

Which Law Was Abolished?

by Eric Lyons, M.Min.

A great deal of confusion exists in the religious world concerning what spiritual law man is under today. Some say the old law still is binding—all of it. Others say that most of it has been abolished, but that some of it still is in effect. Many simply pick and choose laws out of both testaments and abide only by those that are appealing to them. Much of the confusion today about the old law and the new law is a result of the false teachings of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. This intensely evangelistic group teaches that the Ten Commandments still are binding in the present age. Although most Christians readily agree that nine of the Ten Commandments either are stated explicitly or are implied in the New Testament (and thus binding today because they are part of the new law), Seventh-Day Adventists actively teach that the Ten Commandments (including and especially the command to observe the Sabbath day—Exodus 20:8) are part of “God’s unchangeable law” (from the Seventh-Day Adventist’s official Web site—www.adventist.org/beliefs). Whereas certain parts of the Old Testament have been abolished, they insist that God intended for the Ten Commandments to be an eternal covenant that all of His children must follow.

In response to such teachings, some Christians (like myself) quickly cite passages of Scripture that indicate the old law has been taken away. For example, the writer of Hebrews plainly stated that “if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second” (8:7). Then, quoting the prophet Jeremiah, he wrote: “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’ ” (8:8-9; cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34). Elsewhere, the apostle Paul stated that Christ has “wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed it to the cross**” (Colossians 2:14, emp. added). The old law has become “obsolete” (Hebrews 8:13; cf. 7:12; Ephesians 2:14-16). Although we still can learn numerous valuable lessons and principles about how to live godly lives from the old law (cf. Romans 15:4), we are bound by it no longer.

What some like the Seventh-Day Adventists teach, however, is that that God gave two laws on Mt. Sinai. They differentiate between the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial laws, saying that one (the Ten Commandments) is the Law of God and the other (the ceremonial laws) is the Law of Moses. Moreover, they assert that all of the passages in the Bible that refer to the old law being abolished are speaking of the ceremonial laws and not the Ten Commandments, which (they stress) were written with the very finger of God (Exodus 31:18).

Those who separate the “the Law of God” and “the Law of Moses” (in an attempt to find approval for continuing to follow portions of the old law) fail to realize that the Bible does not make such distinctions. Ezra read from “the Book of the Law of Moses,” which also was called “the Book of the Law of God” (Nehemiah 8:1,18). Luke recorded that after Mary gave birth to Jesus “when the days of her purification according to **the law of Moses** were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in **the law of the Lord**, ‘Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in **the law of the Lord**, ‘A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons’ ” (Luke 2:22-24, emp. added). The Law of Moses and the Law of the Lord were the same thing and still are. When writing to the brethren in Rome, the apostle Paul quoted from the Ten Commandments and taught that it was part of the old law to which they had “become dead...through the body of Christ” (Romans 7:4,7). In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul wrote:

[C]learly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.... But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious.... For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For **if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious** (3:3-11, emp. added).

What was “passing away”? The law written on the “tablets of stone.” What was the law “engraved on stones” that was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai? The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). In this passage, Paul teaches the very opposite of what Seventh-Day Adventists teach—the Ten Commandments are **not** an eternal covenant.

The New Testament explicitly teaches that the old law has been abolished. Whether one is talking about the Ten Commandments or the ceremonial laws, the Law of Moses or the Law of God, all are considered the old law that

no longer is in effect. Jesus Christ fulfilled that law and nailed it to the cross forever (Matthew 5:17-18; Colossians 2:13-17).

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