and mng 3) in every sense (Matthew 5:17; cf. Luke 24:25-27,44-47).

"The Law (mng 2) and the Prophets" was the name for the whole Old Testament Scriptures. The Jewish teachers of the law (mng 2 and 3)(the rabbi's) were the acknowledged theologians or interpreters of the Old Testament. During the New Testament period they robbed the Old Testament Scriptures from its message and power (Matthew 15:1-13; Mark 7:1-13) by replacing it with their own religious teachings and interpretations from the Old Testament. The Pharisees were a Jewish Sect that pretended to make everyone believe that they kept the teachings of the Jewish religious teachers. They believed that they would be justified (saved) by keeping the law (mng 3) - the moral laws and especially the ceremonial (ritual) laws and civil laws of Israel. But Jesus Christ clearly said that the Pharisees were like whitewashed gravestones which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. On the outside they appear to people as righteous but on the inside they were full of hypocrisy and wickedness (Matthew 23:27-28; cf. Luke 11:44).

### 1. Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets through his teachings.

At his first coming Jesus Christ taught that he had not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but had come to fulfil them (i.e. the Law and the Prophets)(Matthew 5:17). He has come to fulfil the law (mng 1) in the sense of God's requirements for salvation (justification), sanctified living (sanctification) and condemnation (judgement) as it is contained in the Old Testament Scriptures (mng 2) and expressed in the moral, ceremonial and civil laws (mng 3).

He has come to reveal the perfect meaning of the moral law (Matthew chapters 5 to 7), to bring the realities expressed in the shadows of the ceremonial (ritual) laws (Colossians 2:17) and to establish the kingdom of God whose principles would transcend and replace the civil laws of the state of Israel. He came to fulfil what the books of the Law taught (compare Deuteronomy 18:15,18 with Matthew 21:11, Luke 2:34, John 4:25-26 and 14:24, Acts 3:22-24). He came to fulfil what the books of the Prophets (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12) and the Psalms (Psalm 22) predicted. Jesus Christ is not only the Final (Last) Prophet, but also the Greatest of all God's prophets. God spoke his final and complete word through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2)! All people that came after Jesus Christ and claimed to be 'the prophet' are false prophets (Matthew 24:24)!

## **2. Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets through his substitute suffering and death in the place of believers.**

Jesus Christ fulfilled the required conditions of God's law, namely, that God's law must be perfectly obeyed and all transgressions of God's law must be completely punished. He revealed himself as the Suffering Servant of the Lord (compare Isaiah 42:1 with Matthew 3:17 and Matthew 17:5; compare Isaiah 42:2-4 with Matthew 12:18-21; compare Isaiah 42:6 with Luke 2:32 and Acts 13:47; compare Isaiah 53:4 with Matthew 8:17; compare Isaiah 53:12 with Luke 22:37). Jesus Christ is not only the Final (Last) High Priest, but also the Greatest of all God's high priests (Hebrews 4:14-16). He gave himself once for all as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of everyone who believes in him (compare Psalm 40:7-9 with John 1:29 and Hebrews 10:5-7).

## **3. Christ fulfilled the Law and the prophets through his reign as King.**

Jesus Christ crushed the head of the snake, Satan (Genesis 3:15) and saved his people from the power of Satan (Matthew 12:28-29; Colossians 2:14; Colossians 1:13). Jesus Christ is not only the Final (Last) King, but also the Greatest of all kings (compare Genesis 49:10, 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, Isaiah 9:5-6 and Daniel 2:44 with Matthew 4:17, Matthew 11:12-13, Matthew 12:28 and Matthew 21:42-43). He reigns on the throne of God in heaven over everything in the universe and on earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 5:6-14). The Old Testament messianic parts do not limit the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to merely one office. The Messiah would be the King and the High priest at the same time (Psalm 110:1,4; compare Isaiah 52:13-15 with Isaiah 53:4-6) and the Prophet and the Priest at the same time (Isaiah 42:1-7).

## **4. Jesus Christ and his fulfilled work of salvation is the key to explain the Old Testament Scriptures.**

The life, the death, the resurrection, the ascension into heaven and the enthronement of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the New Testament Scriptures, is the key to understand and correctly interpret the Old Testament Scriptures (i.e. the Law and the Prophets)! The way to interpret the Old Testament Scriptures has been clearly revealed in the New Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27,44). The books of the Old Testament Scriptures CANNOT be understood or correctly interpreted without the revelation and fulfilment of Jesus Christ and the apostles in the New Testament Scriptures (2 Corinthians 3:14-16)! The books of the Old Testament Law and Prophets MAY NOT be interpreted without the revelation of the New Testament fulfilment (1 Peter 1:10-12)! "The New Testament has been hidden in the Old Testament and the Old Testament has been revealed in the New Testament" (Augustine). All people need the complete and perfect light of the New Testament revelation in order to understand and correctly interpret the Old Testament revelation! The final decision how something in the Old Testament must be understood and interpreted has been revealed in the New Testament! The Old Testament relates to the New Testament as "prophecy to fulfilment" and as "shadow to reality"! All the promises in the Old Testament, including God's promises to his Old Testament people (Israel) have been fulfilled and will be fulfilled by Jesus Christ to his New Testament people (the Church) which consists of all the believers from all the nations in the world (2 Corinthians 1:20; Ephesians 3:3-6). God's revelation through Jesus Christ is God's final word to all people!

## **5. Jesus Christ summarised the moral law (the Ten Commandments) in terms of love.**

In Mark 12:30-31 Jesus says, "The most important law is: the LORD our God is the Only God. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second (law) is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40).

The apostle Paul and James taught the same (Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8-13). 'Love' is the way in which all the moral commandments in the Bible must be fulfilled and will be perfectly and completely fulfilled.

In John 13:34-35 Jesus says, "A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." What is *new* about this commandment (cf. Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18) is that the only standard for measuring obedience to God's law is "the love of Jesus Christ for us"! The moral commandments in the Bible have not been fulfilled by human love, but by divine love! People can only begin to love with divine love as Jesus Christ loves, when the love of God has been poured out into their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), that is, after they have been born again through the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8) and when they are again and again filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:15-21) and bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

In John 14:21 and 24 Jesus says, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me” and He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” To love with only words and feelings (emotions) is not enough. Love must be expressed in obedience to the words of God (Christ).

## 6. Jesus Christ upheld the moral law and fulfilled the ceremonial law.

The Bible clearly teaches that Christ upheld the moral law (Matthew 22:36-40), but fulfilled and then cancelled the ceremonial law with its requirements (Colossians 2:14) and set all New Testament believers (the Christian Church) free from its regulations.

Moreover, the Bible clearly teaches that the regulations of the ceremonial law were abolished and may not be reintroduced into the Christian Church and thus again erect a barrier, “a dividing wall of hostility” that causes divisions among Christians (Ephesians 2:14-15)! When Jesus Christ died on the cross as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins, all animal sacrifices together with the priests who sacrificed them and the temple where these sacrifices were brought, terminated!

By his death Jesus Christ not only made peace between people and God, he also made peace between Jewish believers who used to have the ceremonial law and Gentile believers from the other nations who never possessed the ceremonial law. He united these two groups of believers into one Body (the Church) (Ephesians 2:11-22). “There is no difference between Jew and Gentile” (Romans 10:12). “Whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – we were all baptised by one Spirit into one Body and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

That is why Christians may never import Old Testament ceremonial laws into the New Testament Church again! And that is why Christians may not introduce ‘Jewish messianic congregations’ that retain parts of the Jewish ceremonial law, just as they may not introduce congregations that retain parts of the religious laws and customs of the other world religions! Christians may not remove what Judaism and the other religions in the world regard and experience as “a stumbling block” (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:22-24; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5)! The religions of the world cannot be “redeemed” by the religious conduct of Christians in their midst. A false religious system is beyond redemption! However, non-Christians (i.e. believers in the other religions) can be redeemed, but only by Christ and his completed work of salvation on the cross.

## C. THE LAW IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS

### 1. The law in Romans chapter 2.

- **(1) The universal criterion of God’s judgement will be the works of people, that is, how they have lived in accordance to the light of revelation they have received, whether through the written law in the Bible or the written law in their hearts.**

**Romans 2:12-15.** “All who sin apart from the law (mng 2) will also perish apart from the law (mng 2), and all who sin in (NIV: under) the law (mng 2) will be judged by the law (mng 2). For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law (mng 1 as contained in mng 2) who will be declared righteous. Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law (mng 2), do by nature things required by the law (mng 1), they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law (mng 2), since they show that the requirements of the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3) are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”

God’s final judgement will be absolutely reasonable, because God will judge people according to how much they know about God and God’s will (i.e. God’s law). There are two groups of people in the world: “The people who are apart from the law” (mng 2) and “the people who are under (literally ‘in’, cf. Romans 3:19) the law” (mng 2). But because “the requirements of God’s moral law” (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3) are written on the hearts of even the Gentiles and thus on everybody’s heart (Romans 2:14-15), the ‘law’ in this context must refer to *God’s special written revelation in the Old Testament* (mng 2). The two groups must refer to the people who live outside God’s Old Testament revelation (generally the Gentiles) and the people who live within God’s Old Testament revelation (generally the Jews and later also the Christians).

The people who only have God’s moral laws (mng 3) written on their hearts will be judged by those laws. God’s judgement of unbelievers will be absolutely just (Luke 12:47-48). And the people who possess the written Old Testament revelation (mng 2)(and written New Testament revelation) will be judged by that law. Because everybody possesses the law (mng 1) in one or another sense, not a single person can hide behind the excuse that he did not know. Ignorance concerning God and God’s will (mng 1) is never complete (Romans 2:13-15)! On the final judgement day God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ (Romans 2:16)(cf. John 5:22).



▪ **(2) What is God's criterion for the judgement of Jews?**

**Jews are *inside* God's special revelation (mng 2), but have rejected the gospel).**

**Jews who sin under God's special revelation will be judged by God's special revelation.**

"All who sin in the law (mng 2) will be judged by the law" (Romans 2:12b). At the time of Paul, the people who lived under (literally: in) God's special revelation in the Old Testament and have rejected the gospel were in general the Jews. In contrast to the majority of Gentiles at that time, the Jews sinned with full knowledge of God's special revelation in the Old Testament. The Jews will be judged in accordance with God's special revelation and this means in accordance with three criteria of judgement:

- Their works in the light of God's general revelation (in creation, in the heart and in the conscience) will judge them.
- Their works in the light of God's special revelation in the Old Testament (in the Law and in the Prophets) will judge them. They will certainly be condemned for transgressing God's laws in the Old Testament.
- And if they had heard the gospel and rejected it, they will also be judged by their works in the light of God's special revelation in the New Testament (in the gospel, which they rejected). They will certainly be condemned for their unbelief (John 3:18,36; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9), for their neglect of doing what God requires (Matthew 25:41-46) and for their many sins that have not been forgiven (Matthew 6:14; John 9:41).

With Jews there will be an exact correspondence between the nature of their sin and their punishment. But because they had much more knowledge of God and God's will than the Gentiles did, their final judgement and punishment will be aggravated in accordance with the gravity of their sin (Luke 12:47-48).

**The criterion for judgement will not simply be knowledge, but obedience of God's special revelation.**

Many Jews thought that simply possession and knowledge of the Holy Book of God (the Old Testament Scripture)(mng 2) would justify them. The Holy Book was revered, kissed, handled with respect, discussed, debated and preached in their midst. Every Sabbath, they heard the reading of the Book in their synagogues. Nevertheless, they did NOT DO what they heard. The Jews generally neglected the most important aspect of the Book – they did not obey its contents! They did not live according to its teachings! Jesus condemned the Pharisees, because they did not practise what they preached (Matthew 23:3). The Jews will be judged according to their works and not simply according to their knowledge.

When Paul says, "those who obey the law (mng 1) will be justified", he does not imply that Jews or anybody else could be justified on account of their obedience to the law (mng 3). He does not imply that people's deeds would only be weighed on the final judgement day and that some would be declared righteous by God on account of their obedience to the law (mng 3). The Bible says very clearly, "*No one* will be justified by observing the law" (mng 3)(Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:28). What Paul means is that the criterion of judgement on the final judgement day will not be what one has heard or knows about the Old Testament, but how one has lived according to the contents of the Old Testament!

**No one will be justified on the basis of his obedience to the law?**

"For it is not those who hear the law (mng 3) who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3) who will be declared righteous" (Romans 2:13).

God's righteous requirement for salvation is nothing less than absolute perfect obedience to the law (mng 1).The Bible does not teach that God will save people on the basis of their obedience to the law (mng 3). Romans 2:12b-13 teaches that God will judge those people who possess God's special revealed law (mng 2) by that law. God's special revealed law says in Leviticus 18:5, "Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them". Both the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:5; Ezekiel 20:11) as well as the New Testament (Romans 2:7; 10:5; Galatians 3:12) teach that if there were people who could keep the law completely and perfectly, they would be justified or saved.

However, no human being qualifies, because no one can keep the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3) perfectly. Both the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 27:26) as well as the New Testament (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10) teach that all people who want to be justified or saved by keeping the law, must keep the law completely and perfectly. James 2:10 says, "Whoever keeps the whole law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3) and yet stumbles *at just one point* is guilty of breaking all of it." And Galatians 3:10 says, "All who rely on observing the law (mng 3) are under a curse, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not *continue to do everything* written in the Book of the Law' (mng 2)." All people who want to be justified or saved by keeping the law are under God's curse, precisely because there is not a single person in the world who can keep the law! Romans 3:10 teaches, "There is no one who is righteous, not even one." There is not a single person in the world who will receive eternal life on the basis of doing the works of the law!

Conclusion. Romans 2:13 does not teach that there will be some people who will be saved or justified by doing the works of God's revealed law.

▪ **(3) What is God's criterion for the judgement of Christians?**

**Christians are *inside* God's special revelation and have accepted the gospel.**

• **Christians who sin under God's special revelation will be judged by God's special revelation.**

Also the Christians will be judged in accordance with God's special revelation and this means in accordance with two criteria of judgement:

- *Genuine Christians will be judged on account of their relationship to Jesus Christ.*

Because Christians have already been justified (saved) by God's grace through faith, on account of what Christ has done for them, they will never be condemned to the eternal fire of hell (John 5:24), but will be publicly vindicated on the final judgement day (Matthew 25:31-34). Their names have been recorded in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 10:20; Revelation 20:15) and they will inherit the new earth together with Christ. Jesus Christ made atonement for all the sins of those who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ. He made atonement for their past sins, their present sins and their future sins (Hebrews 8:12)

- *Genuine Christians will also be judged by their works in the light of God's special revelation in the whole Bible.*

This judgement will not determine their salvation (justification), but their reward (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). They will be judged according to how they have lived their justified (saved) lives. Their lives will be judged in accordance with all the moral laws in the Bible and in accordance with all the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Their works will be judged in order to test *the quality of their faith and the fruit of their salvation.*

- *Nominal Christians will certainly be condemned.*

They will be condemned for their unbelief (John 3:18,36; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9), for their neglect of doing what God requires (Matthew 25:41-46) and for their many sins that have not been forgiven (Matthew 6:14; John 9:41).

• **Christians are justified on the basis of Christ's work of righteousness and by means of their faith.**

No Christian will be justified on the basis of his obedience to the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3) or any of his religious works! God's righteous requirement for salvation is nothing less than absolute perfect obedience to the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3). If there were Christians who could keep the law completely and perfectly, they would be justified or saved. But no Christian qualifies, because no Christian can keep the law perfectly (Romans 3:10,23; Galatians 3:10; James 2:10).

However, Christians are justified (saved), not on the basis of their own works, but *on the basis of* God's completed work of grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The basis for their salvation (justification) is NOT what they do, but what Jesus Christ has already done for them! And Christians receive their salvation or justification (that is, the perfect and complete righteousness of Christ)(1 Corinthians 1:30) because they believe in Jesus Christ (John 1:12-13). Their faith is not the ground or reason of their salvation, but *the means* by which they receive salvation from God.

• **The criterion for judgement will not simply be historic faith, but faith that bears works as its fruit.**

Also with Christians the criterion of judgement on the final judgement day will not be what Christians have heard or know about the Old Testament and the New Testament, but how they have lived according to the contents of the Bible!

Christians are saved (justified) on the basis of Christ's righteousness. Christians will never be saved or justified by a faith that is a pure historic faith, that is, a faith without the specific works that belong to salvation (James 2:14-26). God's judgement will not respect merely faith or justification by faith in the abstract. He will respect faith and justification by faith in its relationship to all the elements that comprise the saved state. In salvation, God's grace may not be emphasised to the extent that the Christian's way of life is overlooked. Believers are not simply *saved from* evil and every kind of unrighteousness, but also *saved to* live a life of holiness and every kind of righteousness. They are not simply *saved from* a meaningless and empty life, but also *saved to* live a very meaningful and fruitful life in good works.

Christians are rewarded on the basis of Christ's righteousness. Christians will also be rewarded, *not on the basis of* their own works (which are always imperfect), but on the basis of the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ (which is completely perfect). They will be rewarded, not because they did good works, but simply because God has been very gracious to them in Jesus Christ.

However, they will be rewarded *in accordance with* their own works. Their good works are for them the proof or clear evidence that they belong to those people whom God has saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10). To some extent their good works will also be the measure of their reward (Matthew 25:20-21; 1 Corinthians 3:14-15; Revelation 14:13). The good works of Christians are therefore also the criterion of God's judgement of Christians.

The criterion for good works is God's moral laws (mng 3). They are the Ten Commandments and all the other moral teachings in the Bible. The moral law of God has not been abrogated for Christians. Although Christians are no longer "under the law" (mng 1)(Romans 6:14), they nevertheless are "not free from God's law, but under Christ's law" (mng 3)(Romans 13:8-10; Mark 12:30-31; 1 Corinthians 9:21). The moral laws of the Bible are *not the means* of justification, but they are *the guidelines how to live* the justified or saved life as Christians.

Conclusion. When Paul says, "God will give to each person according to what he has done" (Romans 2:6), he includes Christians. The good works of Christians, as *the evidences of faith and salvation by grace*, are therefore the criterion of

God's judgement (in the sense of reward) also for the Christian. The good works of Christians have an indispensable place in the biblical doctrine of salvation (Matthew 5:16; Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:14).

▪ **(4) What is God's criterion for judgement of the Gentiles (non-Christians)?**

**The Gentiles are *outside* God's special revelation and have not yet heard the gospel).**

"All who sin apart from the law (mng 2) will also perish apart from the law" (Romans 2:12a).

Romans 2:14-15 is an elaboration of God's criterion of judgement for the Gentiles on the final judgement day. It is an answer to the question, "How can the Gentiles be regarded as having sinned when they do not have the law (mng 2)?"

The answer is that although the Gentiles do not have the written law (mng 2)(the Old and New Testament revelations), they nevertheless do 'the requirements' (literally 'the things') of the law (mng 3) that is written on their hearts. The Gentiles prove that they have knowledge of God's moral laws (mng 3), because of two things:

• **The Gentiles do by nature the things required by God's moral laws.**

For example, the Gentiles pursue lawful vocations, marry and have children, show filial and natural affection, care for the poor and the sick, and do many other virtuous things which are also required by God's revealed law. They do these things 'by nature', which means, that this is their natural instinct or inclination in distinction from some law outside themselves, which forces them to do something. The fact that the Gentiles do by nature the works of the law, prove that "they are a law to themselves", that is, they are as it were their own law book and they themselves reveal God's law to themselves! Some of their own actions reveal that the requirements of God's moral law (mng 3) are written in the very constitution of their human nature. It is important to notice that this 'law' (of which the requirements are written in the natural constitution of every human being since creation)(mng 3), is not a different law than the law that God revealed to the Jews through Moses (mng 2 that contains mng 3).

• **The conscience of Gentiles functions on the basis of their knowledge of God's requirements in their heart.**

The 'conscience' is a function of the human spirit and makes moral discriminations and judgements. The conscience functions like an inward judge or inward monitor, requiring human beings to do what the law (mng 3) requires. The thoughts of the human conscience sometimes condemn and at other times acquit the moral conduct of humans.

• **Gentiles who sin apart from God's special revelation will also perish apart from God's special revelation.**

Gentiles, who have never heard God's special revelation (mng 2), cannot plead innocence, because they all have knowledge of God's general revelation that is written on their hearts (mng 3) and their conscience functions as an advocate accusing them when they violate God's law (mng 1) and defending them when they live according to God's law (mng 1).

Also all Gentiles have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:10-12,23). Because they sin, they are guilty in God's eyes and will certainly be judged by God and perish.

*But because the Gentiles sin without knowing God's special revelation (mng 2), God will not judge them according to the criteria of his special revelation! God will judge them according to their knowledge of his general revelation: their knowledge of God (derived from the creation) and their knowledge of God's moral law (derived from the moral law written on their hearts)(mng 3). And God will judge them according to how they have lived in the light of the knowledge of God's general revelation, which they possessed. They will not be judged according to any law that they did not possess.*

The godless and wicked cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon did not possess the Old Testament or the New Testament revelations. Therefore the final judgement day will be more bearable for them than for the Jews living in the time of Jesus, who possessed the Old Testament and heard the gospel in the New Testament (Matthew 10:15; Matthew 11:20-24).

The Gentiles will not only be judged apart from God's special revelation, but also perish apart from God's special revelation (mng 2). *What God reveals in his special revelation about heaven and hell is therefore not directed to the Gentiles. The only thing we can say about the Gentiles is that God will judge them with absolute justice and fairness.* "That servant, who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants, will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:47-48). Thus, there will be an exact correspondence between the nature of people's sin and their punishment (God's judgement)!"

God demands from Christians that their mercy should surpass their judgement (Matthew 9:13). So with respect to God himself we may expect that God's mercy will also triumph over God's judgement (James 2:13)! How, is not specified.

• **How will God judge all people on the final judgement day?**

The final judgement day is an essential part of the proclamation of the gospel. On the final judgement day, God will judge all people who have ever lived. He will judge people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as his gospel declares Romans 2:16).

*People will be judged according to all their acts.* Not just the outward actions of people, but also the secret or hidden actions of people will be judged (Ecclesiastes 12:14). This is especially directed towards the unbelieving Jews, who specialised in *correct outward behaviour*. In Romans chapter 2, Paul had repeatedly exposed the fallacy of Jewish presumption. Now he also exposes the foolishness of Jewish externalism. God's judgement will be according to the truth, that is, according to the actual thoughts, motives, attitudes and actions of people. And it will certainly include all secret and shameful actions (2 Corinthians 4:2; Ephesians 5:12).

