

Did the Ten Commandments Pass Away?

by Bob Pulliam

One of the most difficult tasks for the Sabbatarian is seeing that the ten commandments were included in that which was nailed to the cross. As noted in other articles in this study area, there is a desire to make the ten commandments a moral law that was separate from the remainder of the law of Moses.

There are two problems with this position. The first is that the Bible never makes such a distinction. Efforts to make that distinction all rely on assumptions (e.g. the Sabbath was in effect from creation because it is mentioned in Genesis 2:3 - see article on Sabbath and Creation). The second problem is that the scriptures specifically include the ten commandments with the rest of the law that passed away. This second problem is what this article will deal with.

A Contrast...

In II Corinthians 3 we have a contrast enumerated by the apostle Paul. This contrast is very revealing (please pardon the pun):

Old Testament Element	Scripture	New Testament Element
tablets of stone	II Cor 3:3	tablets of flesh
old covenant (implied)	II Cor 3:6	new covenant
the letter	II Cor 3:6	the Spirit
engraved on stones	II Cor 3:7 & 3	written on the heart
kills	II Cor 3:6	gives life
ministry of death	II Cor 3:7f	ministry of the Spirit
ministry of condemnation	II Cor 3:9	ministry of righteousness
made glorious	II Cor 3:10f	more glorious
passing away	II Cor 3:11	remains
veiled	II Cor 3:13-16	veil lifted

I'm sure you can find a few other contrasts if you look closely. These are sufficient for giving us a clear picture of what Paul is saying. If you will please examine the left column above, you will find that the ten commandments are the subject under consideration. Efforts have been made to relate these to an event associated with Joshua (**Josh 8:30-35**). But not only is Moses specifically mentioned (vv13-15); the historical context is specified by reference to the veil he put over his face (v13). There can be no doubt that this refers to Moses' second descent from the mountain with the second tablets of the covenant (**Ex 34:27-35**). What does Paul say?... He spoke of it as passing away that what was more glorious might remain.

The Covenant...

There is a constant attempt to define the ten commandments as a covenant that remained, while the remainder was just the law (ceremonial/legal). We are told that the law is no

longer in effect, but the covenant (ten commandments) is still in effect.

Can a passage be found which calls the ceremonies and such of Moses' law a part of the covenant? Yes, indeed...

"Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary;" (Heb 8:8 - 9:2, *emph mine - bp*)

There are two important things to note here about the covenant. First, we find that it was "obsolete and growing old" (8:13). Such makes it clear that it was ready to vanish away when Jeremiah made this prophecy (Jer 31:31-44). And so our author says that it was ready to "vanish away". This "new covenant" is mentioned again in Hebrews 9:15 and 12:24.

The second important thing to note is that "the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary" (9:1). Our author goes on to point out the tabernacle service performed by the priests. Was this a part of the covenant? This divinely inspired author says so! Was the tabernacle service laid to rest at the cross of Christ? Yes, it was. The attempted distinction between "law" and "covenant" is an artificial fabrication, proposed for the purpose of holding on to the Sabbath doctrine.