COMPREHENSIVE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE STUDY

Not One Jot or Tittle Shall Pass

Understanding the Permanence of God's Law, the End of Animal Sacrifices Through Christ Our High Priest, and Why Believers Today Live Under Human Governments Rather Than Israel's Civil Code

Core Thesis of This Study

God's moral law is eternal and unchanging—not one jot or tittle will fall away until all is fulfilled. Although Jesus Christ fulfilled the law through His sinless life and sacrificial death, believers are still commanded to obey God's laws, which He writes upon our hearts and minds. The 'change of the law' described in the Book of Hebrews refers specifically to the transition of the priesthood from the Levites to Jesus Christ and the permanent cessation of animal sacrifices prophesied in Daniel 9. Furthermore, while ancient Israel was given civil statutes to operate as a model nation and light to the world, Israel failed to uphold that calling. Today, believers live as citizens scattered under the governments of men, lacking the civil authority to enforce national judicial penalties while remaining steadfastly obedient to God's enduring moral commandments.

CHAPTER ONE

The Unchanging Foundation: Not One Jot or Tittle

Few questions in Christian life generate as much confusion as the relationship between Jesus Christ and the law of God. For centuries, well-meaning readers of the Bible have stumbled over a seeming contradiction. On one hand, the New Testament proclaims that believers are saved by grace through faith and that Christ has fulfilled the law. On the other hand, Jesus Himself issued one of the most emphatic, unmistakable declarations in all of Scripture regarding the absolute permanence of God's commandments. To understand the unified message of the Bible, we must begin where Jesus began—on a hillside overlooking Galilee, during the Sermon on the Mount.

> *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be*

> *called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."* — **Matthew 5:17–19 (KJV)**

Look closely at the precision of Christ's words. A 'jot' refers to the Hebrew letter yod, the smallest character in the Hebrew alphabet, scarcely larger than a comma or an apostrophe. A 'tittle' refers to the tiny decorative stroke or horn on a Hebrew letter that distinguishes one consonant from another—much like the small horizontal crossbar that turns a capital 'L' into a 'T', or the tiny tail that distinguishes a 'Q' from an 'O'. By invoking the jot and the tittle, Jesus was telling His listeners that not even the smallest microscopic detail of God's moral standard would be erased, canceled, or discarded while heaven and earth remain.

Many readers mistakenly interpret the word 'fulfil' in Matthew 5:17 as a synonym for 'abolish' or 'terminate.' In everyday English, when we fulfill a contract, the contract is over and we walk away from it. Yet Jesus explicitly contrasted 'fulfil' with 'destroy.' He said, 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' If 'fulfil' meant 'bring to an end,' Jesus would essentially be saying, 'I did not come to end the law, I came to end the law'—which makes no sense at all. Instead, the Greek word pleroo means to fill to the brim, to carry out completely, to uphold in full measure, and to demonstrate its true spiritual depth.

Jesus fulfilled the law in two monumental ways. First, He lived a life of spotless, unbroken obedience. Unlike every other human being born into the world, Christ never violated a single commandment in thought, word, or deed. The Apostle Peter testified of Him:

> *"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:"* — **1 Peter 2:22 (KJV)**

And the writer of Hebrews confirmed that although Jesus faced every human temptation, He remained completely sinless:

> *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* — **Hebrews 4:15 (KJV)**

Second, Jesus fulfilled the law by magnifying its true spiritual meaning. Throughout the rest of Matthew chapter 5, Jesus showed that God's law governs not merely outward physical actions, but the hidden attitudes of the human heart. It is not enough merely to refrain from physical murder; nursing hatred and bitterness in the heart violates the spirit of the sixth commandment. It is not enough merely to avoid physical adultery; entertaining lust in the mind violates the seventh commandment. Far from lowering God's standard or discarding it, Christ elevated it and demonstrated what it looks like when lived out in perfection.

Furthermore, the Psalmist declared long before Christ's earthly ministry that God's commandments are rooted in His own eternal character. Because God Himself does not change, His standards of righteousness, truth, and justice cannot expire:

> *"The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness."* **— Psalm 111:7–8 (KJV)**

> *"Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever."* **— Psalm 119:151–152 (KJV)**

> *"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."* **— Malachi 3:6 (KJV)**

Notice also the timeline Jesus gave in Matthew 5:18: 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' Look outside your window today. The heavens—the sun, moon, and stars—are still shining above us, and the earth is still beneath our feet. Furthermore, 'all' has not yet been fulfilled. While Christ fulfilled the prophecies of His first coming, His crucifixion, and His resurrection, many prophecies—including His second coming, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the nations, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth—still lie ahead. Until heaven and earth pass away and God's entire plan of redemption reaches its final completion, God's law stands intact.