*People will be judged according to Paul's gospel.* This cannot mean that the gospel will be the universal criterion of God's judgement. The law as a part of God's Old Testament special revelation is not the universal criterion of God's judgement (Romans 2:12). Also the gospel as a part of God's New Testament special revelation cannot be the universal criterion of God's judgement. *The universal criterion of God's judgement will be the works of people, that is, how they have lived in accordance to the light of revelation they have received,* whether in written form or written in their hearts. What Paul means to say in verse 16, is that the gospel proclaims that God will judge the good and bad works of people through the Judge Jesus Christ on the final judgement day (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:22,27-29). The proclamation of God's righteous judgement of all people and of all their secrets and deeds is an outstanding feature of the gospel.

*God's grace does not dispense with God's judgement! The proclamation of the gospel must include the proclamation of God's grace as well as the proclamation of God's judgement!*

▪ **(5) Legalists (Jews, Christians and Muslims) dishonour God by breaking the law.**

Romans 2:23. "You who brag about the law (mng 2), do you dishonour God by breaking the law? (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3)"

The Jews bragged about possessing the law, but dishonoured God by breaking the law. According to James 2:10 and James 4:11-12, disobedience of the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3) is an insult against the majesty of the Lawgiver, God himself, and it causes the Gentiles to blaspheme God. *The Gentiles expected a nation to be like their God* (Psalm 115:8). And if a nation committed such crimes, as robbing temples, committing adultery and practising idolatry, then their God must be of the same character and should be dishonoured accordingly.

Romans 2:25-27. "Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker."

▪ **(6) Outward physical circumcision only has significance as a sign of inward spiritual obedience.**

- **The physical circumcision of the Jews had value only if the requirements of the Old Testament covenant (Law) were kept (Romans 2:25).**

In Romans 2:25-27 the word 'law' does not refer to the various Old Testament ceremonial laws (mng 3), but rather to the Old Testament covenant (mng 5). In this Old Testament covenant, God promised that he would be their God and they would be his people (Genesis 17:7; Leviticus 26:12). This was a covenant of promise and grace.

The requirements of this covenant (Romans 2:26) was faith in God's promise (Genesis 15:5-6; cf. John 6:28-29) which had to be shown in obedience (Genesis 22:17-18; Hebrews 4:2,6; James 2:17,22). The sign and seal of this covenant was physical circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14).

Paul maintained that physical circumcision only had value when the Jews fulfilled the requirement of faith and showed their faith by their obedience. If the Jews had no faith and no obedience, their claim on God's covenant promises was mere presumption and even an empty mockery! Thus, in Romans 2:25-27, keeping (the requirements of) the law (mng 3) is equivalent to keeping the covenant which God made with the patriarchs. And breaking (the requirements of) the law is equivalent to breaking the covenant which God made with the patriarchs. When the requirements of God's covenant were neglected or violated, physical circumcision became uncircumcision. Then the outward sign of physical circumcision lost its significance (Romans 2:25).

- **Gentiles who are not physically circumcised do not annul God's covenant if the requirements of the covenant are kept (Romans 2:26).**

In Romans 2:25-27 keeping (the requirements of) the law does not refer to unbelieving Gentiles who obey their moral nature and conscience as in Romans 2:14. It rather refers to *Gentiles who have become Christians* as in Romans 1:16-17. The majority of the Gentile Christians are physically uncircumcised. But because Christians fulfil the requirements of the covenant by their faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Jesus Christ, Christians become the real people of God (2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9-10) and are even called the 'Israel of God' (Galatians 6:12-16). Although these Gentile Christians are uncircumcised in their bodies (flesh), they are circumcised in their hearts (spirits) and God regards this as the only real circumcision (Romans 2:28-29)!

On the one hand, the rite of circumcision of the body has no value apart from that which it signifies. On the other hand, when that which the rite of physical circumcision signifies is present, the absence of the sign in the body does not annul God's covenant of grace!

- **The physically uncircumcised will condemn the physically circumcised (Romans 2:27).**

The physically uncircumcised Gentile Christians, who fulfil (the requirements of) God's covenant, will condemn the physically circumcised Jews, who possess God's written revelation (the Holy Book), but nevertheless break (the requirements of) God's covenant.

Likewise, the believing Gentiles of Nineveh in the Old Testament period will stand up in the final judgement day and condemn the unbelieving Jews in the period of Jesus (Matthew 12:41-42). The faith of the physically uncircumcised Gentile believers will condemn the unbelief of the physically circumcised Jews!

All this proves that an external and physical rite like physical circumcision or baptism with water has no saving power because God is Spirit and demands inward and spiritual obedience.

- **(7) The Jews changed the original significance of circumcision.**

During the time of Abraham, physical circumcision was *a sign of justification by faith* (Romans 4:11). But during the time of Moses, physical circumcision became *a sign of justification by works of the law* (John 7:22; Galatians 5:1-4).

- **Physical circumcision originally was a sign of justification by faith (Romans 4:11).**

God made a covenant of promises and grace with Abraham. In this covenant, he graciously promised Abraham three things: First. Abraham would become the father of many nations. His descendants would be as numerous as the stars and as the sand on the seashore. And the Lord would be the God of his descendants. Second. God would give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. These first two promises were already fulfilled by the time Joshua conquered the land of Canaan (Joshua 21:43-45; Joshua 23:14-16). Third. God would bless all the nations of the earth through one of Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:1-3,7; Genesis 15:1-6,18-21; Genesis 17:1-14; Genesis 22:17-18). Abraham believed God and God credited it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). God gave Abraham physical circumcision as the sign and seal of this covenant of God's promises and God's grace. Physical circumcision was therefore *a visible sign and seal that God justified people through faith* (Romans 4:11)! The people who were physically circumcised were obligated to keep this covenant of God's promises and God's grace. They were obligated to continue to live as people justified (saved) by grace through faith, that is, to live as God's people in this world.

However, during the Old Testament period the outward, physical circumcision also had an inward, spiritual meaning. The cutting away of the uncleanness of the body (flesh) symbolised the cutting away of the uncleanness of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4). Thus, during the Old Testament period circumcision of the body was *a visible symbol* of a much higher reality, namely, the spiritual circumcision of the heart. The circumcision of the body during the Old Testament period pointed to *the later rebirth by the Holy Spirit* during the New Testament period (Romans 2:28-29).

However, observing the law and hoping to be justified by keeping the law (for example by getting physically circumcised) without being spiritually circumcised in heart had no value! Whoever had not kept ALL the laws had broken them ALL (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10).

Another great difference between physical circumcision and spiritual circumcision is the following: while spiritual circumcision of the heart is always the work of the Holy Spirit, physical circumcision of the body always remains the work of people.

Therefore, in the Bible, the unbelievers and unrighteous people are called "the uncircumcised in heart" (Jeremiah 9:25-26; Acts 7:51). But Jewish as well as Gentile Christians, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ, are called "the true circumcision" (Philippians 3:3)! All people, who have put their trust in the crucified Christ and live the crucified life, are called "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:12-16)! Abraham may be the physical father of those who call themselves Jews, but he is the spiritual father of all who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles (Romans 4:11; John 8:37-44).

- **Physical circumcision later became a sign of justification by works of the law (John 7:22).**

More than 400 years *after* Abraham, physical circumcision became *detached* from the covenant of grace and became *attached* to the ceremonial law of Moses (Leviticus 12:3; John 7:22). The Jews no longer regarded physical circumcision of the body (flesh) as the sign and seal of being spiritually circumcised in heart and of being justified by faith, but regarded it as *God's pledge that God would give eternal life to people who obeyed the law* (mng 3)(the moral law, the ceremonial law and the civil law of the state of Israel). The Jews wrongfully interpreted Leviticus 18:5 in this way. For the Jews in the time of Moses, physical circumcision became a sign and seal that God justified people through the works of the law, even though God *never* gave that meaning to physical circumcision.

Later Paul taught that if people let themselves be physically circumcised, because they believed that they would be justified by keeping the law, they were obligated to keep the whole law of works (Galatians 5:1-4)! Paul also taught that

no one keeps the whole law of God without breaking one law in his life. Therefore God would not justify any person on the basis of keeping the law (Romans 3:20,28).

It is obvious that the Jews in the New Testament period regarded physical circumcision as a means that in some way secured their justification or salvation. They taught, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Other Jewish rabbis taught that "no circumcised man will see hell". And they alleged that "God swore to Abraham, that no one, who was circumcised, should be sent to hell". They told everyone that "Abraham sits before the gate of hell and does not allow any circumcised Israelite to enter there." Thus, physical circumcision in fact became the physical outward sign of Jewish nationalism!

This teaching of the Jewish rabbis is certainly not based on the facts of the Bible.

▪ **(8) While the shadow is physical circumcision, the reality is spiritual circumcision.**

Romans 2:28-29. "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code (mng 3). Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God."

• **Fake Jews and worthless physical circumcision.**

The word 'Jew' is derived from the tribe of Judah and means 'praise' (Genesis 29:35; Genesis 49:8). A real Jew desires to receive his praise from God, while a fake Jew desires to receive his praise from other people. Jesus condemned the Jews, because they relied on outward appearance and were always seeking praise from one another (John 5:44). Paul regards a mere outward physical Jew as a fake Jew. Natural descent from Jacob does not make a descendant of Jacob a real Jew in God's eyes!

Physical circumcision in the New Testament period was no longer a sign of the covenant of grace, but had become a custom based on the Old Testament ceremonial law (John 7:22). The outward sign of physical circumcision has no value whatsoever unless it remains a sign for physically circumcised people that they have been spiritually circumcised in their hearts.

• **Genuine Jews and the real spiritual circumcision.**

A genuine 'Jew', that is, a genuine believer that receives praise from God, is not characterised by what he is outwardly and physically, but what he is inwardly and spiritually! The only genuine 'Jew' is a person whose heart has been circumcised by the Holy Spirit. 'Circumcision of the heart' means to be born again through the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. This principle, negatively stated, is that whoever professes to be a natural Jew and is only circumcised in his flesh is not a genuine Jew (Romans 2:28). This principle, positively stated, is that whoever is circumcised in his heart through the work of the Holy Spirit in the inward man is a genuine 'Jew', that is, "a believer that receives praise from God". Thus, the only genuine 'Jew' is a Christian, no matter whether he was originally a natural Jew or a natural Gentile! Only such a person receives praise from God! Fake Jews receive their praise from other people, but genuine 'Jews' receive their praise from God.

The New Testament clearly teaches that physical circumcision as a part of the ceremonial law has been cancelled (Colossians 2:14) and abrogated (Ephesians 2:15). "In Christ Jesus, neither (physical) circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:6). "Neither (physical) circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything anymore; what counts is being a new creation" (Galatians 6:15-16) through justification by faith and rebirth by the Holy Spirit. All people who follow this rule are really *the people of God* and are called *the Israel of God* (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16).

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## 2. The law in Romans chapter 3.

▪ **(1) Conclusion of Romans 1:18 to 3:20: Three reasons why the whole world (both Gentiles and Jews) stand condemned before God and must be judged (Romans 3:19-20).**

- God already punishes people by giving them over to their sins (Romans 1:18-32).
- Man's conscience already testifies against his sins (Romans 2:12-16).
- The Law (mng 2)(Romans 3:10-18) already shows that the whole world must be silenced and held accountable to God (Romans 3:19) and that no one will be declared righteous by keeping the law (mng 3)(Romans 3:20).

"Now we know that whatever the law (mng 2) says, it says to those who are included in (NIV: under) the law (mng 1), so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Because (NIV: therefore) no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law (mng 3); rather through the law (mng 3) we become conscious of sin" (Romans 3:19-20).

All people in the world are *included in* (not *under*) God's law (i.e. God's holy and righteous requirement for condemnation, salvation and living as expressed in especially the moral commandments and prohibitions written in the Bible or written in the heart)(mng 1)(Romans 3:19b). Whether they are Gentiles and do not have the special revelation of God (Romans 2:14-15), or whether they are Jews and Gentiles that do have the special revelation of God (Romans

2:12-13), they are required to meet God's righteous requirement (law)(mng 1). Those who are *outside* God's special revelation (originally the Gentiles) are *not outside* the sphere of God's righteous requirement and therefore not outside the condemnation and judgement that the Old Testament pronounces.

The law (mng 3)(Romans 3:19a) acts like a judge: it silences every argument against the God of the Bible and his revelation in the Bible and makes people responsible to give an account to the God of the Bible.

The law (mng 3)(Romans 3:20b) also acts like a mirror: it shows people how they really are, how God sees them and how sinful they really are. It makes them conscious and painfully aware that they are completely depraved.

The law (mng 3)(Romans 3:21a) cannot act like a saviour: it cannot and does not reveal a way of justifying or saving people in God's sight. It cannot and does not reveal a way of salvation (justification and sanctification).

Every mouth in the history of this world is silenced, "because" (not "therefore") "no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing 'the law' (either the moral laws in their heart or the moral, ceremonial and civil laws written in the Old Testament, let alone the 613 laws which the Jews added to God's law)(mng 3)(Romans 3:20ab)!" The future tense expresses that this fact is an absolute certainty: everyone in the world will have to give an account to God of their relationship to the God of the Bible and their life and works. No one in the world will be justified or saved by his own effort, his 'good' or 'religious' life or by his own works of the law. Even if he keeps some of the laws, he never keeps all the laws – and God requires nothing less than 100% perfection (Galatians 3:10)! In order to be declared righteous in God's eyes by observing the law (the teachings and moral laws of the Bible)(mng 3), a person must never have committed one single sin or transgression (James 2:10) and he must always have lived an absolute perfect life before God (Isaiah 64:6)! It is therefore very clear that the works of the law cannot and will not justify a single person in the history of this world! "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (mng 3) (Romans 3:28).

▪ **(2) The nature, means and ground of justification (salvation) (Romans 3:21-24a).**

• **The nature of justification: it is God's righteousness.**

Justification of believers is therefore based on God's perfect righteousness and not on any imperfect human righteousness (Romans 3:21). "But now a righteousness of (NIV: from) God, apart from law (mng 3), has been made known, to which the Law (mng 2) and the Prophets testify." The Law (i.e. the Old Testament Scriptures)(mng 2)(Romans 3:21b) *does reveal* a way of making people righteous or a way of saving people apart from law (i.e. in the sense of man trying to keep the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)(mng 3)(Romans 3:21a). The Old Testament Scriptures reveal that "righteousness" is an attribute of God, not of man; that this righteousness is required by the holy and righteous God of the Bible; that this righteousness has been revealed in the Old and the New Testament and that this righteousness can only be acquired by man by receiving the righteousness of Jesus Christ as a gracious gift by means of faith (Genesis 15:6; cf. Galatians 3:6-9). God's righteousness can never be acquired by man trying to keep the law (i.e. by man trying to keep the religious works of the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)(mng 3)!

The purpose of the 'law' was never to justify or save people, but rather to reveal God's requirement for belonging to him, for approaching him and for living before his eyes. The moral law makes a person conscious of what is sin and that he is a sinner, that is, a person that is separated from God, being self-sufficient and living independent from God and missing God's goal for his life! Because not a single person in the world can keep God's requirements perfectly, these 'laws' (mng 3) drive people to despair and lead them to Jesus Christ, who is the only One who can justify or save them (Galatians 3:21-25)!

• **The ground of justification: it is given by grace.**

The righteousness of God is a completely free gift (Romans 3:24a). This perfect righteousness of God is offered to people by God's grace and it is received through faith in Jesus Christ.

• **The means of justification: it is received by faith.**

This righteousness of God (acquired by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ) is imputed (ascribed, reckoned rather than credited) to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, regardless whether he is a Jew or a Gentile (Romans 3:22). There is no longer any differentiation between Jews and Gentiles, because all people are depraved (have sinned) and are lost (Romans 3:23). Verse 22b and 23 is a parenthesis which stands in a very significant relationship to both what precedes and to what follows. Verse 24 resumes the theme of verse 22a and expands it.

▪ **(3) Explanation of the ground, purpose and results of justification (Romans 3:24b-31).**

• **Paul explains the ground of justification (Romans 3:24b-25a).**

Justification was acquired at a very costly price. God gave Jesus Christ as a ransom price, which saves us from the slavery or bondage of sin. He gave Jesus Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, which saves us from his wrath.

• **Paul explains the purpose of justification (Romans 3:25b-26).**

The death of Jesus Christ proves that God is completely just in his character, because he did not leave sin unpunished.

- **Paul explains the results of justification (Romans 3:27-31).**

“Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what law (principle) (mng 4)? On the principle of observing the law (mng 3)? No, but on the principle of faith.” Justification by faith excludes all boasting by people before God. Justification by faith represents God in his true nature as the God of all people (of Jews and Non-Jews) and as the God who uses the same method of justification (salvation) for all people: for Jews who had the written law (mng 2) and for Gentiles who did not have the written law. However, justification by faith does not set aside God’s moral law (mng 3). The moral law is still necessary for knowing what is sin and for knowing how to live the righteous life as a person saved by grace.

### 3. The law in Romans chapter 4.

What is the difference between the statements in Romans 4:15, Romans 5:13 and Romans 7:8?

By making all three statements in the negative, Paul emphasises the positive. He emphasises that the law has always shown that people have sinned and that God has condemned them for their sins. But because these three statements speak of different aspects of the law, they need to be interpreted separately.

- **(1) The law (mng 3 representing mng 1) as God’s legal requirement for remaining righteous. Adam as representative of the whole human race transgressed this law and consequently the whole human race fell into sin in solidarity with him (Romans 5:13).**

“Before the law (mng 2 representing mng 3) was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law (mng 3 representing mng 1).”

The statement in the negative: “When there is no law (mng 3), sin is not taken into account”.

The statement in the positive: “When there is law (mng 3 representing mng 1), sin is taken into account!”

In the period between Adam and Moses there was no written law (mng 2 representing mng 3). But because “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 3:23) and people nevertheless died, they must have sinned. They must have transgressed a law (mng 3 representing mng 1). They were not condemned to death for transgressing any written law of Moses, nor for any personal sins. They were condemned to death for the transgression of the one law which God gave to Adam before he fell into sin (Genesis 2:15-17).

God regards Adam as the representative head of the whole human race. When Adam sinned and was punished with death, the whole human race was regarded as having sinned in solidarity with Adam and were condemned and punished to die *in solidarity with Adam* (Romans 5:17a,18a,19a; 1 Corinthians 15:22)! The Greek text of Romans 5:12 says: “Therefore like through one man (Adam) sin entered the world and through sin death (entered the world) – And in this way death *came once for all*<sup>7</sup> to all men, since all *sinned once for all*<sup>8</sup>.”

In this context, the emphasis is on the one law that God gave only to Adam (Genesis 2:15-17) as God’s legal requirement for remaining righteous. This law was God’s absolute legal requirement (condition) for only Adam to remain justified and not to be condemned to death. Adam alone broke this law. However, not only Adam died, but all his descendants suffered death! Therefore, there must have been a law which God took into account that caused all his descendants to die. And that law was Genesis 2:15-17. The emphasis is on Adam’s representative responsibility for the fall of mankind into sin!

When God gave this one command (law) to Adam, Eve had not yet been created (Genesis 2:18-23). But when Satan later came to tempt Adam and Eve, he addressed the woman (Genesis 3:1-5). One could argue that Eve did not know God’s command, but the Bible says that Adam “was with her” when she was tempted (Genesis 3:6)! Adam knew God’s command (law)(mng 1). Adam was the responsible head of the family and the responsible representative of all human beings!

Therefore the apostle Paul could say: “When there is a law, sin is taken into account”! The one law (mng 3 representing mng 1) which Adam transgressed (Genesis 2:15-17) was taken into account and the whole human race was condemned *in solidarity with Adam* (Romans 5:17a, 18a,19a)!

- **(2) The law as God’s legal requirement for justification condemns each individual (Romans 4:15b).**

“Because law (mng 1) brings (God’s) wrath. And where there is no law (mng 3 representing mng 1) there is no transgression.”

The statement in the negative: “Where there is no law (mng 3 representing mng 1), there is no transgression (sin) (and no wrath of God).”

The statement in the positive: “Where there is law (mng 3 representing mng 1), there is transgression (sin) (and wrath of God).”

<sup>7</sup> Greek: διηλθον, aorist tense = expresses a once for all event in the past

<sup>8</sup> Greek: ημαρτον, aorist tense = expresses a once for all event in the past. It does not refer to people continuing to sin ever since.



Paul speaks about the law (mng 1) as God's legal requirement (absolute condition) for justification (salvation) and condemnation (judgement): namely, that all people must live perfect lives and all sins must be punished. He argues that justification by faith is based on the nature of the law (mng 1), namely: the law (mng 1) cannot evoke faith, but can only bring God's wrath. Consequently, the law (mng 3 representing mng 1) cannot bring justification or salvation. Thus, justification can never be by the law, but only by God's grace and the believer's faith (in Christ's righteousness in his place)!

In the period before Moses there was no law in the sense of a law written in a book (mng 2 representing mng 3), but every human being had the law in the sense of God's legal requirement for justification and condemnation (mng 3 representing mng 1) written in his heart (Romans 2:15). In the period after Moses every human being possessed the law (mng 1), either written in his heart (mng 3 representing mng 1) or written in the Bible (mng 2 representing mng 3 representing mng 1)(Romans 2:20b; Romans 3:10-19b). Because no individual in the history of the world is without the law in this sense (mng 1), the sins of every individual are taken into account and every individual is judged according to the law he possesses (whether written in his heart only or written in the Bible). "Where there is law (mng 1), there is transgression (and God's wrath)." The law (mng 1) requires absolute obedience to the requirement of perfect righteousness and holiness. And because no individual has kept this law or can keep this law (mng 1), every individual is condemned as a sinner.

God's wrath remains on every individual in his natural state (Psalm 5:4-5; John 3:18,36). God's wrath is removed only by God's grace when a person's sins are atoned for (i.e. by God's sovereignty) and when he has received this atonement by faith (i.e. by man's responsibility)(Romans 3:23-26)! God's grace is universally sufficient to save people, but only becomes an effective reality for an individual through his personal faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). Without faith God's wrath remains on that individual!

"Grace that brings salvation to *all men*" (Titus 2:11) does not imply universal grace or universal salvation, because in the context "all men" referred to "all social classes of men", for example, old men and women, young women and men, slaves and masters (Titus 2:1-10) and referred to "us" (coming from all kinds of social backgrounds) who say "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions, who wait for the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ and who have been redeemed and purified to become his own people (Titus 2:12-14). "All men" in this context referred only to "all believers in Jesus Christ". "God's grace overflows to many", not to all (Romans 5:15); to "those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (Romans 5:17).

If there would have been an individual in history who by obedience could keep the whole law (mng 3 representing mng 1) perfectly, one would expect that he would have been justified, that is, he would have been regarded as a righteous person and would have received eternal life. This was the belief and expectation of the legalists (among the Jews, Christians and Muslims), but they were wrong! Legalists forget that justification by keeping the law (mng 3) was only possible *before the fall* of Adam and all mankind into sin (Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5). Legalists do not take Romans 5:12-13 into account, namely, that all men have fallen into sin in solidarity with their representative, Adam. Nevertheless, due to the fall of all men in solidarity with Adam, "there is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10)! "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Legalists believe that *after the fall* individuals could still be justified (saved) by their personal obedience to the law (mng 3). But Paul says, "No one will be declared righteous by observing the law (mng 3)" (Romans 3:20; cf. Acts 13:39; Romans 3:21; Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:10-11; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Paul himself had once tried hard to be saved by doing the works of the law (mng 3) and he failed miserably (Acts 22:3-4; Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:4-7). Now Paul understood that the law (mng 3 representing mng 1) produces God's wrath. The law (mng 1) pronounces a curse on all who do not keep the law (mng 3) perfectly (Galatians 3:10-14). The breaking of just one law (mng 3) makes a person guilty of breaking the whole law (mng 3 representing mng 1)(James 2:10)! The law (mng 1) demands *perfect* obedience and condemns everyone who is not *perfect*. That is why the law (mng 3 representing mng 1) by its very nature cannot impart life, but instead causes death! The law (mng 3) does not bring God's peace, but only God's wrath. The law (mng 3) does not bring God's justification, but only God's condemnation.

Because everyone in history has the law (mng 3 representing mng 1) in the sense of God's legal requirement for justification and condemnation and not a single individual has kept the law (mng 3), not a single individual will be justified by trying to keep the law (mng 3). Instead every mouth is silenced and the whole world is held accountable to God (Romans 3:19). The law (mng 3 representing mng 1) in the sense of God's absolute condition for justification (salvation) and God's absolute standard for condemnation (judgement) justifies (saves) no one, but only brings God's wrath over every individual.

In this context, the emphasis is on the moral law (mng 3) that God gave to each individual, either in his heart (Romans 2:15) or in the Old Testament revelation (Romans 2:20b; Romans 3:10-19b) as God's legal requirement for justification (salvation) and condemnation (judgement)(mng 3 representing mng 1). God requires that every individual must be perfectly (100%) sinless and must be perfectly (100%) righteous with respect to his position in God's eyes. But because no one (except Jesus Christ) qualifies, every individual has broken God's law (mng 1) and suffers under God's wrath. The emphasis is on the individual's responsibility for his sins and consequent condemnation.

▪ **(3) The law as God's moral requirement for sanctification activates sin in each individual (Romans 7:8).**

“But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment (law)(mng 3), produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law (mng 3), sin is dead.”

The statement in the negative: “Apart from law (mng 3), sin is dead” (i.e. sin is not activated).

The statement in the positive: “By means of the law (mng 3), sin springs to life”.

Paul is here not speaking of the law (mng 1) as God's legal requirement for attaining the holy and righteous state (position) in God's eyes (justification), but is speaking of the law as God's moral requirement for living the holy and righteous style of life (process)(sanctification)(mng 3). Especially the Ten Commandments revealed what is right and what is wrong in God's eyes and showed how God's saved people should live the life of a believer. Remember, God's eternal purpose was to reveal his glory to his people and to display his glory through his people on earth.

Paul says that *apart from the moral law (the Ten Commandments)(mng 3), sin within the sinful nature of man is inactive*. Sin is as it were “dead”. Although the person may be doing very evil things in his body, his human spirit is “dead” (cf. Ephesians 2:1). Therefore he has no conscious awareness of God's reality or presence, his conscience and intuition with respect to what is right and wrong is inactive and he feels no guilt or shame for the evil he is doing. The sin dwelling in his sinful nature may express itself actively in all kinds of evil in his behaviour and yet lie dormant in his spirit.

However, when the moral law (mng 3) is given serious attention, then the sin dwelling in the sinful nature of man springs to life and becomes active. The moral law takes into account, not only outward acts of people, but also their inner thoughts, motives, attitudes and feelings and even their unconscious sin (Romans 7:7). The moral law makes a person aware of what sin is and stimulates his sinful nature into producing actual sinful behaviour. Sins spring to life and act in his spirit! Another way to say this is: “The power of sin (the power that activates sin) is the law (the moral law)(mng 3)” (1 Corinthians 15:56). And yet another way to say this is that the Holy Spirit is convicting him of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8).

The more a person tries to keep the moral law (mng 3), the more the moral law arouses the sinful passions lying dormant in his sinful nature (Romans 7:5), incites every kind of evil desire in him (Romans 7:8) and causes him to experience how depraved he really is (Romans 7:23-24). He feels guilty and ashamed, a failure and lost and says: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” When the moral law activates sin in the sinful nature of man, he “dies”, that is, the Ten Commandments kills his self-righteousness, self-sufficiency (independence from God) and fancied state of goodness. His false security comes to an end and he comes into a state of misery and danger of eternal condemnation (Romans 7:9b). Although the moral law (mng 3) is holy, righteous, good and spiritual (Romans 7:12,14), it is not an instrument of life, but rather an instrument of death. The moral law is God's means to cause people to realise that they are depraved and unspiritual.

In this context, the emphasis is on the moral law (mng 3) that God gave to each individual, either in his heart (Romans 2:15) or in the Old Testament revelation (Romans 2:20b; Romans 3:10-19b) as God's moral requirement for sanctification. God requires that every individual must live perfectly (100%) sinless, righteous and holy with respect to his lifestyle in God's eyes. But because there is not one individual (except Jesus Christ) who does not break the moral law, every individual suffers under the realisation that he (his human nature) is completely depraved. The emphasis is on the individual's experience of the depravity of his human nature.

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#### 4. The law in Romans chapter 5.

▪ **(1) The law (mng 3 in the sense of mng 1) that was transgressed by Adam legally constituted all people to be sinners. The grace of God and Christ legally constituted all believers in Christ to be righteous.**

Romans 5:15-19. (15) “The gift<sup>9</sup> (i.e. the gracious gift of justification or salvation) is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man (Adam), how much more did God's grace<sup>10</sup> and the gift that came by the grace<sup>11</sup> of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! (16) Again, the gift<sup>12</sup> is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgement followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift<sup>13</sup> followed many trespasses and brought justification. (17) For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through the one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness<sup>14</sup> reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (18) Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of

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<sup>9</sup> Greek: το χαρισμα

<sup>10</sup> Greek: η χαρις

<sup>11</sup> Greek: η δωρεα εν χαριτι

<sup>12</sup> Greek: το δωρημα

<sup>13</sup> Greek: το χαρισμα

<sup>14</sup> Greek: οι την περισσειαν της χαριτος και της δωρεας της δικαιοσυνης λαμβανοντες

one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. (19) For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

The comparison, which was started in Romans 5:12 is completed in Romans 5:18 “Just as ... so also”<sup>15</sup> and repeated in Romans 5:19.

- The first part of the comparison: **trespass (of one man, Adam) - condemnation (of all natural descendants of Adam) - death (of all natural descendants of Adam)**
- is followed by the second part of the comparison: **righteousness (of one man, Christ) – justification (of all believers in Christ) – life (for all believers in Christ)**.

In Romans 5:12 Paul does not compare the sin and death of Adam with the sin and death of his descendants, but compares the sin of the one representative, Adam, with the righteousness of the other representative, Christ. He compares the fall of one man, Adam, with the death and resurrection of another man, Jesus Christ! He teaches, “Just as (through) one transgression (of Adam) led to the condemnation of all people (bound to Adam), *so also* (through) one righteous act (of Christ) led to the justification of all people (bound to Christ). In the second part of this verse Paul is not speaking of ‘all people in the history of the world’ (universal salvation), but of ‘all believers in Christ, because he records the condition for their salvation: they must receive God’s grace and the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17b)!

He teaches, “Just as (through) the disobedience of one man (Adam) many people (all people in history except Christ) were *once for all* made sinners (aorist tense), so also (through) the obedience of one man (Christ) many people (all believers in Christ in history) will be made righteous (future tense)(Romans 5:19). When the representative of mankind (namely Adam) fell into sin, all mankind were *once for all* made sinners. But after the representative of all believers in Christ (namely Christ) fulfilled the righteous requirement of God, all believers are one for one made righteous the moment they believe in Jesus Christ.

- **The solidarity of all people with Adam.**

The disobedience of the one man, Adam, *made* the many (people) sinners and the obedience of the one man, Christ, *will make* the many (believers) righteous. The word ‘made or will make’ means ‘to legally constitute’<sup>16</sup>. Adam’s one act of disobedience “made or legally constituted” every individual of the human race a sinner! A *sinner* means a person who misses the right relationship to the God of the Bible, to other people and to himself, because he does not yet believe in Jesus Christ (John 16:9). He misses a personal relationship with the God of the Bible, misses God’s holy characteristics in his life and misses God’s purpose for his life, because he has not yet become what God intended all people to be (Genesis 1:27-28).

In the eyes of the holy and righteous God, not a single member of the human race is righteous anymore! God regards and treats every member of the human race in his or her natural state as a sinner on account of what their representative, Adam, did. Adam is the representative head of all natural people. What happened to Adam has a profound impact on the whole human race. The whole human race fell into sin in solidarity with Adam, has been made (or legally constituted) sinful in solidarity with Adam and consequently is condemned to die in solidarity with Adam. The fact that all descendants of Adam also commit sins only proves that they have fallen in sin in solidarity with their representative, Adam, and have consequently been born in sin (Job 14:4; Job 15:14; Psalm 51:5).

- **The solidarity of all believers with Christ.**

But the solidarity of the whole human race with Adam is contrasted to the solidarity of all Christians with Jesus Christ. Christ’s one act of obedience “will make or will legally constitute” every believer in Jesus Christ a righteous person.

In the eyes of God, every single believer in Jesus Christ is perfectly righteous! God declares, regards and treats every member of the Body of Christ as completely and perfectly righteous on account of what Jesus Christ did. Jesus Christ is the Representative Head of all Christians. What happened to Christ at his death and resurrection has a profound impact on everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. A righteous person has received the right position to the God of the Bible, is completely forgiven and will go to heaven.

The whole Body of Christ (the born-again Christian Community) died and was resurrected in solidarity with Christ, is made righteous in solidarity with Christ and consequently is pronounced righteous in solidarity with Christ. Compare also our suffering in solidarity with Christ and our becoming heirs in solidarity with Christ (Romans 8:17).

- **Adam is the pattern of Christ.**

That is why Paul calls Adam “a pattern”<sup>17</sup> of the one who is to come” (Romans 5:14), namely Jesus Christ. The personal sin of Adam and its consequence of death affected every individual of the human race. Likewise, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and its consequence of eternal life affects every individual who believes in Jesus Christ!

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<sup>15</sup> Greek: *ωσπερ/ως .... ουτως και*

<sup>16</sup> Greek: *καθιστημι*

<sup>17</sup> Greek: *τυπος*

▪ **(2) The law was added to increase sin. The increase of sin brings about the much greater increase of God's grace.**

Romans 5:20-21. "The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace<sup>18</sup> increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The 'law' here stands for the whole written Law of Moses (mng 2 including mng 3), the whole organised system of the Old Testament. The law was added between the time of Adam and Christ (in about 1407 B.C.), not with the purpose to be the means of gaining righteousness (eternal life), but to be the means of realising the extent and ugliness of sin and death and the means of realising the necessity of salvation (Galatians 3:24). The more knowledge man has of the law (mng 3), the greater is his responsibility (Romans 4:15). The more the law (mng 3 representing mng 1) works in the heart and mind of man, the more man's aversion against God is aroused and causes him to transgress God's righteous commandments (Romans 7:8,11,13). Thus, the only influence of the law in the time between Adam and Christ was to multiply transgressions and sins. The law definitely never functioned as the means of gaining righteousness (as the Pharisees believed and all other legalists still believe)!

However, God's plan was to bring good out of evil. His design was to allow man's sin to abound so that his grace may even super-abound! All the many sins in the world (for which God is not the cause and also not responsible) nevertheless became the occasion of the most wonderful display of God's grace. The law (mng 3) is still a very effective means to multiply the evil people do, because the sinful nature in man has become an ally of the sinful world and of Satan. But God's grace has become a far more effective means to produce both righteousness and life, because God's grace transforms the believer's nature and causes the believer to become an ally of God's people and of God!

Although the influence of evil on the world is still very great and causes death in the fullest sense of the word, God's influence of righteousness on the world is far greater and causes life in the fullest sense of the word. The beneficial influences of God's grace infinitely transcend the evil influences of sin. God's grace is producing far more good in this world than the evil which sin produces in this world. God's grace super-abounds:

- not necessarily in *the number* of people that are saved,
- but certainly in *the scope* (the range of benefits which build people up instead of the range of evils which only tears people apart)
- and in *the direction* (justification instead of condemnation) that grace has in the lives of people!

Adam's influence of evil on the world is far outweighed by Christ's influence of good on the world! Some of these benefits are: peace with God, access to God's grace, perseverance, Christian character, hope and love (Romans 5:1-5)!

Thus, God's mercy (grace) triumphs over God's judgement (law) (James 2:13)!

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## 5. The law in Romans chapter 6.

Paul teaches the relationship between law and grace. Christians *do not stand* "under law", but must *also stop to live* "under law". Christians *stand* "under grace" and *live* "under grace". He encourages the Christians in their efforts to resist the corrupt desires of their sinful nature and to live "under grace". Compare "living under grace" (Romans 6:14) with "living by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-26).

Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law (mng 1), but under grace."

Romans 6:15-16. "What then, shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to (or put yourselves at the disposal of) someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or (slaves) to obedience, which leads to righteousness?"

The Christian who overcomes (conquers sin in his life) lives under grace and no longer under the law (mng 1). There are two misunderstandings concerning the law, namely, that the law (mng 3) is a means of justification and that the law (mng 3) has been replaced by grace. There is just one right understanding of the law (mng 1), namely, the law is God's righteous requirement for salvation and sanctification!

▪ **(1) First misunderstanding: the law (mng 2 and 3) is the means of justification.**

- **The teaching that the law is the means of justification (salvation) is the teaching of the Legalists.**

This misunderstanding concerning the law teaches that in order to be justified (saved) everyone must keep the law (mng 3)(the moral, ceremonial and civil laws of the Old Testament). This misunderstanding was promoted by the Jewish religious leaders and teachers, who emphasised the keeping of the Old Testament ceremonial law including the very many man-made laws they added to the ceremonial law. They added 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions to the

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<sup>18</sup> Greek: η χρις

ceremonial law and even multiplied this number by inventing 39x39 (=1521) man-made laws just about keeping the sabbath! That is why the Jews and the religions that followed the Jews became so legalistic!

For example: the Jewish religious leaders and teachers required their followers to obey the following laws or duties in order to be righteous (justified, saved):

- Their religious duty was to make a particular confession about their god: that their god is a mathematical unity (James 2:19). However, Deuteronomy 6:4 does not make a mathematical statement about the divine nature of God, but rather teaches that the God who revealed himself in the Bible is “the only or unique” God; that there is absolutely no other god besides the God who revealed himself in the Bible: “The LORD is God; the LORD alone” (Isaiah 45:22).
  - Their religious duty was to pray three times a day (Daniel 6:10).
  - Their religious duty was to fast many times a year (Zechariah 7:5; Zechariah 8:19) and twice a week (Luke 18:12).
  - Their religious duty was to give one tenth of their possessions to their religion (Malachi 3:10).
  - Their religious duty was to make three pilgrim’s journeys to Jerusalem every year (Deuteronomy 16:1).
  - Their religious duty was to physically circumcise their boys (Genesis 17:12).
  - Their religious duty was to eat only certain clean foods (Leviticus chapter 11).
  - Their religious duty was to observe specific purification rituals (Leviticus chapters 12-15).
  - Their religious duty was to wear special clothing belonging to their sex (Deuteronomy 22:5).
- Etc.

- **The Legalists were mistaken, because the regulations of the ceremonial law were only external and temporal.**

They were “only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings – external regulation applying until the time of the new order” (that is, the New Testament period)(Hebrews 9:10).

There were two things that the law could not do and still cannot do:

- **The law cannot give grace** (John 1:17).

The law demands righteousness, but it cannot give righteousness! The law cannot supply grace to forgive people their sins or to help them in their needs.

- **The law cannot give the truth** (John 1:17).

The law cannot supply truth in the sense of “the reality of the shadows” (illustrations, types) it pointed to. For example, the law did not reveal the real nature (truth) of the Old Testament temple, priesthood, religious times, sacrifices, circumcision, etc., which were *shadows, illustrations or types* of the New Testament realities (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 9:8-10; Hebrews 10:1)! The Old Testament temple was a type of the real physical body of Christ (John 2:19-22) and the shadow of the real New Testament Church (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22). The Old Testament priesthood was a type of the real High priesthood of Christ (Hebrews 7:15-18,22-28). The Old Testament sacrifices were a type of the real sacrifice of atonement of Christ (Hebrews 9:12-14; Hebrews 10:1-4,8-14). The Old Testament physical circumcision was a type of the real spiritual circumcision done by the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11).

The law (mng 2 and 3) did not reveal that Israel and its prophets, priests and kings were *types* of the New Testament reality of the Church consisting of people from all nations (1 Peter 2:9-10) and of Christ (Isaiah 49:3,6) as the final and greatest Prophet, as the everlasting High Priest and as the absolute sovereign King of kings!

Only Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection could supply both grace that forgives sins and supply truth that reveals the real nature of God’s plan of salvation. Jesus Christ revealed truth by fulfilling the shadows (illustrations, types) of the Old Testament law (Matthew 5:17). And Jesus Christ merited grace that saves people by his death on the cross (Romans 3:24-25).

During the Old Testament period God never intended the law (mng 2 and 3) to teach people how to be justified (saved), but rather to teach people how to approach, worship and serve God and how to live as God’s saved Old Testament people. The moral law taught God’s already saved Old Testament people (Exodus 20:1) how to live spiritually and morally as his holy (set apart) people (Exodus 20:2-17). The ceremonial law taught God’s already saved Old Testament people how to approach, worship and serve God. And the civil law of Israel taught God’s already saved Old Testament people how to live as good citizens in the society of the theocratic state of Israel.

- **(2) The second misunderstanding: the law (mng 1, 2 and 3) has been replaced by grace.**

- **The teaching that the law has been replaced by grace is the teaching of the Liberals.**

This misunderstanding concerning the law teaches that Christians are “free from the law” and no one needs to keep the law (mng 1, 2 and 3) any more, because the law has been replaced by grace. This misunderstanding was promoted by false teachers among Christians, called “Antinomians” in the first century A.D. They taught that people may simply ignore the law (i.e. the law is no longer important for Christians). And they taught that people may continue to transgress the law (i.e. sin) so that they may receive more grace (Romans 6:1,15)! They believed that the more (and the more often) God’s grace forgave their many sins, the more God is glorified! So they deliberately advocated the setting aside of the law as well as the freedom to sin.

- **The Liberals were mistaken, because ignoring the law (mng 1,2 and 3) resulted in “cheap grace” and transgressing the law (mng 3) resulted in shameful un-Christian behaviour.**

Christians who ignore the law believe in cheap grace. They do not realise how depraved they really are and how deep they had fallen into sin. They also do not understand that grace is “costly grace” – it cost God the life of his only Son (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 8:9; 2 Corinthians 9:15). “Costly grace will also cost the genuine Christian nothing less than his life (John 12:24; Romans 12:1-2)! Cheap grace desires righteousness (salvation) without the cost of sanctification (growth, holiness and fruit). Cheap grace reacts against religious activism, but fails in discipleship (Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14:26-28).

God did not *replace* the law, but *fulfilled* the law!

- God did not simply *do away* with his righteous and holy requirement (demand) that all people must be perfectly righteous and holy and that all sins of all people in history must be punished. If he did, he would have been unrighteous and unholy. God *fulfilled the law* (mng 1) *in the place of believers* at the cost of the life of his only Son. Jesus Christ died on the cross as the punishment for the sins of believers and as a sacrifice of atonement that completely satisfied God’s righteous and holy demand (law).

- God *fulfilled* the Old Testament ceremonial law (mng 3), “the shadows”, by taking on the human nature in Christ and bringing the New Testament “realities”.

- God *fulfilled* the Old Testament civil law of the kingdom (state) of Israel (mng 3) by introducing the New Testament teachings about the kingdom (kingship) of God (the reign of the Spirit of Christ in the heart and life).

- But God *never replaced* the Old Testament moral law (mng 3), but rather *fulfilled* it in the sense that he gave it its true and original meaning in Matthew chapters 5-7.

The law (mng 3) was never a means of attaining righteousness, but always a means of realising the need for righteousness (Romans 7). It was also the standard of the righteous life that would bring glory to God (Romans 6). God always planned to have his own people by revealing his glory to them and by displaying his glory through them! Costly grace results in receiving God’s costly grace and living out God’s costly grace in righteousness (as your position and identity in Christ), in sanctification (as your process of growth and lifestyle), in discipleship (as your daily calling) and in love (as the constant fruit of being filled with the Spirit).

- **(3) The correct understanding: the law is God’s righteous requirement.**

The right understanding of ‘the law’ teaches that the law (mng 1) is God’s righteous and holy requirement for all people. Because God is righteous and holy, he requires that all people live perfect righteous and holy lives and that all sin (unrighteousness and unholiness) must be completely punished. This is the teaching of the Bible and particularly the letter to the Romans. God’s plan has always been to reveal his glory to his people and to display his glory through his people!

No other religion in the world deals with ‘law’ in this sense. For them ‘the law’ consists of religious duties which they must do and which they hope would justify them before God.

Because no human being in history qualifies with respect to God’s law in the sense of God’s righteous and holy requirement(mng 1), all human beings *stand* condemned under the law (mng 1). Jesus Christ is the only One who fulfilled the law (mng 1). *He fulfilled it in the place of the people who believe in him.* The Bible teaches that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as “a substitution sacrifice that made atonement for all the sins of believers in Jesus Christ” (Romans 3:23-26). Jesus Christ lived a perfect (sinless, complete righteous and holy) life on earth and died on the cross to make atonement for all the sins (i.e. transgressions of the law, unrighteousness and unholiness) of the people who believe in him. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore only believers in Jesus Christ do *not stand* “under law” (mng 1) and its curse (condemnation and death) anymore, but *stand* “under grace” (Romans 6:14)! All other people in the world *still stand* “under law” (mng 1) and its curse.

Believers in Jesus Christ have received the baptism with the Holy Spirit (i.e. are born again)(Romans 6:3) and have become God’s covenant people (Galatians 3:10-14), that is, God’s adopted sons and daughters (Ephesians 1:3-8). Christians no longer *stand* “under law” (mng 1), but *stand* “under grace”, that is, they *stand in the position of God’s grace* (i.e. they are perfectly righteous in God’s eyes) *and experience God’s grace* as the rolling of the waves towards the shore: grace upon grace upon grace (John 1:16-17)! They experience God’s grace because they experience God’s forgiveness of all the sins they have confessed (1 John 1:9), they experience God’s strength in difficulties and they experience all spiritual blessings as coming from God.