CHAPTER TWO

Written on Hearts and Minds: Why We Must Still Obey

A natural question follows: If Jesus kept the law perfectly on our behalf, why must believers continue to obey it today? Does Christ's obedience excuse us from obeying God, or does His example empower and obligate us to follow in His footsteps? The New Testament answers this question with crystal clarity. Christ did not keep the law so that we could break it; He kept the law to redeem us from the penalty of our past sins and to give us a living pattern to follow.

First, we must understand what sin actually is. The Bible gives a concise, unmistakable definition of sin in the First Epistle of John:

> *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."* **— 1 John 3:4 (KJV)**

Think about the logical consequence of that single verse. If God's law had been abolished at the cross, then sin would no longer exist, because you cannot break a law that is no longer in force. As the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans:

> *"Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression."* — **Romans 4:15 (KJV)**

Paul reinforced this truth when explaining how we recognize right from wrong:

> *"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet... Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."* — **Romans 7:7, 12 (KJV)**

The law functions like a mirror. When you look into a mirror and see dirt on your face, the mirror did not put the dirt there, nor can the mirror wash your face clean. Only water can cleanse you. Yet you would never smash the mirror just because it revealed your dirt! In the same way, God's law reveals sin and defines righteousness, while the blood of Jesus Christ washes away our guilt. Once we are cleansed by Christ's sacrifice, do we throw away the mirror and return to the mud? Paul anticipated that exact false argument and rejected it forcefully:

> *"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."* — **Romans 3:31 (KJV)**

> *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?... What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."* — **Romans 6:1–2, 15 (KJV)**

When Paul wrote that believers are 'not under the law, but under grace,' he was explaining that believers are no longer under the condemnation and death penalty of the law, because Christ paid that penalty. Being under grace means receiving unmerited pardon—not receiving permission to continue breaking God's commandments.

The Promise of the New Covenant: Internalizing the Law

Why did the Old Covenant fail to produce lasting righteousness among the people of ancient Israel? The fault was never with God's law—which Paul called 'holy, and just, and good.' The problem was the rebellious human heart. Under the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai, God wrote His commandments on cold tables of stone. The people heard the thunder, trembled

at the mountain, and promised to obey, yet their hearts remained unchanged. Within forty days, they were dancing around a golden calf.

To solve this root problem of human nature, God promised a New Covenant. Notice what God promised to change in the New Covenant. He did not promise to abolish His laws or replace them with a lower standard. Instead, He promised to move His laws from external stone tablets directly into the inner core of the believer's mind and heart:

> *"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that 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 that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."* — **Jeremiah 31:31–33 (KJV)**

This foundational prophecy is quoted verbatim in the New Testament in the Book of Hebrews, proving that it applies directly to believers under Christ:

> *"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:"* — **Hebrews 8:10 (KJV)**

> *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;"* — **Hebrews 10:16 (KJV)**

Think about what happens when God writes His law into our minds and hearts through the Holy Spirit. Obedience ceases to be a cold, begrudging checklist of external rules forced upon us from the outside. Instead, God's way of thinking becomes woven into our character, desires, and instincts. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, obeying God becomes a natural expression of who we are becoming in Christ. As Ezekiel prophesied:

> *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."* — **Ezekiel 36:26–27 (KJV)**

Obedience as the Proof of Love and Genuine Faith

Throughout the New Testament, obedience to God's commandments is presented as the indispensable evidence that a person truly knows God and loves Jesus Christ. Anyone can claim with their lips to believe in Jesus, but Scripture insists that genuine faith transforms how we live:

> *"If ye love me, keep my commandments... He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."* **— John 14:15, 21 (KJV)**

> *"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."* **— 1 John 2:3–6 (KJV)**

> *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."* **— 1 John 5:2–3 (KJV)**

Far from being a burden or a yoke of bondage, God's commandments are described as 'not grievous'—they protect human life, strengthen marriages and families, promote honesty, guard against greed, and bring peace to society. Even at the very end of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation, the faithful saints of God are identified by two defining marks: their faith in Jesus and their obedience to God's commandments:

> *"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."* **— Revelation 14:12 (KJV)**

> *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."* **— Revelation 22:14 (KJV)**

CHAPTER THREE

The Change of the Law in Hebrews: A New High Priest

If God's moral law is eternal and written on our hearts, what did the writer of Hebrews mean when he explicitly stated that there had to be 'a change also of the law'? To read this passage out of context has led many astray, yet when we read the surrounding verses in Hebrews chapter 7, the meaning becomes completely unmistakable. The passage is not

discussing the Ten Commandments; it is discussing the priesthood and the sacrificial rituals that accompanied it.