Whoever still lives “under law”, either in the correct sense as standing condemned under God’s righteous requirement (mng 1)(i.e. the unbelievers in the world) or in the wrong Jewish sense as trying to be justified by keeping the moral, ceremonial and civil laws (mng 3) (i.e. the legalists) will never be justified by God and can never become righteous and holy!

Whoever lives “under grace” because he has been justified by faith in Jesus Christ (i.e. the believers in Jesus Christ), can and wants to and shall never continue to live in sin (1 John 3:6,8,9), but instead *can and wants to and shall* live the new, righteous and holy life! He has received God’s glory and now displays God’s glory!

▪ **(4) Living under law or living under grace (Romans 6:14).**

Who is your lord: “sin” or “the law” or “Christ” (the Spirit of Christ)?

- **Antinomians** are people who reject the law.

They are nevertheless *slaves to sin*. The lord of Antinomians is “sin”.

- **Legalists** are religious people who stand and live under law.

They are *slaves to the law*, because they try without end to be justified by keeping the law, but fail to be justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. But they cannot keep the law 100% (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10) and are therefore still *slaves to sin* (Romans 6:16; John 8:34). The lord of Legalists is “the law”.

- **Christians** are believers in Jesus Christ who stand and live under grace.

They are *slaves to Christ* or the Spirit of Christ in the sense that they are completely governed by Christ or his Spirit. Believers in Jesus Christ are certainly no longer slaves to sin and do not have to be slaves to the law! The Lord of Christians is “Jesus Christ”.

• People under law

For example the religious Jews. They either stand condemned under God’s holy and righteous requirement (mng 1)(because they do not yet believe in the gospel), or they try to be justified (saved) in God’s eyes and please God by doing the works of the law (the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)(mng 3) and by doing this in their own power.

Such people do not have the legal state of righteousness (i.e. they are not justified or forgiven), because their goal and motivation is to be justified before God by keeping the law (mng 3)(Galatians 3:10-11). They also do not have the moral state of holiness (i.e. they are never able to live the new, righteous and holy life), because in their human natures they are still slaves to sin (Romans 6:16). People “under law” in the sense of God’s righteous requirement (for justification and sanctification)(mng 1) are still *slaves of sin*. They are used to offer the members of their bodies in slavery to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness (Romans 6:13,19). They are under the control of wickedness (Romans 6:20) and do shameful things (Romans 6:21). People “under law” in the sense of God’s moral, ceremonial and civil laws (mng 3) are still *slaves of the law*.

• But people under grace

The Christians. They have been justified (saved) by God’s grace through faith in what Jesus Christ had accomplished. Such people not only have the legal state of righteousness (i.e. they are completely forgiven), but also have the moral state of holiness (i.e. they can, want to and shall live the new, righteous and holy life)! They are no longer slaves to sin (no longer able to continuously live in sin), because in their human natures they have become slaves (in the sense of “servants”) to God (Romans 6:22), slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:18) and slaves to obedience (Romans 6:16). They may still fall into a sinful act, but they will not continuously live in that sin (1 John 3:6-9). They will repent of their sin, confess their sin and receive God’s forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and God’s grace to keep on resisting that sin (1 Corinthians 10:13)! They offer the members of their bodies in slavery (i.e. service) to God’s righteousness leading to holiness (Romans 6:19). They are under the control of righteousness (Romans 6:20). The benefit they reap leads to holiness and the result is eternal life (Romans 6:22). Romans 6:14 said, “You (Christians) are not under law, but under grace.”

• Paul continues to address the issue of sin, not the issue of the law.

He speaks against people who continue to live in sin.

Believers in Jesus Christ are “under grace” and have been baptised with the Spirit into union with Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). They have been made righteous (justified) and holy (sanctified) in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30). They have Jesus Christ as their Lord and King.

But if Christians are no longer “under law”, does this mean that they are at liberty to sin (as the Antinomians taught)? Paul says, “By no means!” (Romans 6:15). The doctrine of justification by grace through faith does not give anyone the right to reject the moral law (mng 3)(i.e. the Ten Commandments) and continue to sin with impunity. Although Christians are never justified by keeping the law (mng 3), they still need the moral law (mng 3) to show them how to live the Christian life (Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:30-31; Romans 7:6).

• Living under the master ‘sin’ or under the master ‘righteousness’.

Christians must no longer be slaves of sin, that is, they should no longer be slaves of their sinful natures and do the sinful deeds that belong to the sinful nature. Instead Christians must be slaves of obedience to God (Christ), slaves of righteousness. Obedient Christians are committed to live out of their righteous and holy position (state) and do righteous and holy deeds. This is their position or identity on the one hand and their style or display of God’s glorious life on the other hand. John 15:15 and Galatians 5:1 teach that only submission to Jesus Christ leads to true freedom. In this context Paul illustrates “the true state or condition of unbelievers” with the picture of slaves serving their master ‘sin’. And he illustrates “the true state and condition of believers” in Christ with the picture of slaves serving their master ‘righteousness’.

*Before their conversion*, people offered themselves to be slaves of their old master called ‘sin’. They put themselves at the disposal of their sinful nature together with all its manifestations of disobedience. ‘Sin’ was such a powerful master, that people did not have the ability to do any good (in God’s eyes), but only to obey evil. The consequence of living

under the dominion of sin is 'death', that is, spiritual death now, physical death at the end of life on earth and eternal death in hell thereafter.

*After their conversion*, Christians offered themselves to be slaves of their new master called 'righteousness'. They put themselves at the disposal of their regenerated nature together with its manifestations of obedience. 'Righteousness' here refers to righteousness in all its aspects and virtually means the same as salvation in all its aspects (cf. Romans 5:17). 'Righteousness' is such a powerful master, that Christians have the ability to do what is good in God's eyes and actually obey everything that is good. The consequence of living under the dominion of righteousness is 'life', that is, new, spiritual and holy life now, physical resurrection after death and continuance of eternal life thereafter.

- The consequences of service to the master 'sin' or the master 'righteousness'.

Thus, Paul teaches that no human being can live without a master or a lord! No one in the world is really 'free' or 'independent', in the sense that he has no master over him. Everyone in the world has a master, under whose lordship he has put himself, and that master is either "sin" or "righteousness". The master "sin" obligates people to offer the members of their body as instruments of unrighteousness to sin and this leads to death, that is, a condition of unrighteousness and unholiness. They are unable to resist sin and unable to obey God. But the master "righteousness" obligates Christians to offer the members of their body as instruments of righteousness to Christ and this leads to a condition of holiness. They are able to resist sin and able to obey God. When a Christian knows that these are the consequences of service to sin and service to righteousness, he will tend to devote himself to continual faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

Thus, in order to live the new, righteous and holy life continually, Christians should enjoy God's grace and make use of God's grace (John 1:16; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 12:14-15)! By continually receiving God's grace through faith, they are able to keep on resisting the sinful nature and able to keep on devoting themselves to live the new, righteous and holy life. The sinful nature *should not* be the master in a Christian's life (Romans 6:12). The sinful nature *need not* be the master in a Christian's life. By depending on God and his grace, the sinful nature *will no longer* be the lord in a Christian's life (Romans 6:14). By grace a Christian can, wants to and shall live to God's glory!

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## 6. The law in Romans chapter 7.

Romans chapter 7 teaches the Christian's legal state (position) with regard to the law (mng 1). The Christian is no longer doomed (consigned to destruction) by the law (mng 1). He is free from the bondage to the law (mng 3 representing mng 1) (as a means to righteousness and holiness). He lives no longer "under law" (mng 1 and 3), but "under grace".

In Rome the majority of Christians came from Gentile background and had not grown up with observing the Law of Moses (mng 2). The minority however came from Jewish background and had grown up with observing the Law of Moses (Ephesians 2:11-18). The Law of Moses consisted of moral, ceremonial and civil laws in the Old Testament Scripture especially as interpreted by the extended traditional explanations of the Jewish religious teachers (mng 3). On the one hand this difference in background caused tension between the two groups of Christians.

On the other hand the Law of Moses caused tension among the Christians from Jewish background themselves, because they realised that they could not keep the Law of Moses (mng 2) with all its laws (mng 3), even when they tried very hard to keep the law (Romans 8:7-8)! The Christians from Jewish background tended to be legalistic and wanted to enforce the Law of Moses (mng 3 and 2) on the Christians from Gentile background. They religiously still tried to live "under law" (i.e. they tried to be justified or saved by keeping the law) and emotionally still lived "under law" (i.e. they believed that in order to be good Christians, they had to keep these laws). These Christians remained as it were "slaves" or "prisoners" of the law (mng 3 in the sense of mng 1).

### ▪ A summary of the law in Romans 3 to 7.

- In Romans 3:20-22,28-30 and Romans 4:5-6,14

Paul shows that people need to be freed from the bondage to the law in the sense of *God's holy and righteous requirement for justification or condemnation* (mng 1) in order to be declared righteous before God and consequently experience justification by faith and forgiveness of sins. People need to be freed from trying to be justified (saved) by doing the works of the law (the moral, ceremonial and civil laws) (mng 3) in their own power.

- In Romans 6:14-16 and Romans 7:21-25

Paul shows that people also need to be freed from the bondage of the law in the sense of *God's holy and righteous requirement for sanctification* (mng 1) in order to live a holy life before God. The people need to be freed from trying to be sanctified (transformed) by doing the works of the law (the moral, ceremonial and civil laws) (mng 3) in their own power.

- In Romans 7:7-25

Paul shows people the benefit and effect of the law (mng 3). Release from bondage to the law is essential, not because something is wrong with the law, but because people have turned the law into a means (an instrument) of justification



and into *a means (an instrument)* of sanctification before God. Release from the law is necessary, because the law cannot make a person righteous and the law cannot make a person holy! The moral law can only make people experience their depraved sinful nature (give them knowledge of sin and a deep realisation and conviction of their sinfulness) and make them long for genuine salvation from sin.

- **Romans chapter 6 describes the position of the Christian with regard to sin.**

The Christian is free from *the bondage to the power of sin*. Justification by grace through faith does not give the Christian a license to continue to do sin or live in sin! The *state* of righteousness (justification) and holiness (sanctification)(1 Corinthians 1:30) by grace through faith must and will lead to the *process* of living a holy life (sanctification)(1 Peter 1:15)!

- **Romans chapter 7 describes the position of the Christian with regard to the law.**

The Christian is free from *the bondage to the law* (as a means of justification and as a means of sanctification). He is no longer “under law”, but “under grace” (Romans 6:14). This results in a change from a formal (impersonal) relationship to the law to a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Previously the person under law bore fruit for death, but presently the Christian under Christ and his grace bears fruit to God.

- **The word “law” in a more absolute sense (mng 1) and in a more general sense (mng 3).**

The word “law” in a more absolute sense (mng 1) refers to the holy and righteous requirement of God that all people must live a perfect righteous and holy life in order to be saved and that all the sins of people must be completely punished. The law is God’s whole rule of duty and God’s absolute condition for salvation (Romans 10:5).

But the word “law” in a more general sense (mng 3) refers to the absolute righteous and holy demands or requirements of God that are *expressed* in the moral laws, the ceremonial (ritual) laws and the civil laws of Israel, in particular as they have been interpreted by the extended traditions of the Jewish religious teachers.

*The moral laws* (the Ten Commandments) taught the people during the Old Testament period how God demanded that they should live holy and righteous lives as God’s (saved) people towards God and their neighbours.

*The ceremonial laws* (with regard to holy people, holy places, holy times and holy actions) taught the people during the Old Testament period how they might approach, worship and serve God.

*The civil laws* (with regard to the king and judges, the penal and compensation laws) taught people during the Old Testament period how they should function as God’s theocratic nation among the Gentile nations.

*The extended (613 in number) traditional interpretations of the law* were invented by the religious leaders in Israel and laid as a heavy burden on the shoulders of religious people with a view to exercise authority and control over the religious people. Jesus Christ accused these religious leaders of not practising what they themselves were teaching. “They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them” (Matthew 23:3-4).

- **(1) Romans 7:1-6. The function of faith (in Christ): Faith leads to freedom from the law (mng 1). The law (mng 3) is insufficient for justification (righteousness) and sanctification (holiness).**

- A person is bound to the law as long as one lives (7:1-3a)
- He is released from the law when someone dies (7:3b)
- When the Christian died in solidarity with Christ’s death he died to the law (7:4a)
- When the Christian was resurrected in solidarity with Christ’s resurrection he can bear fruit to God (7:4b) (i.e. in solidarity with Christ he can do what he could not do by keeping the law)
- Before regeneration a person “under law” bears only fruit for death (7:5)
- After regeneration the Christian “under grace” serves in the way of the Spirit and no longer in the way of the law (7:6)

Romans 7:1-6 illustrates Romans 6:14, “A believer in Jesus Christ is no longer “under law”, but “under grace”. A person must be liberated from law in order to be justified and to bear fruit for God.

- **The law (mng 1) has authority over a person only as long as he lives (Romans 7:1).**

In Rome there lived many Jews and Gentile converts (proselytes) to Judaism. They lived “under law”, that is, they tried to be justified by keeping the moral, ceremonial and civil law (mng 3), (including the numerous traditional interpretations of the law). They were bound to obey the law (Leviticus 18:5) perfectly (Galatians 3:10-11; James 2:10). As long as they lived “under law”, the law had authority over them and ruled uncompromisingly over them.

However God intended *the dominion of the law* (mng 3) to be temporary, only during the Old Testament period until the first coming of Christ (Galatians 3:23 - 4:7).

- **The law (mng 1) has no authority over a dead person (Romans 7:2-3).**

The relationship of a person with the law (mng 1) is like a marriage relationship. As long as both marriage partners live, they are bound to the law of marriage. But when one marriage partner dies, the other is released from the law of marriage and is free to marry again (1 Corinthians 7:39).

However, if the person marries a second person while his spouse is still alive, he commits adultery. But if his spouse dies, he is released from the law of marriage and is not an adulterer if he marries again. The principle of death severs the former marriage relationship and sets him free to engage in the next marriage relationship.

- **The Christian died to the law (Romans 7:4a).**

Like the above example, the Christian died to the law (mng 1) *in solidarity with* the death of Jesus Christ.

Just as the woman is released from the law of marriage to her husband by the death of the husband, likewise by implication the believer in Christ is released from the “law” (God’s righteous requirement for justification and condemnation)(mng 1) by the death of the law. The law is ‘dead’ because it has been fulfilled by Christ!

But out of respect for the Jews, Paul does not say that “the law died”, but that the person who became a believer died to the domination of the law. Paul is referring to the death of the Christian in solidarity with Christ and consequently his death with respect to trying to be justified by keeping the moral, ceremonial and civil laws as interpreted by the Jews (mng 3). The Christian’s former relationship to the law (God’s righteous requirement and his trying to keep that moral, ceremonial and civil laws)(mng 1 and mng 3) has once for all been severed. He has been set free from the unmerciful dominating authority of the law in order to come under the gracious lordship of Jesus Christ. He has been set free from a relationship with unbending laws in order to start a new relationship with Jesus Christ by grace through faith.

By the *literal* death of Jesus Christ and the *spiritual* death of the Christian in solidarity with Jesus Christ, the Christian has “died to sin” (Romans 6:2). That is, he has been set free from *the guilt and power* of sin. He has renounced his allegiance to his sinful nature and has said “no” to the allurements and enticements of the sinful world (Colossians 3:3). Only his spiritual death can sever his former relationship with his sinful nature.

And by the *literal* death of Jesus Christ and the *spiritual* death of the Christian in solidarity with Jesus Christ, the Christian has also “died to the law” (Romans 7:4a). The termination of his former bondage to the law sets the Christian free to enter into a second bondage with Jesus Christ. The termination of being “under law” sets the Christian free to be “under grace” (Romans 6:14). The end of the first bondage to God’s law (God’s righteous requirement) that condemns him sets the Christian free to enter into the second bondage to Jesus Christ that justifies (saves) him.

- **The Christian has been resurrected to bear fruit (Romans 7:4b-5).**

In the same way, the Christian has been resurrected in solidarity with the resurrection of Jesus Christ in order to bear fruit to God.

By the *literal* resurrection of Jesus Christ and the *spiritual* resurrection of the Christian in solidarity with Jesus Christ, the Christian is no longer under the guardianship and supervision of the law as an immature child, but is led and controlled by the Spirit of Christ as a mature son (Galatians 3:23 - 4:7; Galatians 5:16-26)!

*Before regeneration* a person under law (mng 1)(God’s righteous requirement) was controlled by his sinful nature. The law (mng 3)(the moral laws) aroused sinful passions in his body so that he bore fruit for death (Galatians 5:19-21). He served in the old way of the written law (mng 3)(the moral, ceremonial and civil laws written in the Old Testament).

But *after regeneration* the Christian died to the law (mng 3 in the sense of mng 1)(God’s righteous requirement as expressed in the moral, ceremonial and civil laws) that formerly bound him. He was released from the law. He now serves in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written law. He no longer tries to keep the moral, ceremonial and civil laws in the Old Testament Scripture in order to be justified.

In solidarity with Christ, Christians now bear fruit to God. “Fruit” in the Bible is associated with trust (faith) in God (Psalm 1:1-3; Jeremiah 17:7-8) and with a constant personal relationship to Christ (John 15:1-8). “Fruit” refers to good works (Luke 3:8-14; Ephesians 2:10), Christian character (Galatians 5:22-23), winning new believers (Colossians 1:6; Proverbs 11:30) and making mature disciples (John 15:16). It refers to a transformed inner nature (Matthew 7:17-18), transformed thinking (Philippians 4:8), transformed speaking (Matthew 12:33-36), transformed behaviour (Romans 6:22; Ephesians 5:9), transformed sharing of means (2 Corinthians 9:6-11) and transformed practices (Philippians 4:9).

- **The Christian no longer serves in the old way of the law, but in the new way of the Spirit (Romans 7:6).**

*After regeneration*, the Christian has died to the law (Romans 7:4a). He is released from the requirement to keep the law as a means of justification (salvation) or sanctification. He is “under grace” (Romans 6:14), that is, he has the state of righteousness and the state of holiness by God’s grace through faith (1 Corinthians 1:30). The result is that the Holy Spirit in him produces a new and holy life in him and he lives and serves in the new way. The new way is the way of Christ reigning through *the Spirit in him* and no longer the way of *the written law outside him* (Romans 7:6; cf. Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11).

- **(2) Romans 7:7-13. The function of the law (mng 3): The law causes sin to spring to life and leads to death. The moral law produces experience, then knowledge and finally conviction of sin.**

- The law gives knowledge of sin (7:7)
- The law activates sin (7:8-9)
- The law produces death (7:10-11)
- The law can never produce what is good (7:12-13)

Paul shows from his own experience what the moral law (mng 3) does.

The law is not sin. The law in the sense of the moral laws in the Bible (for example, the Ten Commandments)(mng 3) does not miss God's intention and purpose! "Sin can only be defined in relationship to the God who revealed himself in the Bible. "Sin" is what misses God's purpose. "Sin" is what falls short of God's perfect standard for life (Romans 3:23). "Sin" is what transgresses God's righteous boundaries (Romans 4:15). "Sin" is what rebels against God's way of life (Isaiah 1:2-4). "Sin" is what twists God's truth and Word (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:2). And 'sin' is what fails to carry out God's will. "Sin" is a self-sufficient life independent from God! "Sin" is not believing and not obeying God (Hebrews 4:2,6; cf. John 16:8-10).

- **The law (mng 3) gives knowledge of sin (Romans 7:7).**

The moral law definitely has a purpose. The law teaches what "sin" is in the eyes of God. The law arouses the sinful passions (excite the evil desires)(Romans 7:5) in a person's sinful nature and thus make him aware of how depraved his sinful nature is. The law cannot cause him to be justified before God and also not cause him to live a sanctified life before God. Instead, the law only gives him experience, then knowledge and finally conviction of sin. The law makes him acutely aware of his lack of holiness!

This was also Paul's personal experience. Paul would not have experienced 'coveting' as sin apart from the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet" (Romans 7:7). Apart from the law (mng 3) Paul would not have known, believed or have the conviction that 'coveting' was a sin in God's eyes.

- **The law activates sin (Romans 7:8-9).**

"But sin (for example the sin of coveting), seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment ("You shall not covet"), produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law (the moral law)(mng 3), sin is dead (inactive). Once I was 'alive' (as non-Christians believe they are) apart from law; but when the commandment (in the moral law) came, sin sprang to life (became very active) and I 'died' (with respect to my self-righteousness, my belief that I am 'good')."

Coveting is some kind of forbidden desire to possess what belongs to another. Besides the sin of coveting, the sins of murder, adultery, theft and lies lie dormant within the sinful nature of man. Apart from the moral law (mng 3), sin within the sinful nature of man remains inactive. The sinful person thinks that he is "good" and he is self-righteous (he believes that God cannot punish him) and he is self-sufficient (he does not need God for salvation or anything else in life). He is unaware of sin crouching at his door (Genesis 4:7). And he does not fear punishment for sin (the judgment of God).

But when he hears the moral law: "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not covet" (Exodus 20:13-17) the moral law activates the sin that is lying dormant in his heart. The moral law excites the sinful nature in him to life and rouses every kind of sinful passion (like for example: killing, sexual immorality, stealing, lying and coveting) in him.

As long as he takes little account of God's moral law (mng 3), the sin dwelling in his sinful nature is *inactive*. But the more he takes note of God's moral law, the more the sin dwelling in his sinful nature *becomes active*. Then the sin dwelling in his sinful nature becomes a powerful tyrant in his body and a terrible master in his conscience that deceives him and uses God's good law (mng 3) to excite evil desires in him.

When sin springs to life, he experiences that he "dies", that is, that his fancied state of goodness, self-righteousness and self-sufficiency comes to an end, his false security dies and that he has come into a state of misery and danger of eternal condemnation.

- **The law produces death (Romans 7:10-11).**

"I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment (the law), deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death."

The purpose of the moral law (the commandments)(mng 3) had originally (before the fall into sin) been to maintain everlasting life (Genesis 2:15-17). The man who would keep the law would live by them, that is, he would maintain eternal life (cf. Leviticus 18:5). However since the fall of man into sin, Leviticus 18:5 *in that sense* is no more possible (cf. Romans 10:5). Nevertheless, self-righteous religious people (among Jews, Christians and Muslims) with little self-knowledge continue to imagine that they can earn or attain everlasting life (justification, salvation, paradise) by keeping as much of the law as possible. Before his conversion to Christ the apostle Paul was of the same opinion (Philippians 3:6).

As long as he does not reckon with God's moral law (mng 3), he regards himself as "alive", that is, he remains in a false state of security and a fancied state of goodness, in which he is not painfully aware of his sinful nature and also does not dread punishment for sin (Romans 7:9). *Before his regeneration* he often gave himself over to these sins without realising what he was doing.

But as soon as he began to reckon with God's moral law (mng 3), the law powerfully activated his sinful nature and made him painfully aware how depraved he actually was. The more he tried to keep the law, the more he experienced his total moral and spiritual depravity, that is, that he was "unspiritual" (Romans 7:14-15). At that point in his life he "died", that is, his pride in his so-called "goodness" and his claim to self-righteousness and self-sufficiency came to an

abrupt end. He became acutely aware that he was lost and in need of a Saviour. It was only when he died to his own inflated good opinion about himself, that he saw his own so-called “religious duties” and “good deeds” as nothing more than “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). It was only then that he realised that he needed to be delivered from depending on the law (mng 3) for righteousness and holiness, because the law (mng 3) could never produce righteousness and holiness! The law can only produce experience of sin, which leads to knowledge of sin and finally becomes a deep conviction of sin.

Nevertheless, there are always religious people, like *the legalists* among the Jews (the Pharisees), the Christians and the Muslims, that still believe that they can be justified and sanctified by keeping the law (mng 3). The sinful nature in them misleads them to think that keeping the law (mng 3) can still justify and sanctify them. But how can God’s law (mng 1) that demands *perfect* (100%) obedience at all times justify a person that has at least disobeyed God’s law (mng 3) once (James 2:10; Galatians 3:10)? After the fall of mankind into sin, justification by the works of the law (mng 3) is completely impossible! Also trying to live a holy and obedient life according to the law (mng 3) is completely impossible! Instead, the law (mng 3) has become God’s instrument to bring all people to a deep conviction of their sins, their depraved nature and their consequent state of spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1). The law (mng 3) has become God’s means to show people that they are completely lost, that they need a Saviour outside themselves and without all their own religious efforts, and that they are doomed to be condemned in God’s final judgement!

- **The law can never produce what is good (Romans 7:12-13).**

“So then, the law (God’s moral law)(mng 3) is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12).” Although the law in itself is holy, righteous and good, *it cannot produce* holiness, righteousness and goodness in people (Romans 7:8). Because the law is God’s instrument to arouse sin to life in the sinner, the law can never function as God’s instrument to bring eternal life to the sinner! So, instead of being God’s instrument that produces life, the law is God’s instrument that excites the sinful nature in a person to produce death.

“In order that sin might be recognised as sin, it (sin) produced death in me through what was good (the law)(Romans 7:13a).” It is not the law (mng 3) that causes spiritual death, but sin dwelling in the sinner that causes spiritual death. The law (mng 3) causes people to realise their own unholiness, unrighteousness and depravity. The law makes them aware of their spiritual death and it causes all their self-righteousness and false security to “die”.

“Through the commandment (the law)(mng 3) sin might become utterly sinful (Romans 7:13b).” The law causes sin to become “excessively sinful”, that is, the law causes people to become painfully aware how great sinners they are and how unspiritual their human nature is. The law becomes the mirror in which people become aware of their total moral and spiritual depravity (Romans 3:20). The moral law brings the utter sinfulness of their sinful nature into the open. The moral and spiritual purity of God’s commandments make the moral and spiritual depravity of man’s sinful nature stand out all the more sharply (Romans 5:20)! God’s purpose with the law is to show to people how unrighteous and how unholy they really are! Because the law (mng 3) is only an instrument that reveals sin and incites the sinful nature to activity, it can never be the instrument to justify or save people!

God had never intended the law (mng 3) to be an instrument to bring life to people. When God gave the law (the Ten Commandments) to his people, they were already saved (delivered from the house of slavery) and they were already God’s people (Exodus 20:1-2). God gave them the law in 1447 B.C. (Exodus 19:3), not as an instrument to bring life, but as God’s rule or standard how God’s saved people should live as the people of God in the world (Exodus 20:3-17). It was the religious party of the Pharisees who since the exile of Israel to Babylon in 586 B.C. changed the law into the means of justification (salvation)!

- **What phase of Paul’s personal experience is portrayed in this passage? (Romans 7:7-13).**

Does Romans 7:7-13 describe the experience of a regenerate person or of an unregenerate person? *It seems most likely that this passage describes Paul’s experience just before, during and shortly after his conversion.*

When Paul was still an unregenerate Pharisee (Acts 26:5), he was self-complacent and regarded himself as someone who was very religious and completely righteous through outwardly keeping the written law of Moses (mng 2) (Philippians 3:4-6). For a long time, he occupied himself intellectually with the written Law of Moses and tried to keep the 613 laws that the Pharisees derived from the Law of Moses. However, the moral law of God (mng 3 in the sense of mng 1) that demands perfect righteousness and perfect holiness simply did not function in his life. Paul “lived apart from the moral law” in the religious self-righteousness and spiritual pride of a Pharisee (Romans 7:9a).

Paul says that *apart from the moral law, sin in the sinful nature is inactive* (Romans 7:8). Paul does not tell us *when* in his life he began to take the moral law of God serious, *when* in his life he began to realise what sin and covetousness really was (Romans 7:7) and *when* the moral law caused his indwelling sin to become active and to produce every kind of covetous desire in him (Romans 7:8). It must have started when he was still unregenerate before his conversion. The experience of “sin springing to life and he died” (Romans 7:9b) should most probably be associated with either his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, or with his contact with Ananias in Damascus, or with the events during his three year stay in Arabia (Acts chapters 9, 22, 26; Galatians 1:13-18). It was then that this former persecutor of the Christian Church had time to reflect on the kind of person he had been before his conversion, to think about the witness

of Stephen and the other Christian martyrs, whom he helped to kill, and to listen to the teaching of Ananias and other Christians in his early Christian life.

It was then that he had time to meditate on the words of Jesus himself to him on the way to Damascus (Acts 22:8-11; Acts 26:14-18) and to study the Bible passages that summarise the way of salvation (Genesis 15:6; Psalm 32:1-11; Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12; Habakkuk 2:4). It was then that Paul was aroused from his spiritual apathy, that he became painfully aware of how sinful he really was and that his sinful pride and vaunted self-sufficiency “died”, that is, came to an end (Romans 7:9b). It was then that he realised that the moral commandments (mng 3), which were intended to guide God’s people how to live, actually brought death to religious people who wanted to be justified by keeping the law (cf. Romans 9:31-33). By trying to keep the law (mng 3), he realised that he could not keep the law and that he was totally depraved in his unregenerate nature (Romans 3:10-20), that is, that he was spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-4).

It was not God’s moral law that had deceived him, because the moral law is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12). It was his own indwelling sinful nature that had deceived him to believe that he could be justified by keeping the law. His indwelling sinful nature used the knowledge of God’s moral laws (mng 3) to actually do the things forbidden by the moral law. Knowledge of the moral law caused him to realise how utterly sinful he was, how depraved he was, how much he had missed God’s purpose for his life (Romans 7:10-11,13).

▪ **(3) Romans 7:14-25. The function of the law of sin (mng 4): The law of sin makes the believer a prisoner of sin.**

- The indwelling sin is not the believer’s real nature (7:14-15).
- The law (mng 3) cannot destroy the sinful nature (7:16-20)
- The indwelling sin is a power from which a believer cannot deliver himself (7:21-23).
  - The Christian experiences sin as a constant enemy lying in wait to attack (7:21).
  - The Christian delights in God’s righteous requirement (7:22).
  - The Christian is still a prisoner of his own sinful nature (7:23).
  - The Christian is a walking civil war between the indwelling sin and the indwelling Spirit
- Only Jesus Christ can rescue the believer from this body of death (7:24-25).
  - The Christian still lives in a body of death (7:24).
  - Christ rescues the Christian from the forceful operation of his sinful nature (7:25).
  - The Christian must make war against his sinful nature and make an end to his misdeeds.

In Romans 7:14-25 Paul explains the benefit and effect of the law (mng 3), not because the law is evil, but Deliverance from the law (in the sense of being an instrument of justification or salvation and an instrument of sanctification or holy life) is necessary because the Jewish religious leaders and teachers have made the law (mng 3) into a means (an instrument) of justification (salvation). The law cannot make anybody righteous or holy. The law can only give someone knowledge and an awareness of sin.

The law (mng 3) makes the Christian more alert, but it cannot destroy the dominion of indwelling sin (the sinful nature of man). This inability is not due to the nature of the law (mng 3), but to the nature of indwelling sin. The Christian believer still commits sins, but the indwelling sin is not his real nature anymore, because he longs to be delivered from it. The law (mng 3) can do nothing to destroy the power and corruption of sin in any person in the world!

• **The law is spiritual, but the Christian is still unspiritual (Romans 7:14).**

The law (mng 3) is *spiritual* in nature, because it reveals God’s nature and will, which is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12).

**However, the Christian as to his sinful nature is unspiritual.**

He is unspiritual because his sinful nature does not and cannot by itself subject itself to God and God’s will. The Christian still experiences the reality, presence and power of indwelling sin. The Christian approves of God’s law (mng 3), but denounces his indwelling sin. By using the word ‘unspiritual’, Paul does not say that the Christian is still not born-again, but that the Christian is still imperfect: the opposite of what the law (mng 3) demands, namely, to be spiritual – in fact, to be absolutely complete and perfect! Because the Christian is still unspiritual (not complete and not perfect), the law (mng 3) cannot sanctify the Christian.

**The Christian as to his sinful nature is sold to sin.**

Paul does not say that he is a complete slave of his master “sin” (as in John 8:33-36). But Paul says that although he had been sold to sin (when he fell into sin in solidarity with the whole human race)(Romans 5:12) he rejects “sin” as his master (lord)!

**The Christian lives in a world where two realities overlap one another.**

On the one hand he is still a member of the fallen human race: he has been sold to sin, but he does not acknowledge sin as his lord. He is no longer a slave to sin (Romans 6:6). On the other hand he has been born-again: he is a new man, a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). He has two realities in his human nature: The one reality is called *the flesh* (Romans 7:18), that is, *his old sinful nature*, which is imperfect, weak and transitory. The other reality is called *the mind*, (Romans 7:22,25), that is, *his new regenerate nature*, which is controlled by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16) and God’s moral law (mng 3) from within (Hebrews 8:10). Both his sinful nature and his regenerate nature dwell in his spirit (soul) and in his body. Romans 7:14-25 describes the conflict between the Christian’s old sinful nature which he derived from Adam and his new regenerate nature which he derived from Christ (cf. Romans 5:17-19). “For the sinful nature desires

what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other so that you do not do what you want (Galatians 5:17).” King David (Psalm 51:3-15) and the tax collector (Luke 18:13-14) experienced this conflict in their spirit and body.

In the past Paul was *only a sinner* (not born again) (John 3:3). In the future he will be *only a perfect and glorified saint* (1 John 3:2). But in the present between his regeneration (the beginning of his Christian life) and his physical death (the end of his life on earth) he is *at the same time a sinner and a saint*. The fall of mankind into sin and its consequences (especially the powerful onslaughts of his sinful human nature on his regenerated nature) continue to have an effect on the Christian until his physical death or until the second coming of Christ. Paul experiences life as if he has been sold (as a slave) to the realm where sin is a very formidable power.

The Christian is perfectly righteous and holy *with regard to his state (position) in Christ*, but he is not yet perfectly righteous and holy *with regard to his life-style (behaviour) in this present world*. By his death and resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ himself has become and now is the righteousness and holiness and redemption of the Christian (1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 2:4-7). Jesus Christ “redeemed” the Christian (Romans 3:24). Redemption<sup>19</sup> means the buying back of a slave or a captive, that is, making him free by the payment of a ransom<sup>20</sup> (Mark 10:45; 2 Corinthians 5:21). But the Christian is not yet always righteous and completely holy in his thoughts, motives, attitudes, words and deeds in this present world. He still commits sins (1 John 1:8-10; 1 John 2:1-2), but does *not keep on sinning* and *cannot continue to lie in sin* as someone who has not yet been born again (1 John 3:6-9).

The Christian lives among people belonging to the evil world (cf. Matthew 13:25), where Satan controls people. He is surrounded by godlessness, wickedness, corruption, violence, immorality and deception. God has rescued the believer in Christ from the dominion of darkness and has brought him into the kingdom of his Son, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13). The Christian no longer belongs to the dominion of Satan, but to the kingdom (kingship, sovereign reign) of Christ. He still lives “in the sinful world”, but is “not of the sinful world” (John 17:11,14). He now belongs to God and to the born again world, where Jesus Christ rules as King, where God keeps him safe and where Satan cannot harm him (1 John 5:19-20; Matthew 13:36-43,47-50)!

- **The law is good, but the Christian cannot do the perfect good (Romans 7:15).**

The best translation of Romans 7:15 is, “I do not desire or approve of”<sup>21</sup> what I *frequently* (present iterative tense) carry out<sup>22</sup>. What I do not wish<sup>23</sup> I *frequently* (present iterative tense) practice<sup>24</sup> But what I hate or prefer the least<sup>25</sup> I *frequently* (present iterative tense) do.<sup>26</sup>”

Paul’s spiritual and moral goal is nothing less than perfection (Philippians 3:12-14; Matthew 5:48; Hebrews 12:14). But at the end of each day when Paul evaluates his life, he realises that he falls far short of God’s standard of perfection and loathes the evil things he has done. God in Christ has done so much for him and yet he could do so little in return. Everything he did or accomplished that day is tainted with sin. He realises that his goal is much higher than his actual performance! He admits that the moral law (mng 3) simply cannot make him holy, righteous or good.

The “flesh”, which is the old sinful nature in the Christian, desires what is contrary to the Spirit. And the Spirit, who is already present in the Christian (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20), desires what is contrary to the sinful nature. These two realities are in conflict with each other, so that the Christian *frequently* does what he does not wish to do (Galatians 5:17), but also *frequently* does what the Holy Spirit wants him to do. The Christian is a walking civil war. Paul does not say that he cannot do *anything* good, but that he cannot do *the perfect* (and continuous) good which he wishes to do.

The Christian cannot do the perfect good. This is not due to the nature of the moral law (mng 3), but due to the sinful nature which still dwells in the Christian. While the non-Christian *voluntarily yields* himself to *continually* be (present continuous tense) a slave<sup>27</sup> of his sinful nature (Romans 6:16), the Christian has *involuntarily been sold and remains sold* (perfect tense)<sup>28</sup> to his sinful nature (as long as he lives in his body on this earth)(Romans 7:14; cf. Romans 5:12). The Christian does not willingly give himself to the service of sin, but his sinful nature is in the position of a sold person whose acts are not always the evidence of his inner inclination. The Christian often wants to do what is good, but his sinful nature works so forcefully against him that he does what is evil instead. It is because of the presence of the sinful nature in the Christian that he often does what he hates and omits to do what he approves.

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<sup>19</sup> Greek: ἀπολυτρωσις

<sup>20</sup> Greek: λυτρον

<sup>21</sup> Greek: γινωσκω

<sup>22</sup> Greek: καταργαζομαι

<sup>23</sup> Greek: θελω

<sup>24</sup> Greek: πρασσω

<sup>25</sup> Greek: μισεω

<sup>26</sup> Greek: ποιεω

<sup>27</sup> Greek: δουλοι εστε

<sup>28</sup> Greek: πεπραμενος participle, perfect tense, passive voice of πωρασκω = to sell (someone as a slave)

- **The law cannot destroy the sinful nature (Romans 7:16-20).**

“And if I *frequently* (present iterative tense) do what I do not want (to do), I agree that the (moral) law (mng 3) is good” (Romans 7:16). Paul says that although the Christian hates his transgressions of God’s moral law, he still admits that God’s moral law is good.

“As it is, it is no longer I myself who *frequently* (present iterative tense) do it (that is, do what I do not want to do), but it is sin living in me” (Romans 7:17). Paul says that the sinful acts, which the Christian frequently does, are no longer the criterion of the real character of the Christian. His sinful acts are indeed his own acts. But when these sinful acts are not performed with the full agreement of his regenerated nature, they no longer show the complete human nature of the Christian or the real state of the Christian. “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire (to do) (present tense) what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do (present tense) is not the good I want (to do), no, the evil I do not want (to do) (present tense), this I keep on doing. Now if I do (present tense) what I do not want (to do) it is no longer I who do (present tense) it, but it is sin living in me (that does it)” (Romans 7:18-20). Paul concludes that the sinful acts, which the Christian often does, only confirm that nothing spiritually or morally good or beneficial lives in his sinful nature.

Although the moral law (mng 3) commands what a Christian should do and the regenerate nature of the Christian desires to do what the moral law commands, the moral law (mng 3) simply cannot destroy the sinful nature in the Christian! Whenever God commands that a particular evil should not be done, God’s moral command does not automatically destroy the inclination in the Christian to do that evil thing. Conclusion: the moral law (mng 3) or Ten Commandments cannot help the Christian in the struggle between his sinful nature and his regenerate nature. The moral law simply cannot make the Christian holy, righteous or good!

- **The indwelling sin is a power from which a believer cannot deliver himself (Romans 7:21-23).**

In Romans 7:21-25, Paul states his final conclusion. The struggle of the Christian is between *his sinful nature* which he derived from Adam and *his regenerate nature* which he derived from Christ.

The word “law” in this passage is used in two senses:

- The law is an unbending rule (principle)(mng 4)(Romans 7:21), namely: the law of sin (i.e. the sinful nature) (Romans 7:23b) and the law of my mind (i.e. the regenerated nature) (Romans 7:23a).
- And the law as God’s righteous requirement (mng 1)(Romans 7:22).

The Christian experiences sin as a constant enemy lying in wait to attack. Paul summarises Romans 7:14-20 as follows: “So I find this law (this unbending rule or principle)(mng 4) at work: when I wish to do good evil lies at the door” (Romans 7:21). Paul is not forced to give in to evil lying at his doorstep, but the evil old nature in him is certainly not sleeping. After his regeneration the sinful nature sprang to life and has the sinful world (1 John 2:15-17) and Satan (1 Peter 5:8) as its allies. The sinful nature continually looks for a way to turn a good deed into an evil deed. Compare sin lying in wait at the door of Cain (Genesis 4:7) and Satan who is continually on the look out to attack believers (1 Peter 5:8).

The Christian delights in God’s righteous requirement. “For in my inner being I delight in God’s law” (Romans 7:22). With his whole inner being the Christian delights in God’s law (mng 3 in the sense of mng 1) in the sense of God’s holy and righteous requirement, which is revealed in God’s moral law. Jesus Christ summarises God’s holy and righteous requirement as: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:30-31).” This law is not intended to be the means of justification, but as the rule which should govern the life of the Christian.

But as long as he lives on earth, the Christian is still a prisoner of his own sinful nature. “But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members” (Romans 7:23a). “The law (mng 4) of sin” is the old depraved and sinful nature still at work in the members of the Christian’s body, *continually* waging war (present continuous tense)<sup>29</sup> against him and *frequently* making him a prisoner (present iterative tense)<sup>30</sup> of himself. Thus the sinful nature can conquer the Christian! It can take the spirit and body of the Christian captive and make them subject to its powerful corrupt influence. The power of the sinful nature is still so great, that the Christian cannot resist it with his own will power or effort (Romans 7:15,23). The Christian does not become the willing servant of his sinful nature, but rather its miserable victim. The Christian is “a prisoner of war” of an indwelling enemy, namely, his own sinful nature. As long as the Christian still lives in his present physical body, he remains the *unwilling and reluctant servant* of his own sinful nature.

However, when the Christian acknowledges Jesus as his Lord, he renounces his indwelling sin as lord! By living by the Holy Spirit, the Christian will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16). But, as long as the Christian lives in his present physical body, his sinful nature will be present and the control of the Holy Spirit will never be perfect or total in him. No Christian is all the time Spirit-filled. That is why every Christian is commanded: “Be *again*

<sup>29</sup> Greek: αντιστρατευομαι

<sup>30</sup> Greek: αιχμαλωτιζομαι

and again filled with the Spirit”<sup>31</sup> (Ephesians 5:18). No Christian reaches perfection here on earth. That is why he is commanded: “Be continually (imperative, present continuous tense) perfect as your heavenly Father is (indicative, present continuous tense) perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This is what a Christian should strive for again and again.

The Christian is a walking civil war between the indwelling sin and the indwelling Spirit. “And making me frequently (present iterative tense) a prisoner of the law of sin (mng 4) at work within my members” (Romans 7:23b). “The law of the mind” (mng 4) is the regenerated nature of the Christian. The Christian experiences a civil war in him between the law of sin and the law of his mind. This is the civil war between his indwelling sin and the indwelling Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:17). The fact that the Christian experiences a spiritual war in the members of his body is the proof that he is genuinely born-again! A non-Christian does not experience this spiritual struggle! The spiritual struggle consists of the realisation that he does not always do what he wishes to do and that he sometimes does what he does not wish to do (Romans 7:19). The Christian delights in God’s moral law (mng 3), but at the same time loathes the sins he commits (Romans 7:15,20).

- **Only Jesus Christ can rescue the believer from his body of death (Romans 7:24-25).**

The Christian still lives in a body of death. Therefore Paul cries out: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). “The body of death” is the Christian’s physical body at the present time before his resurrection. His body is still the sphere where his sinful nature operates most specifically. The members of his physical body (his eyes, tongue, hands and feet, etc) are still the instruments of his sinful nature to do sin. His body is subject to the ravages of the indwelling sin and causes spiritual death and finally physical death. But the present body of the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and will be transformed to become like the glorious resurrected body of Jesus Christ at the resurrection of the body (Philippians 3:21).

Finally Paul exclaims, “Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:25a)! While the moral law (mng 3) can never make an end to this spiritual conflict within the Christian, Jesus Christ can, will and does! The moral law can only cause the Christian to become acutely aware of his helplessness, powerlessness and depravity and spur (drive) him on to seek victory where it can only be found, namely, with Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:24). Only Jesus Christ will again and again rescue the Christian from the forceful operation of his sinful nature. The Christian will not only receive the righteousness of Christ, but also the holiness of Christ, which is, victory over the power and depravity of sin. God gives this victory more and more in the present time and perfectly in the future eternity. This is God’s grace in Christ Jesus!

“So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin” (Romans 7:25b). Paul says that the Christian has two natures within him which cannot be separated from each other until physical death or until Christ’s second coming, whichever comes first. The two inseparable natures within the Christian are the old sinful nature (the indwelling sin) and the regenerated (born-again) nature. With his “mind” (his regenerated nature) the Christian willingly serves God’s moral law (mng 3), but with his “flesh” (his old sinful nature) he completely unwillingly serves the law of sin (mng 4). The flesh (the old sinful nature, the indwelling sin) remains an unwelcome intruder and an illegal colonist in the body of the Christian. Paul does not deny that he is responsible for his sinful thoughts, motives, attitudes, words and deeds. But he realises that the real and deepest cause for the fact that the Christian can still fall into sin and actually still commits sin is his sinful nature. He does not maintain that the Christian serves the indwelling sin willingly, but rather that the indwelling sin is a power from which the Christian *cannot* deliver himself.