> *"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood."* **— Hebrews 7:11–14 (KJV)**

Look at the legal problem the writer of Hebrews is explaining. Under the Old Covenant system given at Mount Sinai, God designated one specific family—the descendants of Aaron from the tribe of Levi—to serve as priests and High Priests. No person from any other tribe of Israel was permitted to approach the altar or serve as High Priest. If someone from the tribe of Reuben, Benjamin, or Judah tried to officiate as a priest at the temple, the Mosaic priesthood law strictly forbade it.

Now consider Jesus Christ. Everyone knew that Jesus was born of the royal tribe of Judah—the lineage of King David—not the priestly tribe of Levi. Yet David himself had prophesied in the Psalms that the coming Messiah would be a priest forever, not according to the family line of Aaron, but according to the ancient, royal priesthood of Melchizedek:

> *"The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."* **— Psalm 110:4 (KJV)**

Therefore, for Jesus Christ—a descendant of Judah—to become our High Priest, the specific statute governing who could hold the office of High Priest had to be changed! As Hebrews 7:12 states: 'For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.' The 'change of the law' was the administrative transfer of the High Priesthood from mortal human priests of the tribe of Levi to the immortal Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Why We No Longer Appoint Human High Priests

Under the old system, human High Priests were flawed, mortal men who suffered from the same weaknesses as everyone else. Because they were sinners themselves, they first had to offer animal sacrifices for their own sins before they could offer sacrifices on behalf of the nation. Moreover, because they were mortal, their ministry was constantly interrupted by death. Every generation had to appoint a new High Priest to replace the one who died.

Hebrews explains how Jesus Christ completely superseded that temporary human office:

> *"And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."* **— Hebrews 7:23–28 (KJV)**

Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead and lives forever at the right hand of God the Father, He holds a permanent, 'unchangeable priesthood.' We no longer need to appoint earthly men to stand between us and God as High Priests, nor do we need human mediators to carry blood into an earthly sanctuary. Every believer now has direct access to the throne of God through Jesus Christ alone:

> *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;"* **— 1 Timothy 2:5 (KJV)**

> *"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession… Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*
> **— Hebrews 4:14, 16 (KJV)**

CHAPTER FOUR

Daniel 9 and the Cessation of Animal Sacrifices

Closely tied to the change of the priesthood is the ending of animal sacrifices. For over a thousand years, from the tabernacle in the wilderness to the temple in Jerusalem, priests slaughtered bulls, goats, lambs, and doves day after day. Why did God institute that elaborate sacrificial system in the first place? Not because the blood of animals could ever actually erase human guilt, but because every lamb slain on the altar served as a visual prophecy—a shadow pointing forward to the coming Lamb of God.

Over five hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God revealed through the prophet Daniel the exact timeline of the Messiah’s arrival, His death, and the permanent end of the sacrificial system. In Daniel chapter 9, the angel Gabriel delivered the famous Seventy Weeks prophecy:

> *"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."* **— Daniel 9:24–27 (KJV)**

Every detail of this prophecy converged at Calvary. Notice the sequence of events Gabriel foretold:

First, 'Messiah [shall] be cut off, but not for himself.' Jesus was executed—cut off from the land of the living—not for any sin of His own, for He was completely innocent, but as a substitute bearing the sins of the world.

Second, 'in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.' In prophetic reckoning, where a day represents a year, the seventieth week represents seven years. After three and a half years of public ministry—right in the middle of that prophetic week—Jesus offered Himself on the cross. At the exact moment He died, God gave a dramatic physical sign inside the Jerusalem temple that the old sacrificial system had reached its appointed end:

> *"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;"* **— Matthew 27:50–51 (KJV)**

That massive, heavy curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place—where only the Levitical High Priest could enter once a year on the Day of Atonement with animal blood—was torn completely in two from top to bottom by an unseen hand. Forty years later, in AD 70, Roman armies destroyed both Jerusalem and the temple just as Daniel 9:26 had predicted ('the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary'), making Levitical animal sacrifices physically impossible to perform.