Paul does not resign himself to this condition, because he is deeply convinced that only Jesus Christ can deliver him from sin. Jesus Christ has already justified (forgiven) him from all sin in the past, present and future (Romans 6:6-7). Now Jesus Christ is in the process of sanctifying him from all sin in the present. The future tenses in verse 24 and 25 emphasise absolute certainty. In the present time Jesus Christ will *certainly rescue the Christian again and again* from the forceful operation of his sinful nature. And in the future at his second coming he will *certainly, completely and forever rescue* him from his sinful nature!

- **The Christian must make war against his sinful nature and make an end to his misdeeds.**

The struggle of the Christian is between *his sinful nature* which he derived from Adam and *his regenerate nature* which he derived from Christ. His sinful nature is a power from which he cannot free himself. *Time and again* the Christian serves like a slave (present iterative tense) his sinful nature.

Not God’s law (mng 3), but God’s grace gives the Christian victory in his struggle against sin in his sinful nature and enables him to live the new and holy life in spite of the presence of his sinful nature! It is not the law<sup>32</sup> (mng 3), but Jesus Christ who *once for all* redeemed<sup>33</sup> the Christian from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13) and *once for all* set him free<sup>34</sup> from the dominating power of his sinful nature with its corrupt influences (Romans 8:2; cf. Romans 6:6-7).

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<sup>31</sup> Greek: πληρουσθε εν πνευματι (imperative mood, present iterative tense, passive voice). It is a command, it is something that must happen again and again, and it is something which God the Spirit does and not the Christian in his own power.

<sup>32</sup> The Jews call ‘the law’ Torah, the Muslims call ‘the law’ Sharia and the Christians call ‘the law’ Nomos in the Greek language.

<sup>33</sup> Greek: εξηγορασεν (aorist tense) = to buy back, to redeem, to deliver

<sup>34</sup> Greek: ηλευθερωσεν (aorist tense)



The regenerate nature of the Christian is also a power, because nothing less than the Spirit of God lives in him (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)! Therefore, the Christian *again and again* serves like a slave (present iterative tense) God's moral law (mng 3)(Romans 7:25).

But Paul is also deeply convinced that he has a personal responsibility to fight against the indwelling sin and to put the misdeeds of indwelling sin to death by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16-26). The best thing to do when the sinful nature attacks, is to immediately pray to Jesus Christ and put yourself under his loving authority and protection.

▪ **(4) What phase of Paul's personal experience is portrayed in this passage? (Romans 7:14-25).**

Is Romans 7:14-25 the experience of a regenerate person or of an unregenerate person?

There are people who argue that Romans 7:14-25 cannot be the experience of a born-again believer. They base their argument on Paul's statement, "I am unspiritual" (Romans 7:14) and on the contrast between Romans chapter 7 on the one hand and Romans chapter 6 and chapter 8 on the other hand.

What evidence is there to support the conclusion that Romans 7:14-25 describes the experience of a regenerate believer and not of an unregenerate unbeliever?

• **Romans 7:24.**

Paul's statement in Romans 7:24 about himself is humble and realistic. As a born-again believer Paul describes himself as "the least of the apostles" (1 Corinthians 15:9), as "the least of all God's people" (Ephesians 3:8) and as "the worst of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). So when Paul describes himself as "a wretched man" (Romans 7:24) this is quite in line with these other humble and self-incriminating statements about himself as *a regenerate Christian*! He is a wretched man as long as he is not yet completely saved from his depraved nature, which will only happen when he sees Jesus Christ face to face (1 John 3:1-3; Philippians 3:8-14).

• **Romans 7:14-25.**

Paul's statements in Romans 7:14-25 are more likely a description of a regenerate Christian than of an unregenerate unbeliever. It is unlikely that an unregenerate person would say, "I agree that God's law is good" (Romans 7:16,22), "I do not approve of sin, I hate sin and deeply regret my sins" (Romans 7:15,19,24) and "I wish to do what is good" (Romans 7:18,19,21). It is unlikely that an unregenerate person would thank God, through Jesus Christ, as Paul is doing (Romans 7:25; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3).

• **Romans 6:1-7.**

Paul's statements in Romans 7:14-25 do not contradict his statements about the regenerate believer in Romans 6:6-7,18,22. The physical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was a once-for-all decisive event in the history of this world. Likewise, the spiritual death and resurrection of the Christian in solidarity with Christ is a once-for-all decisive event in his personal history (Romans 6:2-7).

In Romans 4:2-5, "justification" (in the sense of imputing righteousness) is *the legal act* by which God reckons<sup>35</sup> the righteousness of Christ to the believer's account and thus regards and treats the believer as completely righteous in his sight. The sins of the believer in the past, present and future have been completely forgiven!

In Romans 6:6-7, "sanctification" (in the sense of imputing holiness) is also *a legal act* by which God reckons the holiness of Christ to the believer's account and thus regards and treats the believer as completely holy in his sight (1 Corinthians 1:30). The crucifixion of the old self in solidarity with the crucifixion of Christ results in releasing (delivering) the believer from his body of sin and setting him free from the slavery to sin. "The body of sin" is the physical body which he possessed as a non-believer. It was a body that was conditioned, controlled and dominated by his sinful or depraved nature. It was a body that irresistibly served godlessness and wickedness as a slave. Also this was a once-for-all decisive event (Romans 6:6).

It would then appear that the Christian has been completely and perfectly sanctified, that is, that his body of sin and his slavery to sin has been completely removed from him, that he no more has a physical body that is conditioned, controlled and dominated by his sinful nature and that he is completely free to serve righteousness. However, the letter to the Romans chapters 6 to 8 teaches more.

• **Romans 8:1-4.**

Romans 8:3 says, "God having once for all sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh for the purpose of dealing with sin (its guilt and power) once-for-all *doomed*<sup>36</sup> sin in the flesh". God pronounced his sentence of doom on sin in the unregenerate nature. This is *a legal act* concerning *the state* of the believer. But God's pronouncement of judgement (the legal act) always includes putting that judgement into effect. Romans 8:4 says, God doomed sin in the flesh "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit." *The once for all legal act concerning the state of the believer becomes a continuous ethical*

<sup>35</sup> 'To impute' means 'to reckon' (which is by grace) rather than 'to credit' (which may be by merit).

<sup>36</sup> Greek: ο θεος τον εαυτου υιον πεμψας εν ομοιωματι σαρκος αμαρτιας και περι αμαρτιας κατεκρινεν (aorist tense)  
την αμαρτιαν εν τη σαρκι

act concerning the process of the believer. While God is 100% responsible for the state of the believer, the believer is also responsible for his process – he must stop living according to the sinful nature and instead live according to the Spirit.

Thus, righteousness and holiness do not only have a legal aspect which is called “justification”, but also an ethical aspect which is called “sanctification”. The forensic<sup>37</sup> aspect emphasises *the state* of being righteous and holy before God, while the ethical<sup>38</sup> aspect emphasises *the process* of becoming more and more what the believer already is in Christ, that is, becoming more and more righteous and holy in spirit and body on earth.

God’s condemnation of sin always includes the doom of sin, that is, the execution of that sentence by delivering a person from both the guilt of sin and the power of sin. When a person becomes a Christian, God delivers him from the guilt of sin. Throughout the Christian’s life God continues to deliver him from the power of his sinful nature. At the end of the Christian’s life on earth God finally delivers him from the presence of sin. At the present time, the sinful nature in the Christian believer has lost its *absolute* power and cannot continue to bind him to itself anymore. In the future at the second coming of Christ the sinful nature in the Christian believer still living on earth will in the twinkling of an eye lose all its power forever (1 Corinthians 15:52-57)! The resurrected body of the Christian will be a spiritual body, a body completely governed (conditioned, controlled and dominated) by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:44,50)!

The physical body of the regenerate Christian is therefore no longer *completely* conditioned, controlled and dominated by his sinful nature. The involuntary choice before regeneration to be a slave to sin has become a voluntary choice after regeneration to be a slave of righteousness (Romans 6:16-18) and thus, the regenerate believer in Christ has been set free from the *total dominion* of his sinful nature.

Certainly, Romans chapter 6 pictures the Christian as having died to the power of the sinful nature and having the ability and devotion to live the new and holy life. However, nowhere in Romans chapter 6 or elsewhere in the Bible is it stated or implied that the regenerate Christian has been *completely delivered* from his struggle against his sinful nature! Even Romans chapter 6 clearly refers to this *ongoing struggle* between the Christian’s regenerate nature and his sinful nature (Romans 6:12,13,19; cf. Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 6:12-13; 1 John 1:8-10; 1 John 2:1-2). Also Romans chapter 8 clearly refers to this ongoing struggle between the Christian’s regenerate nature and his sinful nature (Romans 8:13). Throughout his life on earth the regenerate Christian *continues* to put to death<sup>39</sup> the misdeeds of the body by the Holy Spirit living in him.

- **The complete picture from the letter to the Romans is that the Christian is “a sinner-saint”!**

The regenerate Christian cannot lead an absolute sinless life.

*On the one hand, the regenerate Christian is an involuntary prisoner of only the one aspect of his human nature, that is, he is the unwilling prisoner of his sinful nature* (Romans 7:14,23). He is still “sold under sin” due to the fall of humanity in sin (cf. Romans 5:12). His sinful nature still has such a control over his life that *he cannot lead an absolute sinless life* (Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:8-10; 1 John 2:1-2). The sinful or depraved nature is still a power that wants to coerce and control the believer (Romans 7:21,23,25). Time and again the sinful nature attacks and opposes the Holy Spirit living in the believer and tries to drag the believer back into his old life-style (Romans 7:23a; cf. Galatians 5:17). Often the sinful nature (i.e. the law of sin) makes the believer a prisoner of itself (Romans 7:23b). The sinful nature is so powerful that the believer cannot resist it with his own will power or effort. Paul does not say that the sinful nature always conquers the believer or that the believer can only live a defeated life. He says that the sinful or depraved nature of man is a power from which even a regenerate Christian cannot free himself and which at times (not always) conquers the regenerate Christian in spite of the fact that the regenerate Christian does not intend his sinful nature to conquer.

The regenerate Christian cannot lead an absolute sinful life.

*On the other hand, the regenerate Christian is the voluntary servant of the other aspect of his human nature, that is, he is the wholehearted servant of his regenerate nature* (Romans 6:17-18). His regenerate nature has such a control over his life that *he cannot lead an absolute sinful life anymore*. The born-again Christian believer “has *once for all* died to sin” (aorist tense)(Romans 6:2), “has *forever* been justified from sin” (perfect tense)(Romans 6:7), “has *once for all* been set free from sin” (aorist tense)(Romans 6:18,22) and “has *once for all* become a slave to righteousness” (aorist tense)(Romans 6:18) and “a slave to God” (aorist tense)(Romans 6:22). These are all decisive events. The Christian is commanded to *continually* reckon (present tense) himself dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11). He is commanded *never* to allow (present tense)<sup>40</sup> sin to be his master or lord (Romans 6:12). He is commanded *never* to present (present tense)<sup>41</sup> the members of his body as weapons of unrighteousness to sin (Romans 6:13), but commanded to *once for all* present (aorist tense) the members of his body as weapons of righteousness to God (Romans 6:13) and to *once for all* present (aorist tense) the members of his body as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness (Romans 6:19). The dominating position and power of his sinful nature has been broken. Although time and again he does fall into

<sup>37</sup> Forensic = used in courts of law

<sup>38</sup> Ethical = used of morals relating to conduct

<sup>39</sup> Greek: ει δε πνευματι τας πραξεις του σωματος θανατουτε (present continuous tense) ζησεσθε (future tense emphasizes the absolute certainty)

<sup>40</sup> Greek: παριστανετε

<sup>41</sup> Greek: παρασησατε

committing a sin (Romans 7:14-26), *he cannot, does not want to and will not continue* to live in sin (Romans chapter 6; 1 John 3:6,8-9)!

*The Christian is a sinner-saint.*

Although Satan, the sinful world and the sinful nature in man try with all their might and trickery to keep the regenerate Christian from doing what is right, they *cannot throughout stop him* from doing right and growing in holiness! They *cannot completely prevent* him from experiencing victory over sins and peace that surpasses all understanding! While the wages of continually living in sin is death, justification leads to more and more holy living and results in eternal life (Romans 6:22-23)! This sense of victory, which the Christian now possesses in principle, he will possess in perfection in the future. It is this knowledge and assurance which sustains Christians in all their struggles!

With regard to his *position (state) in Christ* a regenerate Christian is already a saint. The perfect righteousness and holiness of Christ has already been ascribed (imputed) to his account. He has been separated from the godless and wicked world and dedicated to belong to God.

With regard to his *process of growth (style of life) in Christ* a regenerate Christian is not yet perfectly righteous or holy in his thoughts, motives, attitudes, words and deeds. He is perfectly righteous and holy in his position in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30), but not yet perfectly righteous and holy in his Christian walk (cf. 1 Peter 1:15-16). The regenerate Christian is a sinner-saint.

Paul's statements in Romans 7:14-25 are completely opposite to his statements about unregenerate people in Romans 7:5,9a. Romans 7:5,9a uses *the past tense* and describes an unregenerate unbeliever in the past: "We were in the flesh (lived in the sinful nature)" and "we bore fruit for death" (Romans 7:5; Galatians 5:19-21). In the past Paul was alive apart from the law and gave no serious attention to God's law (mng 3 including mng 1). So the law did not arouse sinful desires in his sinful nature and he lived an undisturbed self-sufficient and self-righteous life, unafraid of God's punishment for sins (Romans 7:9a)!

But Romans 7:14-25 uses *the present tense* and describes the regenerate Christian in the present. Paul calls Jesus Christ his Lord (Romans 7:24), describes the spiritual struggle of the Christian as long as he still lives in his present mortal body on this earth (cf. Galatians 5:16-23) and expects to be delivered from his present lowly body (Romans 7:24; cf. Philippians 3:21).

Paul's statements in Romans 7:14-25 are completely opposite to his statements about unregenerate people in Romans 8:5-8. Romans 8:5-8 says, "Those who *continually* are (NIV: live) according to the flesh (the sinful and depraved nature), *continually* think the things of the flesh. The mind of the flesh (is) death. Therefore the mind of the flesh (is) hostility or hatred<sup>42</sup> to God. It *never* submits (present continuous tense)<sup>43</sup> to the law of God (mng 3 in the sense of mng 1), and *never* can (submit to the law of God)(present continuous tense)<sup>44</sup>. Those who *continually* are in the flesh can *never* please God (present continuous tense)." The sinful depraved nature of the non-Christian *continually* rules over his life.

But Romans 8:5-6 also describes the regenerate Christian and says, "Those who *continually* are (NIV: live) according to the Spirit, *continually* think the things of the Spirit. The mind of the Spirit (is) life and peace." The regenerate Christian is born-again by the Holy Spirit, occupies his life with the things of the Spirit (cf. Colossians 3:1-4) and experiences the new life and peace with God.

Likewise in Romans 7:14-25 the regenerate Christian agrees with God's moral law (mng 3)(Romans 7:16), delights in God's moral law (Romans 7:22) and serves in the new way of the Spirit (Romans 7:6; cf. John 4:23-24). While the unregenerate non-Christian hates the God of the Bible (Romans 8:7), the regenerate Christian hates the evil which he does (Romans 7:15)!

**Conclusion.** It is clear that in Romans 7:14-25, Paul describes how great the weakness of the regenerate Christian is. In order to be sanctified, the Christian needs a much greater power outside himself than his sinful nature inside himself! He needs no one less than Jesus Christ who once for all earned the legal position of perfect righteousness and holiness before God in the place of and for the benefit of regenerate Christians. And he needs no one less than the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit) who continually applies this righteousness and holiness in the ethical process called sanctification to the personal lives of believers.

Therefore Romans 7:7-13 most likely describes Paul's experience *just before, during and shortly after* his conversion!

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<sup>42</sup> Greek: εχθρος

<sup>43</sup> Greek: υποτασσεται

<sup>44</sup> Greek: ου δυναται

- **(5) What is the difference between being ‘in the flesh’ and being ‘unspiritual’? (Romans 8:8 and Romans 7:14).**

**All non-Christians are “in the flesh”<sup>45</sup> (Romans 8:5-8).**

Every non-Christian is controlled by only his sinful nature and does not have the Holy Spirit living in him. He is unregenerate (not born again). Although the non-Christian chose to be a slave of his sinful nature and set himself at the disposal of his sinful nature (Romans 6:16), he cannot choose to be free from his sinful nature. He irresistibly offers the members of his body as instruments to serve unrighteousness and unholiness. He *does not* submit to God and God’s will. He *cannot* even submit to God and God’s will. He *cannot* please God at all. Thus, to be only ‘in the flesh’ is to be unregenerate.

**All Christians are “unspiritual”<sup>46</sup> as to their sinful nature (Romans 7:14).**

Every Christian has as it were two natures: a sinful nature that causes him to be unspiritual and a regenerate nature that causes him to be spiritual. The law is spiritual<sup>47</sup>, but a Christian as to his sinful nature is unspiritual, carnal, that is, the opposite of what the law is, namely, perfect. The law reveals the holy, righteous and good will of God (Romans 7:12), but a Christian as to his sinful nature is still unholy, unrighteous and evil. The Christian knows that in his sinful nature there is nothing that is morally good or beneficial (Romans 7:18). The sinful nature of the Christian causes him to *often* do the things which he hates, and to *often* neglect doing the things which he loves. The unspiritual nature is most evident in a Christian that has not grown spiritually (1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

**All Christians are spiritual<sup>48</sup> as to their regenerate nature.**

The regenerate nature of the Christian is also called his “mind” (Romans 7:23) and refers to him as a person who has the mind or way of thinking of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). The Holy Spirit lives in him and wages war against his sinful nature (Galatians 5:17). The regenerate nature of the Christian is his righteous and holy state in Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 5:18; Romans 6:4-8; 1 Corinthians 1:30). It is the reality of the Holy Spirit living in him (Psalm 51:10-11). “The spiritual man” lives his life in accordance to God’s revealed will in the Bible and is able to discern and make judgments between good and evil (1 Corinthians 2:15). The spiritual nature of Christians is most evident in a Christian that has grown spiritually to maturity (Hebrews 5:14).

**All Christians are sinner-saints that will eventually become glorified saints.**

Before regeneration, a non-Christian is “only a sinner” (Romans 5:8). After regeneration, a Christian is “a sinner-saint” (Romans chapter 7). But in the future, at the second coming of Christ, a Christian will be “a glorified saint” (Romans 8:30; 1 John 3:1-3)! Thus, in the period between regeneration (the beginning of his transformation) and final glorification (the completion of his transformation) the Christian experiences a constant war between his sinful nature and his regenerate nature. In this life the Christian is a walking civil war (Galatians 5:16-18)! However, the fact that the Christian experience this conflict between his sinful nature and his regenerate nature is a proof that he is born-again!

- **(6) What is the difference between ‘being a slave to sin’ and ‘being sold to sin’? (Romans 6:6 and Romans 7:14)**

**The non-Christian is a slave to sin during his unregenerate state.**

Romans 6:6,16,17 and 19 teach that *before* their regeneration, all people *used to be* slaves (imperfect tense) to sin and *had once-for-all yielded* their members as slaves to impurity (aorist tense). They behave as people who have *voluntarily* sold themselves as slaves to sin that dwells in their sinful nature (to do evil in the eyes of the Lord) (1 Kings 21:20; 2 Kings 17:17). This is proved by the fact that in their unregenerate state they obey the wishes of their sinful nature and they offer the members of their body to serve impurity and ever increasing wickedness. Because they are unregenerate, they *do not and cannot free themselves* from the dominating and enslaving power of their sinful nature. They do not submit themselves and cannot submit themselves to God and his will. They cannot please God (Romans 8:7-8). Thus, “being a slave to sin” means to still be unregenerate!

**The Christian is still sold to sin during his regenerate state.**

*After* his regeneration the Christian has once-for-all been set free from the above condition of slavery to sin and has once-for-all become a slave of righteousness and a slave (in the sense of “servant”) of God (aorist tense)(Romans 6:18,22)! The condition of “being a slave to sin” (Romans 6:6,16,17,19) never returns! However, the condition of “being sold (as a slave) to be under the master ‘sin’ ” (Romans 7:14) remains a condition and an experience throughout the Christian’s life on earth. The Greek in Romans 7:14 does not say that the Christian “has (voluntarily) sold himself as a slave to sin” (aorist tense), but rather that he “has been sold (as a slave) (at the fall of Adam into sin)(Romans 5:12) to be under sin and consequently is (until his death or the second coming of Christ) in the condition of being sold under sin” (perfect tense)! The condition of being sold (as a slave) to live in a world where sin is the master is not the same condition as actually being a slave to sin, putting oneself at the disposal of sin and yielding one’s members to serve the master sin! The condition of being a slave to sin cannot be said of the regenerate Christian.

<sup>45</sup> Greek: εν σαρκι

<sup>46</sup> Greek: σαρκινος

<sup>47</sup> Greek: πνευματικος

<sup>48</sup> Greek: πνευματικος

Romans 7:14-26 is best explained by its parallel passage in Galatians 5:16-26, which says, “Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

The Bible teaches that the regenerate (born-again) Christian is *still not perfect*. Time and again there is a conflict in the Christian. He still lives in his present weak body, which is subject to his sinful nature. And this sinful nature attacks him constantly and so severely that he does not always do what he really desires to do. Nevertheless, the Christian has something, which the non-Christian does not have, namely, the Holy Spirit living in him! While the non-Christian is still a slave to his sinful nature and produces fruit for death (Romans 7:5; Galatians 5:19-21), the Christian is no longer a slave to his sinful nature, but a slave to the Holy Spirit and produces the fruit of the Spirit (Romans 7:4; Galatians 5:22-25). Although his sinful nature is still a powerful reality in him (Romans 7:14-26), the Christian has *once for all* crucified (aorist tense) his sinful nature with its fruit (sinful passions and desires)(Galatians 5:24). The Christian has made a definite break with living in his sinful nature. The Christian has stopped obeying the old master “sin” and now obeys the sovereign Master God, even when he lives in a world where “sin” is the master of non-Christians. Remember “sin” is “missing God’s goal”, “transgressing God’s commandments in the moral law”, “twisting God’s truth in the Bible”, “doing what God forbids” and “neglecting to do what God commands”. The Christian has been transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). The Christian *wants to, can and will live the new life* in his regenerate nature, even when he has to constantly fight the onslaughts of his sinful nature. To put this in another way: the Christian submits himself willingly to the reign of Christ through the Holy Spirit to live the new life in dependence of the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is in the process of practising what he already is in principle. To put it in yet another way: the Holy Spirit is in the process of applying the righteousness and holiness of Jesus Christ to the life of the Christian (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30).

“The law of sin” (mng 4) is the old depraved and sinful nature still at work in the members of the Christian’s body, *continually* waging war (present tense) against him and *frequently* making him a prisoner (present tense) of himself.

Likewise, the regenerate Christian “is sold (as a slave) (when Adam fell into sin) (perfect tense) and is consequently condemned to involuntarily live (as a slave) under the master “sin” within this present world (Romans 7:14), even though he himself does not acknowledge “sin” as his lord, but Christ as his Lord. To put this in another way: the Christian “is *frequently* made a prisoner (present tense) of the sinful nature (the law of sin) that works within the members of his body” (Romans 7:23). The Christian is thus the passive subject to a power that is alien to his will and from which he cannot free himself. He acknowledges that his sinful nature is still a present reality and still exercises a powerful influence over him. He is *involuntarily* subjected to the forceful operation of his sinful nature. This is proved by the fact that he time and again does things, which he does not want to do (Romans 7:15), and often cannot do what is good (Romans 7:18). Thus, as in Galatians 5:17, the Christian experiences a powerful spiritual and moral conflict raging in the members of his present body, in which the dictates of the sinful nature opposes the dictates of the Holy Spirit (Romans 7:23).

However, like Galatians 5:22-25, Romans 8:12-14 teaches that through the Holy Spirit living in him, the regenerate Christian does not have to live according to the sinful nature and can put the fruit of the sinful nature to death. Through the power of the Holy Spirit living in him the Christian can again and again resist his own sinful nature and do what he really desires to do, which is, do what God wants him to do.

But because the regenerate Christian has a sinful nature until his physical death, he *often* cannot resist the evil influence of his sinful nature and cannot always do what he really wants to do. Although he is spiritually and morally regenerate and is under the dominion of the Holy Spirit, he is still spiritually and morally influenced by his own sinful nature. As long as the Christian lives in the body of death (his present physical body), his sinful nature will also be present and the control of the Holy Spirit will not yet be perfect or total in him. That is why the regenerate Christian needs to be filled with the Spirit *again and again* (present tense)(Ephesians 5:18), that is, again and again he needs to submit himself completely to be conditioned, controlled and dominated by the Holy Spirit!

▪ **(7) What is the difference between ‘the body of sin’ and ‘the body of death’? (Romans 6:6 and Romans 7:24)**

The apostle Paul uses four terms connected to the body. Although there is a connection between these four terms, they also have differences.

• **The body of sin (Romans 6:6) is the physical body of the unregenerate unbeliever.**

It is the physical body of the non-Christian, which is indwelt, conditioned, controlled and dominated by his sinful or depraved nature and which voluntarily, yet irresistibly, serves impurity and ever increasing wickedness as a slave. When he becomes a believer in Christ, he is *once for all* set free (all aorist tense) from this body of sin (Romans 6:6,18,22). Nevertheless, his physical body still remains a body of death or a body of humiliation.

• **The body of death (Romans 7:24) is the physical body of the regenerate Christian.**

It is the physical body of the Christian, which is still indwelt by his sinful nature, which is no longer his master, but is now also indwelt by his regenerate nature (the Holy Spirit), who has become his Master. It is the physical body of the Christian, which often involuntarily and irresistibly still yields to this sinful nature, which *again and again* wages war

against his regenerate nature and *again and again* makes him a prisoner of his sinful nature (both present continuous tense)(Romans 7:23). As a consequence, the sinful or depraved nature (i.e. the law of sin)(Romans 7:21,23), which still dwells in the spirit and body of the Christian, still continues to produce spiritual and especially physical death. That is why it is called “the body of death”.

- **The body of humiliation (Philippians 3:21) is the physical body of the Christian before his resurrection from the dead.**

It is the physical body of the Christian, which is still subjected to physical death. It means the same as the body of death. The last enemy that Christ will destroy is “death” (1 Corinthians 15:26).

- **The body of glory (Philippians 3:21) is the physical body of the Christian after his resurrection from the dead.**

It is the physical body of the Christian after the second coming of Christ. Only at his second coming, Jesus Christ will use his all-controlling power to transform the body of humiliation into the body of glory, which will be like his own glorious resurrected physical body (imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual)(1 Corinthians 15:42-44)!

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## 7. THE LAW IN ROMANS CHAPTER 8.

In Romans chapters 1 to 5 Paul explained *the state of justification* and made it clear that the law (mng 3) cannot secure justification. In Romans chapter 6 and 7 he explained *the state of holiness* and *the process of sanctification* and made it clear that the law (mng 3) can also not produce sanctification. In Romans chapter 8 Paul explains the everlasting assurance of salvation and security of Christians. Believers in Jesus Christ will never be doomed to perish. The salvation that was purposed by God the Father, merited by God the Son, proclaimed in the gospel (Romans 1:16) and applied by God the Holy Spirit is absolutely sure (certain)!

The salvation of Christians has from all eternity been *purposed* (planned, decided) by God the Father. Salvation is on the basis of God’s eternal purpose in election, that is, on the ground of his unmerited and unchanging love that chooses people. God loved believers first (1 John 4:19), when they were still sinners, godless and enemies, that is, when they were still completely lost (Romans 5:6,8,10).

The salvation of Christians has been *merited* and consequently been made possible by Christ’s sacrifice of atonement on the cross.

The salvation of Christians is being *realised* by Christ’s sovereign lordship (kingship) and ceaseless High Priestly ministry through his Spirit (the Holy Spirit).

- **(1) The Christian is sure of his salvation, because he is delivered from the dominating and controlling power of his sinful nature (the law of sin and death)(Romans 8:1-4).**

Romans 8:1-4 says, “Therefore, there is now no doom (or consignment to destruction)(NIV: condemnation)<sup>49</sup> for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law (mng 4) of the Spirit of life set me free from the law (mng 4) of sin and death. For what the law (mng 1 expressed in mng 3) was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful man<sup>50</sup>, for sin<sup>51</sup> (i.e. for the purpose of dealing with sin – its guilt and its power)(NIV: to be a sin offering) And so he *once for all* (aorist tense) doomed (or consigned to destruction) (NIV: condemned) sin in sinful man<sup>52</sup>, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not *continue to live* (literally: walk)(present continuous tense) according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”.

- **The Christian may enjoy a life free from doom.**

The Christian is sure and secure in his salvation because he will never be doomed. While John 5:24 promises that the Christian will not be *condemned*<sup>53</sup> in the final judgement day, Romans 8:1 promises that the Christian will not be *doomed* (punished with eternal destruction in hell) (Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)! This is because God has already *doomed* the sinful nature of the Christian together with its overwhelming guilt and its dominating power in the body of Christ on the cross.

The Holy Spirit (the law or principle of the Spirit)(mng 4) has liberated the Christian from the absolute dominating and controlling power of the sinful nature or the indwelling depravity (the law of sin and death)(mng 4)(cf. Romans 7:21,23ac,26b). The Holy Spirit functions as “a law”, that is, as a *Life-giving and Controlling Power* in all aspects of the Christian’s life (Galatians 5:16-18). The sinful nature functions as another “law”, that is, as another compelling and controlling power in the Christian’s life. It challenges (defies) again and again the believer’s will and changes his good

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<sup>49</sup> Greek: κατακριμα

<sup>50</sup> Greek: ομοιωματι σαρκος αμαρτιας

<sup>51</sup> Greek: και περι αμαρτιας

<sup>52</sup> Greek: κατακρινεν την αμαρτιαν εν τη σαρκι

<sup>53</sup> Greek: εις κρισιν ουκ ερχεται

intentions into evil. It can bring havoc in his body. Paul does not say that the Christian is always doing sin, but that the sin dwelling in the human nature of the Christian is such a strong power that he cannot deliver himself from it! The sinful nature of the Christian will continue to work in his body until he is finally set free from his body of sin and death (Romans 6:6; Romans 7:24; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57)!

The "law" in Romans 8:3,4 and 7 is God's righteous requirement (absolute demand and condition) for justification (salvation) and condemnation (judgement)(mng 1) as it is expressed in God's moral laws (the Ten Commandments and other moral laws in the Bible)(mng 3). Because God is perfectly holy and righteous, this law demands perfect obedience to God and his will, perfect punishment of all sins (disobedience) and as a consequence perfect holiness and righteousness in all human lives. However, no one in history qualifies, except Jesus Christ (who is sinless). Also this law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and mng 3) cannot justify or save anyone, because the depraved human nature of man makes this impossible!

- **What was impossible for the law to do, Jesus Christ did.**

What this law could not possibly do (i.e. justify or save man) because it was weakened by the sinful nature in man, God did in Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ fulfilled God's requirement of perfect righteousness and perfect holiness *in the place of* everyone who believes. Because God's holy and righteous demand was satisfied, he removed the guilt, punishment, shame and absolute dominating power of sin from Christians! In this way God doomed sin and its dominating power through the human body of Jesus Christ on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).

The regenerated Christian proves that he is genuinely a new man by no longer living out of his sinful nature, but by living in dependence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of life functions as the new power in his life.

- **(2) The Christian is sure of his salvation, because his salvation has actually begun in the regeneration and sanctification of his heart and life by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5-8).**

Romans 8:5-8 says, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3), nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

- **The Christian may enjoy a holy life.**

Because the Christian is delivered from the absolute dominating and controlling power of his indwelling sinful nature, he lives his life no longer in accordance with his sinful nature, but in accordance with the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5b; Galatians 5:16-26).

The obedience to Jesus Christ and consequent sanctification begins at regeneration (Acts 5:32; 1 Peter 1:2) and is perfected only at the time the Christian sees Christ face to face (1 John 3:1-3). The Spirit will continue to sanctify the Christian until he is finally set free from his present body in which the sinful nature and death causes so much ravage (Romans 7:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

- **What is impossible for a non-Christian to do, a regenerated Christian can do.**

While the non-Christian does not possess the Holy Spirit, the Christian does. While the non-Christian *again and again sets* his mind (present continuous tense) on the things promoted by his sinful nature, the Christian *again and again sets* his mind (present continuous tense) on the things promoted by the Holy Spirit. The *mind* (reason, emotions and will) of the non-Christian results in death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace (Romans 8:6). The *mind* of the non-Christian is hostile to the God of the Bible and against his revealed will in the Bible (the law)(mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3). The non-Christian *does not at any time submit* (present continuous tense) to God and God's will (the law)(mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3)! He *cannot at any time submit* (present continuous tense) to God and God's will (Romans 8:7)! The non-Christian is dominated and controlled by his sinful nature. He cannot do anything that could please God (Romans 8:8). He does not have the Holy Spirit and therefore cannot be a regenerated (born-again) Christian (Romans 8:9)! The regenerated Christian, however, is controlled by the indwelling Holy Spirit. That is the distinguishing mark of the Christian. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ or Christ in (the heart and life of) the Christian (Romans 8:9-10a).

- **The body of all people must die. Only the Holy Spirit gives life to the spirit and the body.**

The disintegrating and destructive power of the indwelling sinful nature in Romans chapter 7 is put in sharp contrast to the life-giving power of the indwelling Holy Spirit in chapter 8. Both are presently at work in the body and life of the Christian. Because the sinful nature is still active in the physical body and life of the Christian, his body is doomed to die physically. All people must die physically, because the sinful nature operating in their bodies must be doomed (Romans 8:10b)! But because the Holy Spirit is also present and active in him, his human spirit has been regenerated (John 3:3-8). The spirit of all believers in Jesus Christ is regenerated (born-again, born-anew, born from above)(John 1:12-13; John 3:3-8). All believers in Jesus Christ have been justified by faith (Titus 3:4-8). They possess eternal life. God guarantees that their mortal bodies will certainly be resurrected from physical death (1 Corinthians 15:42-44) (Romans 8:11).

- **The regenerated Christian is obliged to live no longer according to the sinful nature, but according to the indwelling Spirit.**

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of the Christian is *the condition* for his salvation: *the initial stage* of his salvation (regeneration, conversion, faith and justification), *the continuing stage* of his salvation (sanctification: growing in holiness and doing righteousness) and *the final stage* of his salvation (the resurrection of his body) (1 Corinthians 15:26). The sovereign government of the Holy Spirit in the Christian makes his salvation absolutely secure!

Therefore the Christian has an obligation towards God: he should no longer live according to his sinful nature, but according to the indwelling Holy Spirit. The fact that the Christian has once for all time died to sin (Romans 6:2) does not release them from the responsibility to continually put to death the sinful thoughts, motives, plans, attitudes, feelings, evil inclinations, words and deeds in his body! The completed work of salvation of Christ not only makes justification and sanctification necessary, but actually possible! The Christian *should* again and again put the misdeeds of his body to death by the power of the indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:12-13). He *desires* to do this, *can* do this and *shall* do this!

However, if he thinks that he is a Christian, but nevertheless lives according to his sinful nature, he will certainly die (i.e. he will certainly be *condemned* in the final judgement and *doomed* to be destroyed in hell (Romans 8:13a; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 6:4-8; Hebrews 10:26-31; Hebrews 12:15-17; Revelation 20:8; Revelation 21:27). A person continuing to live according to (in obedience to) his sinful nature (i.e. continuing to live in sin) has not yet been born-again (1 John 3:6-9). Jesus Christ teaches that “you must be born-again” (John 3:7).

▪ **(3) To what do ‘the law of the Spirit’ and ‘the law of sin and death’ refer?**

- **The law of the Spirit and the law of sin and death do not refer to the gospel versus the law (mng 3).**

“Because through Christ Jesus the law (in the sense of the dominating principle) of the Spirit of life set me free from the law (in the sense of the dominating, compelling and controlling power) of sin and death (the sinful nature)”.

Some Christians believe that on the basis of 2 Corinthians 3:7-9, these two terms refer to *the gospel* and *the law*. However, 2 Corinthians 3:7-9 compares *the New Testament ministry of Jesus Christ (the fulfilment and reality)* with *the Old Testament ministry of Moses (the preparation and shadows of the law)*(mng 2). It does not speak of *the deliverance* (setting free) from this law.

Moreover, these Christians confuse “the law” as God’s *absolute requirement or condition for salvation* (mng 1) (to which the Christian died and from which he has been released) (Romans 7:4,6) with “the law” as God’s *moral commandments for living* as a Christian (mng 3) (from which the Christian has not been released) (Romans 7:7-16,22,25)!

And finally, “the setting free” refers to being set free from “the law” of sin (mng 4). **The regenerated Christian is not yet set free from his sinful nature, but he is set free from the absolute dominance, compelling and controlling power of that sinful nature (indwelling sin)**(Romans 8:2)! “The setting free” refers to *the state of holiness* (a once-for-all accomplished act as in Romans 6:2,6-7) and not to *the process of sanctification* (an ongoing activity as in Romans 6:13,19).

- **The law of the Spirit and the law of sin and death refer to the Holy Spirit versus the sinful nature.**

On the basis of Romans 7:21,23,25, the best interpretation is that the word “law” means *the absolute governing principle: the absolute compelling, controlling and dominating power* of either the indwelling sinful nature or the indwelling Holy Spirit.

**The sinful nature of the non-Christian.**

In the non-Christian there is only **one** absolute governing principle: one dominating and controlling force, namely his sinful nature (the flesh) and it produces every kind of fruit for death (Galatians 5:19-21). The non-Christian cannot but obey its demands. He is a slave of sin (Romans 6:16; John 8:34).

**The sinful nature in the Christian.**

In the Christian there are **two** opposing forces: “the law of sin and death” (i.e. his sinful nature) and “the law of the Spirit of life” (i.e. the Holy Spirit who is active in the regenerated nature of the Christian). Both “laws” operate in the Christian’s body.

The sinful nature of the Christian is still a powerful principle or force in the old nature of the Christian. The sinful nature is called *the law of sin and death*, because it refers to the dominating force behind every kind of sin in the sinful nature of the regenerated Christian which he derived from Adam and Eve (Romans 7:21,23,25) and to the reason for everything in him that leads to death in the fullest sense of the word (i.e. spiritual, physical and eternal death)(Romans 6:22-23). The sinful nature of the Christian is still *a ravaging power* (Romans 7:14-25) and *a terrible opposing power* (Galatians 5:17). While the regenerated Christian is not yet set free from his sinful nature, he is set free from the absolute dominating, compelling and controlling power of that sinful nature in him. In principle his sinful nature is already *a defeated power* and *a temporary power*, which will plague him only until his physical death (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).



**The regenerated nature of the Christian.** Now the Holy Spirit is the *absolute governing principle, the compelling and controlling power* in the regenerated Christian. The Holy Spirit is the Author and Sustainer of the new life. He is the Director and Controlling Power within the new and regenerated nature of the believer in Jesus Christ.

▪ **(4) How did Jesus Christ doom sin in sinful man?**

• **Christ doomed the sinful nature in the Christian in his own weakened human nature (Romans 8:3).**

“For what the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3) (God’s absolute requirement for justification and sanctification expressed in the Bible and in the moral law) could not do, because it was weakened by the sinful nature (the flesh), God did by sending his Son in the likeness of man with a sinful nature (literally, “in the likeness of sinful flesh”) for the purpose of (atoning and removing) sin (Greek: ‘peri hamartias’). God once for all *doomed* sin in the flesh (i.e. the body of Christ). Here the word ‘flesh’ does not refer to something sinful, but rather something mortal.”

God *once-for-all* doomed (consigned to destruction)(aorist tense) sin (and its power) in the body (literally: the flesh, i.e. the mortal body), not of the Christian, but of Jesus Christ on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Between his birth and his death, Jesus Christ had the same kind of body people have, except for sin (Hebrews 4:15). God doomed sin (residing in the sinful nature of the Christian) in Christ’s mortal human nature. It was not sin *in* Christ’s flesh (body) that was doomed, but sin in the Christian’s sinful nature that was doomed *through* Christ’s flesh (body). God consigned the power of sin (residing in the Christian’s sinful nature) to destruction through the death of Christ (in his mortal human nature) (Hebrews 2:14-18).

• **Thus Christ fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law (Romans 8:4).**

“in order that the righteous requirement of the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3) may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the sinful nature (flesh), but according to the Spirit.”

**The Christian is saved because God’s righteous requirement has been met in his place.**

By Christ’s completed work of salvation, God doomed the power of sin in the sinful nature of the Christian with the purpose that the righteous requirement of the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3) may once for all be fulfilled in the life of the Christian. The law is God’s absolute requirement for justification (salvation) and condemnation (judgement) expressed in the Bible and especially in God’s moral commandments. Thus, “*God’s law*” expresses both “*God’s condition (requirement) for justification (salvation)*” and “*God’s goal for sanctification (holy living)*”. **God’s condition for justification and God’s goal for sanctification is nothing less than absolute perfection!** Jesus Christ fulfilled this condition for justification (salvation) and this goal for sanctification for every person that believes in him! From the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ onwards, God proclaims, regards and treats that Christian as perfectly justified and perfectly holy (1 Corinthians 1:30)! That is why the only boasting the Christian may do is to boast in the completed work of justification and sanctification of Christ *on behalf of* him (1 Corinthians 1:31)!

Because Jesus Christ has already merited *the state* of perfect spiritual and moral holiness of the Christian, *the process* of sanctification in the life of the Christian is thereby guaranteed as not only possible, but also certain! The sanctification of the Christian consists of living his life according to God’s moral laws (mng 3). **By the indwelling and control of the Holy Spirit, the Christian can, want to and will live according to God’s moral laws.** **The sanctification of the Christian is now possible, real and it will be perfected in the future!**

The righteous requirement of God’s law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3) is perfectly fulfilled by only Jesus Christ: first on the ground of his life, death and resurrection two thousand years ago and second on the ground that he is now living his perfect life in and through the Christian by the indwelling Holy Spirit!

*By God’s grace there is no conflict between “God’s moral law demanding a holy life” and “God’s Spirit enabling and energising that holy life”.* **What God demands, for example: love (Mark 12:30-31) he also gives (Romans 5:5)!** Likewise, what God demands: perfect righteousness and holiness (Matthew 5:48; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:16), he also gives (1 Corinthians 1:30)! **In the context of justification, the Christian is released from keeping the law (mng 3)(the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)(Romans 3:28).** **But in the context of sanctification, the Christian is not released from keeping the moral law (mng 3)(Romans 13:8-10).**

• **The non-Christian is not saved because God’s righteous requirement has not been met in his case.**

The requirement of God’s law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3) is not met in the non-Christian (Romans 8:4a). His sins have not been atoned for by the death of Jesus Christ (Mark 10:45; John 10:11; Romans 5:19). And the non-Christian does not live according to the Holy Spirit, but only according to his sinful nature (Romans 8:4b; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3). He does not and cannot live according to God’s law (Romans 8:7-8), because he is unspiritual, i.e. he does not have the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). The moral law is spiritual (Romans 7:14) precisely because it is derived from the Holy Spirit and is taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13).

• **And thus Christians can, should and will live the new and holy life.**

Romans 8:3-4 refers to the legal basis of holy living (cf. Romans 6:7). The power of the sinful nature has once for all been doomed to be destroyed by Christ’s completed work of salvation. The execution of this destruction *has already begun* by the work of the Holy Spirit living in the Christian.

If the regenerated Christian could and would completely and perfectly obey the Holy Spirit, he also could and would be completely and perfectly free from not only the guilt and shame of sin, but also from the power and pollution of sin! However, because every Christian continues to have a sinful nature within his physical body until his physical death, no Christian on earth can or will be completely and perfectly free from the guilt or shame of sin, and from the power or pollution of sin. That is why regenerated Christians still confess their sins and receive complete forgiveness (Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:9). Only after his physical death will a Christian be absolutely free from the guilt, shame, power, pollution and even presence of sin!

Nevertheless, because Christ's death *once for all* delivered (aorist tense) the Christian from this *absolute* dominating, compelling and controlling power of sin (Romans 6:2,7) and because the Holy Spirit is applying this reality to his life (Romans 8:2), the Christian *can, should and will* walk after the Spirit and no more after the sinful nature (flesh)(Romans 8:4)! A Christian may not be victorious over sin all the time, but he will certainly not be defeated by sin all the time! The Christian *can, should and will* again and again put to death the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:13) and he *can, should and will* again and again set his mind on what the Holy Spirit desires (Romans 8:5).

▪ **(5) What does the Bible teach about the free will of man?**

Does the natural man have a completely free will? Is he able to accept Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord by his own will and effort? Is he able to choose to do good? The natural man has the freedom for example to choose what clothes he will wear and what food he will eat. But that freedom is limited by whether the sovereign God provides him with clothes or food. He does not have the freedom to choose Jesus Christ as his Saviour, because it is God who chooses him (John 6:44,37; Romans 8:29-30; cf. Romans 10:14-17). The natural man has thus a very limited free will (Romans 8:7-8; Romans 9:16-18).

This paragraph contrasts the natural man (the non-Christian) with the spiritual man (the Christian). "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5). The non-Christian (i.e. the person who does not believe in Jesus Christ) does not have the Holy Spirit. He *again and again* (present continuous tense) sets his mind (i.e. his way of thinking, aims, aspirations and strivings) on what his sinful nature desires. He continually lives under the dominating rule of his sinful nature and finds his interests and goals in corrupt worldly affairs.