The Book of Hebrews explains why animal sacrifices ceased forever when Christ died. Animal sacrifices had to be repeated endlessly because they could never truly cleanse the human conscience. Jesus' single sacrifice, by contrast, was infinite in value and accomplished total, permanent redemption:

> *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins… By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."* **— Hebrews 10:1–4, 10–14 (KJV)**

To continue offering animal sacrifices after Christ's crucifixion would be to deny the sufficiency of His blood. The shadow vanished because the reality had arrived. Yet notice the vital distinction: ending animal sacrifices did not end God's moral law. On the contrary, animal sacrifices were only needed because humans broke God's moral law! When the sacrificial payment was paid in full by Christ, the moral law defining right and wrong remained just as binding as ever.

CHAPTER FIVE

Israel as a Model Nation and Light to the World

To understand why parts of the Old Testament law—specifically the civil and judicial statutes—are not enforced by believers today, we must understand the unique historical mission God gave to ancient Israel. When God rescued the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from slavery in Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai, He was not merely forming a private religious club. He was establishing a sovereign, physical nation-state with its own borders, land, courts, judges, economy, and system of governance.

God's intention was for Israel to serve as a living showcase of His wisdom and righteousness—a model of the Kingdom of God on earth that would attract surrounding pagan nations to the true God:

> *"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."* **— Exodus 19:5–6 (KJV)**

Moses explicitly reminded the people before they entered the Promised Land that their obedience to God's statutes would serve as a witness to the entire watching world:

> *"Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"* **— Deuteronomy 4:5–8 (KJV)**

Centuries later, the prophet Isaiah echoed this same calling—that Israel was meant to be a beacon of truth and justice shining out to every Gentile nation:

> *"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;"* — **Isaiah 42:6 (KJV)**

> *"And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."* — **Isaiah 49:6 (KJV)**

Because ancient Israel was a literal nation governed directly by God (a theocracy), God gave Israel civil laws—what Deuteronomy calls 'statutes and judgments'—to regulate national life. These civil laws covered property boundaries, inheritance, agricultural gleaning for the poor, debt cancellation every seven years, cities of refuge, rules of evidence requiring two or three witnesses, and judicial penalties carried out by appointed magistrates and judges.

Israel's Failure to Fulfill Its Calling

Tragically, ancient Israel failed to fulfill this noble mission. Instead of standing apart as a model of God's kingdom and drawing the surrounding nations to righteousness, Israel repeatedly imitated the idolatry, injustice, and corruption of its pagan neighbors. Time and again, God sent prophets pleading with the nation to repent, yet the people hardened their

hearts until God allowed both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah to be conquered and carried into exile.

The Scriptures openly record Israel's failure to keep the covenant:

> *"Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them."* **— 2 Kings 17:14–15 (KJV)**

> *"And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you;"* **— Ezekiel 5:6–7 (KJV)**

> *"For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith 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 continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord."* **— Hebrews 8:8–9 (KJV)**

Because Israel broke the national covenant and failed to serve as a light to the world, the sovereign theocratic kingdom of Israel ceased to exist as an independent divine commonwealth. Ultimately, Jesus Christ Himself stepped forward as the true 'light of the world' (John 8:12), accomplishing what the nation of Israel failed to do.

CHAPTER SIX

Living Under Human Governments: Why We Cannot Enforce Civil Law

This brings us directly to our reality today. Believers in the New Testament era do not live inside a divinely governed nation-state like ancient Israel. Instead, God's people are scattered across every continent, living as spiritual citizens of heaven while residing physically inside nations ruled by human governments—republics, democracies, monarchies, and secular states.

When Jesus stood on trial before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, He made it unmistakably clear that His kingdom is not currently operating as a political or military nation-state enforcing civil statutes by force:

> *"Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."* **— John 18:36 (KJV)**

Because Christ's kingdom is not currently established as a civil government in this world, individual believers and local churches do not possess legal or judicial authority to enforce the civil penalties of ancient Israel. Under the Mosaic civil code, appointed judges and magistrates of the nation of Israel held state authority to impose fines, restitution, corporal punishment, or capital punishment. Today, God has not granted that civil 'sword' to individual Christians or church congregations. Rather, during this present age, God has placed civil authority in the hands of human governing officials.