In contrast, the Christian (i.e. the person who believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord) has the Holy Spirit. He *again and again* (present continuous tense) sets his mind (his way of thinking) on what the Holy Spirit desires. He has the thoughts and attitudes of the Spirit, the same view of things as the Spirit, the same goals, aspirations and strivings that the Spirit has! He continually lives under the loving and wise government of the Holy Spirit and directs his interests and goals again and again to things which the Spirit proposes and approves and which glorifies God.

"The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). The attitude and condition of the non-Christian result in death. "Death" primarily refers to spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1-3). Such a person is ungodly (Romans 5:6), alienated from the God who has revealed himself in the prophets of the Bible and Jesus Christ. He lives his life on earth apart from the God of the Bible and does things that are in contradiction to God's character and will. He persists in his hostility against God (Romans 5:10). He is powerless against the unholiness and unrighteousness in his life (Romans 5:6). Spiritual death finally results in physical death (Hebrews 9:27) and eternal death in hell, where there is only eternal misery (Mark 9:42-49; Revelation 21:8).

In contrast to the non-Christian, the attitude and condition of the Christian result in life and peace. "Life" means that he has an intimate personal knowledge of God and fellowship with God (John 17:3). "Peace" means that he has an inner assurance that all his past sins are forgiven (Romans 5:1), that all his present difficulties are overruled for good (Romans 8:28), and that all the future events and people he encounters will not be able to separate him from God's love for him (Romans 8:31-39)!

"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Romans 8:7). It is spiritually, morally and psychologically impossible for the non-Christian to submit himself at any time (present tense) to the God of the Bible and obey his "law" (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and 3) (i.e. God's will as expressed in the Bible and in the moral law), because the way of thinking, the view of the world and attitudes of the natural man are basically hostile to the God of the Bible. He does not want to submit himself to God. He cannot submit himself to God. The natural man with his so-called free will and personal effort is not able to choose the God who revealed himself in Christ or choose to do his will.

"Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God" (Romans 8:8). The non-Christian is controlled by his sinful nature and consequently *cannot at any time please or be acceptable to God* (present tense)! The natural man or non-Christian has no ability to change or transform himself! At his birth he *involuntarily* inherited the sinful nature from Adam and Eve (Job 14:4; Job 15:14; Psalm 51:5). And throughout his life he *voluntarily* became a slave of his sinful nature (Romans 6:16). Thereafter he cannot free himself from this slavery to sin! No man can free himself from himself! The thoughts and emotions, as well as the decisions and choices of the natural man can only obey his sinful nature. He cannot remove these by any act of his human will (cf. Romans 9:16). Romans 8:5-8 proves the moral and

psychological impossibility for any natural man (the non-Christian) to obey God or to please God or to do anything to be accepted by God.

In order to be set free from this slavery to his sinful nature, the natural man (the non-Christian) needs a Saviour outside himself. He can only be set free by receiving God's gracious gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, by regeneration (Romans 8:2)(cf. John 3:3-8). "To all who received him (Jesus Christ), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children ....born of God" (John 1:12-13)!

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## 8. THE LAW IN ROMANS CHAPTER 10.

### ▪ (1) What does the Old Testament teach about law-righteousness and faith-righteousness?

Romans 10:5 says, "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: 'The man who does these things will live by them'." Paul makes two quotations from the Old Testament Law to prove to Jews that also the Old Testament taught "righteousness by faith" (i.e. the principle of faith), which is the complete opposite of what the religious Jews taught, namely, "righteousness by law" (i.e. the principle of legalism).

As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul has the inspiration and authority from the Holy Spirit to adapt and apply the Scripture in the Old Testament to the New Testament. Paul applies Hosea 2:23 and Hosea 1:10 in Romans 9:25-26 to the salvation of the *Gentile* believers. James applies Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:14-18 to the salvation of *Gentile* believers. And Peter applies Exodus 19:4-6 in 1 Peter 2:9-10 to the salvation of *Gentile* believers. Likewise Paul applies Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 to define the law-righteousness of the Jews. And he applies Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in Romans 10:6-7 to define the faith-righteousness taught in the gospel. Both Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in their Old Testament context do NOT deal with law-righteousness, as the Jewish religious leaders and teachers falsely maintained.

The Jews eagerly pursued law-righteousness, which they derived from their interpretation of Leviticus 18:5. They interpreted it as follows: the obedience of the law (the moral laws, the ceremonial laws and the civil laws) (mng 3) by Jews would lead them to justification by God and this would lead to eternal life. But Paul uses the same Leviticus 18:5 to prove the exact opposite! The law is God's absolute demand or requirement for the justification (salvation) and the condemnation (punishment) of man (mng 1). In the first place: all man's unrighteousness and unholiness must be perfectly *punished*. In the second place: man must live an absolute perfect righteous and holy life in order to be *justified*. And in the third place: man must live an absolute perfect life from beginning to end in order to be *sanctified*. The law is thus God's 100% perfect standard for condemnation, justification and sanctification! But because not a single human being in history (except Jesus Christ) qualifies to meet God's standard of absolute perfection (Galatians 3:10-12; James 2:10), the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 3) condemns all human beings to spiritual, physical and eternal death. The way of law-righteousness is doomed to fail!

### ▪ (2) Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 to prove that no one is justified by law-righteousness (Romans 10:5).

Leviticus 18:5 by itself (taken out of its Old Testament context) is a *principle* that has relevance in three different states of man:

- In the state of sinlessness, obedience to the law would have led to eternal life (Genesis 2:15-17).

If any person in history would have been righteous to the full extent of God's demand, that is, perfectly righteous, then he would have been justified and given eternal life. **The combination: "sin-condemnation-death"** is taught in Romans 1:1 to Romans 3:20 (Romans 6:23) and invariably is the combination in God's judgement. This is the combination for all people in history, except one, Jesus Christ, who was perfectly sinless (Hebrews 4:15).

Likewise **the combination: "righteousness-justification-life"** is taught in Romans 5:15-19 and invariably is the combination in God's salvation. This is the combination for Jesus Christ and for all believers in Jesus Christ to whom he imputes his righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). God's judgement is always according to truth: sin will lead to eternal death, but perfect righteousness will lead to eternal life.

However, obedience that leads to eternal life would have been possible only for Adam while he was in the state of sinless integrity (Genesis 2:15-17)! After the fall of Adam into sin and of all mankind in solidarity with Adam, regaining righteousness by obedience to God's command is no longer possible for anyone, because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). Not even one person is righteous (Romans 3:10)! Only Christ is righteous (1 Peter 3:18)! Even those Pharisees who think that they are righteous (Luke 18:9) are not righteous enough (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10)!

- In the state of sin, obedience to the law can never lead to justification (Romans 3:20,28; Romans 10:5; Galatians 2:16).

After the fall of mankind into sin, the principle of obedience can never again be the basis for man's acceptance with God. After the fall into sin the only combination left is: "sin-condemnation-death" (Romans 6:23). The principle of Leviticus 18:5, "The man who does these things will live by them", does not and cannot operate in the realm of sin. This is what Paul teaches throughout the letter to the Romans. No one can be justified by doing the works of the law,

simply because no one is sinless and no one is perfectly obedient. Justification by doing (the law)(mng 3) is the absolute opposite of justification by believing (faith), because “doing” always has human righteousness in view, but faith has divine righteousness in view. The only righteousness that can be operative in man’s sinful state is never the tainted and imperfect righteousness of man (Isaiah 64:6), but only the perfect holy righteousness that comes from God and which the gospel reveals (Romans 1:17; Romans 3:21-22; Romans 10:3).

It is this contrast between law-righteousness and faith-righteousness which Paul makes in Romans 10:5-7. As an apostle, Paul has the right to *pick out only the principle of Leviticus 18:5*. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he used the same words, but with a different meaning than it has in its original Old Testament context. This also happens in other Bible passages (compare Isaiah 7:14 with Matthew 1:23 and compare Amos 9:11-12 with Acts 15:15-19). In the Old Testament context, which was the state of sin, Leviticus 18:5 can never mean “obedience to the law leads to eternal life” (justification), but can only mean: “obedience to the law leads to a sanctified life” (sanctification). However, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers pulled Leviticus 18:5 out of its Old Testament context and gave it the meaning: “obedience to the law leads to justification (eternal life)”. Paul wanted to contrast the law-righteousness taught by the Jews (a false teaching) with the faith-righteousness taught in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament (the truth)!

- **In the state of justification, obedience to the law does lead to a sanctified life (Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:11).**

“Righteousness” and “life” are never separable. But the righteousness that leads to justification can never be the righteousness of sinful people, but can only be the righteousness of Jesus Christ within the realm of his sinlessness and based on his completed work of salvation (by his death and his resurrection). And people can only receive this righteousness of Christ by God’s grace through faith in Christ (Romans 5:17-18; cf. Ephesians 2:8-9).

Within the realm of justification by grace through faith, the character of the new life is that it is “righteous”. Therefore within the new life of those who have been justified by faith it is necessary to live in the way that is “righteous”. This is taught in Romans chapters 6 to 8. The new (justified and sanctified) life is a life of righteousness in obedience to the commandments of God (Romans 6:13-14,16-17,22; Romans 8:4). If a person lives after the flesh he will die, but if he puts to death the misdeeds of the body, he will live (Romans 8:13). In the realm of grace and the state of justification, obedience to God’s commandments (the moral law) is the way a Christian will live his life.

During the Old Testament period the believer “lives” in the sense that he prospers and prolongs his days in the land (Deuteronomy 5:32-33). And during the New Testament period the believer “lives” in the sense of having a personal relationship with Christ and enjoying personal fellowship with God in Christ (John 17:3), experiencing peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7), rejoicing with inexpressible and glorious joy (1 Peter 1:8), being transformed to Christ likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18) and becoming a blessing for others (1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2:8). In the regenerated and renewed realm of saving and sanctifying grace we come back to **the combination: “righteousness (of Christ) - justification (of believers in Christ), that is, approval by God –life (sanctified, righteous and holy living by Christians)”**. This is also the meaning of the principle in Leviticus 18:5 in the Old Testament context and of the principle in Galatians 3:11 in the New Testament context: “The righteous will live by faith”.

In the Old Testament context Leviticus 18:5 has nothing to do with legalism. Like the context of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21) the context of Leviticus chapters 18 to 20 does not speak about the law (mng 3) as the way to attain righteousness or salvation, but as God’s claims on people who are already righteous or saved! Only *after* God saved or redeemed Israel from their slavery in Egypt (Exodus 20:1-2), does he give her Ten Commandments as the rule how to live as God’s redeemed people (Exodus 20:3-17). Likewise, in Leviticus chapters 18 to 20, only *because* the Lord is already the God of Israel and Israel is the redeemed people of the Lord, he demands that they keep his commandments as the rule how to live as God’s redeemed people!

- **(3) Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:11-14 to prove that a person is only justified by faith-righteousness (Romans 10:6).**

- **Proclaiming the New Testament gospel in Old Testament terms.**

Romans 10:4-5 says, “Christ is the end (goal) of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law (mng 3): “The man who does these things will live by them.” Romans 10:4-5 describes *the state of righteousness which only Jesus Christ earned*. Jesus Christ is the only person in the history of the world who perfectly obeyed and lived by all the commands of the law (mng 3).

Romans 10:6-7 says, “But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down)” or “Who will descend into the deep?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead) (Romans 10:6). Romans 10:6-7 describes *the same state of righteousness which people must receive* by God’s free grace and through faith in Jesus Christ and not by their efforts to keep the law. Jesus Christ is the only person in the history of the world who is God (cf. Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9; 1 John 5:20) and yet was born as a human on earth (to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons)(Galatians 4:4-5). He is the only person in the history of the world who after dying to make atonement for sins was resurrected from the dead. And he is the only person in the history of the world who ascended into heaven to rule over the whole universe.

Paul proclaims the New Testament truth (i.e. the gospel) in Old Testament terms. He can do this, because he already proved that the way to justification in God's eyes was the same during the Old Testament period as is now during the New Testament period. The way to justification has always been "justification by faith" in the context of God's grace and never "justification by the works of the law" in the context of man's effort (Romans 1:17; Romans 3:21-22; Romans 4:1-3).

- **The gospel in the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament.**

The gospel or good news is the message about "justification by faith"; it is about "receiving God's (Christ's) righteousness by faith". This "righteousness by faith" during the Old Testament period is defined in Deuteronomy 30:11-14, "Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so that we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so that we may obey it?" No, *the word* is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you may obey it." Already during the Old Testament period Deuteronomy 30:11-14 teaches that the truth about what to know, what to believe and what to obey was accessible and near to people. People did not need to do something spectacular like ascending to heaven or travelling across the sea to another country to acquire this truth (Romans 10:6-7). "The word" of God (e.g. the gospel or good news in the Old Testament) was on their lips and came into their hearts as they read the Book of Deuteronomy.

The gospel in the Book of Deuteronomy is the following: God was already the God of the Israelites and the Israelites were already the people of God (Deuteronomy 4:7-8). God chose them because he loved them (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). They had already been saved from slavery (Deuteronomy 5:6). The relationship with God had been established and what God required in this relationship was unconditional love (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) and service. "What does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear (trust) the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees ... for your own good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Deuteronomy 11:13). The Promised Land and its blessings was God's gracious gift to them. Righteousness *never was or is* the result of the energetic human effort to keep the law (mng 3). Israel did not receive the Promised Land with all wealth and its blessings because they earned it with the power of their own hands (religious wars) or earned it with their religious fervour (prayers, fasting, giving or pilgrimages). God gave them all this because God is gracious and gave them the ability to produce wealth and hereby confirmed the covenant promise he made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deuteronomy 8:17-18). They received all this on account of the wickedness of the other nations and in spite of the fact that Israel was still a stiff-necked people (Deuteronomy 9:4-6). God predicted that he would raise up the greatest Prophet in history who would speak God's words and must be obeyed unconditionally (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-24; cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12). Israel was a people holy (set apart) to God (Deuteronomy 26:16-19). God would send his curses over people in Israel that disobeyed him (Deuteronomy 27:9-26) and he would send his blessings over people in Israel that obeyed him (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Then Moses summarised the gospel in the Old Testament with the words which Paul quoted in Romans 10:6-7 (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). During the Old Testament period "the righteousness of God" was accessible and near to people, not as "a righteousness by works of the law", but as "a righteousness by faith"!

With all these words in the Book of Deuteronomy (the Law)(mng 2) Moses emphasised that the Law (mng 2) was given to Israel, not set in a legalistic framework (in which righteousness or salvation must be earned), but in the context of God's covenant of grace. Righteousness was God's gracious gift to those who believed during the Old Testament period (Hebrews 4:2). Righteousness is still God's gracious gift to those who believe during the New Testament period (Ephesians 2:8-9).

- **The gospel in the book of Romans in the New Testament.**

Paul *applies* this Old Testament definition of "righteousness by faith" (the righteousness of God, given by grace and received by faith) to prove that also during the New Testament period the righteousness of God is accessible and near to people! A person has access to God's righteousness by the first coming of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth (Romans 10:6), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Romans 10:7), and by having God's word in the mouth and in the heart (i.e. confessing Christ with your mouth and believing Christ with your heart) (Romans 10:8). The preaching of the gospel (the good news concerning Jesus Christ) makes God's word or truth concerning righteousness (salvation) available so that a person can know it, believe it with his heart and confess it with his mouth (Romans 10:9-10). The gospel is the message concerning Christ's righteousness given by God's love (mercy and grace) and received by man's faith. The gospel is God's power for the salvation of every man who believes (Romans 1:16).

- **The accessibility and nearness of righteousness by faith in the New Testament period.**

Paul applies the principle of "faith righteousness" in the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament to the New Testament. When Paul says, "The righteousness by faith *says*" (personification), he means, "The Bible says with reference to the attainment of righteousness by faith" that it is accessible and near through three events in the New Testament: the incarnation of Christ, the resurrection of Christ and the proclamation of Christ.

**The accessibility and nearness of righteousness by faith is proved by Christ's incarnation.**

The Bible teaches: Do not say in your heart: "Who will ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down?" Because the Jews did not believe that Christ (the Messiah) had come down from heaven, they asked with contempt who could

ascend to heaven in order to bring Christ down? Paul insists that the fact that Christ already came down from heaven and lived among people on earth is the visible proof of the accessibility and nearness of God's revelation (and thus of faith-righteousness). Every human effort to ascend to heaven as it were to bring Christ down would be a renunciation of the reality and value of his incarnation. Anybody still trying to climb up to heaven by whatever religious means (cf. 1 Thessalonians 6:16) to find the truth (cf. John 14:6), rejects Christ's incarnation. The truth has already come down to earth in the incarnation of Jesus Christ!

**The accessibility and nearness of righteousness by faith is proved by Christ's resurrection.**

The Bible asks: "Who will descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." Because the Jews did not believe that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead (Matthew 27:62-66; Matthew 28:1-15), they asked with contempt who could descend into the abode of the dead (in the Bible 'the deep' is usually contrasted with 'heaven') in order to bring Christ up? Every human effort to descend into the grave as it were to bring Christ out of the dead would be a renunciation of the true nature and significance of his death and resurrection. Paul maintains that we do not need to go down to the realm of the dead to find the truth any more than we need to go up to heaven for the same purpose. As Christ came from heaven to earth so also did he come again from the grave ('the lower parts of the earth')<sup>54</sup> (Ephesians 4:9-10) and manifested himself to many people as resurrected and alive (Acts 1:3)! The truth is already present with us as a living reality in the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Only Jesus Christ fulfilled the law in the sense of the righteous requirement of God (mng 1)! What Paul wants to say is that the task of fulfilling the righteous requirement of God for justification (i.e. for becoming a Christian) and for sanctification (i.e. for living as a Christian), that is, for salvation from beginning to end, was never the task assigned to any man or prophet on earth. This task was assigned only to Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 1:18-20). Only *he* fulfilled the task! Only *he* descended from heaven (Romans 10:6; John 3:13,31). Only *he* was God that took on the human nature (John 1:1,14). Only *he* suffered the agonies of hell in our place (Matthew 27:46) and died as a sacrifice of atonement for our sins (Romans 3:25), so that we may be declared righteous by faith. Only *he* was raised from the deep place of the dead (Romans 10:7) so that we may be able to live the new and holy life (Romans 6:4). Only *he* ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God, so that we may have him as our King and Lord (Romans 10:9). As Lord, he works out our salvation from its beginning (at rebirth and justification) throughout our lives (through healing, deliverance, renewal and sanctification) to its end (at his second coming and the resurrection of our bodies). Only Jesus Christ is the guarantee of our salvation (Romans 8:29-30; cf. Philippians 1:6)!

No human being contributed anything to the birth of Christ or the resurrection of Christ. No human being can contribute anything to his own salvation or the salvation of others! No human being can keep the law (mng 3 in the sense of mng 1) and think that it could accomplish the same righteousness as the righteousness Jesus Christ earned by his incarnation, death and resurrection! Only Jesus Christ was delivered over to death for our sins (Romans 4:25a; John 1:29) and was raised to life for our justification (Romans 4:25b; John 6:39-40). Only Jesus Christ accomplished everything necessary for our complete and perfect justification (salvation)!

**The accessibility and nearness of righteousness by faith is proved by the preaching of the gospel.**

"But what does it (the Bible) say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart', that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming." What is "the word of faith", that is the word that evokes faith and requires faith as a response? Romans 10:8 is a quotation of Deuteronomy 30:14 with slight variation. In this case, Paul specifies what "the word" is. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:14a, "The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart". Paul is thinking of "the word" as the gracious promises and exhortations in the Book of Deuteronomy. The word was the gospel or good news in the Old Testament which Moses and the prophets proclaimed. It evoked faith in the Israelites and required faith of the Israelites as a response. All these words in the Book of Deuteronomy were given to Israel in the context of God's grace.

Paul elaborates this "word"<sup>55</sup> in Deuteronomy 30:14 (i.e. the gospel in the Old Testament) as "the word of faith that we are *continually* proclaiming" (i.e. the gospel in the New Testament). He directly *applies* "the word" in the Old Testament revelation to "the word" in the New Testament revelation. "The word of faith" is not the word which faith (believers) utters, but is the word (the gospel message) to which faith is directed. It is not subjective faith uttered, but objective faith proclaimed. The message of the gospel (objective faith) brings faith (subjective faith) into the heart of the believer (so that he can believe it) and into his mouth (so that he can confess it)! "The word of faith" is the gospel or good news in the New Testament which the apostles proclaimed and Christians are still proclaiming (Romans 10:8). It is "the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17), that is, the message about Jesus Christ, which Jesus Christ speaks and sends to people through the apostles and which brings the gospel into the hearts and mouths of people who are becoming believers. Thus, "the gospel" in the Old Testament (Romans 3:21; Galatians 3:6-9) is the same as "the gospel" in the New Testament! The word of faith evokes faith in the heart (i.e. faith starts in the regenerated heart) and the word of

<sup>54</sup> Christ descended to the lower earthly regions (Ephesians 4:9 does NOT say that Christ went to hell between his death and resurrection. Ephesians 4:9-10 refers to Christ's incarnation from heaven to the earth and descent into the grave and his resurrection and ascension into heaven. Likewise, Romans 10:6-7 refers to Christ's incarnation and resurrection from the dead. 1 Peter 3:18-22 does NOT refer to a so-called descent of Christ into hell to preach the gospel to people who never had a chance to hear the gospel. See complete explanation of the second chance theory in Delta PLUS study 17.

<sup>55</sup> Hebrew: ha-dabar, Greek: ρεμα

faith requires faith as a response (i.e. faith must be confessed with the mouth). Thus, if a person confesses with his mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord because he genuinely believes in his heart that God raised him from the dead, he will be saved (justified)(Romans 10:9-10)!

God's word (the gospel message) leads to justification by faith in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The way of justification (salvation) is the same in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. God's word was near the people during the Old Testament period, in their mouth and in their heart as they read the words in the Book of Deuteronomy. And God's word is still near the people during the New Testament period, in their heart and on their lips as they hear the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles and read the Bible that was already written. Mark had already written the Gospel of Mark between 44 and 46 A.D. in Rome for the people in Rome. Paul wrote the letter to the Romans in the spring 57 A.D. from Corinth for the church in Rome. The writing of the whole New Testament message was completed before 97 A.D.

In summary: "Righteousness that comes by faith" was already available and accessible during the Old Testament period (the Book of Deuteronomy). "Righteousness that comes by faith" is also available and accessible during the New Testament period: through Christ's incarnation and resurrection, and through the proclamation of the gospel. Thus, in the whole Bible, from beginning to end, people were and still are justified, not by the law (mng 1 as expressed in mng 2 and mng 3), but by faith only!

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