The Apostle Paul laid out this principle in detail in Romans chapter 13:

> *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."* **— Romans 13:1–5 (KJV)**

Look at the vital distinction Paul makes between the role of the individual believer and the role of civil government. In the very preceding chapter—Romans chapter 12—Paul forbade individual believers from taking judicial vengeance or executing punishment on wrongdoers:

> *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."* **— Romans 12:17–19 (KJV)**

The Apostle Peter gave the exact same instruction, reminding believers that we live in this world as 'strangers and pilgrims' who must respect human civic institutions:

> *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul... Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:"* **— 1 Peter 2:11, 13–15 (KJV)**

Consider what happens when someone forgets this distinction. When Jesus was confronted with a woman caught in adultery in John chapter 8, the scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Him into acting as a civil judge executing Mosaic capital punishment under Roman occupation. Jesus refused to act as a civil magistrate, reminding them of personal sinfulness and mercy, while still upholding the moral commandment by telling her, 'Go, and sin no more' (John 8:11). Similarly, when a man asked Jesus to settle a civil inheritance dispute with his brother, Jesus replied:

> *"And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?"* **— Luke 12:14 (KJV)**

We do not have the authority to carry out ancient Israel's civil punishments because we are not magistrates of a biblical theocracy—we are citizens living under the governments of men. Yet while we cannot enforce national judicial penalties, the underlying moral wisdom and principles of fairness, honesty, compassion for the poor, and justice embedded within those laws still instruct our consciences as we live peacefully under civil authorities.

Of course, Scripture establishes one clear boundary to human government: civil rulers hold authority only within their proper sphere. Whenever a human government commands a believer to violate an explicit commandment of God, our supreme allegiance belongs to our Creator:

> *"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."* **— Acts 5:29 (KJV)**

CHAPTER SEVEN

Putting the Whole Picture Together: Harmony Across Scripture

When we step back and view all these scriptures together, every apparent contradiction disappears, revealing a remarkably cohesive and logical biblical framework. Nothing in the

New Testament overturns the Old Testament; rather, the New Testament brings God’s plan into sharp focus.

Aspect of God's Law	Old Testament Context	New Testament Reality Today
Moral Law (God's Eternal Standard)	Given at Sinai on tablets of stone to define righteousness and expose sin (Exodus 20; Psalm 111:7–8).	Remains forever until heaven and earth pass away (Matthew 5:17–19). Written on believers' hearts and minds under the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:10) and obeyed out of love (1 John 5:3).
The Priesthood (Mediation Before God)	Restricted exclusively to mortal men from the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron (Hebrews 7:11, 23).	Changed by necessity so Jesus Christ (of the tribe of Judah) serves forever as our sinless High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:12–28). No earthly High Priests needed.
Animal Sacrifices (Atonement Shadow)	Daily and yearly offerings of bulls, goats, and lambs pointing forward to the coming Messiah (Hebrews 10:1–4).	Permanently ceased when Messiah was cut off at Calvary (Daniel 9:26–27). Christ's single sacrifice perfected believers forever (Hebrews 10:10–14).
Civil & Judicial Law (National Governance)	Given to ancient Israel as a physical nation-state meant to be a model of God's kingdom and light to the world (Deuteronomy 4:6).	Israel failed its covenant mission (Hebrews 8:9). Believers today live under human governments (Romans 13:1–5; 1 Peter 2:13–14) and lack authority to enforce national civil penalties.

Let us review the core truths that anchor a sound, biblical understanding of God’s law:

First, God’s moral law is eternal. Not one jot or tittle will fall away until heaven and earth pass and all prophecy is fulfilled. Jesus Christ did not come to abolish God’s commandments; He came to fulfill them through spotless obedience and to reveal their full spiritual depth.

Second, Christ’s obedience does not exempt us from obeying God. Because sin is the transgression of the law, true faith establishes the law rather than voiding it. Under the New Covenant, God writes His laws directly into our hearts and minds so that righteous living flows naturally from a transformed inner life, proving our genuine love for God.

Third, the 'change of the law' in Hebrews 7:12 addresses the priesthood, not the Ten Commandments. Because Jesus descended from the tribe of Judah rather than Levi, the

priestly statute changed so that Christ could serve forever as our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek—eliminating any need for human High Priests.

Fourth, animal sacrifices ended permanently at the cross. Just as Daniel 9 prophesied that the Messiah would be cut off and cause sacrifice and oblation to cease, Jesus offered one perfect sacrifice for sins forever, rendering repeated animal offerings obsolete.

Finally, we live today as citizens under human governments rather than inside an earthly theocracy. Ancient Israel was entrusted with civil statutes to serve as a model of God's kingdom and a light to the nations, but Israel failed to keep that covenant. Today, believers do not hold civil authority to enforce national judicial penalties; instead, we submit peacefully to governing authorities while faithfully keeping God's enduring moral commandments until the day Christ returns to establish His kingdom over all the earth.